



# **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

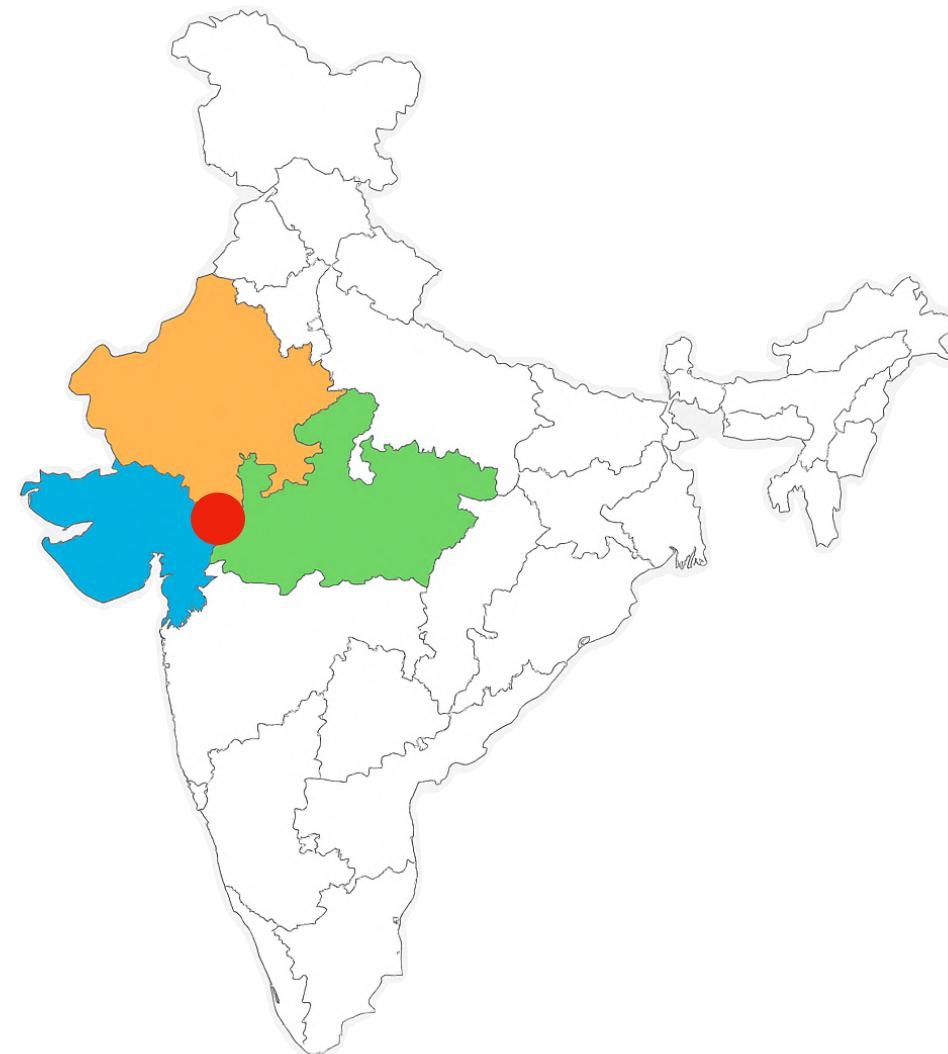
Article 19 - Right to Seeds

**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.



## Article 19 - Right to Seeds

- Higher promotion of input intensive hybrid seeds, compared to indigenous seeds, causing reducing Seed Sovereignty.
- Rajasthan once had rich menu of more than 200 crop-types, now limited to 15-20 crops, of which only 8-10 are cultivated at a wide-scale.
- No policy mechanism for farmers to produce their own seeds and contributing to their seed sovereignty.
- Increasing corporate control over seeds.
- Minor millets, which were the identity of indigenous communities, are overshadowed by government policies promoting pearl millets, and sorghum.
- The native seeds are getting obsolete, no policy actions to revive them.
- Varieties of paddy, millets, traditional uncultivated fruits and vegetables have been forgotten.



## 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 ?

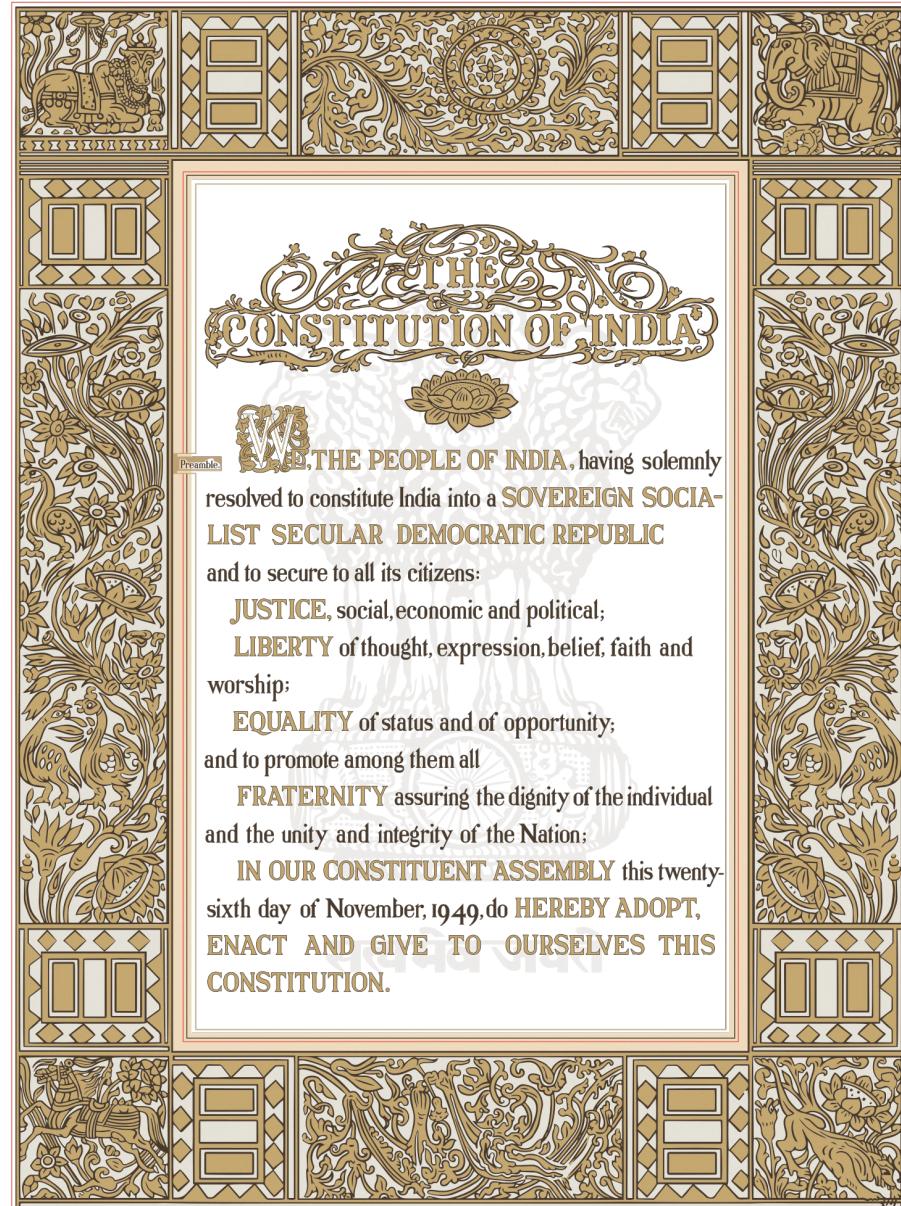
Certainly, the human rights approach makes sense because it enables indigenous and other marginalised communities to:

- 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)**