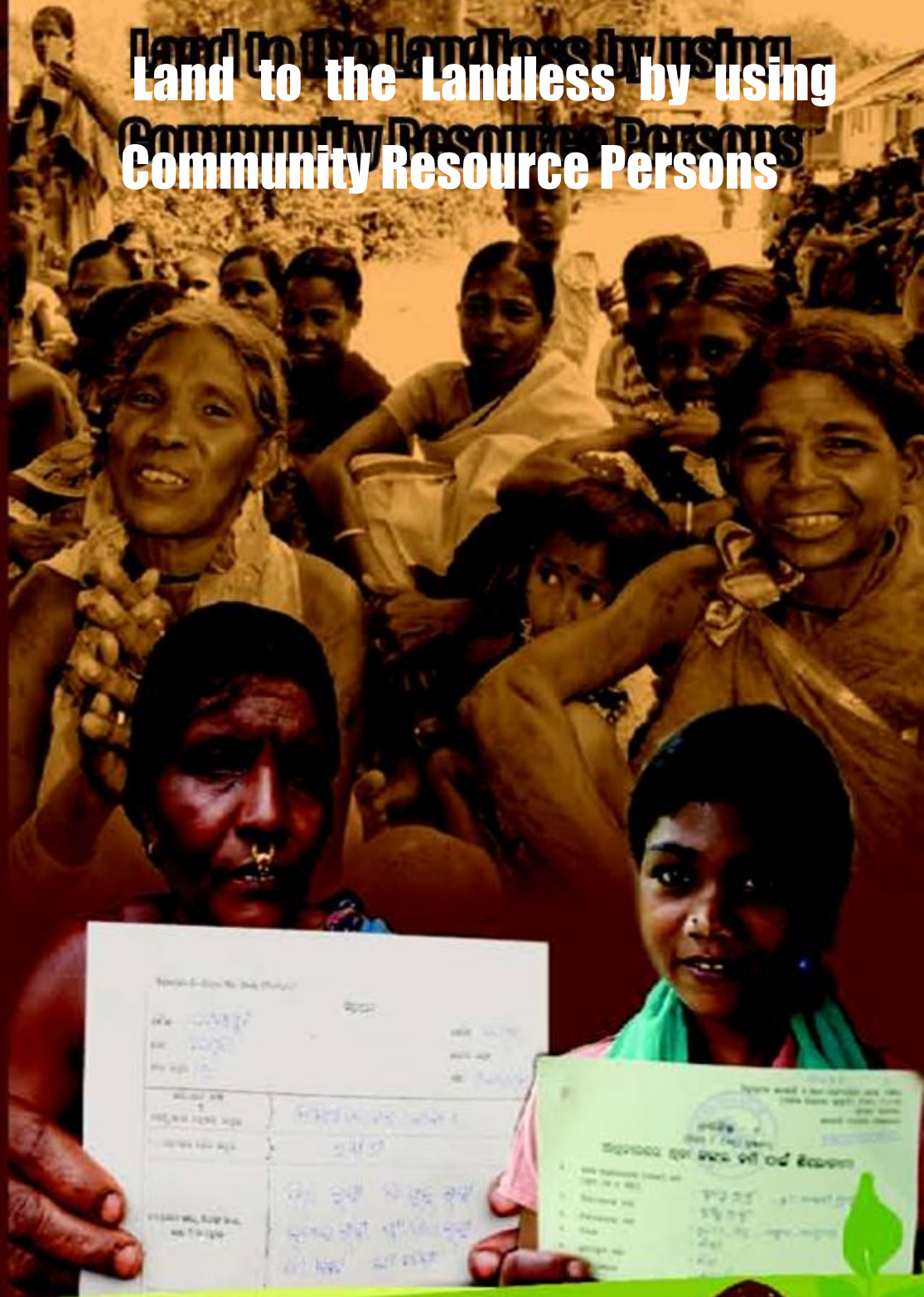


Odisha Tribal Empowerment  
and Livelihoods Programme

# Land to the Landless by using Community Resource Persons





Land is not only a critical source of living for indigenous people; it is central to their life and self-dignity. With secure access to and control over land, they have a firm base to improve their living standards. But a vast majority of tribal families, despite sincere government efforts, do not have secure tenurial rights leading to perpetuation of poverty and marginalization. With its project villages located in the difficult terrains of the state with high degree of poverty and food insecurity, land by default forms the most crucial component of OTELP's (Odisha Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme) intervention, a programme co-funded by IFAD, DFID and WFP.

With an objective of providing land to the landless in **1042 project villages** in 30 blocks of its 7 operational districts, and ensuring livelihoods convergence, OTELP has collaborated with **Landesa** (Rural Development Institute), a globally recognised non-profit organisation that supports programmes in partnership with governments to secure the land rights of the poor. In the collaboration, while OTELP extends the programme platform as well as human and other resources, Landesa provides technical assistance.

OTELP implements the **Community Resource Persons Model** - an innovative concept designed and piloted by Landesa in 36 villages in three districts of Odisha.



The **Community Resource Persons** (of late, named as the Bhumi-Sanjojaks) are local youth jointly identified by the villagers and local revenue officials, and then trained to provide additional capacity to the field level revenue officials in settling land -both homestead and farmland in favour of eligible landless families. These CRPs are engaged with a modest honorarium for a limited period of time to ensure accurate identification of landless families in a transparent and timely manner. This could be made possible because of the flexible **“Support for policy initiative Component”** in the loan agreement of IFAD.

The CRP model effectively addresses the major challenges that Government have been constantly facing while implementing *a number of progressive land allocation programmes such as:*



*“We were over burdened with our usual revenue related work. The CRP came to help us at each and every stage of land allocation process.*

*The CRP expedites the work and settlement is made possible in a timely manner. Only because of the CRP's assistance I could settle 147 cases within two months, else it would have taken me one year.”*

*Sarat Chandra Naik, RI, Semiliguda*

i) accurately identifying the landless families for recognizing their land rights; and ii) adding capacity to assist and support the overworked and inadequately staffed revenue administration to carry out land settlement process.

The CRPs are trained in two phases to prepare the list of landless families. In the first phase, they collect the list of households and their land holding status from the village record of rights. In the next phase, they triangulate the information and prepare the final landless list. Finally, the CRPs submit the same to the Tahasildar for field verification who then instructs the revenue Inspector to initiate the land settlement process.



CRPs assist the revenue officials at every step of land settlement by mobilizing the community for their active participation that makes the entire process transparent. While enumerating landlessness, CRP undertakes a household survey and validates it in a village meeting to ensure that not a single landless family is overlooked in the process. With the CRPs' support, all villagers remain present during field verification and land demarcation. The transparent and open process enables villagers to know about each other's land, availability of government land, and ensures complete transparency as regards village land records.

With due diligence, a series of activities are carried out as per revenue laws to settle land in favour of the eligible families.

As of September 30, 2012, with the help of 550 CRPs, identification of landless families is complete in 991 (94%) villages out of a total of 1042. The survey has revealed that out of 58,276 total households, the number of absolute landless (people possessing zero homestead and zero farmland) is 12,170 (21%), while the category of household that possess less than 2 decimals of homestead and less than one standard acre of agricultural land comes to 18,015 (31%). Combining the two categories together, the statistics depict that more than **50 per cent families are landless**. So far, field verification is over in 613 (58%) villages; Land titles (patta) distribution is over



*“CRP or Bhumi-Sanjojak is a local youth on whom people have enormous faith. Moreover, s/he is familiar with the persistent land issues of the area that helps in mobilizing the community. People also extend similar support and cooperate with the accompanying government official.”*

*Ramesh Chandra Behera, OWS, PA ITDA, Th Rampur*





in 233 (22%) villages with 8,286 families receiving titles to land. Based on the enumerated data, the programme is expected to benefit 20,000 more landless families.

During the implementation of the programme, several policy issues that are important to land settlement have been identified. One of the major issues has been **settlement of landless people residing on objectionable lands** (the lands that cannot be allotted due to the reason that in official records, the lands are not habitable). To address this issue, Government decided that landless people occupying government land may be settled as per the logic and principles adopted in case of

Forest Rights Act. The decision has paved the ways for settling land in favour of a significant number of landless families.

Based on the progress in OTELP's programme, Government has extended the land allocation programme to all the villages in 118 Tribal Sub-Plan blocks of Odisha spread over 12 districts. The programme will touch 1.2 million of tribal populace and is likely to benefit half a million landless families.



The programme will cover the villages in three overlapping phases within next five years. The first phase from 2012 and end by 2013 shall cover 6,094 villages in addition to 1042 villages already taken under OTELP, the second phase will be from 2014

to 2015, to cover 3,970 villages, and the third phase covering 7 villages shall start in 2016 and end by 2017. The first two phases with 61 TSP blocks shall saturate the current 7 OTELP project districts and the third phase shall be implemented in all 57 TSP blocks of 5 non-OTELP districts, viz Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Balasore, and Sundergarh.



Access to and control over land - homestead (1/10 of an acre and agricultural land (about an acre) is expected to create significant livelihood opportunities through various government schemes. The programme will involve efforts towards convergence of various schemes that would benefit the poor tribals.



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