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Up above the hill, an Adivasi ooru of Attappady waits for better houses



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Idavani is one of the 192 tribal hamlets (ooru) of Attappady.

Topic | Palakkad

One has to cross the Varagar, a tributary of the Bhavani, four times to reach Idavani.

The waters of Varagar cuts the road connecting the tribal hamlet to the outer world at four points. The 7-km road, constructed as part of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) a few years ago, came as a huge relief for the natives of Idavani. The tribals dwelling in the forests of Attappady in Kerala's Palakkad district used to be cut off from the rest of the world before he road was constructed.

Even now the area gets alienated when the Varagar floods. There are no bridges or culverts on the road. But that is not what the people of Idavani are worried about nowadays. The problem they want someone to address immediately is housing.

Almost all the 36 houses in the hamlet are in a bad shape. The small structures that make the hamlet have tin roofs and their walls are not plastered. Idavani is one of the 192 tribal hamlets (ooru) of Attappady. It is one among the 19 oorus that house the Kurumba community, one of



the three primitive tribes of Attappady. The other two prominent tribes of the region are Irular and Mudugar.

Team Onmanorama reached Idavani as part of visiting the tribal region in the wake of the reports of continuing infant deaths and health issues in Attappady.

“Almost all the houses are damaged. They all leak during rain. When it rains, we catch the water that falls inside our homes in vessels,” Rangī, an elderly woman in the ooru said. She said most of the houses in the area were built 20 years ago. “That time we had to carry all construction materials on our head to bring them here,” she remembered.

Rangī said she had applied for the funds for rebuilding her house some five years ago, but there has been no word on it from the panchayat yet.



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LIFE hope

Idavani falls in the fourth ward of Puthur panchayat. Muhammed Basheer, who represents the ward, said 28 families of the ooru have been included in the preliminary list of the LIFE Mission, a comprehensive housing scheme of the Kerala government. The final list of beneficiaries will be ready only after the verification process which is under way. It will end on December 20. Basheer, who is also the panchayat vice president, exuded hope that a good number from the 28 families may make it to the final list.

Already, four families have been shortlisted for the Pradhan Mantri Avas Yojana too, he added.

Lack of proper housing, like poor health, is a major issue in all the three village panchayats in the Attappady region.

In Pudur panchayat, which has 67 oorus, 1,757 people have applied for houses through LIFE Mission. This includes 234 applicants who do not have land and 1,522 families with land.

Panchayat president Jyothi Anilkumar said lack of proper housing is a major issue in remote oorus like Thodikki, Galasi, Kadukumanna and Thadikkundu. Final number of beneficiaries will be decided only after

proper verification.

In Sholayur panchayat, 1,502 people have applied to be included in the LIFE Mission scheme. These include applicants from the 42 tribal hamlets and settlers too. Verification of the applications is going on. Panchayat president Ramamurthy said 300 houses were completed in the first phase of the Mission in the past five years. Apart from these, houses have been allotted to 250 Adivasi families and 32 beneficiaries belonging to Scheduled Castes under a special project.

Agali panchayat has the highest number of applicants – 2,963. Of them, 2,565 are homeless people while 398 are landless.

(This is the third part of a series investigating the issues concerning the tribal population of Attappady.)

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