

Perspective on United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peasants and Other People Working in Rural Areas (UNDROP)

Special focus on

Article 15 - Right to Food and Food Sovereignty

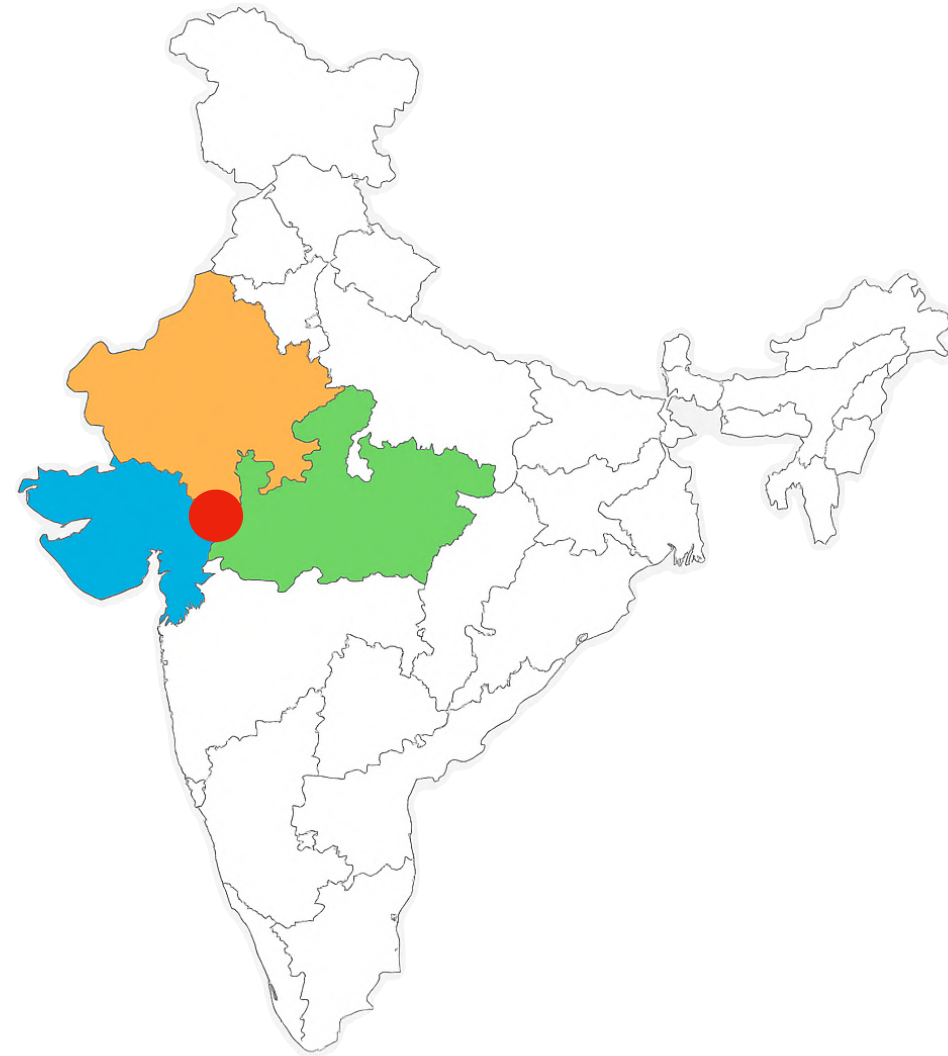
Article 17 - Right to Land

Article 19 - Right to Seeds

VAAGDHARA, Banswara, India

About Our Efforts.....

- Established in 1986
- Supporting indigenous farming communities in 3 states of India.
- Supporting above 140,000 farming families in 1200+ villages of 3 states, for strengthening their Food, Farming, Livelihood and Thought Sovereignty
- Farmers, mostly are small and marginal farmers, having landholding less than 1 Hectare.



Indigenous communities: A General Perspective

- Indigenous communities have always followed a sustainability- and sovereignty-focused lifestyle for centuries.
- Custodians of nature, living in harmony with the environment.
- Their way of life emphasizes community well-being, and traditional wisdom.
- Economically, Socially, and Politically marginalized section of the society, despite global developments.
- Geographical isolation, land encroachment and displacement, limited access to education and healthcare, socio-economic exclusion remains their key challenges
- So called modern development is affecting living and traditional livelihoods, leaving lesser opportunities for young generations.



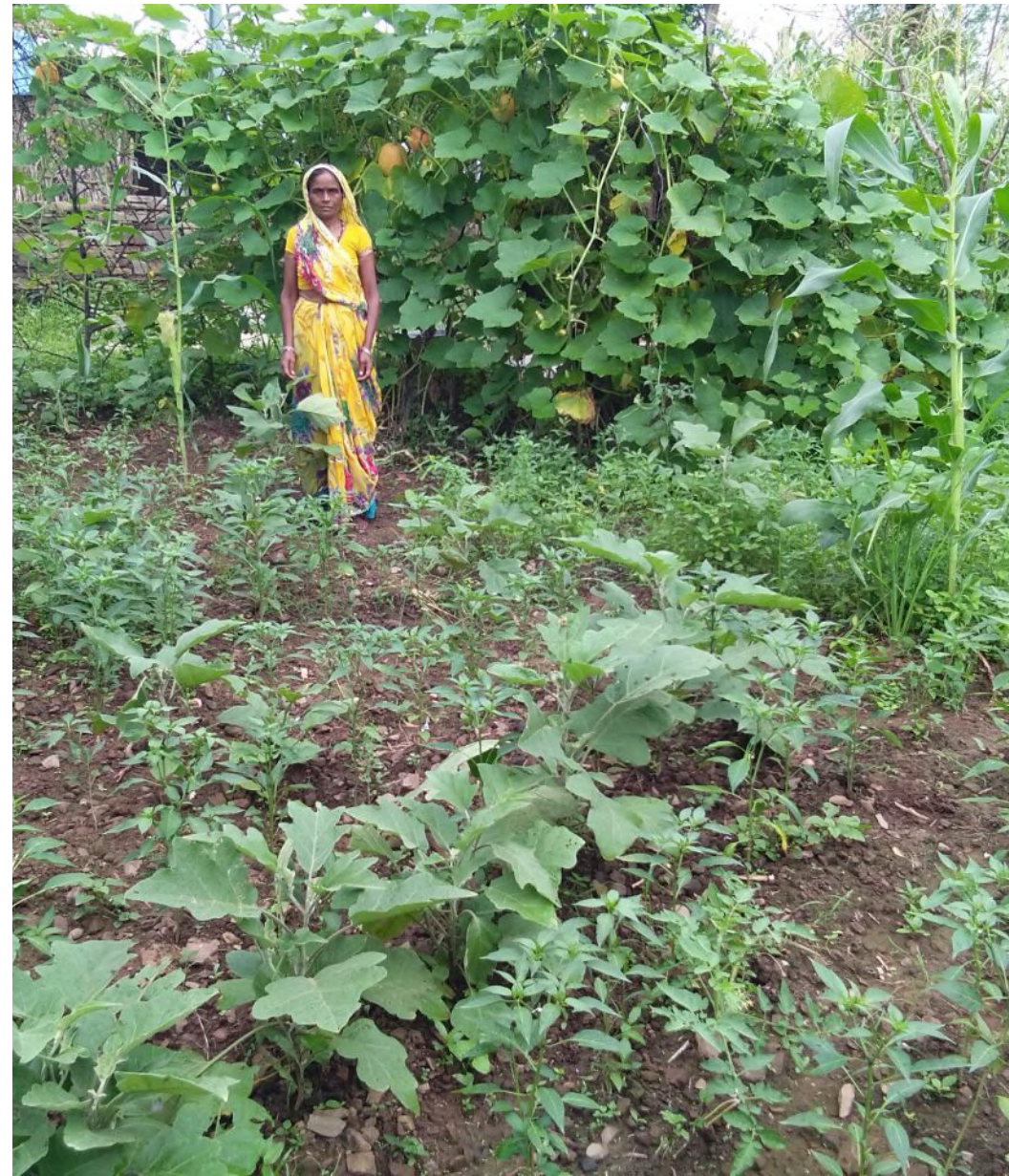
Human Rights Challenges in Tribal Regions Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat

Communities in this region face a range of interconnected human rights challenges, many of which occurs daily due to:

- *Inadequate implementation of policies, and*
- *Systemic oversights*
- *Marginalization of their social, economic, and cultural identities.*

Article 15 - Right to Food & Food Sovereignty

- Women and children suffer with **high prevalence of malnutrition**. (~ 58% women - anemia; ~32% children underweight)
- Entitlements of **subsidized wheat and rice rations** are imposed on the community, even not being their staple foods.
- Public distribution channels focus on cereals only, **lacks a complete nutrition basket** involving pulses, vegetables, and other, leading to nutrition insecurity.
- Policies focus on dependency driven farming (input intensive), **ignoring sovereignty led farming**, leading to **increased distress migration**.
- No policy mechanism to promote forgotten foods. Various schemes are available but coverage is very limited.
- Incorporating minor millets in Public Distribution System, Mid Day meal for children - enhance nutrition security is essential.
- Food is a basic element of household governance, but there is **no broader policy action or mechanism to support its sovereignty**.



Article 17 - Right to Land

- Farmers are no more considered as '*Food Providers*' - *Anna Data* - causing his detachment with farming.
- Corporates often **grab lands making lucrative offers to indigenous farmers**, which increases his vulnerability.
- There are **no policy actions to regulate such market driven offers**.
- **Forced displacement** from forests for development, conservation, or infrastructure.
- **Land grabbing** by Govt. for mining, tourism, educational institutions etc
- Communities are not able to exercise their rights on lands and food system due to delayed or denied rights under Forest Rights Act.
- No major programs to control land degradation.



Major reasons for violations

- Weak execution of policies
- Weak implementation of **PESA* Act (1996) and FRA** (2006)**, especially in ensuring Gram Sabha autonomy.
- Lack of legal awareness among community and participation in planning and decision making processes.
- Mostly being small landholders, are **excluded from government schemes**.
- **Poor healthcare access in remote areas; and weak system and services.**
- **Lack of recognition for traditional agroecological practices**, which often do not align with "modern agriculture"
- **Exposure to climate risks**, such as droughts, erratic rainfall, and degraded soils, without adaptive support.

**Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Area) Act, 1996*

***Forest Rights Act, 2006*

Does Human Rights Approach Makes Sense ?

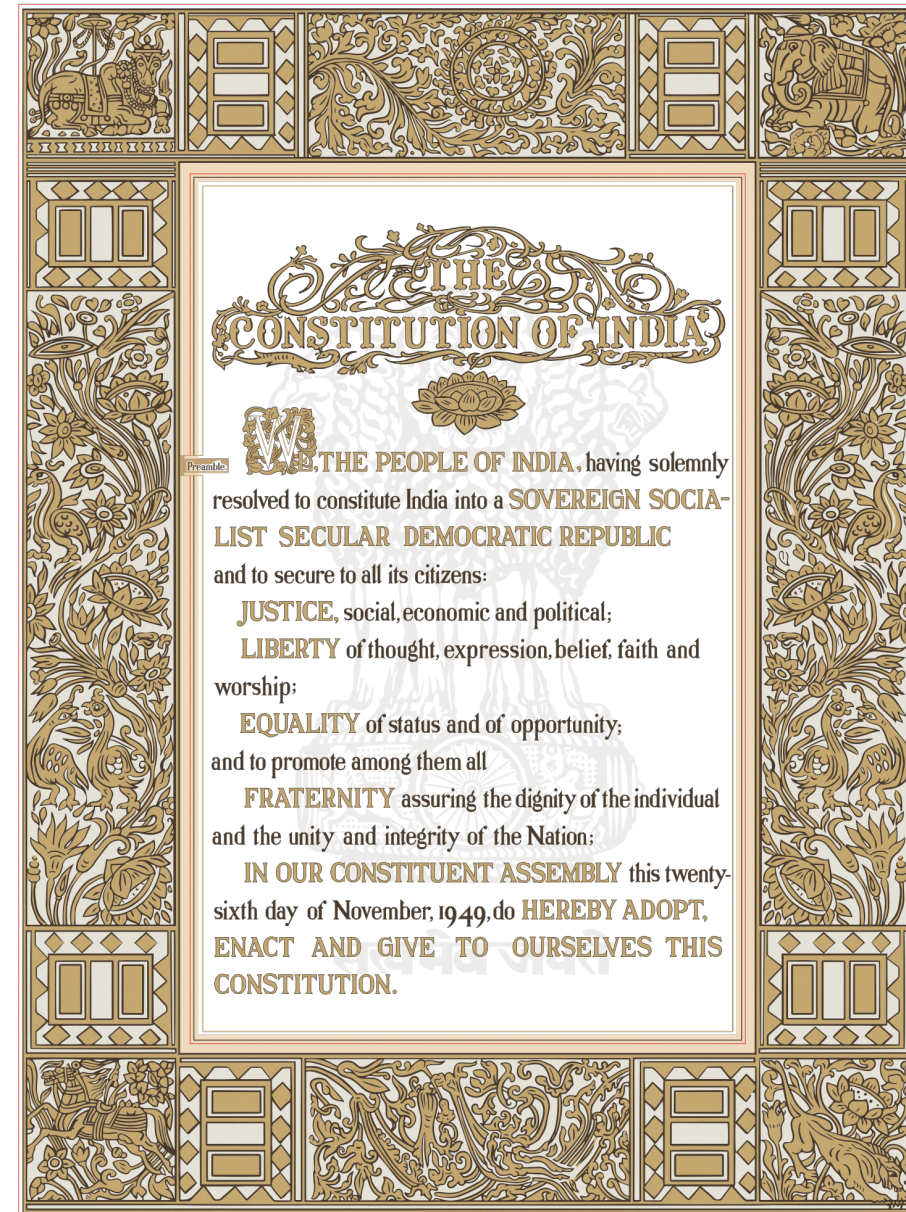
Certainly, the human rights approach makes sense because it enables indigenous and other marginalised communities to:

- Voice their aspirations and
- Treat them as rights-holders entitled to **dignity, equity, land, livelihood, and participation**, and not just as passive beneficiaries.

Indian Constitution guarantees the followings:

- Fundamental Rights to guarantee equality, non-discrimination, and the right to life with dignity.
- ‘Directive Principles of State Policy’ to recognize economic and social rights, including food, nutrition, education, and livelihoods.
- Fifth Schedule & PESA (1996) for tribal self-governance and cultural rights.
- Legal and Policy Instruments like Forest Rights Act, Employment Guarantee Act, National Food Security Act and others.

Having all these, the situation of human rights violations is grim due to lesser awareness among communities, lesser recognition by system, power imbalances, weak execution of policies and others.



How can International Declaration as UNDROP be helpful?

- For empowering farming communities on their rights.
- Provides civil societies, communities a tool to engage with policy makers for their rights.
- Helpful in planning and creating programs more inclusive, sustainable.
- Helpful in connecting regional communities and civil society and with global movements.

How can UNDROP be used by CSOs?

Household Level

- Facilitate creating and nurturing community institutions and reaching out to larger number of families through them.
- Build their capacities on Peasants rights (UNDROP).
- Transfer this knowledge on UNDROP at family level.

Community Level

- Facilitate dialogue process with them to know their perspective on violation of their rights and map their aspirations.
- Enable them to take forward their aspirations and voices at state or national level.
- Evolve youth as community leaders on peasants rights.

Policy Level

- Building capacities of local governance members on peasants rights.
- Facilitate taking forward farmers aspirations unto policy makersEngaging with policy.
- Sensitize them for required actions on violation of rights.

International Level

- Ensure that Indigenous Farmers voice and aspirations reaches at global platforms, ECOSOC through submitting statements, side events.

- Facilitating Community led - Seeds Sovereignty Campaigns in 1200+ villages.
- VAAGDHARA has been consistently doing it through Swaraj Yatra (Community Walk) and Tribal Sovereignty Conclaves, focused on strengthening Food, Farming and Nutrition Sovereignty.
- Recently, organised 'Swaraj Samvad'- uniting more than 500 civil society organizations, farmers, and others - bringing them under a common frame of Swaraj (Sovereignty).
- Now, in process to take this vision in 10 different tribal communities regions across India.



Efforts so far for strengthening civic space

A glimpse of Vaagdhara efforts for strengthening community sovereignty

[Swaraj Padyatras \(Community Sovereignty Walks\) and Conclaves over the years](#)

[**Swaraj Samvad - 2025**](#)

[Swaraj Sandesh Samvad Padyatra - 2022](#)

[Youtube Video](#)

[Janjatiya Swaraj evam Samprabhuta Samagam - 2018](#)

[Youtube Video](#)



THANK YOU

Swaraj Samvad Sandesh Padyatra - A Community walk to strengthen indigenous farmer's sovereignty

Banswara to Jaipur (350 miles)