Land Rights for the Poor: New State, New Beginning

“Considering the fact that the Scheduled Castes suffer from social discrimination and untouchability and with a view to empowering and assuring them dignity of living, the Government of Telangana envisages the scheme of Land Purchase for the landless poor Schedule Caste families dependent on agriculture”

“Survey of all kinds of lands available in Telangana State will be conducted. State Government already asked for Rs. 600 crore from the Centre for conducting a comprehensive land survey in the State”

The vast majority of rural households in Telangana suffer from a drastically inadequate relationship with the land on which their well-being and livelihood depends. They lack any land to cultivate, lack even a homestead, or lack security and legal recognition for the land they do possess and use. The formation of the new state of Telangana has created new hopes for resolving these land issues. People believe that it’s a historical opportunity to create, rebuild and strengthen institutions and systems to complete unfinished task of securing land rights to the poor.

In fulfillment of peoples’ aspirations, State Government of Telangana has recently issued orders launching a new scheme of land purchase for the poor Schedule Caste families who are dependent on agriculture. The Scheduled Castes constitute about 15.44% in the State of Telangana. There are about 11.92 lakhs Scheduled Castes households in the State of which 9.2 lakhs are residing in the rural areas. Most of them continue to survive as agricultural labourers and they suffer from social discrimination and untouchability.

With a view to empowering and assuring them dignity of living, the Government of Telangana envisaged the scheme of Land Purchase for the landless poor Schedule Castes families. Each Schedule Caste family will be given up to three acres of land under this scheme. Priority will be given for the agricultural families who are absolutely landless. Patta will be granted in the name women. The entire cost of registration fee, stamp duty and other incidental expenses will be borne by the Government.

Further, the Government of Telangana took a decision to undertake a comprehensive survey of all lands in the State. The major bottleneck in resolving any land problem and the root cause for many land problems is the lack of proper survey and survey records. Law requires that re-survey should be done after every 30 years but the last survey in Telangana was done in 1940’s. Most of the survey records (village maps and tippans) are in brittle condition. The State Government requested the Government of India to grant Rs. 600 crore for conducting a comprehensive land survey in the State.

Telangana Government is taking quick measures to complete the unfinished task of land reforms. But, there is a long way to go before every landless poor gets access to at least small plot of land; every land owner has secure right to it; and every poor family has place to live with dignity. Telangana Peoples’ Land Manifesto prepared by Landesa highlighted the aspirations of Telangana people and the required actions to fulfil them. Hope that the new Government takes all the required measures to ensure access to land and secured rights over it for all the landless poor in the state.

Sunil Kumar M
State Director, Landesa/RDI
Access to land and secured rights over it for the poor remain a major challenge before the Governments including the new State of Telangana. Land reforms remained an unfinished task. The recent decisions of the Government of Telangana, a newly created State to purchase land for dalits and also resurvey all the land are commendable. Hope that lakhs of dalits who suffer from social discrimination and untouchability will get access to land and thus come out of their sufferings.

NALSAR University of Law, which is committed to socio-economic justice, took up several initiatives to help securing land rights for the poor. We have established a Legal Aid Clinic (Land Rights) at Warangal to provide free legal services to the poor on land matters. We have introduced a new course on Land Law and a Land Rights Clinic for the law students in the University. We have also took-up several research projects and organized workshops and conferences on land related issues. This newsletter is another initiative in that direction. NALSAR also trained five hundred paralegals in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh states who helped lakhs of poor getting secured rights to land until now.

Land is life for poor families. In Telangana, there are thousands of poor and tribals who are suffering with land problems, and for them, deprivation of land is deprivation of life. Hope the new State takes all the required measures to help the poor and get access to land and secure rights over it, and thus, can bring back life to them. NALSAR is committed to contribute to this cause.

In India, land is addressed as mother for being the source of life. Since time immemorial, land has been central to growth and development of civilizations and lives. Our mythology and Puranic literature describes how wars have been fought for land and how land is linked to dignity and prestige of regimes and people. Our socio-economic and cultural existence, thus, is defined by the extent of land ownership across geographies. Considering the criticality of land for survival, our state and national governments have introduced a number of legislations with the avowed intention of securing land to the poor and the dispossessed.

Recognising the need for securing ownership rights over land to the poor, Landesa initiated a Land Yatra (Caravan) in the newly formed state of Telangana in February 2014. It was during this time, the historic discussion around separate statehood was gaining ground, and Landesa took this opportunity to initiate a People's Movement through reaching out to as many people as possible. The intertwined objectives of initiating this Land Yatra were to create the demand and support state government prepare the Telangana Land Policy and also to come out with the People's Land Manifesto for Telengana.

Telangana, as we all know, has a rich history linked to land reforms movement in the country starting from having the first village to have donated land under Bhoodan to having promulgated some of the most progressive land legislations of the country. However, secured land rights continue to be a major area of concern. Though the situation with respect to land rights is not very different from rest of the country, the situation in Telengana is particularly critical for being mostly a Scheduled V area with very high distribution of tribal population.

Landesa commits to support the Telangana government in achieving its core objective of land to the landless. While it would continue to work closely with state government and civil society organisations on preparing a separate land policy for the state, it would try to scale the Land Rights Centre in Warangal, first of its kind in the country, to extend free land related legal services to the poor in the state.
NALSAR University of Law in collaboration with Landesa and the Legal Services Authority established Land Rights Legal Aid Clinic at the office of District Legal Services Authority, Warangal on 3rd March, 2014. The Clinic is aimed at providing free legal services to the poor on issues related to land, spread legal awareness and train various stakeholders working on land. Students of NALSAR University of Law under the supervision of its faculty and land tenure experts of Landesa are striving for the fulfilment of the Clinic's objectives since last one and half years.

More than two hundred people visited the Clinic until now requesting for legal advice regarding their land problems. They were advised by the Landesa experts on the law and procedure to get their land problems resolved. Further, appropriate authorities were contacted for resolving their land problems.

As part of the Clinic's activities, training programmes were organized for various stakeholders. One day training programmes on land rights was organized for the media, police and rural bank officials. Further, Paralegal Volunteers were trained on land laws during their training by District Legal Services Authority.
Telangana People’s Land Manifesto

- Land to the landless rural poor
- Homestead to the homeless rural poor
- Patta with secured rights to the landowners and to those who have legitimate claim over land
- Re-survey
- Updated and accessible land records
- Effective and efficient land administration system
- Legal support to the poor through community-based Paralegals
- Providing land to women and protecting their rights
- Restore, protect and develop lands of the poor with a special focus on SCs, STs and other marginalized groups
- Legal recognition to tenants and providing them all the benefits due to them as farmers

Telangana People’s Land Manifesto is prepared based on the expectations, opinions, and aspirations of Telangana people expressed during the Land Caravan and last six years work of Landesa / Rural Development Institute. Landesa has undertaken a “Land Caravan” from 6th February to 14th March 2014 with the teams travelling across Telangana and gathered information from farmers, the landless poor, and revenue officials to find possible solutions for land problems. The teams have travelled about 4000 Kms in all the ten districts of Telangana, met more than 5000 people, and interviewed about 1000 of them.

- Give land to the 25 lakh rural landless households, especially SCs and STs
- Give Homesteads to 6 lakh rural homeless and landless households
- Give patta and secured rights to 20 lakh farmers
- Update land records and make them accessible to all
- Re-survey the lands using cost effective and latest survey technology
- Make the land administration effective and efficient
- Establish one Land Rights and Legal Assistance Centers at every revenue divisional headquarters to provide needed assistance to the poor in getting their land problems resolved
- Give land rights to the 31 lakh rural women engaged in agricultural work who do not own land.
- Restore the lakhs of acres of alienated assigned and tribal land.
- Legally recognize tenants including the issuing of Loan Eligibility Cards and providing them all the benefits due to them as farmers including crop loans to all those of the 4 lakh tenant farmers who lack them

The vast majority of rural households in Telangana suffer from a drastically inadequate relationship with the land on which their well-being and livelihood depends. They lack any land to cultivate, lack even a homestead, or lack security and legal recognition for the land they do possess and use.

1. Land to the landless rural poor

Various studies suggest that about fifty percent of rural households in Telangana are landless. Which means that about 25 lakh rural households (approximately 1 crore people) have no land to cultivate. Majority of them belong to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other marginalized groups. Providing a small piece of land can enable them to come out of poverty.

State Government should take immediate steps to distribute all the available lands including government, ceiling surplus, bhoomiyan and un-utilised acquired lands. Strictly enforce existing laws which can make more land available to the poor. Further, State Government should allot funds to Women Self Help Groups to purchase lands for all the poorest women members in their groups.

2. Homestead to the homeless rural poor

It's estimated that in addition, about 6 lakh rural households in Telangana are both landless and houseless. They could not even take the benefits under rural housing programmes as they do not have land to build their houses. A house of one’s own is a basic human right and a fundamental right guaranteed by the Constitution of India.
Government should allot 4 guntas (10 cents) to each poor landless and homeless family to build a shelter and take up supplementary livelihood activities such as backyard poultry, goat-rearing, horticulture and vegetable cultivation. Government of India has already committed funds to states for purchasing homestead land for the poor under Indira Awas Yojana (IAY). Additionally, state funds should be allocated as well. Government should provide needed support to build the house and develop the homestead by ensuring convergence between various departments.

3. Patta with secured rights to the landowners and to those who have legitimate claim over land

At least a further forty percent of farmers (20 lakh households) have insecure, undocumented or inadequately documented land rights in Telangana. About ten lakh poor people who have purchased small pieces of agricultural land through un-registered/plain paper transactions (Sadabainama) but do not have patta; additional thousands of people who have inherited land do not have patta in their name as mutations have not been taking place regularly; about one lakh inam lands are not yet settled; thousands of poor are cultivating land in forest revenue boundary disputed areas with constant threat of eviction; thousands of people are cultivating land in so called “Deemed forest” (unsettled forests) areas with unsettled rights; thousands of tribal and other traditional forest dwellers either did not receive title under the Forest Rights Act or there are errors / mistakes / discrepancies in the titles issued to them; and thousands of poor are cultivating government / farrari patta / ghatt number / billa number lands.

The State Government should take immediate steps to

- Extend the date for receiving application for regularization of sadabainamas and issue patta. Further, Government should exempt the regularization fee for at least SCs, STs and women. Government should also extend the cut-off date from 2000 to 2010.

- Carryout mutations in land records and issue patta to all who have inherited land

- Settle all the inam lands

- Settle forest revenue boundary disputes and issue patta under revenue laws or title under the Forest Rights Act to the poor who are in cultivation of those lands

- Complete forest settlement process and recognize existing rights of people

- Issue titles to tribals and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers under Forest Rights Act. Rectify errors/mistakes/discrepancies in the titles.

- Issue titles to community forest resources under Forest Rights Act.

- Issue patta to eligible people who are in cultivation of government / farrari patta / ghatt number / billa number lands.

4. Updated and accessible land records

Majority of entries in all the land records do not reflect the field reality. Many times, names of the pattadars and cultivators are not entered in revenue records. Further, there are many errors / mistakes / discrepancies in the revenue records. People are facing many hardships due to non-update land records. They are being deprived of many benefits due to them as farmers. The State Government should take immediate steps to update all the land records and make them accessible to all at low or no charge. Further, Government should regularly take up Azmoishi and Zamabandi.

5. Re-survey

The major bottleneck in resolving any land problem and the root cause for many land problems is the lack of proper survey and survey records. Law requires that re-survey should be done after every 30 years but the last survey in Telangana was done in 1940’s. Most of the survey records (village maps and tippans) are in brittle condition. The State Government should take urgent steps to re-survey all agricultural lands with the involvement of local people, using up-to-date and cost effective technology.

6. Effective and efficient land administration system

Revenue department which deals with land administration has neither the time nor the required capacities for administering land. There is acute shortage of revenue staff at all levels. Thousands of land petitions are pending in various revenue offices. The State Government should recruit sufficient number of revenue staff at all levels, build their capacities and make them accountable on land matters. Appoint one Village Revenue Officers (VRO) to each revenue village and ensure that VRO stays in the village where he or she is appointed. Ensure that required numbers of women are recruited. Provide necessary budgetary support to the revenue department.
7. Legal support to the poor through community-based Paralegals

There are at least 100 to 200 land problems in every village. About 12 lakh land problems were brought to the notice of revenue authorities just in the last one year. It is estimated that about 2% of land in rural areas is in court cases and about 40% of land is in other problems. The poor are unable to get their land problems resolved because they lack legal awareness, cannot obtain legal aid services and cannot access adjudicating systems.

The State Government should create community-based Paralegal programme for providing facilitation support to the poor in getting their land problems resolved. A Land Rights and Legal Assistance Centre should be established at every Revenue Divisional Headquarter under the aegis of DRDAs to provide the needed assistance to the poor in getting their land problems resolved and also to educate people on land rights. These Centres should consist of Paralegals, Community Surveyors and Lawyers. In each Mandal, 3-5 rural youth/women from the community should be identified, trained in land and legal matters and positioned as paralegals. 3-5 youth/women from the community should be identified, trained in land survey and positioned as Community Surveyors. A Coordinator with a background in law should be appointed in each Centre who will provide both functional and technical support to the Paralegals and Community Surveyors. A panel of lawyers should be constituted in each Centre to fight the land cases pertaining to the poor in both Revenue and Civil Courts. Government of India has already agreed to provide for all the necessary cost through National Rural Livelihood Mission.

8. Providing land to women and protecting their rights

In Telangana, more than three fourth of rural women (35 lakhs) are engaged in agricultural work but at most only 4 lakh of these own land. Women are denied equal rights to access, inherit, or own land even though law provides for it.

State Government should allot agricultural land and homesteads in the name of women only; inheritance rights of women should be strictly enforced; and revenue machinery should be sensitized to respect and enforce the rights of women.

9. Restore, protect and develop lands of the poor with a special focus on SCs, STs and other marginalized groups

Significant percentage of land assigned to the landless poor is alienated. Five lakh acres of assigned land is alienated as per Government estimates and as per the estimates of civil society organisations it is about 25 lakh acres.

In spite of the stringent Land Transfer Regulations prohibiting transfer of lands tonon-tribal in Scheduled Areas, tens of thousands of acres of land have been illegally passed into the hands of the non tribals. Non-tribal population holds as much as 51 percent of the lands in the scheduled areas and more and more lands are going in to the hands of non-tribal. An assessment of the cases disposed of by the LTR authorities in the agency areas of Telangana shows that more than 50% of the cases have gone in favor of the non-tribals. Out of 45,595 cases booked under LTR (1, 86, 664 acres), land is restored (at least on paper) in only 15, 556 cases (71, 273 acres).

The State Government should strictly implement the laws prohibiting land alienations and restore the land to the original owner/beneficiary. Further, Government should take measures to prevent distress sales. Also, take steps to help the development of the lands of the poor with convergence between various departments.

10. Legal recognition to tenant farmers

As per Government estimates, there are about 4 lakh tenant farmers in Telangana. Out of them, about 2 lakh tenant farmers have received Loan Eligibility Cards until now (which are valid only for one year). And, majority of the tenants who have received the Loan Eligibility Cards did not get crop loans.

The State Government should ensure that all the tenant farmers gets the Loan Eligibility Cards and receive crop loans and other benefits due to them as farmers.
Telangana is where, under the legendary ‘Bhoodaan’ movement, Acharya Vinoba Bhave got the first land donation for distribution among the landless poor. Telangana is the land where several rebellious movements and struggles took place for land rights. Telangana is the land where several pro-poor land laws have been enacted. But still, the vast majority of rural households in Telangana suffer from a drastically inadequate relationship with the land on which their wellbeing and livelihood depend. They have no land to cultivate, lack even a homestead, and lack security and legal recognition for the land they do possess and use. About fifty percent of rural households in Telangana are landless. About 6 lakh rural households in Telangana are both landless and houseless. At least a further forty percent of farmers (20 lakh households) have insecure, undocumented or inadequately documented land rights. A majority of entries in all the land records does not reflect the field reality. Most of the survey records (village maps and tippans) are in a brittle condition. The Revenue department, which deals with land administration, has neither the time nor the capacities required for administering land. There are at least 100 to 200 land problems in every village. Women are denied equal rights to access, to inherit, or to own land even though the law provides for it. A significant percentage of land assigned to the landless poor is alienated. Non-tribal population holds as much as 51 percent of the lands in the scheduled areas and more and more lands are going into the hands of the non-tribal population. The formation of the new state of Telangana has created new hopes for resolving these land issues. People believe that it’s a historical opportunity to create, rebuild and strengthen institutions and systems to complete unfinished task of securing land rights to the poor. Landesa undertook a land caravan in the months of February and March 2014 with our land tenure experts travelling across the length and breadth of Telangana and gathering information from farmers, the landless poor, and the local government officials to hear from people about their land problems and their aspirations and expectations from the new state administration. The teams have travelled about 4000 km in all the ten districts of Telangana, met more than 5000 people, and interviewed about 1000 of them. Here is what people told the land caravan team “Re-survey all the lands; make all land records available to people; post a VRO in every village; let the VRO stay in the village; update all land records; involve the community in land survey, administration and record management; train the, revenue machinery; settle Inam lands; regularize sadaba inama; issue titles to forest land in cultivation; resolve forest and revenue boundary disputes; do not deem any land as forest without community involvement and settlement; empower grama sabha for land management; simplify land records and rights; tell us about land rights and laws. It should be land to landless, homestead to homeless.” We have prepared the Telangana People’s Land Manifesto based on the expectations, opinions, and aspirations of Telangana people expressed during the Land Caravan. The major expectations of people from the new government are - Land to the landless rural poor; Homestead to the homeless rural poor; Patta with secured rights to the landowners and to those who have a legitimate claim over land; Re-survey; Updated and accessible land records; Effective and efficient land administration system; Legal support to the poor through community-based Paralegals; Providing land to women and protecting their rights; Restore, protect and develop lands of the poor with a special focus on SCs, STs and other marginalized groups; and Legal
recognition to tenants and providing them all the benefits due to them as farmers.
The rebuilding of the state of Telangana will remain incomplete without granting “Land to the landless” and “patta to the farmer who is cultivating the land”. The ideal state of “Golden Telangana”, “People’s Telangana” “Developed Telangana” or “Samajika (Socialist) Telangana” cannot be achieved without secured land rights to the poor, tribal, women and other marginalized groups.

Hope that the new Telangana government will implement the People’s Land Manifesto and build a Telangana where there are no landless poor and everyone has secure rights to land.

Route-1: Nalgonda, Warangal and Khammam Districts

- Met about 1600 people and interviewed 293 of them

Route-2: Medak, Nizamabad and Karimnagar Districts

- Met about 1400 people and interviewed 258 of them

Route-3: Scheduled Areas of Adilabad, Warangal and Khammam Districts

- Met about 1200 people and interviewed 281 of them

Route-4: Ranga Reddy and Mahabubnagar Districts

- Met about 900 people and interviewed 181 of them.
Government has issued Loan Eligibility Card (LEC) to me but which is of no use. No bank is giving loan. Crop damages should be paid to the tenant only. All the landless poor should be given a piece of land.  

Kavitha  
SetramThanda, Uppargudem Village, Kuravi Mandal, Warangal

Date should be extended for regularizing Sadabainama. Revenue department should be given sufficient funds for infrastructure and stationary. Presently many records are in brittle condition. They are not even in a position to scan. Resurvey has to be conducted and all the records have to be updated.  

N. Venkataramaiah  
DeputyThasildar, Thirumalayapalem Mandal, Khammam

Government should waive the registration fee for the poor and regularize the unregistered sale deeds. There is acute shortage of surveyors.  

Sujatha  
Barugudem village, Khammam Mandal, Khammam

Old Patwari system has to be reintroduced as the present VRO system is a failure. The new system destroyed the land records and land administration. The Revenue department has to start a special drive for conducting resurvey and rectifying all the records  

Gopi Shankar Rao  
Sarpanch, Palvai village, Gurrampudi Mandal, Nalgonda

Middlemen involvement is increasing in Revenue offices. Officers are issuing pattas by taking money…which are also fake. Only persons who can afford are able get their work done. Self help group women should be given some powers to work on land issues. I believe that many land issues will be resolved through women.  

Pushpalatha  
SHG CA B Kothapally village, Nellikuduru Mandal, Warangal

Resurvey must be conducted. The general public must have easy access to all land records. VRO must be available in village  

Narahari  
Kalimera village, Kattangoor, Nalgonda

Government is taking back the land assigned to the poor for the tree plantation under Pachhathoranam scheme. Each landless poor family should be given 2 acres of land  

Pulamma  
Nemmikal village, S Athmakur Mandal, Nalgonda

The Land Registration fee should be decreased.  

Gaddam Narsareedy  
Farmer, Ankapur, Nizamabad

Revenue officers should give receipt for every application and should inform the applicant about the status of the application. There should be one VRO for each village.  

Rama devi  
Kothapally village, Wardhanapeta Mandal, Warangal

A simple procedure has to be followed for regularizing the Inam lands. The Registration Department should be merged with Revenue department.  

Raja Rao  
Tahsildar, Phenpahad Mandal, Nalgonda

PPB & TD should be sent to land owners by post or through mee seva. Resurvey has to be done by planting permanent boundary stones.  

Sudhakar  
Paralegal, Thungathurthy Mandal, Nalgonda

Date has to be extended for regularization of unregistered sales. Resurvey has to be conducted and all the records have to be updated  

Lavan kumar  
VRO, Pindipol village, Thrumalayapalem Mandal, Khammam

Revenue Authorities should conduct local enquiry before issuing patta in all cases. Government should take initiative to spread awareness about land laws and records.  

Venkanna  
Moripirala village, Rayapartthy Mandal, Warangal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dobbala Ashok</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Angadipet village, Nizamabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banothu Sallemma</td>
<td>Tribal women</td>
<td>Narsapur, Medak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asampalli Balamani</td>
<td>MS President</td>
<td>Vemulawada, Karimnagar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goskula Rajaiah</td>
<td>Tenant farmer</td>
<td>Mustipalli village, Sirisilla Mandal, Karimnagar</td>
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<td>K. Babu</td>
<td>Sainik welfare dept</td>
<td>Nizamabad</td>
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<tr>
<td>V. Prabhaker</td>
<td>AIKS, President</td>
<td>Armoor, Nizamabad</td>
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<td>Kampelli Maisaiah</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Nerella, Karimnagar</td>
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<td>Perumandla Narayan Goud</td>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>Sathakkapet, Karimnagar</td>
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<td>K. Kanaka Durga</td>
<td>Tahasildar</td>
<td>Burghampadu Mandal, Khammam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Polaveni Laxmi</td>
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<tr>
<td>P. Naveen Kumar</td>
<td>Young surpanch</td>
<td>Shivampet, Medak</td>
</tr>
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VROs should be available in the village at least for 2 hours in a day. Pattas has to be issued to the legal heirs immediately at least in the new state.

Officers should respect the women approaching the Tahasil office.

A minimum land tax should be collected annually so that farmers have a piece of evidence. Basic Land records should be included in the syllabus at school level. Women are now addicted to daily serials. Land issues and land matters are to be made a subject for serials, so that they will be able to understand the Land matters.

I'm cultivating land on lease. At least the new state should assign some land.

Pahani has to be maintained properly. Every village should have one VRO. There should be sufficient surveyors available. Government is issuing pattas without showing the possession on field.

If the VRO resides in the village many land issues can be resolved easily.

We are still using Nizam made revenue records. We need to prepare new land records.

Due to lack of awareness in tribal areas people are not applying for PPB and TD. Major problem in agency area is that they are complacent when it comes to their lands. They believe that no one can take their land. This is the prime reason for them not to apply for PPB/ TD.

We are not aware of what land problems we have. We know only farming. A person should be appointed in each village for creating awareness among the villagers about land issues.

Resurvey and re-settlement should be done. All the village maps and tippons should be made available at the mandal level. Proper acknowledgment has to be given for each application. Women have to be made aware of the land issues.

Titles were not issued for the forest land under our cultivation.

CC cameras have to be arranged in every government office which can reduce the corruption. There must be a help desk in each government office to guide the common man. Officers working on land issues must be properly trained.
Village court should be conducted for resolving land cases

**Gullapali Bala Goud**
Surpunch, Mushtipalli Village, Karimnagar

It's the duty of every village revenue officer to visit each house to note land details and also land problems. It's their duty to resolve them.

**Indrasena Reddy**
Ex ZPTC, Ponnala Village, Medak

The Government has to distribute lands to the landless. We have land and cultivating them since years. But, we still don't have patta.

**Lalitha**
Farmer, Mirzapur, Pudur Mandal, RR District

Revenue officials should be strictly monitored. Officials should take the responsibility for resolving land issues of the poor.

**Shivappa**
Farmer, Kerelli village, Darur Mandal, RR District

Due to revenue forest boundary disputes many STs are deprived of Ro FR pattas.

**Bakkalaiah**
ST, Farmer, Bijnapalli, Mahabubnagar

Resurvey of the lands should be initiated so that the tribals will be benefited. Vemanapalli and Kotapalli villages there are lot of poor without any lands. Updation of pahani is not based on field verification. We don't get copy of pahani.

Women in Vemanapalli and Kotapalli villages

We are land less. Government should assign some land. The records are not in proper shape and condition. Changes or rectification in the revenue records should be made in the presence of village committee.

**Innala Nagaiah**
Tudukurthy, Nagarkurnool, Mahabubnagar

Village committee consisting of village elders, Revenue Inspector, Village Revenue Officer, and SHG women should be formed for resolving Land issues at village level

**Rajappa**
IKP – CA, Husnabad, RR District

Assigned lands should be protected. Our village should be made a revenue village so that all the Land records will be available in our village.

**Golla Hanumanthu**
Kodangal, Mahabubnagar

Land tax should be collected so that farmers have a piece of evidence for the cultivation. Basic Land records should be included in the syllabus at school level. Women should be trained on land matters. Permanent fixed boundaries have to be planted. Temple lands have to be leased to landless poor instead of open auction.

**Prabhakar**
Paralegal, Nagarkurnool, Mahabubnagar

Immediately after registration, PPB&TD should be issued. Changes or rectification in the revenue records should be made in the presence of village committee.

**Laxmi**
SHG member Janampet village, Addakula Mandal, Mahabubnagar

Basic land records and their importance should be included in school text books.

**Srinivas Goud**
Dy. Surpanch, Kerilli Village Dharoor Mandal, RR District

Since non-tribals are cultivating our lands we are working as agriculture labor. Lands transferred from tribals should be restored.

Women in Kistavaram village, Badrachalam Mandal

We don't have patta for the land we own. Since 50 years we are in the possession of the land. I was repeatedly promised by the concerned revenue officer that the pattas would be issued to me.

**P. Madhukar**
Battipalli village, Manthanimandal, Karimnagar
Land in Political Parties Manifesto’s

Telangana Rashtra Samithi Manifesto

* TRS will provide 3 acres of land to each landless SC and ST families.
* Patta will be granted in the name of the woman member of the family.
* Government should conduct re-surveys every 30 years. But since 1940 no government has undertaken land surveys. TRS will undertake Land Surveys in Telangana on a priority basis.
* TRS is committed to strict implementation of the AP Scheduled area Land Transfer Regulation 1959 (1 by 70 Act or LTR act).

Telangana Congress Party Manifesto

* The Telangana State Government will take immediate steps to distribute all the available lands including government, ceiling surplus, Bhooalan unutilized acquired lands to the poor. Funds will be allotted to women Self Help Groups to purchase lands for poorest women members in SHGs.
* The Indian National Congress commits itself to ensuring access to land to all, especially the poor in Telangana. It will develop and implement schemes and policies to confer land rights in a free and fair manner. The interests of the tribals, Koya, Gondu, Konda Reddy etc, will be given priority.
* Congress will ensure to ensure a Right to Homestead for all rural households. To support the right to homestead/housing, we will ensure affordable and quality housing for all. The IAY and The Rajiv Awaas Yojna will be expanded to cover all poor, rural and urban households.
* State Government will take immediate steps to:
  * Effectively implement Koneru Ranga Rao Committee recommendations.
  * Extend the date for receiving application for regularization of sadabinaamis and issue patta. Further, government should exempt the regularization fee for at least SCs/STs and women. Government should also extend the cut-off date from 2000 to 2010.
  * Carry out mutations in land records and issue patta to all who have inherited land.
  * Settle all the Inaam Lands.
  * Settle forest revenue boundary disputes and issue patta under revenue laws or title under Forest Rights Acts to the poor who are in cultivation of those lands. Complete forest settlement process.
  * Issue titles to Tribals and other traditional forest dwellers under Forest Rights Act. Rectify errors/mistakes/discrepancies in the titles. Issue titles to community forest resources.
  * Issue patta to eligible people who are in cultivation of government/Farrari Patta/Ghatt Number/Billa
number Patta lands

- A new land reform policy for updating land records, redefining ceiling limits, preventing purchase of agricultural land by individuals not dependent on agriculture, reforming assignment policy to confer land, effective implementation of prohibition of alienation of assigned lands and protection of tribal lands, will be formulated.
- Funds will be allotted to women Self Help Groups to purchase lands for poorest women members in SHGs
- Action plan for effective implementation of Koneru Ranga Rao committee recommendations will be announced and all recommendations will be implemented in one year.
- The land assigned for specific purpose, if it is not utilized for the mentioned/allotted purpose shall be reviewed.
- Lands under bhoodan & WAKF will be safeguarded and shall be reviewed.
- All assigned lands given to SCs, STs will be reviewed.

**TDP and BJP Manifesto on Land**

- TDP promises to give 2 acres of land to each landless Tribal family through TRICOR.
- TDP promises to implement land purchases through the SC Corporation for land, to landless Dalit families.
- BJP will try to provide 2 acres of land at one place to all landless agricultural labourers. People who have less than 2 acres, will be provided with the gap.
- TDP promises loan eligibility cards to all tenants and also promises to provide bank loans.

**The Communist Party of India**

- We demand that every tenant farmer should be given a loan eligibility card. They should also get bank loans, input subsidies, crop damages, crop insurance facilities.
- We demand that every landless SC and ST family should be given 2.5 Acres of government land fit for cultivation. Patta should be given in the name of woman member in the family.
- Every SC and ST houseless family should get a house site, and 2 lakh Rupees subsidy to build the house.
- Forest Rights Act should be strictly implemented to grant titles to tribals of all the forest land under their cultivation.

**Loksatta Party**

- Loksatta promises a legal guarantee to all tenants to provide bank loans, subsidies, crop damages.
State Government of Odisha recently announced a progressive Policy for Girls and Women 2014. Landesa was invited by state government to assist them in drafting a section of the policy relating to asset ownership.

Below is the extract of the policy relating to land ownership:

Ownership, access and control over assets by women are vital to their empowerment. Land is considered to be one of the most important assets because of its higher economic value and its bearing on social security especially for women.

Women can own land through direct government transfers, purchase or lease from the market and through inheritance. Odisha has an established system of providing land to the landless including agricultural land, joint titling in land distribution and house building assistance under government schemes.

The identity of women as an individual is however subsumed within the definition of a household/family in most of the land and house building schemes. The challenge is in reaching vulnerable women including single women with land and house building entitlements.

4.1 Policy Directives

1. Enable women and women’s groups to claim their rights over assets, land and housing through legislations and administrative measures.

4.2 Strategies and action points

1. Reduce stamp duty for registration of land and house purchased in a woman’s name and gift deeds of immovable property executed in favour of women.

2. Record all homestead as well as agricultural land allotments made in favour of landless, homestead less and displaced families under the existing laws, policies and programmes of the Government, in the name of the wife/woman.

3. Ensure inheritance rights of women and reflect those inherited rights in the land records.

4. Introduce special course on land rights of women and related laws and judicial decisions in the training curriculum of Odisha Administrative Services (OAS) and Odisha Revenue Services (ORS) officers at the entry stage.

5. Embark on programmes for different stakeholders on land literacy including entitlements and property rights of women.

6. Priorities benefits to all vulnerable women including single women under housing and land ownership programmes through appropriate definitions.

7. Allot Ac. 0.04 decimal of homestead land in rural areas to women belonging to low income group and not possessing any house/ flat or homestead land and who are either (i) widowed, unmarried, divorced or separated from husband by a decree or order of a Court or under any custom or usage having the force of law, having attained 45 years of age or more, or (ii) women with more than 40 percent disability, who have attained 30 years of age or more.

8. Extend land lease at nominal rates in favour of women’s groups for productive activities. Allot cultivable/arable Government land on temporary lease basis to women SHGs for agriculture and horticulture purposes.

9. Engage with financial institutions to provide credit support to women and women’s groups to enhance the opportunities for asset ownership.
Key Highlights Of The New Land Acquisition Act

Compensation: The Act provides for the payment of compensations that is up to 4 times the market value in rural areas and 2 times the market value in urban areas.

R&R: This is the very first law that links land acquisition and the accompanying obligations for resettlement and rehabilitation. Over five chapters and two entire Schedules have been dedicated to outlining elaborate processes (and entitlements) for resettlement and rehabilitation. The Second Schedule in particular outlines the benefits (such as land for land, housing, employment and annuities) that shall accrue in addition to the one-time cash payments.

Retrospective Operation: The Act applies retrospectively to cases where no land acquisition award has been made. Also in cases where the land was acquired five years ago but no compensation has been paid or no possession has taken place then the land acquisition process will be started afresh in accordance with the provisions of this act.

Multiple Checks and Balances: A comprehensive, participative and meaningful process (involving the participation of local Panchayati Raj Institutions) has been put in place prior to the start of any acquisition proceedings. Monitoring Committees at the National and State Level to ensure that R&R obligations are met have also been established.

Special Safeguards for Tribal Communities and other disadvantaged groups: No law can be acquired in Scheduled Areas without the consent of the Gram Sabhas. The Law also ensures that all rights guaranteed under such legislations as the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 and the Forest Rights Act 2006 are taken care of. It has special enhanced benefits (outlined in a dedicated chapter) for those belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Safeguards against displacement: The law provides that no one shall be dispossessed until and unless all payments are made and alternative sites for the resettlement and rehabilitation have been prepared. The Third Schedule even lists the infrastructural amenities that have to be provided to those that have been displaced.

Compensation for livelihood losers: In addition to those losing land, the Bill provides compensation to those who are dependent on the land being acquired for their livelihood.

Consent: In cases where PPP projects are involved or acquisition is taking place for private companies, the Bill requires the consent of no less than 70% and 80% respectively (in both cases) of those whose land is sought to be acquired. This ensures that no forcible acquisition can take place.

Caps on Acquisition of Multi-Crop and Agricultural Land: To safeguard food security and to prevent arbitrary acquisition, The Bill directs States to impose limits on the area under agricultural cultivation that can be acquired.

Return of Unutilised Land: In case land remains unutilised after acquisition, the new Bill empowers states to return the land either to the owner or to the State Land Bank.

Exemption from Income Tax and Stamp Duty: No income tax shall be levied and no stamp duty shall be charged on any amount that accrues to an individual as a result of the provisions of the new law.

- Share in appreciated land value: Where acquired land is sold to a third party for a higher price then 40 per cent of the appreciated land value (or profit) will be shared with the original owners.
- Time Bound Social Impact Assessment: The Bill mandates a Social Impact Assessment of every project which must be completed within a period of six months.

(Source: FAQs circulated to the Members of Parliament during the debate on the Act)
Landesa recently completed the Legal Needs and Bottlenecks Study (LNB) Study to identify the bottlenecks in securing land rights and the typology of legal needs of the poor and tribal people, including widows and abandoned women in the sample. The study team gathered primary and secondary data from a selected sample of mandals and households in Warangal district. The sample included five mandals in three divisions of Warangal district. In order to ensure that the study focused on the target group (persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, women, and persons below the poverty line), the team chose a sample of villages with the highest proportion of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe populations and sample land cases that involved persons belonging to the target groups.

In all, the study covered 100 land cases. In each mandal, the team picked a mix of pending and resolved land cases that covered the 13 different types of land problems that are highly prevalent in the State (and which the Legal Aid Centers will aim to resolve). The types of land problems studied included: not having documents for land obtained through inheritance, purchase, family partition, or government allocation; errors in land documents; survey and boundary disputes; and lack of possession of assigned land.

The team developed sets of detailed questionnaires for each different type of land case and for various stakeholders. In each case, the study team interviewed the households involved and the Revenue officials at various levels, using the relevant questionnaire to understand the specific legal needs of the households and the barriers in resolving the land cases. The team also measured the legal awareness of the households interviewed.

The initial analysis of the study data has some interesting findings that will help in understanding and defining the design and programming of the sub-district legal aid centers. They include the following:

One of the biggest barriers to resolving land cases is the lack of capacity of the Revenue officials. The study found that the Revenue officials knew very little about the 13 land problems addressed in the study and the processes for resolving them. Also, the local-level Revenue officials have many
responsibilities, and so they often do not have much time to devote to resolving land issues.

Women have a harder time than men in getting resolution to a land problem. Even though 40 of the sample land cases involved women and their rights to land, in none of the cases were women pursuing legal resolution to their land problems by themselves. Rather, a male family member was taking each case through the system on behalf of the woman holding the land rights.

Thus, if a woman does not have a male relative to represent her in the justice delivery system, she often has no way to get her land problem resolved.

When the target groups do access the justice delivery system to find a resolution to their land problems, they reach out to the most local institutions. In most of the sample cases, the parties took the case to the village-level officer. It was only a few who took their cases beyond the village level to the mandal-level officials. In none of the cases had the parties taken the case beyond the mandal level. The study found that the parties to the cases did not know what the next step in the process would be. Others knew the steps, but did not have the time or the resources to go beyond, to the district level.

As per the initial analysis, some of the legal services needs of the poor, particularly those of the SCs, STs and Women, are:

* Awareness about land rights, laws and procedure
* Access to land records
* Legal advice
* Support of a person knowing the laws and procedure
* Services of lawyers
* Access to adjudicating forums and land administration authorities

The bottlenecks in resolving the land problems are:

* No periodical updating of land records
* Lack of awareness about the laws and procedure
* Lack of required revenue staff
* Lack of training to revenue officers
* Frequent transfers of revenue officers
* Lack of surveyors
* Lack of evidence/necessary documents with the poor.
Honorable High Court of Judicature at Hyderabad for the states of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh has recently considered the issue of what documents determine title and ownership to land. Hon'ble Justice C. V. Nagarjuna Reddy while deciding a batch of cases delivered an important judgment on this issue. Below is the summary of conclusions of the court:

(1) A patta granted under BSO-27 confers absolute title.

(2) An assignment made under BSO-15 prior to 18-6-1954 in Andhra Area and a patta granted under Laoni Rules before 25-7-1958 in Telangana Area confer absolute title with right to transfer the land. Unless the Revenue functionaries are first satisfied that the land is an assigned land within the meaning of sub-section (1) of Section 2 of Act 9 of 1977, no proceeding for cancellation of assignment can be initiated.

(3) In case of Laonipattas granted on collection of market value, the pattadar is entitled to sell the land without any restrictions.

(4) In respect of estate and inam lands, ryotwaripattas / occupancy rights certificates constitute title. In case of protected tenants under the Hyderabad Tenancy and Agricultural Act 1950, the protected tenants having ownership certificates hold absolute title.

(5) In the absence of patta, revenue records form basis for determining title. A-Register/Diglot, Ledger/Chitta in Andhra Area and Sethwar, Supplementary Sethwar and WasoolBaqui in Telangana Area are the basic settlement record which provide basis for subsequent entries in the Village Accounts. Before integration of revenue record, No.1 and No.2 Accounts (old), No.3 Account, No.10 Account and Register of Holdings in Andhra Area and Pahani patrika, Chowfasila, Faisal Patti and Khasra Pahani in Telangana Area are relevant Village Accounts for determination of title. After integration of the Village Accounts under the 1971 Act, (i) Printed Diglot or A-Register, (ii) Village Account No.1, (iii) Village Account No.2, (iv) No.3 Register and (v) Village Account No.4 – Register of Holdings constitute relevant record.

(6) Between two rival claimants relying upon the entries in revenue record, the person whose name is recorded in the basic records such as A-Register and Record of Holdings and their successors-in-interest will be considered as the rightful owners. In deciding such disputes, the revenue authorities and the courts need to carefully weigh the evidence relied upon by the rival parties with reference to the record referred to hereinbefore. Even in cases of disputes between the Government and private persons, the above referred record constitute material evidence in determination of title.

(7) While there is a presumption that all porambokes and lands reserved for communal purposes vest in the Government, no such presumption arises in respect of waste lands, assessed or unassessed.

(8) A person in possession of land for 12 years or more without title can claim transfer of registry in his favour as envisaged by para-7 of BSO-31.

(9) Long possession supported by multiple registered sale transactions give rise to presumption of title. Such presumption is however rebuttable.

(10) RSR is not a stand alone document. It is one of the relevant records in determination of ownership.

(11) Description of Government land in RSR only means that it is not an inam land. It can include patta lands also.

(12) Dots or blank in pattadar column does not necessarily mean that the land is vested in or it belongs to the Government. Despite such blanks or dots, a private person can claim ownership based on entries in revenue record prepared both prior to and after the commencement of the 1971 Act, besides registered sale transactions. If the Government disputes such entries, it needs to get its right declared by instituting proceedings before the competent court of law.

(13) The entries in TSLR do not constitute conclusive proof of title.

(14) Where there is a bonafide dispute regarding title of a person in possession of the lands other than public roads, streets, bridges or the bed of the sea or the like, summary proceedings under the 1905 Act cannot be initiated. In all such cases, the Government which claims title shall approach the competent Civil Court for declaration of its title.

G. Satyanarayana Vs the Government of Andhra Pradesh (W.P.No.15438 of 2012)
Lie of the Land

PRIYANKA KOTAMRAJU
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The new State of Telangana inherits a tattered mess of land records and violated land rights

On a scorching morning in July last year, Malliah woke up early. The cropping season was nearing its end and his two-acre field stubbled with paddy was ready for a fertiliser boost. Armed with his title deed, he made his way to the urea bank set up at the Kowdipally mandal in Medak district. It was his first time here. He joined a long, snaking line at the rear. Hours later, in the late afternoon, Malliah was still waiting for his turn. When it finally arrived, he produced his papers; the heavily subsidised bag of urea within reach now. The lady at the counter pored over his details. Then, she asked for his Pattadar Pass Book for the land. He didn't have one. She pulled out the revenue department's big book of names, the pahani, to check government records. Malliah's name was missing. Since his father's death a few years ago, Malliah had sought a change in ownership on paper without any success. He had also lost the whole day in a line at the end of which there was no urea for him. Now, he would have to return to the open market to buy it, but at a much higher price.

At the end of the season, when Malliah harvested his plot, the yield fell short by four quintals. The application of fertiliser hadn't been timely because of the missing records. Now, multiply his loss with 10 lakh other farmers in Telangana, who incur losses every crop season due to poorly maintained records, and the lie of the land becomes an inescapable truth.

Subsidies on seeds and fertilisers and crop loans are difficult to obtain, if farmers cannot produce copies of any of the 11 records needed to stake their claim to the lands they till. Vulnerable to land grab, criminal cases in revenue courts and falling yields, land insecurity is rampant here.

On February 20, when Parliament passed the Andhra Pradesh Re-organisation Bill (2014), India's 29th state was born. The 60-year-old Telangana movement had grown legs and walked into reality in an election year. Three weeks prior to that, Landesa, a non-profit network dealing in land rights, embarked on a 'land caravan' across Telangana to find out whose land it was. They marched through 10 districts — from the semi-urban areas of Sangareddy and tribal lands of Adilabad, to the red corridors of Khammam and Pochampally in Nalgonda, where the Bhoodan movement once took wing.

According to the Koneru Ranga Rao Land Committee Report (2006), since its formation AP, especially Telangana, has seen strong pro-poor land legislations — land reform acts, tenancy acts, prohibition of land grabs acts etc. Despite that, on-ground implementation has been weak. While the AP government has officially assigned over 40 lakh acres, far less is in the hands of farmers and under cultivation.

Interestingly, in his first Chai peCharcha, Narendra Modi spoke of the urgent need for re-surveys of land across
the country. Earlier, in 2008, union minister for rural development Jairam Ramesh launched the ₹1,000 crore National Land Records Modernisation Programme. Although nine states have fully implemented it, AP is yet to begin work for nearly 30,000 of its villages. “The first thing Telangana’s new government will have to do is a land re-survey,” says Suneel Kumar, the State director of Landesa. Land, he adds, has to be resurveyed every 30 years by the government. The last land survey in Telangana was conducted from 1936 to 1942; and in the Andhra region, before 1900!

B Venkatiah is, by all accounts, a model farmer. In Gummadavelli village, Gurrampode mandal, Nalgonda district, that is a rare achievement. The NS left canal that runs from Nagarjuna Sagar dam, the only source of water in these parts, kisses the borders of Gummadavelli and rushes on to water the oasis of Hyderabad, leaving behind thousands of acres of parched lands in Nalgonda. Despite this, Venkatiah’s fields have prospered. In a village overrun by Indiramma (a State government housing scheme) structures, he owns a pukka house. He also drives his own Hero motorcycle. According to the sarpanch, Raghava Reddy, he is their poster boy. However, Venkatiah is a worried man. “I have a Pattadar Pass Book. I have the title deed to my lands. But my name is missing from the pahani. Without that I’m not eligible for any of the government’s schemes,” he says. “The Village Revenue Officer (VRO) comes, but he can’t write records. Even his visits are irregular. Every time I try to get the records corrected, I shell out ₹5,000. But it never gets done.”

The incompetence of tehsildars and VROs is so high, we’re told, that 150 acres of land in Gummadavelli has been allotted to 86 families under one survey number. Which of the 86 can claim it as their own? In a village of 3,000 most are landless, says the sarpanch.

The same story echoes across villages of Nalgonda district — in Palwai, Thanedar, Koppole, Parvatagiri, Kathalguda. Even the tandas, sandwiched between villages and inhabited by the Lambada communities, are beset by similar problems, despite the special government pattas for STs.

In Parvatagiri village, Elamma’s family have been waiting for the settlement of their lands for 45 years. They received 15 acres as inam in 1969 from the then Nizam. According to the AP (Telangana area) Inams Abolition Act, 1955 (reinforced by the State government in 1973), inam lands need regularisation to transfer occupancy rights. While more than nine lakh acres of such land has been settled, thousands of acres are yet to be transferred. “For the last two years, officials couldn’t determine if it’s inam or Wakf board land,” she says, clutching all the documents in her possession. Suneel Kumar examines them and says it’s inam alright. “Then why are they taking so long?” asks Elamma.

The land caravan rolls into Kathalguda village next. Plots allotted for Indiramma houses lie vacant. “There’s no government assigned land here,” says Thorapukla Anand. “Most of us live on rent. Benami and kabza of plots occur routinely. There’s no land even to bury a dead man!” In many villages populated by SC households across Nalgonda, finding land for graveyards is also a major problem.

Thirty-year-old Kavitha has been a community surveyor in this mandal, since 2005. Her team of 35 surveyors and field assistants, recruited as part of Indira Kranti Patham (IKP) launched in 2000, act as the go-betweens for villagers and the revenue department. “We go from village to village, collect all the complaints and tell them how to fill the paperwork. But we get little support from the revenue department and that makes our job difficult,” she says. At the last sadassalu (village revenue court), 185 issues were brought to the department’s notice. “About 160 were rejected and dismissed. That didn’t solve any problems. Now, people find it hard to trust us.”

CLB Shastri is a deputy tehsildar in Nalgonda. He has spent 27 years in the revenue service and served as secretary of the union. When asked about the deep-seated mistrust of the department, he minces no words. “In their current shape, land records are less than 30 per cent accurate. The pahani is in tatters,” he says. “But look how overworked we are. Put on election duty, disaster relief, and made to handle the public distribution system. Where’s the manpower? Look at the quality of recruits for the posts of VROs and tehsildars. They don’t know a PPB from a title deed. We want a mandal reorganisation. And land re-surveys.”

**Out of line**

The National Highway 44, the longest highway in the country, connects Varanasi to Kanyakumari, touching Bangalore and Hyderabad. It has also brought the Agency district of Adilabad, AP’s second-most backward district, closer to Hyderabad. Ichoda is one
among many villages that fall by its side. Location notwithstanding, it doesn't seem to derive any of the benefits that a major highway ought to bring with it. At the Mandal PrajaParishad office, people gather from villages nearby. Since the implementation of the Forests Right Act (FRA) began in 2008, tribals here have been caught in the forest and revenue department crossfire. Shakuntala, a Gond tribal, is from Chincholi village. Her six acres, planted with Nilgiri trees, were taken over by the forest department along with the land of three other families. The revenue department was of no help. “I sat outside the forest department till they returned my land. The other families were scared. Now I have my fields, while they have to work as coolies and roll beedis,” says Shakuntala.

Land alienation and poor-to-poor discrimination are other problems peculiar to Andhra's Agency districts. Despite the regulations that prohibit the transfer of tribal land to non-tribals, nearly 48 per cent of the properties have passed into non-tribal hands. VNVK Sastry, former director of India's Tribal Research and Training Institute and former advisor to the government on tribal development, says, “Around 25 lakh acres of land is still under Section 4 notification (not yet declared reserved forests). But the forest departments have taken over, evicting tribals from lands they have occupied for decades”. If the new State doesn't solve these issues, he says, there’s a fear that doras (landlords driven out by the Telangana rebellion) will return. “There could even be another peasant uprising.”

Blood and revolution
The road to Indravelli shuts down once a year in April. No vehicles are allowed and police nakabandi stands strong. Part of the red corridor, it's also one of the sites of the Telangana rebellion. Nearly 33 years ago, on April 20, hundreds of tribals were gunned down by the police. Even today, visitors at a martyr's statue just outside Indravelli, risk police attention.

At RatnamCelinamma's, the women of Indravelli have gathered for an impromptu meeting. Celinamma's twin dogs yelp at her rabbits sleeping close by. Broods of chicken scurry about and the twins raise their pitch. Cups of chai arrive and everyone huddles closer to listen to Celinamma, the de facto spokesperson who served as the president of the ZillaSamakhya twice. Celinamma, who came to Indravelli as a young bride in 1981 says, “Doras (landlords) ran the place and the girijans had no legal rights to their lands.”

Soon after Celinamma’s arrival, Indravelli was scarred by the incident that propelled the Telangana revolt. “It was on April 17, a Friday, when hundreds of girijans had gathered in the village square. They were demanding pattas to their lands. Three days had passed but the protests showed no signs of winding up. On Monday, April 20, the weekly mandi was to be set up. Amid the market's chaos, policemen walked up to the protesters. Poking Drupatibai in the ribs, one of them teased her, saying ‘How long do I have to fast, get going now’. In a flash, Drupati, who was chopping onions, drew out her knife and stabbed him.”

What followed forms one of the bloodiest episodes in the Telangana rebellion. Drupatibai was killed. Hundreds more died in the police firing. Official records, however, claim 13 people died. “They lied,” says Celinamma. “The bodies just piled up. We took them to the nearby jungles. There was no place to bury them. Dogs followed the stench into the forests, fed on the flesh of the dead, coming back in hordes, biting our cattle.” Since then, the State has, arguably, over-compensated the STs while declaring other communities — SCs and OBCs — non-tribals. So girijans are protected by the Forests Rights Act, non-tribals like Celinamma have become targets of discrimination. “It is the law that discriminates between the communities here,” says Sastry. The assignation of land is as much about pedigree, as it is about paperwork.

In Indravelli village, the ratio of STs to SCs is 70 to 30. “Only 16 people of our community possess lands. The rest are landless and jobless,” Celinamma says. Nirmala, 25-year-old mother of two daughters, has a degree in nursing but no job or land. “I'm repeatedly rejected. What do I do with my degree,” she says. “I want to educate my kids but will it help?”

Yet it's here, in Indravelli, that the hope in the new State of Telangana shines brightest. “This land is our mother,” says Nirmala. She has no land, we remind her, but she insists this will change, “Telangana is our land and I'm going to be a VRO.”

Last year, Telangana Rashtra Samithi President K Chandrasekhar Rao promised three acres to each Dalit family in the new State. But without a re-survey and reform, only a new rebellion can carve this land out of Telangana.
Sethwar: After disposing of all the representations/appeals filed by the khatedars for the correction of survey errors, a final survey register is prepared called Sethwar Register. This Register is regarded as the king of all Registers. This contains the full details of survey number, patta / grant, gairan / inam, name of the khatedar, total area, pot kharab area, balance area, rate of assessment (Dhar), final assessment in case of wet lands, sources of irrigation etc.

WasoolBaqi Register: After completion of “Akarb and Register” at the final stage of Jamabandi process, a very important register, written on the alphabetical order of the Khatedars (pattadars) of the village, showing all old S.Nos., extents and assessments of the khatedar on one page and on the opposite page the details of corresponding New S.Nos., extents and assessments is prepared which is called as the “Wasool Baqi” register or correlation register. All old entries of the khata are noted down as per the “Theka Bandi Register,” which is prepared basing upon the revenue records existing at the time of classification of soil work (Parathbandi) and got it attested by the concerned Tahsildar. The corresponding new survey details shown on the opposite page, are noted down as per the entries recorded in the just prepared “Akar land” register. At the end of the entries of each khata, totals are noted for old entries and corresponding new survey entries. This will give the clear picture of each khata particularly to ascertain the discrepancy of extents if any.

Village Accounts (Pre-Independence): After completion of Survey and Settlement and announcement of settlement rates, a copy of the Basic records (ie) Village map, Sethwar Register and Wasulbaqi Register will be supplied to the Tahsildar. Tahsildar will get two copies of Pahani prepared by the Patwari in his office and attested by him. Pahani is an important Register maintained by the Patwari for the purpose of Azimash and also for various statistical Returns and accounts to be prepared by him in connection with day to day Land Revenue Administration. This corresponds to No.2 Account i.e., Adangal maintained by the village Karnams in Andhra region. One copy of the village map, and Pahani are supplied to the Patwari. In order to collect land Revenue, Patwari will have to prepare ‘Chowfasla’ register Kathawise yearly along with Pahani. One copy of the Sethwar is sent to Central Survey Office. One copy of the village map, Sethwar, Wasulbaqi Register, and Pahani are kept in the Taluk office. All the remaining Survey and Settlement Records are transferred to the District Land Record Office which is part of the Collector's office.

Village Accounts after Independence: Prior to Independence, land revenue was the main source of income to the Government in both Andhra and Telangana regions. The main function of the Revenue administration was fixation of revenue demand and collection of land revenue. There were 38 village accounts in Andhra Area and 40 village accounts in Telangana Area. The purpose of maintenance of these village accounts was mainly fixation of assessment and watching revenue collections. After Independence, land revenue was no longer the source of revenue to the Government as it used to be and maintenance of land records lost its significance. The Government has reduced village accounts from 40 to 22 in Telangana Area and from 38 to 23 in Andhra Area vide G.O. Ms.No.599, Revenue (N) Department, dated 1-7-1976 and G.O. Ms.No. 1474 Revenue (N) Department, dated 15-12-1979, respectively. Account No.2adangal in Andhra Area and Account No.3 (pahani) in Telangana Area have been integrated vide G.O. Ms. No.734 Revenue (N) Department, dated 27-4-1983 and G.O. Ms.No. 1070 Revenue (N)Department, dated 6-8-1983. The Estimates Committee of 1985-86 has recommended in its third report, appointment of Specialists Committee for introduction of common village accounts for both the regions in view of the evolution of institution of Village Officers. The Specialists Committee was appointed by the Government under the Chairmanship of Commissioner of Land Revenue vide G.O. Ms. No.115 Revenue (N) Department, dated 8-2-1989. Based on the recommendation of the Specialists Committee, 11 village accounts common to both the regions were introduced vide G.O. Ms.No. 265, Revenue (LR-II) Department, dated 10-3-1992. The following new integrated records have been adopted from 1-7-1992 i.e., 1402 Fasli.

[Source: From the Judgment of Hon'ble Justice C V Nagarjuna Reddy in G. Satyanarayana Vs the Government of Andhra Pradesh (W.P.No. 15438 of 2012 )]

Following were the important Registers among 40 Registers to be maintained by the Patwaris:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Register Name</th>
<th>Account No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pahani patrik</td>
<td>Register No.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Choufasla</td>
<td>Register No.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Faisalpatti</td>
<td>Register Nos.5, 6 &amp; 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>QabileWasool</td>
<td>Register No.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>JamabandiGoshwara</td>
<td>Register No.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>ArazyiyathSarkari</td>
<td>Register No.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Arazyiyath-e-Inam</td>
<td>Register No.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ZaraiAbupashi</td>
<td>Register No.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Kist Bandi</td>
<td>Register No.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>AsamwariWasoolbaqui</td>
<td>Register No.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Irsalnama</td>
<td>Register No.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Kirdi</td>
<td>Register No.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Khata</td>
<td>Register No.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Khartiwar Rainfall</td>
<td>Register No.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Paidawar Register</td>
<td>Register No.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One can feel secure about one’s land rights only when the land is in physical possession, patta in the hand and name in the land records.