

Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD)

इज्जत से जीने का अधिकार अभियान

Government must stop the subversion of the non-centralized, democratic and statutory institutional framework of FRA and PESA.

Dissolve the Task Force on FRA and PESA in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh

On [6th May 2026](#), the Chhattisgarh Government constituted the Task Force to ensure effective implementation of FRA and PESA in the state. Chhattisgarh is the second state after Madhya Pradesh who constituted such a body on [5th November 2024](#). Odisha is now considering forming a high-level task force to ensure better coordination and effective implementation of PESA and FRA, as recommended by the Governor during a review meeting of the ST & SC Development, Minorities & Backwards Classes Welfare Department on [2nd May 2025](#).

Contrary to the claims, these Task forces are actually a facade for the institutional subversion of the statutory, democratic and non-centralized framework of FRA– and indicate a broader strategy of techno bureaucratization aimed at political hijacking of FRA and PESA. Common to these Task Forces are key representatives of the Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (ABVKA), an RSS frontal organization. Significantly unlike earlier Task Force that the Chhattisgarh government constituted in 2021 for Tribal Development, Forest & Wildlife Management, and Minor Forest Produce; these are not a body to examine, identify and advise on bottle necks and issues that plague the implementation of these laws, but actually a high-level executive agency to override and effectively dismantle the statutory bodies.

In the past 20 years, the higher-level statutory bodies, whether it be in FRA or PESA, have been resisting or at best have been unresponsive to the highly active primary statutory body, the Gram Sabha. The numerous pending and rejected FRA claims that have been Gram Sabha verified and approved are evidence enough. In the case of FRA, there has been a systemic violation of the law. In the case of PESA, no Scheduled Area states passed confirmatory legislations different from the State Panchayat Act as required by PESA. The amendments to all the State panchayat laws excluded the most crucial PESA provision of the higher structures not encroaching into the powers of the lower structures and adopting the Sixth Schedule pattern, above the Gram Sabha, in the Fifth Schedule areas. All the ten Scheduled Area States and the Union Government mischievously took recourse by diluting and misinterpreting the spirit and tenets of PESA limiting it to rule making. The Panchayat Raj Ministry woke up to make an attempt to give directions to the State governments by issuing a Model PESA Rules in 2009. The rule making itself was kept in abeyance for 15 years thereby rendering the Act unimplementable, finally beginning to get notified in 2011; Odisha is yet to notify PESA rules.

The right wing has followed a strategy of infiltrating existing institutions throughout the country by appointing officers/individuals who share their ideology. By constituting Task Forces, they have now begun a new strategy - setting up parallel structures (with their people at the helm) to render existing structures and statutory institutions defunct. The two flagship laws are now being subverted and hijacked by the RSS even as the rich natural resources are being securely conveyed to preferred business houses even using the new -normal method of suppressive-diversionary - electoral autocracy.

What is the Chhattisgarh Task Force?

The Task Force, operational for the next two years, comprising of an 18-member Apex Committee and 12-member Implementation Committee, is to undertake the district wise potential area mapping of Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR) areas and preparing a list of the potential areas; reviewing the pending CFRR claims; providing strategies and work plan on the effective and timebound implementation of PESA related subjects to the District Panchayats and on FRA related subjects to the District Level Committees and other concerned line departments. The State Government and its various concerned line departments are to implement the work plan, strategies and guidelines/directions of the Apex committee. The Task Force is to review and monitor the implementation of these decisions through administrative coordination.

The Apex committee headed by the Chief Minister include the Ministers in Charge of the Departments of Panchayati and Rural development, the Tribal Welfare and the Environment and Climate Change and regional MLAs as well as members of Tribal Advisory Council, NGOs and Akhil Bhartiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (ABVKA), an RSS affiliate. The Implementation committee mostly includes bureaucratic heads from various departments such as the Forest, the Revenue, Tribal Welfare and Panchayati Raj. One quarter of the implementation committee are members of the Forest Department who had on [15.05.2025](#) declared itself to be the nodal agency for CFRR implementation demanding the cancellation of CFRR titles in the state all of which are unlawful on many counts. The said letter was withdrawn due to the resistance of the Adivasi and forest rights sangathans.

The Madhya Pradesh Task force: What has happened so far and its implications?

The Madhya Pradesh task force constituted in 2024 with a similar structure of 6 membered Apex Committee and a 13-member Implementation Committee had the exact same set of objective and tasks. Unlike the Chhattisgarh Task force, here the Minister in Charge of the Departments of Panchayati and Rural development, regional MLAs, members of Tribal Advisory council, representatives of ABVKA and NGOs are part of the Implementation Committee and not the Apex Committee. The Task Force meeting of [28.12.2024](#) discussion included (i) launching a 1 year special programme to expedite the CFRR implementation in the state and formation of PESA Gram Sabhas, (ii) allowing offline processing of claims while making the Van Mitra App more robust and provisioning for online filing of CFRRs, (iii) expediting the formation of FRA cells at the State, District and sub divisional levels and the “FRA experts” organizing trainings on FRA. Furthermore, a sub-committee comprising of representative from ABVKA and NGOs was also constituted to oversee the conversion of forest

villages into revenue villages who in a meeting on [04.03.2025](#) deliberated on this issue and challenges pertaining to that.

However, even after two years the MP Task Force has not yielded any results that advances the FRA implementation or resolve the systemic issues. The claims continue to be pending and rejected, the process of review of rejection is still plagued with illegalities and violations, the trainings organized have been mere tokenistic, the forest department continues to blatantly violate the law and evict the rights holders or restrict their access to land and resources, the non-compliance and non-implementation of FRA in the Protected areas and tiger reserves and the process of conversion of forest villages to revenue villages is implemented by Forest Department and using satellite rather than the evidence submitted by Gram Sabha, resulting in wrongful boundaries and reduction in area. The SLMC remains non-operational. The government uses the Task force and “FRA” experts as an excuse. The RSS frontal groups in the form of office bearers of ABVKA and Janjati Suraksha Manch (JSM), NGOs engaging with them and individuals belonging/closely related to the RSS-BJP-ABVKA cadre dominate these Task force, PESA cells and mobilizers and have used these institutional positions to expand and operationalize their presence in the Adivasi landscape and the forest rights and PESA discourse.

Legal and Institutional Violations

FRA provides statutory institutional architecture in the form of Gram Sabhas and FRCs at the level of village, the Sub Divisional and District level Committees (SDLC, DLC) and then the State Level monitoring Committees (SLMC). The SLMC is the authority tasked with monitoring the process of recognition and vesting of forest rights, devise criteria for the same and to hear grievances and complaints against the violations. SLMC is now decimated, split up and subsumed into the Task Force which is only an administratively created body.

The Task Force, illegally takes over the functions of the statutory bodies viz SLMC and overrides SDLC and DLC disabling them administratively for the next two years. SLMCs are not yet constituted in many states and where they have been they fail to perform their required roles and functions. Instead of establishing, activating and strengthening them, the State Governments are building a parallel institutional structure under the garb of effective implementation. In fact, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), on [24.02.2026](#) issued a letter to all the state governments acknowledging that implementation issues are due to irregular convening of the meetings of statutory committees of FRA, and calling for regular meetings of SDLC, DLC and particularly SLMC .

The MoEFCC is yet to reform the central laws that do not comply with the provisions of PESA and FRA by formulating amendments to fine tune them. That MoEFCC and Forest bureaucracy are persistently violating the FRA and PESA across the country through institutional and policy interferences is an established fact. The state Government is yet to identify and amend those provisions in state subject laws and withdraw the guidelines, and administrative orders that fail to comply with PESA and FRA and issue fresh appropriate guidelines and orders. MoTA, the nodal Ministry, itself has subverted its role to Environment Ministry as detailed [here](#) and [here](#).

The political pattern and intent are clear

Both PESA and FRA which powerfully empowers Gram Sabhas in governance through direct democracy is attempted to be packaged as beneficiary schemes with targets, deadlines and funds deployed through a bureaucratic-political nexus. The Task Force Committee is not the only intervention. The Union Government's schemes of Dharti Abha-Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DA-JGUA) launched in 2024 already formalizes this techno-managerial bureaucratic approach where the Gram Sabhas have been circumvented by parallel institutional structures such as FRA cells, PESA mobilizers and the technical expertise, digitization, and role of RSS affiliates, NGOs and forest bureaucracy. These concerns and violations are detailed in the [submission](#) dated 21.08.2025.

The current ruling regime minces no words in stating its strong abhorrence to the concept of 'Rights and Rights based approaches'. In a sense, the regime intends to make India unquestionably an 'obedient society' by emphasizing on 'duties' only. The fundamentals of our economic policies, both monetary and fiscal, tilting heavily towards crony capital; our trade and foreign policy gradually getting enjoined with USA- Israel axis, and particularly the recent trade agreement with the USA to import goods and services worth \$500b for the next 5 years shall eventually play out through systemic shifts heavily dictating governance parameters, distribution of wealth and power in our political economy.

FRA and PESA emerged through mass struggle against the institutional and policy injustices, during colonial and post-colonial times, to decolonize and democratize governance and establish self-governance as envisioned under the Indian constitution. The ruling regime is subverting these laws by hijacking the statutory institutional mechanisms to advance the hegemonic domination over Adivasi and forest dependent communities and their community resources. We condemn these interventions. The government must dissolve these non-statutory Task Force Committees and focus on strengthening the institutions under FRA and PESA as per the letter and intent of the law.

- 31.05.2026

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On behalf of convenor-collective

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