



Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment

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Block Level CFRR Claim-Making and WebGIS Workshops in Bastar

Date: 7th to 14th February

Location: Block Headquarters of Bakawand, Bastanar, Bastar, Darbha, Jagdalpur,
Lohandiguda, and Tokapal

Introduction

The Bastar District Administration has given the task of training and capacity building for the recognition and management of Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR) to Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE). While working towards capacity building, our team recognized that a very common roadblock to claim-making has been the lack of convergence between forest and revenue maps, where the Revenue Department's maps don't show forest compartment boundaries and the Forest Department's maps don't show revenue village boundaries.

In order to address this lack of convergence, the CFRR team at ATREE has developed a webGIS system (a mapping system accessible through a web browser) which superimposes four types of maps of Bastar district on top of each other; a Google Earth/Bing satellite map, revenue boundary maps, forest compartment maps, and cadastral maps of each village. Since this system transposes all the maps on top of each other, and is freely accessible to the public, it allows people to understand which identify what forest area is being claimed, in reference to the revenue and cadastral boundaries of the village.

To introduce the WebGIS system as a tool to better facilitate the claim-making process, and to address other gaps in the CFRR claim-making process, the ATREE team organised a series of block level workshops to be held in each of the seven blocks in Bastar district. Each workshop was held in the block headquarters of the seven blocks, between the 7th and 14th of February, and was attended by FRC Adhyakshs, Sachivs, and members, Panchayat Sachivs and Sarpanchs, and Patwaris.

Objectives of the Workshops

The main objectives of the block level workshops were as follows –

- Increase awareness about CFRR and what it entails: While most people are familiar with the CR and Individual Forest Rights (IFR) provisions of the FRA, they are still unfamiliar with CFRR and what it entails. The workshops aimed to clarify what CFRR is, the advantages it confers, how it can be used, and how to go about claiming it.
- Outline the correct procedure for claim-making: Filing CFRR claims is a bottom-up process that needs to be carried out by the Gram Sabha through multiple different steps. The process outlined in the official FRA handbook released by the Chhattisgarh State Government is robust, but time-consuming. Most claims that have been issued till date have not followed the procedure outlined in the handbook and instead, have been drafted in a top-down manner by the Forest Department. In order to ensure a bottom-up process, while acknowledging that the procedure outlined by the

handbook is rather laborious, our team outlined a less extensive but legally and procedurally sound method of claim-making. This method remains the same for filing new claims as well as modifying incorrect claims and was disseminated to participants during the workshops in order to facilitate a proper claim-making process.

- Identify flaws in existing titles: The workshops aimed to guide villages that had already received titles on how to assess the titles that had been given to them. Through interactive sessions, participants were taken through the process of understanding the title that they had been given, determining how much they were rightfully due, and assessing whether their title had any errors.
- Explain the use of the WebGIS system: The WebGIS system is a very useful tool for assessing the accuracy of existing titles as well as approximating how much forest area is due for a fresh title. The workshops were geared towards familiarising people with the WebGIS system so that it could be used at the village level for modifying old claims as well as filing new claims.
- Address misconceptions regarding CFRR: The experiences of our FRA coordinators on the ground revealed that there are many misconceptions regarding the CFRR claim-making procedure, ranging from what can be claimed to how to go about claiming it, which we aimed to address through the course of the workshops.

Participation in the Workshops

The workshops saw good levels of attendance and participation across all seven blocks. In all the seven workshops put together, there were a total of 431 participants, representing 237 villages. Out of these 237 villages, 104 villages have already received titles. The representatives of these 104 villages were made aware of the details of their titles and were assisted in determining whether the titles were accurate. In case there were flaws in the titles, they were also taken through the process of how to rectify the title. The representatives of the remaining 133 villages, which have not yet received a title, were taken through the process of how to file a fresh claim and, with the help of the WebGIS system, were also assisted in approximating how much forest land they would be able to claim.

Each of the workshops were attended by the following groups of people:

- i) Patwaris
- ii) Panchayat Sachivs
- iii) Sarpanchs
- iv) FRC Adhyakshs
- v) FRC Sachivs

The details of the number of participants present and the number of villages represented in each of the seven block level workshops is given in the table below -

Name of Block	Total no. of participants	No. of govt. officials	No. of villagers	No. of villages represented	No. of represented villages with titles
Bakawand	91	55	36	45	13
Bastanar	78	35	43	32	8

Bastar	74	52	22	43	23
Darbha	26	19	7	20	11
Jagdapur	75	34	41	37	26
Lohandiguda	44	36	8	32	15
Tokapal	43	19	24	28	8
TOTAL	431	250	181	237	104

Workshops Summary

The workshops were conducted by Dr. Sharachchandra Lele (Project leader), Anubhav Shori (District Coordinator), Ananya Rao and ATREE's team of 18 FRA Coordinators (a team mainly composed of Adivasi youth, including women). Each workshop was divided into three sections. The first section was a common session for all participants who were attending the workshop, where the FRA was briefly explained and the importance and main clauses of CFRR was highlighted. This introductory session also made sure to clarify some common misunderstandings of the Act.

This was followed by an interactive session which introduced ATREE's Web-GIS system to the participants and demonstrated how to use this system to file new claims as well as to assess whether existing claims are correct. On this system, one can select any village in Bastar block, and be able to view the revenue boundaries of the village, the forest compartments that fall within and around the village, as well as all the revenue compartments inside the village.

Using this system, our team was able to assess a few titles in front of all participants by showing them the forest compartments that have been assigned to their village and determining whether it really belonged to the village, or whether the village was due more area than what they had been given. The Web-GIS was projected in front of all participants and people were asked to help our team look-up their village in the system and determine how much CFRR area they were due. These interactive sessions were conducted in Halbi, Dhurwi, and Gondi languages as well, as many of the participants were less comfortable with Hindi.

In the third and final section of the workshop, all participants were divided into breakout groups, where each village was sent to a help-desk manned by someone from the ATREE team. At each help-desk, an ATREE team member sat together with the Forest Rights Committee, Patwari, and Panchayat Sachiv from each village and looked up their specific village on the web-GIS system. We then helped them to understand the CFRR area due to them, the accuracy of their title (if they had received one), and the specific role of each group in the claim-filing process, in case it was a new title, as well as the claim-modification process, in case they wanted to alter their existing title.

After the seven workshops were completed, an additional eighth workshop was held in Bastar block on 2nd March, especially for the Patwaris. This was done because the Patwaris were not able to attend the initial workshop held in Bastar block (which was held on 14th February) because they were occupied elsewhere. The contents of this workshop were the same as the previous ones.



Photo 1 (07/02/2022) - Dr. Sharachchandra Lele explaining the provisions of CFRR in the first block level workshop in Tokapal



Photo 2 (08/02/2022) – A demonstration of the WebGIS system in the second block level workshop in Darbha



Photo 3 (09/02/2022) – FRA Coordinator Santu Maurya explaining how to evaluate the accuracy of CFRR titles in the third block level workshop in Bastanar



Photo 4 (10/02/2022) – The introductory speech at the fourth block level workshop in Lohandiguda



Photo 5 (11/02/2022) – FRA Coordinator Barsingh Maurya conducting a break-out discussion with participants to evaluate existing CFRR claims at the fifth block level workshop in Jagdalpur



Photo 6 (12/02/2022) – FRA Coordinator Jamuna Nag discussing the accuracy of sample CFRR titles in the sixth block level workshop in Bakawand



Photo 7 (14/02/2022) – Field Coordinator Anubhav Shori explaining the WebGIS system to participants during a break-out discussion in the seventh workshop in Bastar



Photo 8 (03/02/2022) Master Trainer Tulsi Thakur addressing participants at the additional workshop held in Bastar block specially for Patwaris

The participant lists for each day of the workshops are attached below.