



Review of Various Initiatives for Tribal Development in Tripura within the purview of Forest Rights Act, 2006

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Abstract

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The Schedule Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA) was implemented in India in 2008, to undo the “historical injustice” meted out to the tribals of the country. The Act ensures Tenurial and livelihood security by recognising Individual forest Rights and Community Forest Rights. The Act was implemented in Tripura with the focus on Individual Forest Rights for habitation and self-cultivation, to achieve sustainable socio-economic development of the tribals. The state government converged many development schemes and two bi-lateral projects with FRA implementation to achieve its goals. This study objectively looks into the various schemes of the State departments and the two bilateral project aided by Japanese international co-operation Agency and the Indo-German Development Cooperation. The study highlights the various benefit schemes that include assistance for rubber plantation, tea plantation, horticulture plantation, housing, etc and how they have aided in land development of the Individual Forest Rights. Apart from providing assistance for land development schemes for Agroforestry, value addition centres and enterprise development for NTFP, assistance for formation of Self Help groups, development of nurseries and plantations, capacity building programmes run for the IFR holders are also discussed. All these initiatives in convergence with FRA have set up the foundation for future development of the tribals who have been long excluded from the socio-economic processed of the country.

Keywords:

*Tribal Livelihood;
FRA, 2006;
Forest Rights;
Socio-economic
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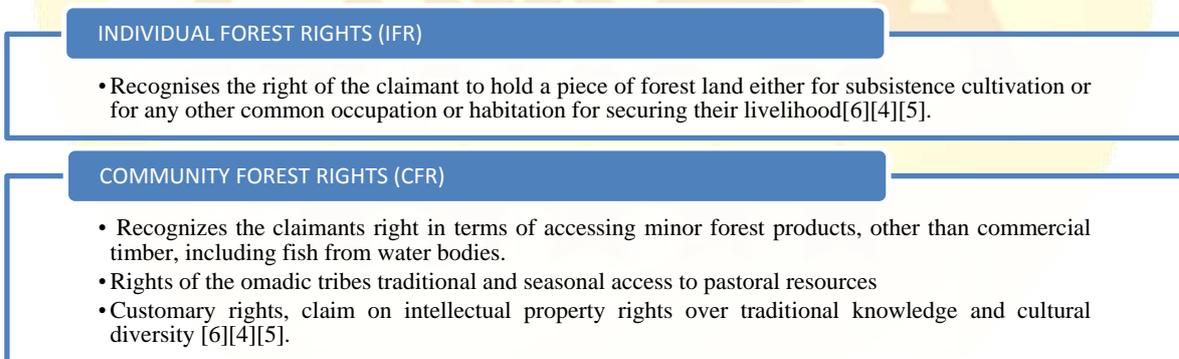
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1. Introduction

India has one of the highest tribal populations in the world, of over 84.34 million tribals (8.2% of total population). This includes 700 State specific tribes and 75 Primitive Tribe Groups (PTGs). And 91.7% of these tribal groups live in and around forests[1]. Forests play a very significant role in the lives of the tribals; it fulfils their livelihood needs, subsistence needs and socio-cultural needs and their ethos' have amalgamated with the forest in such a way that both benefit through mutual existence. But this relationship was ignored since the colonial era leading to the socio-economic exclusion of tribal families with more than half of the tribal families (54.14%) living below the poverty line (BPL), deprived of basic livelihood needs [2]. They were evicted from their home on the pretext of "scientific" Forest Management or for commercial exploitation and conferred the legal status of "encroachers" and led to their displacement and exclusion from mainstream forestry [2][3].

After years of protests, intervention and lobbying by the pro tribal groups like the Campaign for Survival and Dignity, the government recognised the "historical injustice" vetted to the tribals and under the aegis of the government the Ministry of Tribal affairs (MoTA) enacted the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (abbreviated as FRA), in 2008. FRA recognises a total of 14 rights for the scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers which secures their tenurial and livelihood rights and empowers them to manage and conserve the forest resource. The rights are recognised at two levels, the *individual level* and *community levels* (Fig 1) [4][5]. Till April, 2018 about 1.8 million rights have been vested (MoTA, 2018) in 20 states in the country. And Tripura, a North Eastern State was consecutively ranked foremost with respect to the number of total land rights vested in comparison to the claims vested.

Figure 1: Individual Forest Rights and Community Forest rights



A key area of impact of the FRA implementation was the development of the tribal and in 2012 through FRA amendments, clause no. 16 was added that called for, "Post claim support and hand holding to holder of forest rights"[5] ensure that the right holders are provided with relevant livelihood development, basic amenities and land development through convergence of various government line departments benefit scheme. And in Tripura a number of development schemes were converged with the recognition of land rights and this paper aims to review the various schemes implemented in the schemes and how have they impacted the lives of the tribal in the state.

2. Methodology

The adopted methodology for the review of the various initiatives and schemes of the government of Tripura was initially done through national reports available on the world wide web. Thereafter a number of discussions and group discussions were undertaken with

the officials at the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in Delhi; The Tribal Welfare Department, Forest Department and Revenue Department in Tripura (at the state level, district level and block level) to understand the implementation and impact of the various schemes and projects in the state for FRA right holders and also to extract data regarding the implementation. Finally at least 10 village institutions were made part of the discussion to see the ground reality of the implementation of the various schemes and initiatives.

3. Study area

Tripura is the third-smallest state in the country; it joined the India Union in October 1949 and was given full statehood on January 21, 1972 [7]. It covers 10,491 km (24,051 sq mi) and is bordered by Bangladesh to the north, south, and west, and the Indian states of Assam and Mizoram to the east. Tripura lies within the Indo-himalayan ecozone and boast of rich forest and tree cover (76.71%) [8]. Tripura is a Schedule six state i.e. the state has a high percentage of schedule tribes dwelling in the region. And large parts of the population reside in these forest areas and are dependent on the forest for their livelihood and constitute about 30.9% of Tripura's population [9]. The primary sectors of livelihood are Agriculture, forestry, NTFP collection, and pisciculture. There are 19 recognised Scheduled Tribes in Tripura, who share a close symbiotic relationship with the forest they depend on for their livelihoods and in turn they conserved the genetic diversity of wild and less-known crop species (cultivated on lands attached to their houses)[10]. The hilly forest regions of northern and southern parts of the state are home to 32 communities and among the Scheduled Tribes, the most numerous are the Tripuri, Reangs, Jamatias, Chakmas, Halams and Moghs, these tribes along with their characteristic features are discussed in table 1 [10].

Table 1 : Comparison of major tribes of Tripura

Characteristic	Tripuri	Reang	Jamatia	Chakmas	Halams	Moghs
Migrants	Considered Natives of Tripura	Migrated from Shaan state of upper Burma. One of the 75 primitive tribes	Not known	Migrated from Burma	Not known	Arakan tribe migrated from Burma
Linguistics	Tibetan Burman family. Influenced by Bengali language	Austro-Asiatic group under Tibeto-Burman family	Similar to Tripuris . Tibeto-Burman family (kok-borok)	Mixed with loan words of Indo-Aryan language, Tibeto - Chinese language and Arakan language.	Tibetan Burman family.	Tibeto-Chinese linked to Assam-Burmese section

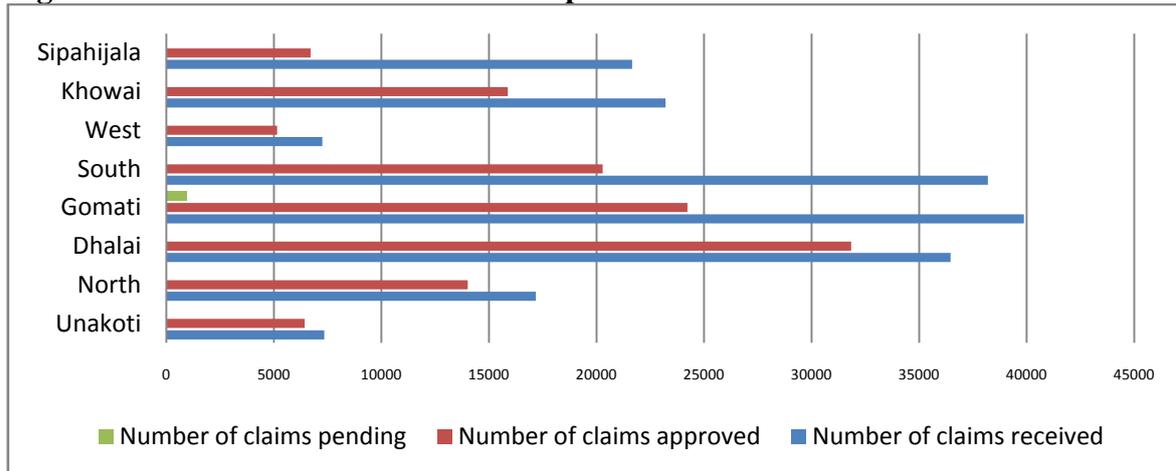
Ethnic origin	Indo-Mongoloid origin	Indo-Mongoloid origin	Mongoloid Origin	South East Asia.	Cocase-Mongoloid origin of kuki-chin tribe	South East Asia
Religion	Hindus	Hindus-vaishnavism	Hindus-shakti cult. "Hoda-Akra" is the social religious institution	Buddhist, hindus and even Islam	Hindus	Buddhist
Economic activities	Educated tribals work in major town whereas those in forest depend on agriculture	Nomadic tribe. Jhoom and food gatherers	Major strength of Army. Undertake Plough cultivation	Jhoom cultivation, plain land cultivation, fishing and wage earning.	Jhoom cultivation, plain land cultivation, and other substitute work	Jhoom cultivation, not very active
Education	Advanced in Education	Marginalised not well educated	Well educated tribe	Lag in education	Lag in education	Lag in education
Practice Jhoom	Yes, some groups	Yes, extensively	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

Compiled from [11][12][13][14][15][16][29]

4. Results and discussion

4.1 FRA Implementation in Tripura

The forestry in Tripura has undergone great change in the last few decades from the adoption of the National Forest Policy, 1988, to the implementation of FRA. Tripura was a pioneering state to implement FRA in 2008 and was ranked foremost in 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016 [17][18] in terms of "percentage of titles distributed over number of claims received in each State" under the Act. At the state level the Tripura Tribal Welfare Department is responsible for the implementation of the FRA in the state. The committees responsible for execution of implementation are constituted at the District Level called the District level Committee (DLC); at the Sub-Division Level called the Sub-Division level Committee (SDLC); along with Forest Rights Committees (FRC) at the Gram Panchayat/Village Council level; a State Level Monitoring Committee has also been formed to monitor the progress of the Act [19]. As per the latest status report of MoTA, 2018 a total of 1.27 Lakh rights have been vested to the tribals in the eight districts in the state, but the focus of implementation has been on the Individual Forest Rights (IFR) with only 55 Community rights being vested (table 3). The distribution of titles is said to be reaching its completion in the state with maximum number of rights vested in two districts namely, Dhalai and Gomati (Figure 2).

Figure 2 : District wise status of FRA Implementation

(Source: Status Report May 2015, Tribal Welfare Department, Tripura)

As per the reports of the tribal Welfare department, the demarcation of land rights vested was being undertaken along with providing pillar. Economic Benefits as under rule 16 of the FRA amended rule 2012 were also being provided to the rights holders in convergence with various line departments, as per the government reports 47, 751 households were provided with some economic benefits in 2013 (Table 2). Indra Awas Yojana (Now PM Awas Yojana) provided assistance for building of house to 7953 IFR holding households in 2013. Other important initiatives were also executed two of the most influential were externally aided projects, namely the “Tripura forest environmental improvement and poverty alleviation project” funded by the Government of Japan through Japan international co-operation Agency (JICA)[20] and the Indo-German Development Cooperation Project (IGDC) called “Participatory Natural Resource Management in Tripura Project” [21] which was given under a grant from the Federal government of Germany. The aim was to provide the IFR holding households a means to generate livelihood opportunities for the tribals who live in and around the forest areas and are dependent either wholly or in part on the natural resources for their sustenance.

Table 2: Summary of Implementation in Tripura

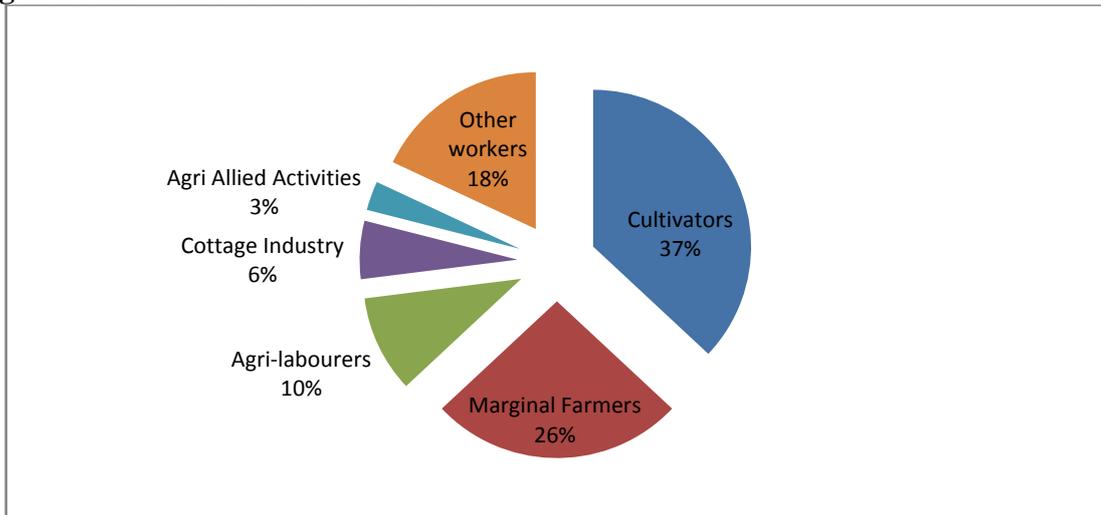
<u>PARTICULARS</u>	<u>INDIVIDU AL Forest Rights (IFR)</u>	<u>COMMUNIT Y Forest Rights (CFR)</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Total applications received (nos.)	2,00,358	277	2,00,635
Forest rights vested (nos)	1,27,029	55	1,27,084
Quantum of land involved(Acre)	4,59,985	91	4,60,076
Demarcation of land completed by GPS (nos)	1,17,524	-	1,17,524
Pillaring completed (nos)	1,12,145	-	1,12,145
Economic benefits provided (nos)	47,751	-	47,751
IAY housing provided (nos.)	7953	-	7953

(Source: Tribal Welfare Department, Tripura, 2013, MoTA, 2018)

4.2 Economic Development of Individual Forest Right Holder

The tribal population in Tripura were found to be economically backward and socially excluded. Majority of them relied on agriculture and cultivation activities for their livelihood. Shifting cultivation or Jhum has also been an important source on livelihood for the households due to the availability of limited flat land for settled cultivation (Figure 3). Due to such restrictions other important sources of livelihood include Agri-labour, cottage industry or government or private employment (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Classification of workers



(Source: Tribal welfare department, Tripura, 2015)

After vesting of rights under IFR an Action Plan was prepared to provide benefits for development by 2014-15. Schemes of line departments, MGNREGA and externally aided projects are converged to provide economic benefits to the FRA Beneficiaries [22]. Some of the economic activities as per the Tribal Welfare Department that are facilitated or should be facilitated on the IFR are given below:

- Agriculture activities in the land given to land right holder should be explored. In fact upto 25% of the forest land given under FRA can be used for paddy cultivation.
- The plantation activities taken up on the land rights are; Rubber plantation, Tea Plantation, Bamboo plantation etc.
- Other activities include: Animal rearing, Medicinal plants, Pisciculture, Jatropha cultivation, Milch cow rearing, Horticulture activities
- Water harvesting structures created along with programmes for livelihood such as duckery, pisciculture.
- Assistance for income generation activities: Special programmes undertaken to assist families through cultivation of bamboo, rubber, tea, coffee, medicinal plants, eco-tourism and other agro-horti forestry practices.
- Setting up rubber processing center : Rubber processing units to be set up for production of rubber sheets as Tripura is the second largest producer of rubber in the country after Kerala. The rubber productivity in 2012-13 was 1200 Kg/ha/year[9].
- Tripura Bamboo Mission: under Department of Industries and Commerce, Govt. of Tripura; is committed to promote bamboo plantation. The strategy is to encourage

forest land right holders to come in large group with an expected land area of 50 ha collectively per village for undertaking commercial High Density Bamboo Plantation.

- Economic Empowerment of women: Self help groups have been formed with women member at present there are 20956. Whereas Women swarozgary groups benefitted under the Swarna jayantigramSwarozgar Yojana are 726 [9]

All the initiatives were to increase production and productivity of food grains, to put the economy of the land right holders in a sustainable growth pattern with emphasis is on ecological balance, to generate productivity and employment at a faster rate and to maintain it thereafter [23]. As per the tribal welfare records 2015 a total of 93349 households were covered under the various schemes (73148 households under schemes of the line department and 20201 households under MGNREGA).

4.3 Achievements of Various State Government Programmes/Schemes

State Government of Tripura has undertaken various programmes for economic and overall development of families and who have been vested IFR under FRA 2006 some of these programme include plantations on IFR, assistance for house building, assistance and loan to self help groups etc [24]. Programmes such as providing assistance for tea plantation, coffee plantation and rubber plantation have also been converged and their status is given in table 3.

Table 3: Achievements under Economic Development Scheme

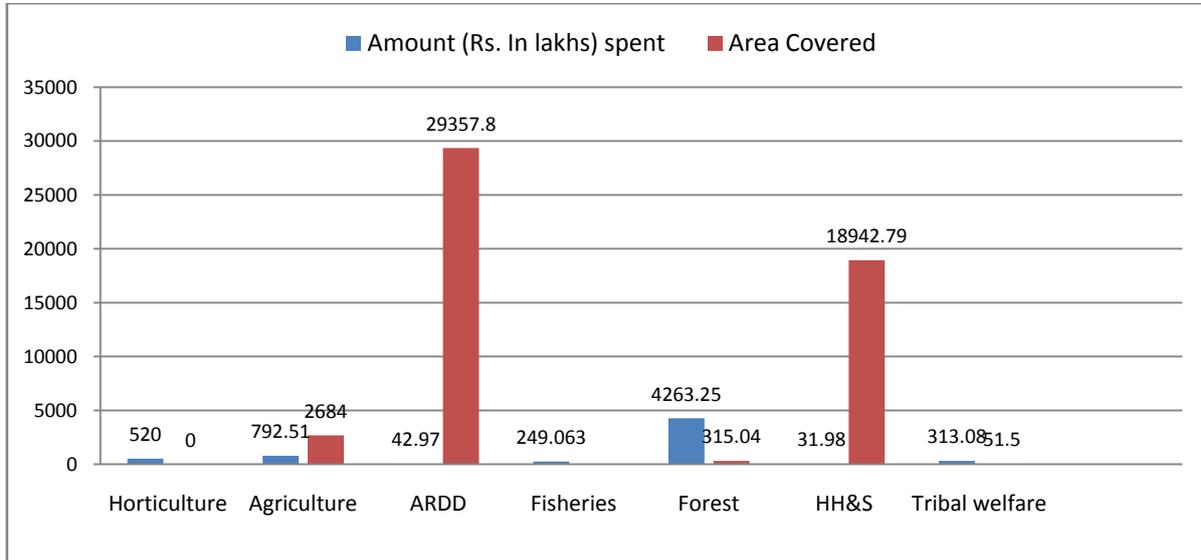
SCHEME	ACHIEVEMENTS			
	1972	1978	1998	2013
Rubber Plantation	NA	NA	NA	17040families
Horticulture	1079 families	10099 families	23209 families	25574 families
Tea plantation	NA	NA	NA	932 families
Coffee plantation	NA	NA	NA	310 families
Self Help groups	NA	NA	115 SHGs	1502 SHGs
Loans given	NA	NA	402	3119

(Source: Tribal welfare department, Tripura, 2013, 2014)

The state Tribal Sub-plan and other budgetary allocations from the state and the center are used to fund these schemes which are implemented through the various state level departments. MGNREGA, provides 100 days of guaranteed employed and gives additional 50 days employment to IFR holders in Tripura. The various line departments in the state of Tripura, like Horticulture department, Agriculture department, Animal resource and development department, fisheries department, forest department, handloom handicraft and sericulture department and Tribal welfare department, have converged with the Forest Right Act to provide for the social and economic benefits of the schedule tribes living in the forest area who have been given titles. The amount spent by various departments for FRA beneficiaries and the area covered is given in Figure 4. In terms of expenditure the forest department is the biggest spender at Rs.4263 lakhs, and the horticulture department has spent the least amount at Rs.520 lakhs. But ARDD or Animal Resource and

Development Department (ARDD) covered the maximum area followed by Handloom Handicraft and Sericulture Department (HH&S)

Figure 4: Amount Spent and area covered by Line Departments for FRA Beneficiary Schemes



(Source: Tribal welfare department, Tripura, , 2014,2015)

The area covered doesn't delineate the reach of various schemes of the line department. An account of the eight districts and the number of IFR holding households is given in table 4, the highest number of schemes/assistance were provided by the forest department in Dhalai, which has been said to reach the most interior of the villages due to better coordination [25] The schemes provided by forest department include, bamboo plantation, mixed horticulture plantations, agroforestry models etc. Agriculture department and Horticulture department also provide a number of schemes in the eight districts, assistance provided include, improved seed variety, saplings etc.

Table 4: Number of Forest Dwellers who have been provided assistance under schemes of various line departments

Name of district	No. of forest rights vested	Horticulture	Agriculture	Animal resource development	Fisheries	Forest	Handloom handicraft & sericulture	Tribal welfare	Total families covered
Unokoti	6428	461	3650	12	144	1393	0	166	5826
North	14013	850	7316	78	498	9377	20	0	18139
Dhalai	31843	3641	7306	120	597	11132	60	0	22856
Gomati	24230	2425	5231	118	396	1549	25	0	9744
South	20289	1670	2730	84	172	1663	23	0	6342
West	5150	357	1243	66	196	399	30	0	2291
Khowai	15876	782	2311	114	121	1450	13	0	4791
Sepahijala	6710	758	1401	254	91	357	13	285	3158
Total	124539	10944	31188	846	2215	27320	184	451	73148

(Source: District Tribal welfare department, Tripura, 2015)

4.4 Externally Aided Projects

a) Tripura-JICA Project

The Tripura-JICA is a bilateral project between Japan international cooperation agency and the government of India, the project started in the year 2007 and was extended to 2017 and the 2nd phase of the project began in 2019. The project is implemented in 7 Districts of West Tripura, Sepahijala, Khowai, South Tripura, Gomati, Unakoti and North Tripura. The target villages were 456 in number with a total budget of JPY 9.2 billion [26].

The main objectives of the project are restoration of degraded forests and to provide sustainable livelihoods to the forest dependent communities. The Project aims at the double prong strategy of restoration of forests and alleviation of poverty. The objectives will be achieved through formation of Joint Forest Management Committees (JFMCs) and Eco Development Committees (EDCs). The key components of the project include; Afforestation in 51,000 hectares of forest land, farm forestry, agro forestry, formation of NTFP Centre for Excellence and soil and moisture conservation are the key components of the project [26]. The two components of the project that directly include the people who have been vested forest rights are NTFP Centre of Excellence and Agro forestry. These will be discussed in detail.

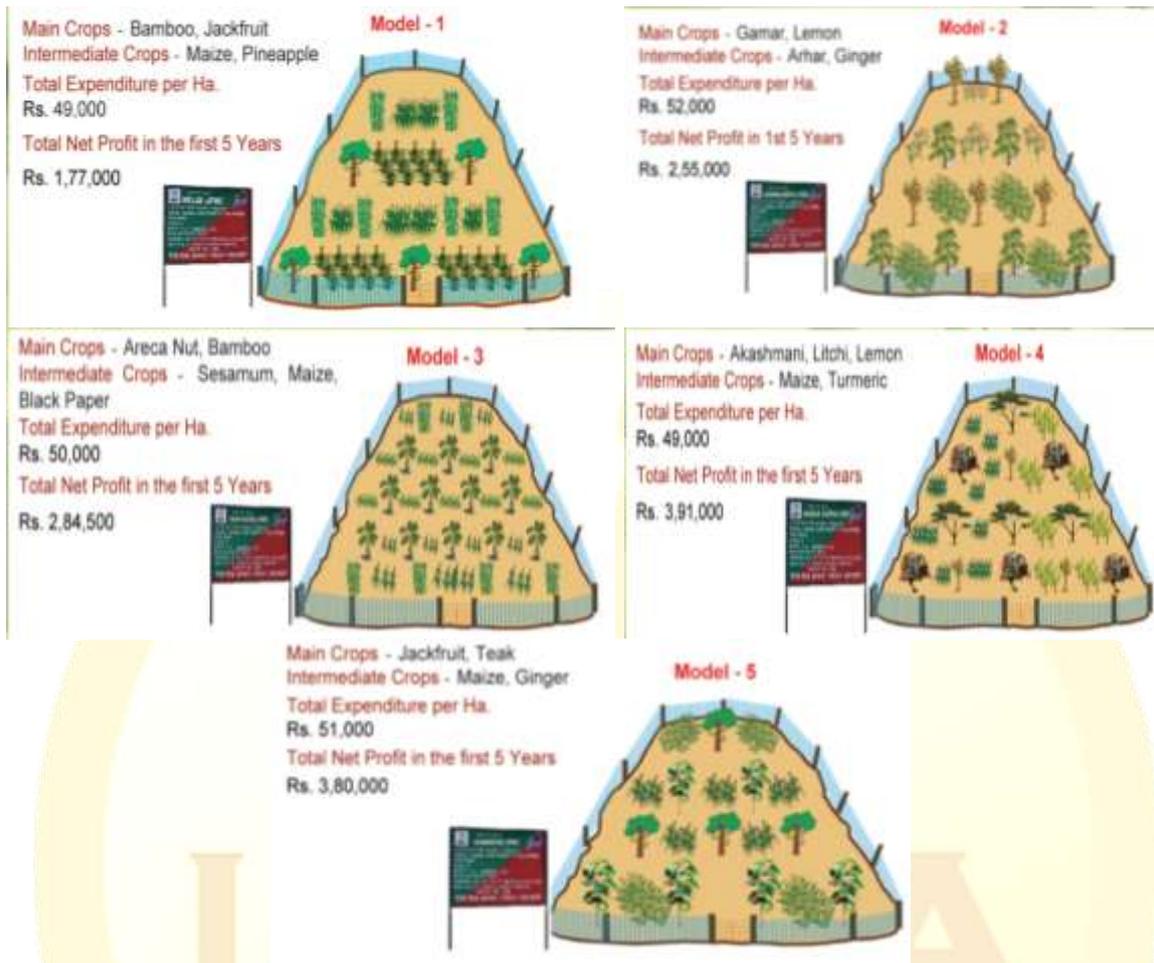
❖ Agro Forestry

Agro forestry is the scientific system of growing agriculture, horticulture and forest crops on the same piece of land for optimum utilisation of land. The main beneficiaries of this scheme are the people who have been vested IFR. During 2012-2013, 1945ha and in 2013-14 1200ha of agro-forestry plantation were raised on the lands on IFR land. The total target of the project was 8297ha. The cost of raising an agro forestry plantation is Rs 49,000 to 52,000. 22,000 is met by JICA in the creation year and the rest is procured from MGNREGA. JICA provides funds for mainainance.

Agro-forestry is highly suitable for raising crops on sloppy and less productive hilly lands and on the lands on which heavy shifting cultivation was practiced.

- Every inch of land is utilized by planting various crops. The ground storey, the middle-storey and the top-storey of the lands could be utilized profitably.
- Crop of short rotation (2-6 months), medium rotation (1-4years) and long rotation (more than 4 year) can be grown together, decreasing gestation periods.
- Agro forestry systems generate more profits per Hectare of area.
- Improves soil fertility
- The produce grown on the FRA land belongs to the beneficiary of the Act.
- The agro models implemented in the projected are given in Figure 5

Figure 5: Models of Agro-Forestry



(Source-Tripura-JICA, 2014)

❖ NTFP Center for excellence

The NTFP Centre of Excellence (NCE) has been formed under the project to focus on Non Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) and value addition in a comprehensive manner. The NCE undertakes research and provides modern technologies and productive planting stock (ibid). NCE also conducts training of community members as well as strengthen value addition and marketing. In this regard, 5 Common Community Facility Centres (CCFCs) have already been set by NCE in partnership with various agencies for value addition of bamboo and various NTFP. Processing of broom grass and incense sticks have been identified as potential income generation activities considering the comparative advantage of Tripura with regard to these activities.

❖ Training for Capacity Building

A number of Trainings are provided under the Project that include training for incense making, Duckery, Fishery, Broom Making, Goatery, Handicraft, Mushroom harvesting and Piggery. The Number of Trainings provided by the project in 8 districts is given below in Table 5. Maximum Number of trainings were given for Fishery and Piggery.

Table 5: Number of trainings provided under Tripura-JICA project

District	Incense	Duckery	Fishery	Broom making	Goatery	Handi craft	Mush-room	Piggery
Gomati	83	0	69	16	0	6	11	123
Khowai	6	1	77	4	0	0	26	109
North	0	0	20	4	0	0	0	8
Sepahijla	15	0	27	10	0	0	24	40
South	36	0	93	28	0	0	6	77
Unokoti	3	0	60	20	2	1	0	7
West	2	0	13	6	0	0	10	42

(Source-Tripura-JICA, 2014)

❖ Formation of Self Help Groups

Tripura-JICA has also assisted in the formation of Joint forest Management committees (JFMC) and Self Help Groups (SHG) mainly run by the women folk of the village (Table 6). Loans are provided to the SHG's and JFMC for plantation in the village, duckery, goatery, piggery etc.

Table 6: Achievements of Tripura-JICA in terms of SHG formed

District	JFMC formed	SHG Formed	A/C opened	SHG savings	Loan Provided
Gomati	150	484	472	2520237	11320582
Khowai	14	204	194	1351595	3959000
North	41	124	122	140505	2976000
Sepahijala	31	86	85	333485	1848888
South	89	292	292	2162305	6448456
Unakoti	66	189	172	457628	2666514
West	30	95	94	519460	2055000

(Source-Tripura-JICA, 2014)

b) Indo German Development Cooperation Project

The Indo-German Development Cooperation Project is a forest based bi-lateral project between the Government of India and the Federal Republic of Germany aiming at socio-economic development of tribal shifting cultivators, rural poor and conservation of natural resources in the state. The purpose of the project is to improve the natural resource conditions supporting enhanced livelihoods of forest dependent communities in Tripura based on "Participatory Natural Resource Management". The project started implementation in the year 2009 and has been implemented in 70 villages in nine blocks of Dhalai and North Tripura Districts. The second phase of the project just began in 2019. Tripura Forest Department (TFD) is primarily responsible for the implementation of the project in cooperation with Rural Development (RD) and Tribal Welfare (TW) Departments. Village Development Planning and Implementation Committees (VDPICs) established under the project are the core planning and implementation body. They are formed at the village level and have proved effective and empowering community based institution.

This project also greatly assists the forest dependent communities who have been given land rights under Forest Rights Act. A total of 28,150 Individual land right holders have

been reached out through various land and non-land based activities all aimed at achieving sustainable land management [27].

The various schemes are given as follows:

- The cumulative plantation achieved of 8847ha involves 12,163 people.
- Quality seedlings have been prepared by 1029 villages from Self Help Groups (SHG).
- In 2012-13 the three-tier mixed cropping model started benefitting the farmers.
- The check dams have been utilized productively for practicing fisheries (3359 villagers benefitted).

Along with convergence with MNREGA, convergence with various research institutes has been successfully achieved which benefits not only through making funds available but also through capacity building of the communities. The above status is depicted in the table below (table 12).

Table 7: Status Review of IGDC Project

	VDPIC (nos.)	SHGs (nos.)	Nurseries (nos.)	Plantation (ha)	Check dams (nos.)	Convergence funds (INR, lakhs)
Target	70	200	Not specified	7700	Not specified	3867
Status Review 2013	70	433	67	6325	320	12,988.86
Status Review 2014	70	450	74	8847	404	24,192.59

(Source-IGDC, 2014)

❖ **Achievements of the IGDC project**

The project which was to end in 2015 has been extended by 2 years and the future project activities will focus on strengthening the self reliance of village level community institution and on sustaining income generating activities. The achievements till the year 2014 are as follows:

- During 2013-14, a total of 53 FRA beneficiaries plantation were undertaken in four villages through converging MGNREGA fund.
- Till date, 341 check dams and 16 rain water harvesting tanks were constructed covering 29.74 ha of water area where 3359 villagers are involved for fishery activity.
- A total of 3424 SHGs members were assisted through seed money for diversifying activities like piggery, goat rearing, fishery, poultry farming, duck rearing, nursery, broom making, mushroom, cattle farming, turmeric-ginger plantation grocery shop.
- As part of the enterprise development, various product-based clusters are being established. E.g. Turmeric (at Dumburnagar), fish cluster (at Dumburnagar), Banana cluster at Makarcherra(at Chawmanu), Mushroom cluster at Salema, Agarbatti

clusters (in 5 villages under Salema and Ambassa). To promote and better market linkage, an industrial cooperative namely Raima Valley Multipurpose Industrial Cooperative Society (RVMICS) involving 250 turmeric farmers has been established, to be based at Dumburnagar.

5. Conclusion

The forest rights Act marks the advent of Indian forestry into more inclusive governance, which is set to transform the forest landscape and state people relationship in the context of natural resource management. It has been implemented in twenty states till date and Tripura was said to have the best implementation in terms of percentage of rights vested for the longest period. Tripura Implemented the Act in 2008 and converged with it, many state and central benefit and development schemes along with the recognition of rights as per the mandate of the Act. It has also been cited that the availability and access to these schemes is crucial for the development of the IFR [25]. The various state departments, Agriculture, forest, Horticulture, ARDD, Handicraft and Handloom and the two externally aided projects, worked along with the tribals and village councils to provide benefits for socio-economic development of the tribals and development of the land vested as forest right. The administration has been able to overcome the procedural difficulties in providing benefits to the forest dwelling tribals but the reach of these schemes remain limited with a large number of beneficiary households still to receive some benefit scheme or assistance for development. There is also no data available as to how the households were selected for providing assistance and it is still dependent on the socio-political scenario in the villages and the influence of the society elites, leading to inequitable distribution. There are indications of positive growth through the achievements of the implemented projects but to make the growth sustainable it is important to strengthen the skill development and capacity building of the IFR holder. But another aspect that needs to be strengthened is the implementation of community forest rights, which remain abysmally low in the state and provide support for the development of the existing CFRs . Another area that has limited support is the agriculture and shifting cultivation activities which is the major source of livelihood of the tribals and is important for their socio-cultural needs, thus innovative ways to develop these practices must be explored.

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