

SPOTLIGHT

INSIGHTS

STORYBOARD

EVENTS

INTERVIEW

BOOK REVIEW

INSIGHTS 1

Revenue department in
Telangana - Building systems
and capabilities

INSIGHTS 2

Why should farmers struggle to
sell their produce?

INSIGHTS 3

Can local authorities solve the
issues plaguing the MSME
sector?

Revenue department in Telangana - Building systems and capabilities



Recent announcements by the Chief Minister to enact new legislations to provide hassle free services devoid of corruption to the people at Revenue department offices, Municipalities and local bodies in the state has evoked strong reactions from the

employees of the department. It should be noted that the revenue department has registered the highest number of complaints against corruption, followed by Municipal Administration and Urban Development and Home Department in the State Vigilance Commission report of 2018. Similarly, in a survey conducted by Center for Media Studies in 2018 revealed that 73 per cent of households were said to have bribed officials for availing public services in the past year. Other wings that were found to be most corrupt were transport, police,

housing, land records, health and hospital services.

These issues should not be seen merely as a fight between the CM and the administration, but of providing services to the citizens in not just revenue department but all departments. Public offices are meant for rendering services to the citizens for which they are legally entitled. The administration is now being reduced to the point of disbursing salaries to the employees and distributing freebies to win elections, while the aspect of service to the citizens is given a go-by. As a result, quality education and healthcare have evaded the citizens. If the government wants to restructure the departments, it should create an environment for the employees to perform, leadership to guide and an atmosphere to render the services.

Tax-paying citizens bear the burden of the salaries of government employees. There is however no proper mechanism for delivery of services to the citizens. To overcome this, firstly, there is a

need for a legislation to deliver basic services to the citizens. Secondly, for improving the services in the revenue department, there is a need for duly qualified, trained and empowered staff appointed by the Government and for the equipment to survey land records. In Telangana state, as many as 115 villages do not have land records or maps. For this, a comprehensive survey should be undertaken in the State. And there should be reassessment of land every 20 or 30 years. Properly assessed land records should be accessible. In some cases, if there is a purchase of land, the buyer pays the stamp duty and still does not get rights over the property. This is leading to double registrations of the same land. Therefore, there should be clear allotment of titles to the buyer. This can be done if the proper procedure is followed.

Reforms Needed

Revenue department is the custodian of land records. It should regularly survey the lands to determine the boundaries

whenever there is a dispute. It must ensure proper title-transfer whenever there is sale or purchase. These are the three primary roles of revenue department. Each of these needs to be set right.

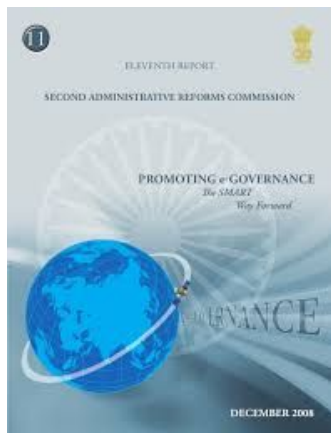
- a) Firstly, as nearly 15 percent villages do not have maps or are lost somewhere, there is a need to build up maps for these villages.
- b) The existing maps are flawed because during Nizam's time, the land survey was not done for all government and private lands in a comprehensive and scientific manner unlike in British India, where they established Great Trigonometry Survey Stations (GTS) and identified the boundary of the village very accurately and had surveyed every piece of land - government and private. Whereas in Telangana, there was lack of a basic scientific approach. Only private lands were surveyed and a few village boundaries identified. Rest of the land was considered as government land. As a result all

the cumulative errors were magnified. And because of third-party collusive litigation, courts usually decided in favour of whoever produces the documents. As a result, the real owner of the land is denied the title. Therefore a proper survey system developed on a permanent basis and a record keeping system with a one-time survey can resolve many of such issues.

- c) Provide all the legal tools and fiscal resources
- d) Bring the survey broadly under supervision of elected local governments but with departmental control in terms of technical matters.
- e) Build robust system of ownership
- f) Recruitment of right kind of officials
- g) Reform of the entire registration system

In this manner, the issue is more about building systems and capabilities.

The SMART way forward



Second Administrative Reforms Commission in its Eleventh Report titled 'Promoting E-Governance' makes the following recommendations for improving land and revenue administration

- Surveys and measurements need to be carried out in a mission mode utilizing modern technology to arrive at a correct picture of land holdings and land parcels and rectification of outdated maps. This needs to be accompanied by an analysis of the existing mechanism for updating land records – which varies from State to State – to be supplanted by an improved and strengthened mechanism which ensures that all future

transactions in titles are immediately reflected in the land records. Such a system should be able to detect changes in titles through various means – namely, succession, will, partition, gift, survivorship etc and update records accordingly.

- The dispute resolution mechanism with regard to land titles needs to be strengthened in order to be compatible with the demands made on it.
- In case of urban areas, a similar exercise needs to be undertaken especially since measurements and surveys have not been done in many such areas and even record of titles is not available in most cities. •

-Nisar Fathima