Democratic decentralization is being promoted as an approach to development and natural resource management worldwide. The idea is to empower local communities to manage their environment in ways that meet their livelihood goals and deploys their knowledge within an overall framework of sustainability and equity. In India, Community Forest Resource Rights (CFR rights) under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 provide forest-dwelling communities with a historic opportunity to have both access to and substantive control over their forest lands. In spite of resistance from forest bureaucracy, there are now thousands of villages in the states of Maharashtra and Odisha have claimed their CFR rights. The question now is how these communities are going to actually use their rights to achieve the goal of sustainable livelihood enhancement. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), who have played a major role in enabling the claiming of CFR rights, will continue to play a major supporting role in the post-claim phase. Therefore, it is pertinent to investigate what forms of CSO intervention leads to what forms of resource management and empowerment outcomes. To address this question, we explore the roles and activities of five different CSOs that are working on supporting the communities in their post-claim phase. Preliminary results from our study show that CSOs perform multiple roles in building post-claim CFR governance including mediation, facilitation and direction. CSOs mediate in the exchange of information between different actors at multiple governance levels, they facilitate implementation of FRA by communicating to the communities about their rights and how to operationalize their rights, and lastly, the CSOs direct the communities in developing transparent and accountable institutional mechanisms for sustaining natural resources and enhancing their livelihoods. We further explain how these roles and strategies relate to the ideology and philosophy that the CSOs follow. By unpacking the roles of CSOs and the ideologies that guide their actions, our research demonstrates how CSOs and communities develop mechanisms for optimal implementation of CFR rights. Finally, we use our analysis to determine the nature of altered democracy produced by the CSO intervention and the ways influence resource and livelihood sustainability in the community.