



Enhancing Impact of Forest Rights and Governance

Theme/Sub Theme: Inclusive Land Tenure Security

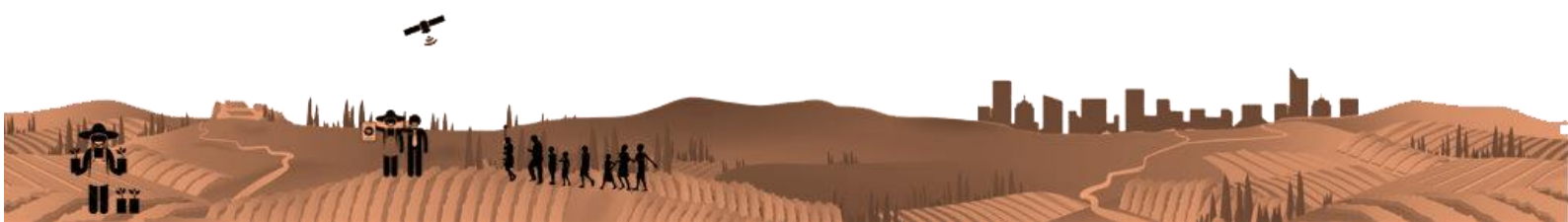
Organiser(s)/Institutions(s): Geetanjay Sahu, TISS



Tata Institute Of Social Sciences

The India Land Development Conference (ILDC) was initiated in 2017 as a collective exercise for learning and advocacy towards improving land tenure security and governance in India. India Land and Development Conference has become a unique annual inclusive Land Convergence platform in India. Established by a collaborative initiative of local and global land-institutions in 2017, ILDC seeks to promote inter-sectoral, inter-disciplinary and multi-level conversations on land and development. ILDC helps researchers, practitioners, governments, businesses, entrepreneurs and professionals working around and at interface of land in different geographies, across scales around diverse issues to come together and interact at an open and inclusive platform. It aims to further, intensify and change land conversations, catalyse cross-learning and amplify innovations. By triggering connections and facilitating networking among land-actors and institutions, it contributes to coordinated and impactful research, innovations, advocacy and actions for improving land tenure security and achieving sustainable development goals. As a part of this process, a website (<http://centerforland.org/ildc2019/>) has been initiated with a focus on news, information and experience sharing on land rights and governance.

TISS and Azim Premji University have been coordinating a research presentation session at ILDC focused on on diverse aspects of forest rights and governance. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act (Forest Rights Act or FRA for short) that was passed in 2006 was the result of a protracted struggle by the marginal and tribal communities of our country to assert their rights over the forest land over which they were traditionally dependent. This Act is crucial to the lives of millions of adivasis and other forest dwellers in different parts of our country as it provides for the restitution of deprived forest rights, including both individual rights to cultivated land in forest land and community rights over community forest resources (CFR). Several studies have pointed out that the Forest Rights Act has the potential to restore rights of forest dwellers over at least 40 million hectares or 100 million acres of forest land in 170,000 villages i.e. one fourth of the villages across the country. Importantly, at least 150 million people, including 90 million tribal people are estimated to be benefited from recognition of forest rights under FRA (RRI et.al., 2015). Similarly, FRA has the potential to democratise forest governance by recognising rights of local communities to protect and conserve forests; ensuring livelihood security; securing gender justice and meeting sustainable development goals of eliminating poverty and achieving ecological sustainability. Also, FRA provides the opportunity to address Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) in 106 districts across 10 states in India (CFR-LA Report, 2016). Over the past few years, thousands of villages have been granted CFR rights across many states, prominent among them being Maharashtra, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh, along with a few instances in Karnataka, Kerala and Gujarat.





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Upon reviewing the experience of the FRA process over the last ten years, it was felt that a greater engagement with and involvement of the research community in the country is needed. Firstly, we believe that a number of researchers (including students) are already engaged in studying various dimensions of the forest rights and governance process as it is unfolding in various parts of the country, but are not part of the FRA research network process. We are therefore not benefitting from their analysis. Secondly, there is a need for even greater engagement of scholars from different disciplines and in diverse locations with this process, which has the potential to radically transform forest rights and governance and thereby dramatically improve the lives of millions of rural households. Questions that need scholarly attention include identifying ways in which forest rights and governance questions have been addressed, how NTFPs are managed and benefiting local people, poverty reduction, gender empowerment, and democratic governance can be enhanced or strengthened under different socio-economic and political contexts.

The ILDC 2019 is planning a special session on impact of forest rights and governance from the livelihood, governance and sustainability point of view. Given your work and interest in the field of forest rights and governance, we request you to submit an abstract on the above themes on or before 31st January and the full paper by 28th February. We are planning to bring out a publication of the selected submissions that will be presented in the session and also peer reviewed subsequently as a separate volume or in a special issue of an important Journal.

Looking forward to interacting with you.

With thanks and regards,

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