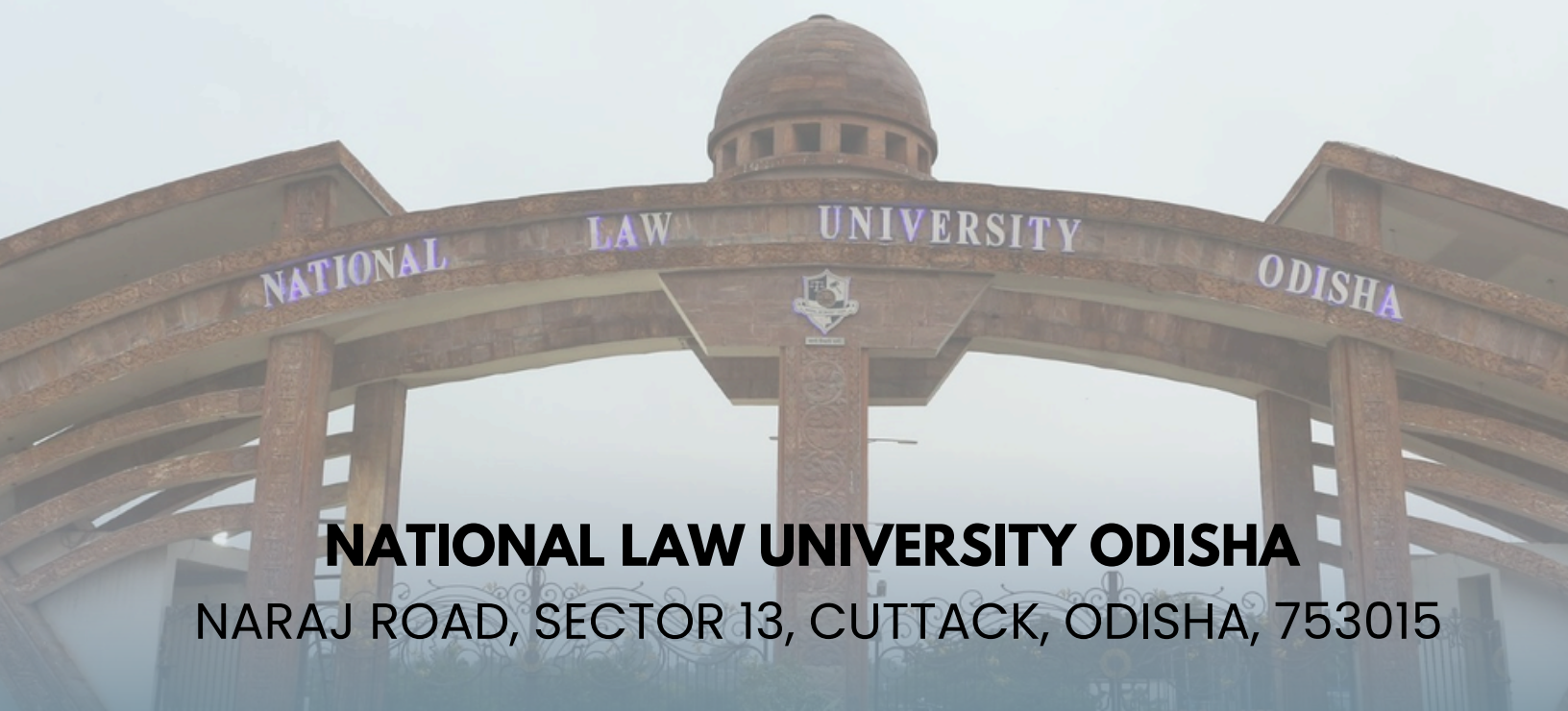




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# 12 YEARS OF NFSA: REFLECTING ON IMPLEMENTATION, EXCLUSION AND THE FUTURE OF FOOD RIGHTS.



**NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA**

NARAJ ROAD, SECTOR 13, CUTTACK, ODISHA, 753015

# ABOUT NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY ODISHA

NLUO was established in 2009 under The National Law University Orissa Act, 2008 and started academic activities in 2009-10. It is recognized by the University Grants Commission (UGC) under Section 12(B) and the Bar Council of India (BCI). The university is also an associate member of UGC-INFLIBNET and participates in the National Knowledge Network under the Ministry of IT. The success of the National Law School model, which began in Bangalore, inspired the establishment of NLUO. Recognizing the gaps in legal education—such as the lack of focus on litigation and judiciary—NLUO was founded to provide socially relevant legal education, termed as “justice education” by founding Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Faizan Mustafa. NLUO aims to enhance legal education by updating curricula, integrating social relevance, and promoting critical thinking. The university offers a flexible curriculum supported by experienced and committed faculty, fostering both intellectual growth and emotional intelligence. Beyond academics, NLUO emphasizes leadership, co-curricular and extracurricular activities like debates, cultural events, entrepreneurship, and sports. The university encourages the use of technology in learning and supports entrepreneurial initiatives through dedicated faculty and student teams. In a short span, NLUO has established itself as a center for excellence in legal education, focusing on both academic rigor and holistic student development.



# ABOUT THE EVENT

Twelve years ago, India passed one of the most ambitious food rights legislations in the world, the National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013. Framed after years of grassroots advocacy, hunger reports, and legal mobilizations, the Act recognized food as a legal entitlement and not just charity. Since then, India has made significant strides but also faced enormous challenges in ensuring that no one goes hungry.

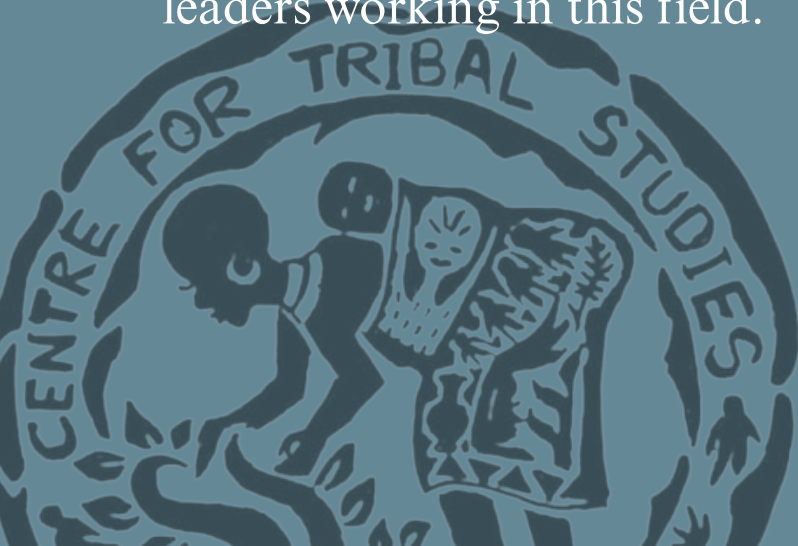
This two-day conference brings together community leaders, lawyers, scholars, students, public officials, and activists to reflect on Odisha's journey with the NFSA so far. Have we reached those most in need? Have technology and Aadhaar helped or hindered access? Are grievance redressal systems functional and trusted? What role do local food systems and cultural practices play in shaping food justice?

By holding this conversation at NLUO, a space of learning, law, and public discourse, we hope to not only understand the gaps and ground realities, but also collectively imagine a stronger, more accountable, and people-centered implementation of the NFSA in Odisha and beyond.



# ABOUT CENTRE FOR TRIBAL STUDIES

The Centre of Tribal Studies at National Law University Odisha has been established to conduct both qualitative and quantitative, action-oriented, and policy research on issues related to tribal welfare. The Centre aims to facilitate high-quality research and analysis on tribal affairs, encompassing its legal, social, economic, and cultural dimensions, with the goal of providing sustainable solutions to broader social, political, and economic issues affecting tribal communities. Additionally, the Centre seeks to develop efficient information and documentation services related to tribal issues both in India and abroad, and to disseminate information and raise awareness. It has organized multiple workshops and seminars to increase awareness of the challenges faced by tribal communities and to foster communication between technical experts and community leaders working in this field.



# THE NATIONAL FOOD SECURITY ACT (NFSA), 2013: A BRIEF OVERVIEW

The NFSA, 2013 was enacted to ensure that every Indian citizen, especially the poor and vulnerable, has access to adequate food. The Act legally guarantees subsidized food grains to over 75% of the rural and 50% of the urban population, making it one of the largest food welfare programmes globally.

The Act covers four major schemes:

1. Public Distribution System (PDS) – Monthly subsidized grains to eligible households.
2. Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) – Nutrition and care for children under six and for pregnant/lactating women.
3. Mid-Day Meal Scheme (MDM) – Hot cooked meals for school children.
4. Maternity Entitlements – Financial support for pregnant and lactating mothers.

It also includes mechanisms for:

- Transparency and accountability (social audits, public disclosure, grievance redress).
- Legal remedies in case of denial of entitlements.
- Nutritional commitments beyond food—like sanitation, drinking water, and health services (Schedule III).

Yet, Odisha, despite its early successes in PDS reforms, has not had a comprehensive review of NFSA implementation in recent years. This conference is a step toward filling that gap.

# THE RIGHT TO FOOD CAMPAIGN: A PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR JUSTICE

The Right to Food Campaign emerged in 2001, rooted in the belief that every person has a fundamental right to be free from hunger. It originated from a Public Interest Litigation filed by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) in the Supreme Court (Civil Writ Petition 196/2001), demanding that the Government ensure food security for all especially in the context of drought and starvation deaths despite overflowing grain stocks.

It is an informal network of organizations and individuals committed to the realization of the right to food in India. We believe that everyone has a fundamental right to be free from hunger and under-nutrition. Realizing this right requires not only equitable and sustainable food systems but also entitlements related to livelihood security, such as the right to work, land reform, and social security. It believes that the primary responsibility for guaranteeing these entitlements rests with the state. Lack of financial resources cannot be accepted as an excuse for abdicating this responsibility. In the present context, where people's basic needs are not a political priority, state intervention itself depends on effective popular organization. The campaign is committed to fostering this process through all democratic means.



# ACTIVITIES

The campaign has taken up a wide range of issues related to the right to food. Sustained demands include:

1. A National Employment Guarantee Act.
2. Universal mid-day meals in primary schools.
3. Universalization of the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) for children under six.
4. Effective implementation of all nutrition-related schemes..
5. Revival and universalization of the Public Distribution System (PDS).
6. Social security arrangements for those unable to work
7. Equitable land and forest rights.

Some of these demands have already been partially met. For instance, the Indian Parliament unanimously enacted the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act in August 2005, and cooked mid-day meals have been introduced in all primary schools following a Supreme Court order in April 2004. The National Food Security Act was enacted in 2013.



# STRUCTURE

As mentioned in the foundational statement, the Right to Food Campaign is a decentralized network that builds on local initiatives and voluntary cooperation. The campaign is lead jointly by 6 national conveners advised by advisory committee consisting of members from its state chapters and national networks working on the issue. It has a small secretariat that plays a basic facilitating role, such as maintaining the website. The annual convention sets the agenda for the secretariat, and most of its work is done by volunteers.

A wide range of activities have been undertaken to advance these demands. These include public hearings, padyatras, conventions, action-oriented research, media advocacy, and lobbying of Members of Parliament.

Six national conventions have been held so far:

Bhopal (June 2004), Kolkata (November 2005), Bodhgaya (April 2007) Rourkela (August 2010), Ranchi (2016), Raipur (2018) and the most recent convention was held from 24–26 May 2025 in Jaipur, Rajasthan, and brought together over a thousand participants from 16 states across the country.

A state-level convention took place in Bhubaneswar on the 21st and 22nd of November 2024, with around 200 participants from 17 districts of Odisha.

# SPEAKERS' PROFILE

## **Dr. Rajendran Narayanan**

Researcher and faculty at Azim Premji University, Bangalore. He is known for his pioneering work on accountability frameworks and social audits under NFSA and MGNREGA.

## **Biraj Patnaik**

Former principal advisor to the Commissioners of the Supreme Court in the Right to Food case and currently affiliated with the National Foundation of India. His legal-political insights link international regulations and India's NFSA.

## **Rajkishor Mishra**

Senior member of Azim Premji Foundation, former Odisha SCPCR Commissioner, and active in grassroots mobilization around child rights and food entitlements. He brings lived experience of rule-making processes in Odisha.

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# SPEAKERS' PROFILE

## **Anjali Bharadwaj**

Transparency activist with NCPRI and key figure in the RTI movement. Her advocacy has focused on linking information access with food rights and monitoring grievance redress systems

## **Sachin Jain**

Development professional with Vikas Samvad, Bhopal. He works on constitutional aspects of the right to food and marginalised community access to welfare

## **James Heranj**

Tribal rights activist from Jharkhand with RTFC. His work connects NFSA implementation to tribal rights and he brings deep experience from Adivasi communities in Ranchi.

## **Bikash Das**

Lawyer at CLAP, Bhubaneswar. He has fought key cases in Odisha High Court relating to food rights and entitlement denials and provides practical insights into judicial enforcement

# SPEAKERS' PROFILE

## **Harsh Mander**

Former special commissioner to the Supreme Court in the Right to Food case and a leading voice on social justice. His writings and field interventions focus on hunger, dignity, and access for the last person.

## **Jagadanand**

Senior development practitioner with CYSD, Bhubaneswar. He brings insights on convergence of schemes and strengthening accountability frameworks in tribal and rural Odisha.

## **Dr. Bijayini Mohanty**

Professor at Utkal University. Her research focuses on local food systems and the nutritional value of millets. She will speak on sustainable food security through indigenous grains

## **Dinesh Balam**

State anchor for Odisha Millets Mission. He will present the successes and challenges of incorporating millets into PDS and school meals under NFSA.

# SPEAKERS' PROFILE

## **Mantu Das**

Disability rights activist from Jajpur who petitioned the Odisha HC after a hunger death incident involving a disabled person. His testimony brings to light the exclusion of disabled persons from NFSA.

## **Devahuti Sarkar**

Researcher at LibTech India. She has researched on Aadhaar-linked exclusions and data discrepancies in Jharkhand's welfare delivery system.

## **Rahul Mukkera**

## **Ipsa Pratibimbita Sarangi**

Programme lead with National Foundation of India based out of Bhubaneswar

# SPEAKERS' PROFILE

## **Sourav Bhattacharjee**

Nutrition Specialist at UNICEF, based in Odisha, India, where he has worked since 2010

## **Biswa Bhusan Patnaik**

He is the Assistant Director, based at SAATHII's Bhubaneswar office. He has led programs focusing on strengthening PLHIV and LGBTQIA+ community-led advocacy and services, including healthcare, social protection and rights

## **Ishwar Mohanty**

Advocate practicing in the Odisha High Court.

# EVENT RUNDOWN

DAY 1  
20TH SEPTEMBER  
2025

TIME	AGENDA	SPEAKERS/ MODERATORS
10:00–10:30 AM	Inaugural Session & Welcome Remarks	Vice-Chancellor, NLUO; RFC Representatives
10:30–12:30 AM	Plenary 1: NFSA at 12 – A Legal and Policy Overview	Harsh Mander, Jyotshna Sreepad, Abanikant Sahoo, Bidyut Mohanty
12:30–1:30 PM	Panel 1: Gaps in Implementation of Core Schemes (PDS, ICDS, MDM, Maternity Entitlements)	Rajkishor Mishra, Ipsa Sarangi, Arun Dihudi, Dharitri Rout
2:30–3:30 PM	Lunch Break	

# EVENT RUNDOWN

DAY 1  
20TH SEPTEMBER  
2025

TIME	AGENDA	SPEAKERS/ MODERATORS
2:30–3:30 PM	Panel 2: Digital Exclusion in Food Systems	Sameet Panda, Devahuti Sarkar, Biswa Patnaik,
3:30–4:30 PM	Community Testimonies – Tribal and Disability Perspectives	James Heranj, Mantu Das, Sandeep Patnaik, Vijay Sekhar, Rupadhara Puta
4:30–5:00 PM	Open House – Reflections & Questions	Moderated by CTS NLUO

# EVENT RUNDOWN

DAY 2  
21ST SEPTEMBER  
2025

TIME	AGENDA	SPEAKERS/ MODERATORS
10:00–11:30 AM	Panel 3: Governance, Accountability & Grievance Redress under NFSA	Sameet Panda, Devahuti Sarkar, Biswa Patnaik,
11:30–1:00 PM	Panel 4: Schedule III & WASH–Nutrition Convergence	Dr. Bijayini Mohanty, Dinesh Balam, Biraj Patnaik , Dr Prajna Giri
1:00–2:00 PM	Lunch Break	
2:00–3:30 PM	Plenary 2: Justiciability of the Right to Food in Courts	Bikash Dash, Ishwar Mohanty, Anjali Bharadwaj, Sachin Jain,

# EVENT RUNDOWN

DAY 2  
21ST SEPTEMBER  
2025

TIME	AGENDA	SPEAKERS/ MODERATORS
3:30–4:15 PM	Plenary 2: Justiciability of the Right to Food in Courts	Open session to be moderated Dr. Randall Sequeira, Sanjay Digal, Gourang Mohapatra
4:15–4:45 PM	Closing Session: Key Takeaways & Way Forward	Student Reflections
4:45–5:15 PM	Vote of Thanks & Concluding Remarks	Organising Committee

## VICE CHANCELLOR



### **PROFESSOR (DR) VED KUMARI**

Former Dean of Law at Delhi University, has been a legal educator since 1983, teaching in India and the USA. She has supervised LL.M. and Ph.D. research and authored influential works on juvenile justice, criminal law, and gender discrimination. As Chairperson of the Delhi Judicial Academy (2009–2011), she introduced participatory judicial training, the Village Immersion Programme, and India's first E-course on Judicial Ethics. A Commonwealth and Fulbright Fellow, she has extensively researched child advocacy. Her seminal works on Juvenile Justice influenced judicial rulings and amendments in the JJ Amendment Bill 2021.

## REGISTRAR

### **PROFESSOR (DR) RANGIN P. TRIPATHY**

Prof. Rangin has been teaching at NLUO since 2010, focusing on constitutional governance, civil liberties, criminal law, and human rights. A Fulbright Post-Doctoral Scholar at Harvard Law School (2019–2020), he studied judicial appointment methods in democracies. His doctoral thesis pioneered judicial performance evaluation in India. He has led judicial reform projects funded by the Department of Justice, Government of India, and consulted for the Odisha Judicial Academy



# OUR TEAM



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DR. SUVRASHREE PANDA



**CO-DIRECTOR**  
MR. KUMARJEEB PEGU



**CO-DIRECTOR**  
MR. M VIJAY BHASKAR

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MANU JALAJ

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SHARON TOPPO

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