

# Rehabilitation of Tribals affected by Ken-Betwa Link Project

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The Minister of State for Tribal Affairs Shri. Durgadas Uikey informed in Lok Sabha on Wednesday that Ken Betwa Link Project Authority under Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti has informed that Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation and Resettlement activities are being undertaken by the State Governments.

However, Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA) is member of Steering and Monitoring committees of Ken-Betwa Link Project, which inter alia monitors the progress of implementation of Action plan of R&R of Project Affected Families (PAFs). Further, MoTA had given a clearance for R&R plan for Scheduled Tribes Project Affected Families (ST-PAF) of Ken-Betwa Link Project, Phase –I, wherein the proposal provided by the National Water Development Agency, (NWDA) in 2016, mentioned that the Ken-Betwa Link Project, Phase-I involves displacement of a total of 1,913 Project Affected Families (PAFs) (population 8,339) out of which a **total of 648 PAFs belong to Scheduled Tribes (ST)**.

MoTA has not received any complaint explicitly stating the issues of amounts recorded as disbursed but not having reached beneficiaries. However, Ministry of Tribal Affairs has received the various representations raising issues of displacement due to the Ken-Betwa River Link Project, which were examined and as the implementation of the FRA lies with the State Governments and UT Administration, these have been forwarded to the State Government of Madhya Pradesh and respective District Administrations for examination and necessary action.

As implementation of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (in short, FRA) lies with State Governments and UT Administrations, this data is not centrally maintained by MoTA.

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has informed that they have accorded the Stage-II approvals to two proposals pertaining to Ken- Betwa link project in Madhya Pradesh on 03.10.2023 and 06.05.2021 inter-alia stipulating the following conditions:

- i. The State Government to ensure that the user agency implements the R&R Plan as per the R&R Policy of State Government in consonance with National R&R Policy, Government of India before the commencement of the project work. The said R&R Plan is monitored by the State Government / Regional Office of MoEF&CC along with indicators for monitoring and expected observable milestones;
- ii. The State Government to ensure that compliance of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 has been completed in accordance with the relevant Rules and Guidelines issued by the MoEF&CC in this regard, before handing over of forest land to the user agency

Further, provisions of Rule No. 11 (7) of the Van (Sanrakshan evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023 provides that the State Government or Union territory Administration can issue order for diversion, assignment of lease or de-reservation, as the case may be, only after receiving the 'Final' approval of the Central Government under sub-section (1) of section 2 of the Adhiniyam, and after fulfilment and compliance of the provisions of all other Acts and rules made thereunder, as applicable including ensuring settlement of rights under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (2 of 2007).

Moreover, MoTA has been exhorting the State Governments and UT Administrations to ensure that no rightful beneficiary is deprived of their forest rights including compliance of Section 4 (5) of FRA which stipulates that the claimants cannot be evicted or removed from forest land under his occupation till the recognition and verification procedure is complete.

The Rehabilitation and Resettlement (R&R) of Project Affected Families, including its implementation, disbursement of compensation, enhancing compensation and rehabilitation cut-off date, is being dealt with by the respective State Government/Project Authority.

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