BRLF

BHARAT RURAL
LIVELIHOODS FOUNDATION

AN AUTONOMOUS INSTITUTION ESTABLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA UNDER MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

From Outlays to *Outcomes*

Scaling civil society action for rural and tribal livelihoods in India.



THIRTEEN YEARS · TEN STATES · 31,000 VILLAGES

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The Gap Between Outlays and Outcomes

India does not lack resources for rural development. Public programmes carry substantial budgets, government schemes reach into every district, and community institutions exist across the country.

Yet in the tribal regions of central India, home to a large share of the country's more than 100 million tribal citizens, the distance between what is allocated and what changes in a household's life remains wide. The last-mile ecosystem often lacks the capacity, convergence, and scalable approaches needed to turn public investment into lasting improvement.

That gap is what the Bharat Rural Livelihoods Foundation was created to address. Established in 2013 by a decision of the Union Cabinet as an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Rural Development, BRLF occupies a unique position: created by government, working through civil society, accountable to both.

100m+

tribal citizens in India. Central India's tribal belt holds a large share of them — and the widest distance between public outlay and household outcome.

THE QUESTIONS WE ARE WORKING ON

How does a landscape adapt when the rain no longer follows the old calendar? What makes a women-led institution durable after the project ends? How does evidence move from a village demonstration into a national programme?

An Ecosystem Enabler

BRLF does not implement alone, nor does it fund alone. It strengthens the ecosystem in which rural change happens, bringing four actors into concert who rarely work in concert:

Government

has the resources, the schemes and the reach

Civil society organisations

hold the trust to act locally

Communities

hold the knowledge of their own land

Philanthropy

brings catalytic and flexible capital and the appetite to innovate

The work of bringing these four together, village after village, is BRLF's work. In this model, lasting change is convened rather than delivered.

BRLF AT A GLANCE

- Established 2013 · Autonomous society under the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India
- Governed by a General Body and Executive Committee spanning Union and State Governments, financial institutions, academia, philanthropy and the development sector
- Audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India; subject to the Right to Information Act

VISION

A future where rural and tribal communities in India achieve economic and social security, all-round prosperity, empowerment and dignity.

MISSION

To transform the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable rural communities by scaling up civil society action in partnership with governments and other stakeholders.

How Change Happens

BRLF's theory of change begins from the gap between outlays and outcomes, and works on the ecosystem rather than the symptom. The pathway has three moves:

01

Demonstrate what works

Grant support and technical depth help credible grassroots organisations show, on real land with real households, that a better approach is possible.

02

Enable adoption

Capacity building of community institutions, frontline functionaries and local cadres turns a demonstration into a practice that communities and systems can carry themselves.

03

Scale through government systems

Convergence with public programmes moves what works from project to policy, so that proven approaches travel on the state's own rails, far beyond any single grant.

THE ULTIMATE OUTCOME

More secure, resilient and dignified lives and livelihoods for vulnerable rural and tribal communities.

What Change Looks Like

Six dimensions, measured household by household.

I

Economic security

Higher, more stable and diversified incomes, productive assets, savings, fewer periods of distress.

II

Resilient livelihoods

Less vulnerability to drought, climate shocks, crop failure and price swings.

III

Productive natural resources

Land, water, forests and commons managed sustainably, supporting livelihoods over time.

IV

Agency and empowerment

Women, tribal communities and marginalised groups with greater voice, decision-making power and control over resources.

V

Strong local institutions

Self-help groups, producer groups, Village Councils (Gram Sabhas), and CSOs able to sustain collective action without continued external support.

VI

Access to the development system

Households reliably reach schemes, entitlements, markets, finance and technology because the local system works better.





The State Partnership Model

BRLF signs a non-financial agreement with a state government, and together they select the civil society organisations best rooted in each area. The government's flagship schemes fund the works on the ground. BRLF invests in the quieter essentials: participatory planning, skilled technical support on-site, and the training that makes public programmes actually deliver. Plans are prepared with communities, ratified in Gram Sabhas, and only then carried into government work plans.

Assets built with public funds are then layered with fisheries, horticulture or livestock, so a farm pond becomes a year-round source of income. What remains when a project closes is a village that can plan its own watershed and institutions that can run their own enterprises.

WHERE THIS OPERATES

10 states

130 districts

31k+ villages

Since 2013, across India's central tribal belt and the north-east – with a new five-year programme endorsed by the Government of Mizoram on the evidence of a joint scoping study with UNDP.



Value of One Rupee

For every rupee BRLF has invested since inception, **Rs 26** has been mobilised through government convergence and institutional partnerships.

BRLF investment since 2013
Grants to civil society partners

US$ 25 million
Rs 219 crore

Public and other resources mobilised
Since 2013

US$ 620+ million
Rs 5,429 crore

Mobilised in 2025-26 alone
One year

US$ 49 million
Rs 428 crore

1:26

LEVERAGE RATIO SINCE INCEPTION

Per household, roughly **US$ 17** of BRLF funds has unlocked about **US$ 420** of public and institutional investment.

Modest grants placed where they align with government schemes and community efforts, moving many times their value.

Currency note: US dollar figures converted at an assumed Rs 87 = US$1, rounded.

Since 2013, in Numbers

1.5m
Households reached (nearly)

1m+
Scheduled Tribe households

900k
Women farmers benefitting

500k+
Hectares under water and soil conservation

300k+
Households reached in 2025-26 alone

1m+
Community members trained across the years

3,600+
Producer groups formed

170
Farmer producer companies (nearly)

115+
Civil society partners supported

SAnKET

Every figure is tracked household by household through BRLF's offline-capable field data system, which follows each household across projects and years – so the Foundation can see not just how many were reached, but which, and for how long.



Independently Verified

A 2025-26 external evaluation by Sambodhi Research and Communications assessed BRLF's work across four states using a quasi-experimental design, covering nearly 2,900 households, almost 90 per cent of whom were Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It found:

28% → 67%

Irrigation coverage more than doubled in Jharkhand

19% → 44%

Irrigation coverage rose sharply in Chhattisgarh

+31.5% vs +3.5%

Household income growth in Odisha intervention areas, against comparison areas

<20% → 70–80%

Completion of natural resource works in West Bengal, at no additional capital cost

Women's empowerment improved across every dimension measured.



ONE ACRE, ONE YEAR

Ram Pyari farmed a single acre in Balkhandi, a forest village in Chhattisgarh, seventeen kilometres from the nearest market. A bamboo trellis, introduced through her Self-Help Group with hands-on support, lifted her vegetables off the wet ground. Her yield tripled, her income nearly tripled to about US$ 2,000 a year, and her mud house became a concrete one. Farmers now travel to Balkhandi to see the method before trying it themselves.

Five Things Thirteen Years Have Taught Us

1

Water is the precondition, not the outcome

A trench is not a livelihood and a pond is not a wage. Income is built in the layering that follows, once the water stays.

2

Design beats effort

Works fail when communities supply only labour. They hold when people understand the hydrology, so BRLF trains for the why, not just the how.

3

Institutions change the unit of negotiation

One farmer at a market has no leverage. A registered producer group can hold a price, open an account and approach a department as an institution.

4

Ownership follows documents

A job card in a woman's hands, an account in her name and a chair in the room change more than encouragement ever does.

5

The cheapest impact is already funded

Much of what households are owed exists on paper. What is missing is the knowledge and follow-through to claim it – and convergence takes patience: new projects need two to three years to reach full alignment with government schemes.



Where the Thinking Travels

INTO NATIONAL POLICY

BRLF authored the Poverty Alleviation and Livelihoods chapter of India's National Adaptation Plan 2025–2035, assessing how flagship programmes can carry adaptation for the roughly 45–60 million people whom climate change could otherwise push into poverty by 2030.

INTO NATIONAL SYSTEMS

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs entrusted BRLF with the entire training architecture of the Aadi Karmayogi Abhiyan: a cascade across 27 states that has prepared more than 1,700 master trainers for last-mile tribal governance.

INTO STATE PROGRAMMES

Odisha's Agriculture Production Cluster model, incubated with BRLF support, was adopted by the state government and scaled from 40 blocks to more than 100, and now informs programmes in three other states.

27

states in the Aadi Karmayogi training cascade
1,700+ master trainers prepared





The BRLF story is longer than twelve pages.

Scan to visit our website for resources to know more.

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Contact:
Mr. Manu Sharma
Head - Strategic Partnerships and Resource Mobilisation
Email: manu@brlf.in **Phone:** +91 99712 20064

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C-32, Second Floor, Niti Bagh, New Delhi 110049
www.brlf.in · info@brlf.in · +91 11 4606 1935