# Chhattisgarh Forest Control Battle

*Prelims : Current events of National and International Importance*

## Why in News?

*Recently, Chhattisgarh Forest department attempted to control over community forest management, contradicting the provisions of Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, leading to widespread protests.*

- **FFR act** - Enacted to recognizing the rights of ST and other forest dwellers over their ancestral lands and community forest resources (CFRs).

- **Act Empowers** - Gram Sabhas (GS) to manage, protect, regenerate, conserve & sustainably use their community forest resources, includes right to formulate their own forest management plans.

- FRA shifts forest governance from a top-down, timber-centric approach to a community-led, needs-based model.

- **Community Forest Resources (CFRs)** refer to the common forest land traditionally protected, conserved, and used by a particular community for their sustainable livelihood. These resources are crucial for the well-being and cultural identity of millions of forest-dwelling communities in India.

- **Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR) -** It is a transformative provision of the FRA, recognizes the right of gram sabhas to manage their customary forests.
- It seeks to rectify the injustices of colonial forest consolidation which dispossessed local communities and supplanted their traditional management institutions with centralised state control.
- **Issues with centralized control** – Chattisgarh Forest Department Attempting to declare itself the nodal agency for CFR management, usurping the role of Gram Sabhas.
- ☒Gram Sabhas should follow a specific plan from Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA).
- It means Gram Sabhas should follow the ***National Working Plan Code (NWPC).*** Thus, undermines local autonomy.
- **Prohibition -** It also prohibited other departments or NGOs from supporting gram sabhas in CFRR management planning.
- **Resistance -** Strong resistance from GS, local political representatives & Adivasi rights groups forced the forest department to retract its decision.
- The letter was withdrawn after a spirited grassroots mobilisation by gram sabhas,

local elected representatives, and Adivasi rights groups.

- **Historical context -** Forests under government control were traditionally managed through "working plans" rooted in colonial-era "scientific forestry."
- Aims to maximizing timber extraction by disregarding local ecosystems and community needs, leading to forest degradation and conflicts with forest-dwelling communities.
- **Challenges in FRA Implementation -** Despite over 10,000 GS receiving CFR titles nationwide, fewer than 1,000 have successfully developed their management plans due to persistent resistance from forest departments.
- **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan** - A Central government program, offers a flexible framework for community forest management plans, which can be further improved.
- MoTA must firmly uphold the autonomy of GS under the FRA and resist pressures to impose NWPC on community forest management.
- Forest departments need to transit from timber-focused "scientific" approach to a people-centric forest management model, providing necessary financial and protective support to GS.

**National Working Plan Code (NWPC).**

The NWPC is a set of guidelines issued by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**, Government of India.

**Standardizes Forest Management:** Its primary purpose is to regulate and standardize the way forests are managed and planned scientifically across the country.

**Blueprint for Forest Divisions:** Essentially, it acts as a blueprint for the preparation of "Working Plans" for specific forest divisions or regions. These plans typically cover a period of 10 years.

**Focus on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM):** The NWPC aims to ensure that forest management balances conservation, sustainable resource use, and the livelihood needs of communities.

## Reference

[The Hindu | Future of forest governance](#)