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title: Need to ensure implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act in letter and spirit in Andhra Pradesh.

SHRIMATI KOTHAPALLI GEETHA (ARAKU): I would like to state that The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 has been passed by Parliament to address the injustice done to tribal and Adivasi communities. It confers legal entitlements on the lands they were cultivating. In Andhra Pradesh 10.67 million people lived within forested landscapes; 5 million were indigenous or tribal people. Andhra Pradesh contains extensive forest landscapes, and has the third largest forest cover among the states in India as per Forest Survey of India 2009.

The low level of local people's understanding, due to poor training, resulted in serious problems at this stage. Many eligible claimants lacked adequate knowledge about the Act and the rules and could not assess their eligibility and process their claims. Many eligible claimants also did not claim due to a perception that they had not adequate evidence.

The implementation of this act has remained a question mark with thousands of claims pending at the government level awaiting orders. Further the government is reluctant to go ahead with implementation of FRA in the Polavaram project submergence areas and areas allocated for other development projects to avoid future legal entitlement conflicts and payment of compensation to forest land occupants, though this is a blatant violation of the Act. Section 4(5) of the Act bars the eviction of any forest land occupant till the process of recognition of their rights has been completed. Similarly, in violation of the Act, claimants from protected areas are being pressurized to relocate without recognition of their rights. Hence, I request the Honourable Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change to kindly intervene in the above situation and do justice to the tribals as well as implement the act in true spirit.