

# Two decades on, tribes await FRA implementation in its true spirit in Kerala

Bureaucratic delays and lack of awareness posing major hinder blocks in execution of Act

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THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: “When the legislation was brought in 2006, we were hoping that it would put an end to our woes forever. But it seems, we will have to wait for long. As per the Act, those who lived in one place till December 13, 2005 will get individual rights. But many people are still waiting,” says K A Ramu.

A member of the Muduga community at Karara hamlet of Attappadi, Ramu and his mother, 80-year-old Mallika, are among the beneficiaries still waiting for the benefits.

Close to two decades after its introduction, implementation of Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA) is still facing hurdles in Kerala. Going by available data, social rights under the Act have been granted to 282 applications (7,88,316.14 acres).

Similarly, an area of 38,754.98 acres has been distributed to 29,119 applications as individual rights. 'Namathu Kanavu Mannu,' a first-of-its-kind atlas on Forest Rights Act, brought out by tribal collective Thampu, sheds light on the progress, lapses and impediments in implementation of the said Act.

The atlas, which is the culmination of a long and arduous task involving activists and tribal ambassadors, takes a closer look at what went wrong, the need for further awareness not only among community members but among government officials too, in addition to the widely debated Attappady model.

In Attappadi, Thampu along with various government agencies have reorganised forest rights committees into 18 settlements. Here 27,150.6918 acres have been distributed under community rights and 3,262.18 acres under individual rights.

## OVERVIEW



### INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS

No. of claims:  
**44,455**

Extend of land given:  
**38,754.98 acres**

### COMMUNITY RIGHTS

No. of claims:  
**1,014**

■ Social rights granted to over about **7.88 lakh acres** of forest land

■ Resource rights refer to right to collect forest produces

■ Community forest rights underlines right over entire habitat, biodiversity, wildlife and its protection

■ Individual rights refer to ownership over farming land

Attappadi serves as an indicator of how the FRA can be effectively executed for the benefit of tribal people. The model can hence be replicated in other regions too, pointed out officials.

It has been pointed out that there is a delay in implementing FRA in its true spirit. Though resource rights have been granted, community forest rights have not been given yet, pointed out Rajendra Prasad of Thampu.

“State is yet to take steps in implementing the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DA- JGUA), introduced by the Centre in 2024, aiming to ensure basic services for tribal hamlets. Even after other states started implementing the scheme more than a year ago, Kerala has not yet begun even preliminary steps. Though community rights were granted for 7.88 lakh people, the processing is still half-way. As far as Kerala is concerned, resources rights and community forest rights should be granted separately, as mandated by the Act,” he explained.

Kerala was one of the first states to begin steps to roll out FRA. However, bureaucratic delays and lack of awareness have been posing major hinder blocks in on-ground implementation.