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(a) every panchayat, within its boundaries, prepares a list of group of hamlets or habitations, unrecorded or un-surveyed settlements or forest villages or taungya villages, formally not part of any Revenue or Forest village record and have this list passed by convening Gram Sabha of each such habitation, hamlets or habitations included as villages for the purpose of the Act through a resolution in the Panchayat and submit such list to Sub Division Level Committee.

(b) the Sub-Divisional Officers of the Sub Division Level Committee consolidate the lists of hamlets and habitations which at present are not part of any village but have been included as villages within the Panchayat through a resolution, and are formalised as a village either by adding to the existing village or otherwise after following the process as provided in the relevant State laws and that the lists are finalised by the District Level Committee after considering public comments, if any.

(c) on finalisation of the lists of hamlets and habitations, the process of recognition and vesting of rights in these hamlets and habitations is undertaken without disturbing any rights, already recognized.¹

Further, Rule 12B(5) of the Rules states as follows:

"12 B. Process of Recognition of Community Rights:-

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(5) The conversion of forest villages, unrecorded settlement under clause (h) of section 3 shall include the actual land-use of the village in its entirety, including lands required for current or future community uses, like, schools, health facilities and public spaces."²

In July 2012, Guidelines also issued by this Ministry which emphasized the need to implement the provisions of the FRA with regard to conversion of forest villages into revenue villages, without any exceptions or exemptions being provided to such villages in any category of forest lands, such as protected areas. Clause (iii)(d) states:

"(iii) Community Rights:

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(d) The forest villages are very old entities, at times of pre-independent era, duly existing in the forest records. The establishment of these villages was in fact encouraged by the forest authorities in the pre-independent era for availability of labour within the forest areas. The well defined record of each forest village, including the area, number of inhabitants, etc. exists with the State Forest Departments. There are also unrecorded settlement and old habitations that are not in any Government record. Section 3(1)(h) of the Act recognises the right of forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers relating to settlement and conversion of forest villages, old habitation, un-surveyed villages and other villages and forests, whether recorded, notified or not into revenue villages. The conversion of all forest villages into revenue villages and recognition of the forest rights of the inhabitants thereof should actually have been completed immediately on enactment of the Act. The State Governments may, therefore,

¹ Inserted by Rule 3 of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Amendment Rules, 2012 (vide Notification No G.S.R. No. 669 (E) dated 6th September, 2012)

² Inserted by Rule 11 of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Amendment Rules, 2012 (vide Notification No G.S.R. No. 669 (E) dated 6th September, 2012)