

Chapter 3 - Land Records

3.1 Land use policy

Even as land is a finite resource, the State Government has not formulated any land use policy defining its sector-wise priorities in utilization of land for the present and future needs for social and development purposes like cremation/burial grounds, play grounds, leisure areas, social forestry, industries, irrigation, roads, housing, other infrastructure development, etc. Further, five year plans and annual plans of the State have not focused on issues relating to land management and land developmental activities. The consolidated data relating to the land allotted to various departments/corporations/companies/individuals and the extent of Government land lying unutilized was not available centrally either with the Revenue Department or with CCLA, although allotment details were available at the District Collectorates. In fact, the basic and primary data, which is essential for effective land administration, was neither compiled nor validated from time to time, rendering it difficult for planned management of land.

During the exit conference (February 2012), the Special Chief Secretary & CCLA accepted that the Government does not have a comprehensive database indicating the details of land available and utilized/alienated to facilitate proper planning in managing utilisation of land resources optimally. He, however, stated that a beginning has been made in this regard by Hyderabad and Ranga Reddy districts, and that the Collectors of other districts have been instructed to follow suit by the end of March 2012.

3.2 Updation of land records

For effective 'Land Administration', maintenance and updation of 'Land Records' is absolutely essential, as these provide vital information in decision making. A Revenue Village is the basic unit of land administration and the Village Revenue Officers (VROs) are the custodians of land records and Government lands at the village level.

Immediately after the lands are assigned to landless poor or alienated to a person/institution etc., necessary changes have to be effected in the land records at mandal and village levels. Until the changes are effected in the relevant revenue records, the absolute rights of the assignees to land so assigned cannot be considered to have been established. Audit scrutiny revealed that such changes were not made in the land records in several cases, resulting in alienation of assigned land twice over without resumption. Illustrative cases are given below.

- For establishment of Textile Export Park at Maheswaram village of Ranga Reddy (RR) district, APIIC requested the Government (November 2001) to allot 420 acres of land, which was not fit for cultivation. The Tahsildar, Maheswaram handed over (August 2002) advance possession of 275 acres to APIIC, pending

finalization of alienation proposals. The Government did not finalize the alienation proposals and APIIC neither used nor protected the lands till 2008. The same land had been assigned during 1967 and 1980 to 191 landless poor persons. However, as the changes had not been effected in the land records, this fact was not known while considering the request of APIIC and came to notice only when the staff of the new assignee, i.e., APIIC, were prevented by the existing assignees from entering the land during 2008.

- Government permitted the Collector, RR District to hand over surplus land to an extent of 255.35 acres (Sy. Nos. 282 to 289) in Budwel village, Rajendranagar mandal, to Tourism Department (91 acres) and HUDA¹ (164.35 acres). The latter took possession of the land in November 2007 and auctioned it off in February 2008 to M/s Unitech Limited for a consideration of ₹ 660.10 crore. The allotment of land to HUDA and Tourism Department and further auction of land allotted to HUDA had happened despite the fact that the matter had been sub-judice before the High Court since 2002. The villagers who claimed to be the original assignees of 281.16 acres of surplus land in survey No.282-289 in Budwel village had contested the transfer of land to HUDA/Tourism Department. The High Court decided the case in 2008 in favour of the original assignees.
- In YSR District, there were 120 land acquisition cases involving 2,717.95 acres pertaining to the period 2005-10, in which the respective land records have not been updated so far in the revenue offices although the transactions have already been completed and the necessary awards passed.

Thus, due to defective and incomplete land records, the Government ended up allotting to Government entities, land that had already been assigned to landless poor who had been issued proper pattas. These cases underline the problems caused by non-mutation and non-updation of land records promptly after the execution of any transaction. Though Government took up computerization of land records and completed updation to the year 2004 incurring an expenditure of ₹ 21.95 crore, the reliability of land records remains worrisome particularly since no updation of computerized records has been done since 2004.

Principal Secretary, Revenue stated that staff shortage in the department, especially at the village level, had crippled its operations on the ground level and was the main constraint in maintaining and updating the land records in a systematic manner. He expressed hope that the ongoing recruitment drive for VROs would ease the situation. It was further stated that a massive drive was being launched with effect from April 2012, for updation of land records through a web based application with digital signature of the Tahsildars and that the entire exercise would be completed within one year.

¹ Hyderabad Urban Development Authority