

BARUIPUR DISTRICT MEETING

Date: 31.01.2021

Time: 10AM-3PM

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Edited by:- Venkatesh Kodukula



FOREST RIGHTS ACT, 2006

SCHEDULE FOR MEETING

Time	Session	Speaker
10:00- 10:15 AM	Introducing the Issue	Advocate of Local area
10:15- 10:45 AM	Discussion regarding Forest Right Act, 2006	Advocate HRLN
10:45 AM- 12:00 PM	Discussion regarding Tiger widow	Dipak Bhakta, Biren Das, Tapas Mondal, Prabir Mishra & Pabitra Mondal
12:00- 12:30 PM	Tiger Widow in regard to the Topics of Discussion	Local Area Person
12:30- 1:20 PM	The help that will be provided locally to support and encourage Forest Right Act, 2006 & Tiger widow	Advocate HRLN & Others
1:20- 1:50 PM	Lunch Break	
1:50- 2:00 PM	Free Legal Aid	All the Advocate present

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INTRODUCTION

Sundarban, the largest deltaic forest of the world, includes over hundreds of islands (105), with a gesture of numerous rivers and creeks. The name SUNDARBAN (beautiful forest) is derived from a mangrove tree species namely SUNDARI (*Heritiera fomes*). The Indian Sundarban is the southernmost part of the estuarine delta formed by the River Ganges and Brahmaputra, bordering the Bay of Bengal. It is located mainly in the coastal districts of West Bengal, i.e. South 24-Parganas and North 24-Parganas. There are villages in the border area all along the northern boundary of the Tiger Reserve. On the eastern boundary lies Bangladesh separated by the rivers Kalindi, Raimangal, and Heronbhanga. For several years HRLN has been working in this deltaic region for the benefit of the marginalized people supporting legal aids. HRLN also has been organizing training, workshops, seminars on several Acts and issues such as FRA-2006, RTI, RTF, MGNREGA etc. for the awareness of the people of this area.

Many wildlife consultants who have visited Sundarban wonder that, even the healthy tigers also have hunted humans for centuries in Sundarban! Genetically these tigers belong to the same family and race as the others found throughout the Indian subcontinent. Yet the Sundarbans tigers behave like no other tigers in the world. In fact, no other predator of any species so violently seeks out our kind. Nowhere else in the world is man so actively hunted out! Local people who used to go to the forest for catching fish, collecting honey, cutting trees always feel it: someone is trying to kill him.

Tigers acquired their taste of human flesh from scavenging: Other experts suggested that Sundarban tigers learned to eat human flesh because it was brought to them from the river Ganges. The river Ganges has been nourishing Sundarban from ancient times. After establishing cities like Kolkata, Haldia, Kakdwip, Namkhana, Diamond Harbour etc. a huge Burning Ghats were made near the bank of Ganges. Water of Ganges carries the corpses who had been incompletely cremated in these burning ghats and acquired their taste of human flesh from scavenging.

According to West Bengal Government data most of the people in the Sundarbans depend on forest products and natural resources with fishing being the mainstay. Yet more than 85% of the fishermen in the region do not have proper licenses to catch fish in the buffer zone of the Sundarban Tiger Reserve, where crabs are found. This Buffer Zone accounts for around 885 square kilometers and sits just outside a larger Critical Tiger Reserve area. Most fishermen go to the forest without valid permits, a punishable offense that can lead to boat seizure and fines of up to 200,000 rupee and three to seven years of imprisonment. As a result, locals estimate that the vast majority of tiger deaths go unreported.

According to the data from the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change provided to the Lok Sabha on June 28, 2019, 71 people have died due to tiger attacks in Sundarban in just five years from 2014 to 2018.

If the average of these figures is taken, an average of seven people have died every year due to the tiger attacks between 1994-1995 and 2010-2011 and an average of 14 people every year between 2014 and 2018.

There are around 3,000 tiger widows in the islands of the Sunderbans, women whose husbands have been killed by tigers while they were fishing, catching crabs or collecting honey for their livelihood. Frequently challenged by natural calamities and human-animal conflicts, the people of these villages don't have permits from the forest department to go to the Core Zone, which makes their work illegal. The Bagh-Bidhabas or tiger widows, therefore, cannot claim compensation and so they rarely inform the authorities about tiger-linked deaths. In many cases, the bodies of those attacked by tigers cannot be traced and they are treated as missing persons. The majority of the victims (68%) were found to be males, aged between 30 and 50 years.

Speaker 1:
Saradindu Biswas, Social activist, HRLN

The speaker started the session with the local problems of marginalized people who used to go to the forest for their livelihood. He added that the mangrove forest Sundarban remained essential in the lives of the people for ages. People go to Sundarban for collecting honey, coastal and estuarine fishing, collecting crabs and riverside prawn collection. There is no demarcation between buffer zone and core area. Core area is a very dangerous zone prohibited for fishing. So that people enter into the dangerous area and easily get casualty by the tiger.

Legal Rights and Restrictions which must be maintain by the fishermen as:

- 1) Identity Card issued by FD
- 2) Boat Licence Certificate (BLC)
- 3) LIC

All these documents recognize them as fishermen and entitle them to a) fishing in the river under its jurisdiction, b) benefits of various welfare and insurance schemes.

The speaker suggested:

- 1) A GD must be done to the local PS soon after hunting by the tiger.
- 2) A complaint letter must be submitted to the STR and FD
- 3) All documents to be enclosed along with the Complaint Letter.

At the end he said that, Fisher Folk Union demanded the implementation of FRA-2006 in the Sundarban. This Act. will be very helpful to form Village Committee, Forest Protection Committee and Gram Sava for their self governance.

Speaker 2:
Prabir Mishra, Activist, Bhubaneswari Swadhikar Samiti

The speaker emphasised on the problems have been facing by the fishing community for long time. He said that most of the people who usually go to Sundarban don't have proper documents with them. The boat used by them doesn't have a BLC. That is why when they go to the core Zone and are hunted by the tiger, they don't meet the document needed for the complaint letter. So that a huge number of tiger widows have been excluded to get any compensation.

Speaker 3:
Jamila Mondal, Resident of Dakshin Durgapur village.

She said that her husband Noor Mahammad Mondal was hunted by the tiger in 2008 when he was 48 years old. They don't have LIC/JIC with them. Without proper documents they could not file any complaint to the STR for the compensation. She never gets a welfare scheme for the tiger widow.

Speaker 6:
Farida Mondal, Tiger widow

She said that her husband Amir Ali went to the estuaries to catch crabs. Suddenly a tiger came and took him into the dense forest. They don't have any proper documents. Her elder son has been suffering from TB and younger son has been living separately in the same village. She is excluded from the welfare scheme for the tiger widow.

Speaker 7:
Anima Sardar, Resident of Deulbari, Kultali

She said that her husband Gaur Sardar was taken away by the tiger when he was 42 years old on 19.04.2010. The very next day on 20.04.2010 she did a GD at the nearest Kultali PS. No BLC and JIC was with them. So her complaint was rejected. She doesn't get any compensation and any other welfare scheme for the tiger widow.

Speaker 8:
Bibharani Mndal, Resident of Deulbari

She said that her husband Sanyashi Mondal used to go catching crabs in the buffer zone of STR. Suddenly Sanyashi Mondal was taken away by the tiger. Bibharani Mondal has proper documents with her. Still she doesn't get any compensation. She went to Nabanna to monitor the case but was still struggling for relief.

Speaker 9:
Bhddara Naiya, Resident of Deulbari

She said that her husband went to the river to catch fishes along with 4 fishermen. When they came near the estuary, a tiger attacked them and took her husband to the bank of the river. When other fellows ran behind the tiger to rescue her husband with a stick tiger run away leaving him dead. She has every document with her. STR authority also helped her by giving compensation Rs. 300000/-.

Speaker 10:
Khudiram Naskar, Victim of tiger attack.

He said that he went to the core zone with BLC along with four fishermen to catch crabs. When they landed the boat near the Jungle the tiger suddenly came and caught him. Fellow fishermen came running to rescue him with bamboo sticks. Frequently they beat the tiger and he ran away into the jungle. He was admitted in Chittaranjan Medical Hospital, Kolkata and came home after good treatment. A bite mark on his head still proving the fact happened inside the core zone of Sundarban.

Speaker 11:
Astik Ghosh

He submitted a very good petition for the compensation. He enclosed so many documents along with his petition such as GDE, BLC, JIC, LIC, Postmortem Report, Death Certificate, News paper cutting proving the fact. Adv. Amit Middya requested the tiger widows to follow the petition that Mr. Astik Ghosh has submitted.

Aparajita Bose, Social Activist,HRLN, Soumitra Karmakar and Ramprasad Saradar, Advocates,HRLN conducted a public hearing along with the tiger widows. One after one they have called the tiger widows and checked their documents needed for a PIL.

RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTION PLAN

Saradindu Biswas, Activist, HRLN pointed out that the National Family Benefit Scheme can provide financial assistance to the tiger hunt family on the death of the breadwinner. The family living Below Poverty Line is eligible for this scheme can be provided an amount Rs. 40,000 after the death of the breadwinner. ID of Forest Department, Boat Licence Certificate, LIC, JIC recognize the fishermen entitled to catch fish in the river under its jurisdiction and provide them various welfare schemes. But, the reality is that the beneficiaries don't know the proceedings to get relief from this situation. An awareness generation programme for the tiger hunt families.

After finishing the public hearing Aparajita Bose, HRLN pointed out that, the documents those have submitted by the beneficiaries were not sufficient for getting reliefs. A Fact Finding is needed to be done in the Tiger Widow Villages (Bagh Bidhaba Palli).

Prabir Mishra, Activist of Bhubaneswari Swadhikar Samiti mentioned Nagenabad and Deulbari are two such two villages that came into focus in Tiger Hunting Cases for several years. He suggested conducting a fact finding in these villages.

Amit Middy, Advocate, HRLN suggested that Prabir Misra, Deepak Bhakta and Samiran will assist the fact finding to be done by HRLN.

INTERACTIVE SESSION

An interactive session was opened up for the audience. In this interactive session, the participants who mainly hailed from the forest community, SC/ST community raised various questions which were answered by the speakers of the meeting. There were participants who were either tiger widows or had been attacked by the tiger themselves and escaped.

Annexure A**Participants:**

SI No.	Name	Email ID	Contact No.
1	Ram Prasad Sardar	ramprasadsardar@gmail.com	8013681084
2	Deep		9735233842
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5	Balram Sardar		9748123525
6	Praddep Maity		9064117554
7	Amit Midhya	amitkumarmidhya@gmail.com	7908285040
8	Ashik Ghosh		8013282607
9	Prabir Mishra	prabir324@gmail.com	9734357570
10	Saradidu Biswas		9073663870
11	Sumitra Naiya		8838659121
12	Panchami Naiya		7478329323
13	Tajlima Bibi Molla		7047444105
14	Zamila Mondal		8409919590
15	Anicha Goldar		
16	Farida Mondal		7501885965
17	Palam Naiya		9635396361
18	Brilaspati Debnath		8116758461
19	Girirami Mondal		9609473515
20	Dhameswar Bembanshi		7044699843

21	Bibharami Mondal		9609473515
22	Bhadra Naiya		8016462056
23	Anima Sardar		7872508276
24	Danchali Mondal		9749072832
25	Binanami Mondal		98833424996
26	Ayesha Halder		8597345849

27	Marijan Laskar		7679836120
28	Karim Majhi		9635491945
29	Namdarami Sardar		8509026653
30	Noorbanu Molla		820758738
31	Golapjan Beoula		6295010996
32	Modina Moshi		7318878804
33	Taslina Molla		7407642392
34	Kajalbala Biswas		9002986902
35	Binata Mondal		7602337348
36	Suchitra Halda		6294743334
37	Gaji Madina		6290229496
38	Chhaimami SK		7478312931
39	Alapi Laskar		
40	Keslapati Mondal		7029804057
41	Mangela Champadan		9641560523
42	Balarjan Gharmi		6295580947
43	Radlaxami Sardar		8207062942
44	Brihaspati Haldi		98831703664
45	Mangala Biswas		8101928016
46	Chandima Singh		7602135164
47	Momemr Seikh		8327653766
48	Pratima Giri		7362983528
49	Rina Rani Naiya		7029223436
50	Nand Rani Sardar		
51	Sandeep Sardar		
52	Dev Kumar		
53	Gautam Haldar		
54	Krishna Nima		
55	Pragati Jana		
56	Biren Das		
57	Som Sunas Ghosh		8918744593
58	Anadi Thanedar		9832318409
59	Ayesha Haldar		
60	Panchami Naiya		
61	Anima Sardar		
62	Anita Halder		9564220760
63	Bishpati Halder		
64	Bibhuti Bhumir		
65	Mudra Namaskar		
66	Prabhat Sardar		
67	Arjun Kr. Pramanik		9681002941
68	Mahesh Sardar		9883831563
69	Vibhuti Duiya		9679729790
70	Nitai Shah		
71	Riva Mondal		9679198700

72	Mongol Sardar		
73	Tapas Mudi		
74	Samiran Maiti		
75	Bechu		
76	Sahdeb Das		
77			
78	Soumili Mondal		
79	Shikha Kayal		
80	Malti Rani		

Annexure B



