

Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC) & Satkosia Tiger Reserve Issue

Context

- The **Odisha Human Rights Commission (OHRC)** has sought detailed reports from the **Forest and Revenue Departments** and the **Angul District Collector** regarding **alleged irregularities in village relocation** within the **Satkosia Tiger Reserve (STR)**.
- The relocation was part of efforts to create a safe and undisturbed habitat for tigers, but complaints have emerged regarding **compensation, rehabilitation, and procedural violations**.

About Satkosia Tiger Reserve

1. Location:

- Situated in **central Odisha**, spanning **four districts: Angul, Cuttack, Boudh, and Nayagarh**.
- Lies along the **Mahanadi River**, which flows through the middle of the reserve.

2. Constituent Sanctuaries:

- Formed by the **Satkosia Gorge Sanctuary (1976)** and **Baisipalli Wildlife Sanctuary (1981)**.
- Both sanctuaries were notified together as **Satkosia Tiger Reserve in 2007** under **Project Tiger**.

3. Geographical Significance:

- Lies at the **junction of the Deccan Peninsula and Eastern Ghats**, resulting in a **unique ecosystem** and **high biodiversity**.
- The **Mahanadi River gorge**, extending ~22 km, forms one of the most beautiful natural river gorges in India.

4. Area:

- **Total Area:** ~963.87 sq. km
- **Core Area:** ~523.61 sq. km
- **Buffer Area:** ~440.26 sq. km

5. Part of:

- The **Mahanadi Elephant Reserve**, which provides habitat continuity for elephants across central Odisha.

□□ Flora and Fauna

- **Vegetation Type:** Moist deciduous forest with sal, teak, bamboo, and mixed species.
- **Key Wildlife:**
 - Mammals: Tiger, Leopard, Elephant, Gaur, Sambar, Wild boar, Spotted deer.
 - Reptiles: Mugger crocodile, Indian python.
 - Birds: Indian skimmer, Malabar pied hornbill, various raptors.
- The riverine ecosystem supports **aquatic biodiversity**, including **freshwater crocodiles and fish species**.

□□ Tiger Conservation Background

- **Declared a Tiger Reserve in 2007** under **Project Tiger**.
- Aimed to protect tiger population and maintain ecological balance.
- Faced setbacks due to **poor tiger density** and **unsuccessful tiger translocation** (notably the tiger translocation project from Madhya Pradesh in 2018, which failed due to conflicts and management issues).

□□□ Village Relocation Issue

1. Objective:

- To relocate villages from the **core area** to ensure **undisturbed habitat for wildlife** and **reduce human-animal conflict**.

2. Allegations:

- **Irregularities** in the process of relocation.
- **Inadequate or delayed compensation** to displaced villagers.
- **Lack of proper rehabilitation facilities**.

- **Violation of human rights** and **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006** provisions.

3. OHRC Intervention:

- The **Odisha Human Rights Commission** has sought:
 - All **records and reports** from the Forest and Revenue Departments.
 - An explanation from the **Angul Collector** on the relocation procedures and grievances.

⚖️ Significance of the Case

- Brings focus on **human rights in wildlife conservation**.
- Highlights the **need for balance** between **ecological preservation** and **livelihood security** of local communities.
- May lead to **policy review** in relocation processes within tiger reserves.
- Reinforces the importance of following **FRA 2006** and **NTCA (National Tiger Conservation Authority)** guidelines on voluntary relocation.

📌 Key Takeaways for UPSC

- **Satkosia Tiger Reserve:** central Odisha, Mahanadi River, rich biodiversity, Deccan-Eastern Ghats junction.
- **Constituents:** Satkosia Gorge + Baisipalli Sanctuaries.
- **Part of:** Mahanadi Elephant Reserve.
- **Current Issue:** OHRC inquiry into irregularities in village relocation.
- **Relevance:**
 - Environmental governance
 - Human rights in conservation
 - Implementation of Forest Rights Act
 - Role of statutory bodies like OHRC

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