A global ‘forest tenure transition’ is currently taking place, involving reform of forest rights and their transfer to indigenous/local communities. It is in this background in 2006 the Indian Parliament passed the ‘Recognition of Forest Rights Act’ in which it recognized, for the first time since Independence that “Historical Injustice” had been committed through the composition of the national forest estate. FRA 2006 created provisions for redress and recognition of forest rights, both private land rights, community management rights by conferring individual and community and forest product harvesting rights amongst others. Its implementation began in 2008 throughout the country. It is expected that such a pro-poor legislation, if implemented honestly, will lead to sustainable development of the indigenous communities by being inclusive and in particular, aiming at their poverty reduction.

My paper aimed at understanding implementation and impact of FRA-2006 in one of the Southern Indian States (Andhra Pradesh, now bifurcated into Telangana and Andhra Pradesh States in 2004) which has significant indigenous population (nearly 11 million) living in forest landscapes. The study tried to unravel the extent to which letter and spirit of the Act that is being realised at the meso and micro level and whether the anticipated rights redressal is actually occurring.

In terms of methods adopted for our study, four village communities having significant indigenous people were surveyed (four villages representing different ecological setting in the state). A significant number sample households were contacted to look at the process and implementation and impact of the act. The key findings of the study are: at the state level there has been serious lack of commitment by the government of AP by emphasizing excessively rapid ‘road maps’ (without following basic rules of the Act) and emphasis on ‘cut-off dates’ not giving opportunity for just redressal. Focus was given more on private rights than community rights.

Our study, an intensive empirical investigation has significance and widely used by the civil society and forest bureaucracy and academicians in their work.

The results/findings of our study show that implementation will impact forest dependent people in terms of livelihood security and their sustainable development.