

Land answers the poverty question

**Comprehensive Programme on
Land to the Landless**



Odisha Tribal Empowerment and
Livelihoods Programme



Comprehensive Programme on Land to the Landless

Extreme poverty in rural India is rooted in landlessness. Landless families who depend on wage labour are almost always the poorest of the poor in whose livelihoods land occupies a central place. A piece of cropland and a homestead land of appropriate size greatly help households in achieving food and nutritional security. A rural family that has insecure titles to land they occupy is less confident to make full use of the land, thereby foregoing many livelihood benefits that land use can provide. Since independence, Government of Odisha, with the objective of providing land to the landless, has introduced a number of policies and programmes. Despite sincere government efforts, many people are still landless.

Landesa (Rural Development Institute), a global land rights organisation, designed and developed an innovative model to identify and train local village youth as Community Resource Persons (Bhumi Sanjojak) to provide additional capacity to the revenue officials. Following a step-wise allocation process, the CRP provides an accurate landless figure for initiation of settlement for regularisation of land to the eligible landless.

Orissa Tribal Empowerment and Livelihoods Programme (OTELP) which aims at empowering tribals in 30 blocks of 7 districts by enhancing their food security collaborated with Landesa (RDI) to provide land to the landless. The collaboration started in 2011 in all the seven districts. By mid-2012, the CRPs have identified close to 30,000 landless households who have started getting titles for both homestead and agricultural land.

Considering the success, Government of Odisha has decided to scale up the CRP model to all the 118 tribal sub-plan blocks in twelve districts with a goal to provide 'land to the landless' within five years (2012-2016). The programme is expected to touch 1.2 million rural households and would focus on all landless in order to ensure titles to the rightful and deserving claimants for the land they currently occupy. The programme would also work out a comprehensive package for livelihood development for the allotted land converging with existing government programmes and schemes.

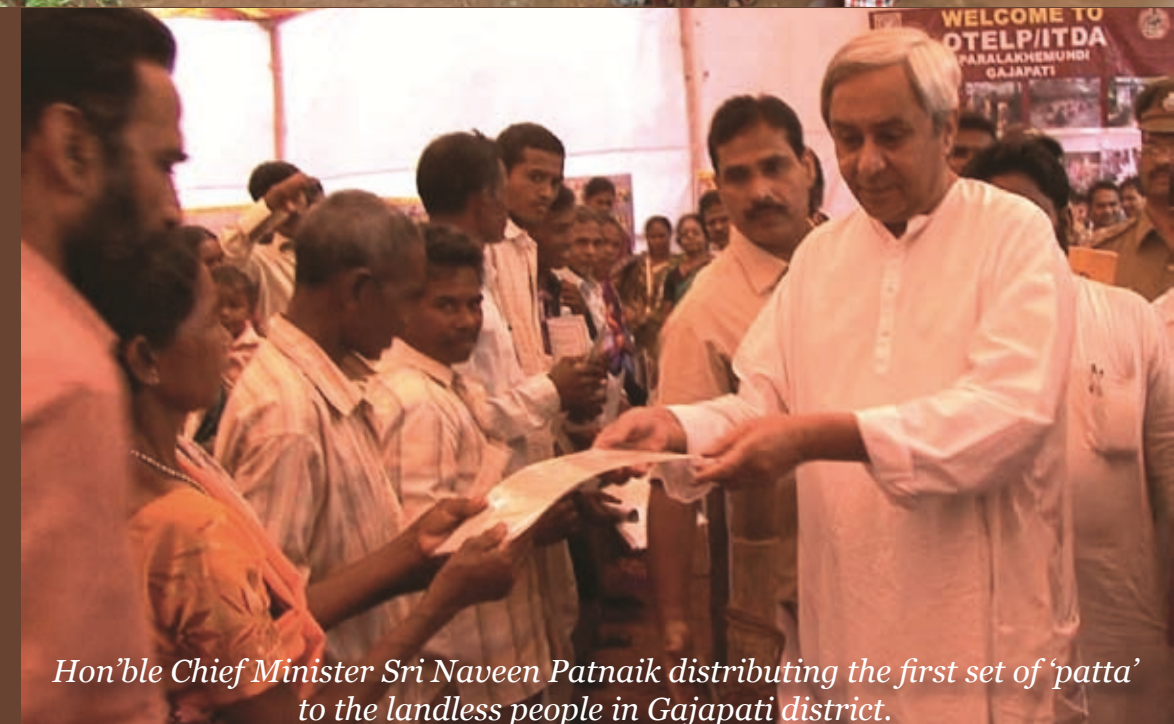


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Experiences worldwide have evidenced that secured land rights lead to definite positive impacts on improved family nutrition (including child nutrition). Secured access and control over land often leads to increased household spending on children's education, basic health care leading to improved status and empowerment within the community. On a macro level, secured land rights contribute towards increased production and economic growth of the country, leading to improved social stability within the community.



Hon'ble Chief Minister Sri Naveen Patnaik distributing the first set of 'patta' to the landless people in Gajapati district.



Transforming Lives

“Earlier we used to live for a day, now we can plan for our future.”

Life that was otherwise normal took a different turn when Duti suddenly lost his father. Duti’s mother, a housewife, was forced to become a daily wage labourer to feed her kids. Without a title to the land they resided, Duti’s 60 year old mother recollects the fear and the uncertainty that she underwent all through her life, “Every night if there was a commotion outside, I used to think where shall I go with these kids if I am asked to vacate.”

Days rolled on. Duti joined his mother as wage labourer while transitioning from childhood to youth. With an ailing mother and a pregnant wife, what Duti earned could hardly give them two square meals a day.

But the wheels of fortune turned in his favour when in April 2012, Duti and his wife Pulmi received patta to homestead land measuring four decimals. The micro plot provided him enough space to build a house, a kitchen garden for growing vegetables and a backyard poultry.

Duti’s menu has changed—with rice, dal and vegetables, eggs and occasionally even mushroom. With a roof over his head, Duti now has access to electricity from a solar panel provided through a government convergence scheme. Besides, the patta has helped Duti in getting a caste certificate that enabled his five years old son to avail free education in the government primary school.

“I never imagined that we would ever have a plot of our own,” says an elated Duti’s mother. “Earlier we used to live for a day, now we can plan for our future,” Duti sums up.



Making her own destiny



“Land has given a new meaning to my life. I don’t have to worry myself to death thinking about the future of my children anymore.”

Budhubari lost her husband about six years ago. With three children to feed and no fixed source of income, she hardly had the time to mourn his demise. Life suddenly became tough and even two square meals turned out to be a luxury.

With no land of her own, the only choice available with Budhubari was to become a wage labourer and somehow survive. “When food was a daily struggle, education for my kids was next to impossible,” laments Budhubari.

Through OTELP’s intervention, Budhubari received legal title to homestead land measuring four decimals and farmland of 2.8 acres.

Life has changed for Budhubari. Turned into a proactive entrepreneur with land, Budhubari has been able to break free of hunger. She is now focused on providing nutrition supplement to herself and her kids by growing drumstick, broad beans and papaya in her home garden. Maize in the farm land will add to her income, says Budhubari.

Budhubari looks contented when she proudly holds the patta. She says; “It has given a new meaning to my life. I don’t have to worry myself to death thinking about the future of my children anymore.” And why would she worry? She now has access to food, shelter, clothes and education for the children. Budhubari is all set to fulfill her other dreams in life.



Loads of courage



“Patta has given me the courage to fight all odds.”

Kali’s life is an untold story of misery and deprivation. Undeterred by the challenges, Kali continues to fend for her seven member family.

Her husband, Ashram Harijan, is thirty five; but cannot walk properly or lift even moderate weights. He limps due to deformity in his right limb caused by lack of medical attention which, in turn, was the result of his poverty. His handicap ruled him out of working as a wage labourer, the only job option available to him. The situation left Kali with no way out than to shoulder the responsibility of being the sole bread earner for the family.

The couple has four daughters - aged eighteen, fifteen, twelve and eight - and a four-year old son. Kali had her hands full trying to earn enough to feed and clothe the family of seven that lives in a one-room hut to which they did not have legal right. The pain of living life has been much more than the emotions and fears of losing her husband’s support for her lifetime. With the passing of time, Kali has understood that there is no one in this world who can lend a supportive hand to her.

She sells dry fish in the village. Every day, she invests 100 rupees to procure her stock from the merchant and earns a paltry profit of around 20 rupees which does not even cover the cost of food.

Having suffered so much in life, Kali had hardly found anything to call her own possession. For years, she had literally forgotten to smile.

“The community resource person, a friendly neighbour, identified me as landless and our Revenue Inspector ensured that I get a patta to a piece of homestead land measuring four decimals,” says Kali.

Patta has brought her a whole new world of joy. Her new found confidence comes out loud and clear when she says, “Patta has given me courage to fight all odds.” She looks forward to have a housing grant under IAY that will provide her a secure home.



Ready to dream



“I have an identity of my own. The patta has rekindled my repressed hopes. I am ready to dream now”

Fate has not been kind to Gomati Harijan, a 40 year old childless widow. Along with poverty, she has partial blindness that restricts her physical movement. As if that is not enough, she has also been suffering from a chronic skin disease.

With her adverse physical condition, she has no option but to fend for herself. Loneliness and insecurity compelled her to adopt her eight year old nephew. “If I work, I get to eat. If I don’t, I have to go hungry. It is as simple as that,” she says in a matter of fact voice. Despite her countless maladies, an unusual boldness in her enabled her to take these adversities in her stride and move on.

Through OTELP’s intervention, Gomati’s hitherto uncertain and distorted life got a firm dimension. The CRP enlisted her as homesteadless and helped her in the entire process to ensure that this deprived woman gets a legal title to her own home.

Patta to a homestead measuring four decimals has given her much more than just a roof overhead - an identity of her own. She now looks forward to a life loaded with dreams and happiness.



Gaining Confidence

“I am a land owner now. I have planted cashew, besides cultivating rice and ragi on my land. I don't feel useless anymore.”

Agata Luara, a 45 year old differently-abled person, is unable to use his right leg. Since he had very little scope of gainful employment, the responsibility of feeding the family of six fell on the frail shoulders of Agata's wife Galmi who had no other option than to work as a daily wage labourer. With the limited income, the family lived in precarious conditions.

When their sons grew up, they too worked as labourers to ease their mother's burden. Agata could only watch helplessly from the sidelines as his wife and children slogged hard to make ends meet. As the head of the house, he lived with a constant guilt of failing his family. Moreover, without a legal right to the land they resided on, the family lived with a fear and apprehension of being thrown out of their house.

A journey of pain, misery and uncertainty ended when Agata received patta to a plot measuring 27 decimals. Patta has helped Agata overcome the guilt and he is a confident man now.

“Patta has brought back my limbs. I have grown ragi, rice and cashew to feed myself and my family,” says Agata.



An Identity of her own

“I could not provide education to my children as I had no residential proof. With the patta, at least my grandchildren are in school now.”

Sixty two year old Labara Nayeeka’s ordeal started when she came to her in-laws village as a newly-wed. Her husband’s family lived in a ramshackle thatched hut that did not offer much protection from the vagaries of weather. Without a piece of land of its own, the family worked as agricultural labourers.

Income depended on the whims and fancies of the land ownership and without the job card; she had no access to NREGS. Survival used to be difficult with low and uncertain income.

Labara’s long, painful ordeal recently came to an end when she got a piece of homestead land measuring four decimals under OTELP’s comprehensive land allocation programme.

With support from OTELP in the form of saplings and know-how, Labara started her own backyard vegetable garden. She now has a home, food from her own garden, an identity which enables her to access various schemes including free education for her grand children. Life has indeed come full circle for Labara’s family.



Ensuring nutrition

“With land, now I am able to provide two full meals to my children.”

Nestled in the small undulating hills of Nandagaon block is Khatalaput, a little community of 30 odd households. Khatalaput is home to Tula Khemundu, her husband and her five children - four daughters and a son. Her husband's family - like most other families in the village - has lived here for more than three generations, but did not have a patta to the land till recently. Basic needs such as food, children's education and - most importantly - an identity were denied to them as they did not legally own land.

Tula's husband worked as a carpenter doing odd jobs in surrounding villages. The family never had enough to eat and Tula could not add to the family income as she had to look after the children.

Through the help of CRP, Tula and her husband got a joint title to four decimals of land. “Earlier, we found it really hard getting two square meals a day. Though I, as an ASHA, knew the importance of nutrition, but there was no way I could provide quality food to my children. After getting a piece of land, I have started growing vegetables in our backyard which provides us all vegetables - and thus all the nutrition - that our family needs.”



Empowering daughters

“I had long understood the criticality of my daughters education. This was undone as we did not have the means. Patta has paved the way forward.”

Ghasi and Bati Khemundu have three sons and two daughters. Although two of the sons have completed their matriculation, they still work as labourers as they have no other job options. The family did not have enough money to spend on educating the daughters.

Ghasi, his wife and sons grew crops in the nearby hills. However getting a harvest was not assured as they did not have the legal rights over the piece of land. Often, they ended up losing all that they invested.

When the CRP of the village explained to them how they could own their own homestead, they were initially skeptical. But Today, Ghasi and Bati wear big smiles. They not only have a title to the homestead but have also been taught by OTELP officials how to grow vegetables in their backyard. Things have started to fall in place as the family gets sufficient food and some income from the sale of the vegetables.

Bati says, “Our daughters need to study, otherwise they cannot do much in their lives. Earlier, we could not afford to give our daughters an education due to our precarious financial situation. But today, I can.”



A fence of protection

“The fence that you see encloses my own home and its backyard. It is not just a fence that protects my plants; it protects and secures my life.”

Sitting on the verandah of his newly acquired homestead, Dhananjaya Khemundu says; “This fence that you see encloses my own home and its backyard. It is not just a fence that protects my plants; it protects and secures my life.” The joy of finally owning a piece of land is writ large on his face. It was a pleasant surprise for him when his name was called out by the revenue officials in the village choutara (meeting place) proclaiming that the land now belonged to him.

Dhananjaya and his wife Parvati, had been living with their five children in a mud house to which they did not have a legal ownership. Illiterate he may be; but Dhananjaya does understand fully well the advantages of owning a plot of land. He knew, with the legal title, the family can avail of the benefits of all the government schemes meant for them; but he did not know how to go about it.

But the wheels of fortune finally turned in Dhananjaya’s favour. One fine morning, the CRP knocked at his door and explained him about the ‘land to landless’ scheme. With the CRP’s help, Dhananjaya followed the process and got the land title.

Having got the identity papers, now their daughters go to the nearest Sevashram School to study and they have decided to send them for higher education. The duo has planted papaya, ridge gourd, jackfruit and other fruit and vegetable bearing trees in their backyard. They eat what they grow and sell the surplus in the nearby *haat* (village market) to earn a decent livelihood.



Title with entitlements



“I wish my mother was alive to see this day – the day we got a patta in our name.”

Though illiterate and living in the hilly terrains of Jharigaon, Nabarangpur, Padman and Ratni Bhatra understand the importance of educating their children. They also understand that they need a caste certificate to avail of free education in a government school. But it was difficult to get a caste certificate without having any identity papers.

Padman’s family lived in extreme poverty. With no regular income, the eight member family constantly suffered for food and elementary needs. Moreover, the couple and their six children lived in constant fear of eviction as they did not have title to the land they lived on for generations.

Padman knew that the legal title to land is essential not only for security reasons, but it can enable him avail of a number of government schemes.

Until OTELP’s intervention, Padman had no hope of getting the ownership papers in his name. But when the CRP finished with the formalities and finally got them the deed, it slowly dawned on Padman that he could now translate his dreams to reality. “I wish my mother was alive to see this day – the day we got a patta in our name,” says a sentimental Padman after receiving the title for his land.

Now Padman is working on availing the benefits of his newly found status as a land owner. Three of his daughters go to school; the other two daughters and a son will join them when they grow up. Padman and his wife plant vegetables – with help from OTELP which provides saplings and the necessary knowhow on backyard plantation and water management.

“Now we can eat something more nourishing than plain rice every day”, says Padman. “We can sell what is left after our consumption at the market for a tidy sum. With some money in hand, we can plan for our children’s future”, he ends.



Born again



“Patta has bailed us out of poverty by providing us the scope of raising our own farm.”

Goli, the third son of Sukaman and Chandra Bhatra, lived with his parents and married brothers. With no fixed source of income, it was extremely difficult for them to provide the basic needs of such a big family of thirteen members.

When the family first came to Chingidiguda, they had to search for work in faraway Umerkote. Those were hard times during which the family had to make do eating even ‘*matimisakhuda*’ (broken rice with traces of mud still in it). Two meals a day was a luxury for them. They lived in a mud house to which they did not have any legal rights.

The CRP came as an angel and identified Goli and his brothers as landless. After six months, they received the *pattas* to their homesteads. They have learnt how to grow vegetables on their small homesteads and are producing a variety of vegetables which they sell.

Now, Goli’s small hut resembles a vegetable shop with huge quantities of beans and ladies finger strewn all over the front. Goli himself is often busy weighing vegetables for buyers who flock to his home.

*“Patta has made our life. We grow all vegetables, earn 30 to 40 rupees for every kilogram of vegetable sold in the *haat* (the local weekly vegetable market),”* says Goli.

Goli exemplifies the entrepreneurial skill of the tribals. A much needed ‘push’ by way of OTELP’s intervention has transformed him - from a helpless poor tribal to a successful person who looks forward to a better living and puts his heart and soul into building his family’s future.



Building future



“Patta will help us realising all our dreams- a house through IAY, a BPL card and daughter’s education.”

Kiabati’s husband, Madan, worked as a mason; but not sure of getting work every day. Half of the days in a month, Madan sat at home idle. With no certainty of income, the family mostly starved.

The couple with three kids lived in abject poverty. With no land of their own, they lived in a small mud house that hardly guarded them against heat and dust. The situation was even worse during monsoon. While food was a daily struggle, the questions of having a pucca house or sending children to school did not arise.

When the local CRP, Sonu, approached them, they were not very confident of Sonu’s ability to get the patta for them. “What does he know? After all, he is one among us,” they wondered initially. But soon they realized that with the capacity building training programme conducted by OTELP, Sonu had been taught to list, verify, measure and fill in the required forms for allotment of homestead and agricultural land.

When Sonu finally did get them the patta, their joy knew no bounds. Madan and Kiabati took full advantage of OTELP’s offer to supply them with saplings and learnt how to raise vegetables in their backyard.

“I am happy. I know that besides having a secure roof and our own farmland, with the patta as an identity paper, my daughter can go to school. I have no worries now.” Says a beaming Madan as a smiling Kiabati looks on.

Madan and Kiabati look forward to realizing all their dreams- a house through IAY, a BPL card and daughter’s education. With Sonu’s help, they are optimistic about fulfilling all of them – one by one.



No more migration



“Land has brought back my husband. It was very hard to live alone when he migrated. I can start my life afresh,”

Rida Mallick’s husband Mithun worked in Kerala as a migrant labourer till a year and half back as there was no work for him in their village. After Rida gave birth to a son, Mithun who had come from Kerala to attend to her during the childbirth, decided to stay back. Mithun tried to get work in the nearby villages and also under the MGNREGS programme; but these jobs were few and far in between.

While Mithun was away in Kerala, the local CRP identified Rida as homesteadless and quietly went about ensuring that the family had their own homestead. Just when Mithun was in a state of confusion over whether or not to migrate once again, he was presented with a patta for a piece of homestead land.

“There is no reason to migrate now,” says Mithun who is happy to be in his homeland. He is engaged in his home-garden. Round the year he is busy growing some vegetable. When free, he spends time with his family.

“Life has taken a new turn. I have got a double bonanza- my son and the land. On the top of it, my migrating husband is back at home now,” says an ecstatic Rida.





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