

## APPEAL TO CHAIRMAN OF RAJYA SABHA ON CAMPA BILL

Shri Hamid Ansari  
Hon'ble Chairman of Rajyasabha  
Parliament of India

Dear Sir,

The CAMPA Bill is now being considered in the Rajya Sabha. Civil society organizations are greatly concerned about the implication of this bill on the rights of forest dwelling communities. The Bill in the present form is fundamentally opposed to the Forest Rights Act by not addressing the legal rights of Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers (OTFDs) recognized and vested under the law and by not requiring the consent of the Gram Sabhas for implementation of compensatory afforestation on their customary lands.

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) now legally recognizes and vests forest rights of STs and OTFDs in about 1,77,000 villages over at least 40 million hectares of forest land. Community Forest Resource rights recognized under the Act now constitute a new forest category to be governed and managed by the Gram Sabhas and forest rights holders. Therefore any government program on forestlands, including with CAMPA funds has to be based on the framework of governance under FRA. However the structure of funding and implementation proposed under the CAMPA Bill is entirely opposed to the structure of forest governance established by the FRA. Under the bill the forest bureaucracy dominates both the National and State level CAMPA Authorities with no representation to tribals and forest dwellers. It also doesn't address the key issue of compensating tribals and forest dwellers for the loss of their forests – a recommendation made by both the Kanchan Chopra Committee constituted by the Supreme court and the IIFM Committee for revising Forest net present value (NPV). When the major reason for poor implementation of the FRA remains the obstinate opposition of the forest bureaucracy to empowerment of gram sabhas and democratization of forest governance, we fear that the CAMPA Bill will serve only to empower the notoriously unaccountable forest bureaucracy to further deprive the forest dwellers and tribals of their livelihoods by forcibly undertaking plantations on their customary lands. We see the CAMPA bill as a further resource grab by the forest bureaucracy at the cost of tribals and forest dwellers, something which is already taking place on a considerable scale, and demand an alternate structure which would directly compensate the forest communities for the loss of their forests and transfer CAMPA money to Gram Sabhas for afforestation and ecological restoration.

Concerns regarding the impact of the CAMPA Bill on FRA have already been voiced inside the Rajyasabha. **By enacting the FRA 10 years ago, the Parliament of India had committed to correct a historical injustice done to the millions of Adivasis and forest dwelling communities. If the CAMPA Bill is now passed by Parliament in its current form, it will represent a reversal of the commitment for justice made in the FRA to the Adivasis and forest dwelling citizens of India.**

We, as concerned citizens, therefore appeal to you to make necessary intervention in the Parliament to stop enactment of the CAMPA Bill till it is amended and defend the Forest Rights Act.

Regards,

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