

## Department of Land and Land Reforms

### INTRODUCTION TO L & LR DEPARTMENT

West Bengal is the leader in land reforms in the country. If we look back to the history, it is the Regulation of 1793 which created Zamindari system with full proprietary right in the land subject to the payment of the land revenue. In 1885 the Bengal Tenancy Act was passed. This act was formulated to consolidate certain enactments relating to land. Board of Revenue was formed in the year 1786. This Board was the apex body of entire land revenue administration of state. After independence on 15th August 1947, Govt of West Bengal promulgated The [West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act 1953](#) and all intermediary interests were abolished. A huge quantum of land was vested. Then the [West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955](#) was introduced and family based ceiling provisions were adopted. The State has distributed 23% of the whole land distributed in the country and to 53% of the beneficiaries vis-a-vis in all other States. West Bengal has recorded more than 15 lakh Bargadars/ Share croppers, which has not been done anywhere else in the country, and has distributed homestead land to more than 5.6 lakh beneficiaries. There are more than 30 lakh patta holders in the State.

Department of a Land & Land Reforms implements land reforms. Therefore, it is essential to upgrade its capabilities for implementation of land reforms in the interest of the landless, marginal and small farmers. Land is very important and dear to the villagers, who constitute 70% of the population of West Bengal. The total land in the State is 86,87,540 hectares, out of which the net cultivated area is 54,63,678 hectares. This land, which is about 63% of the total area, is held by 4.30 crore land holders/raiyats.

It is needless to say, in the above perspective, that the Department of Land and Land Reforms is one of the major departments of the State having extensive citizen interface. The Department of Land and Land Reforms (herein after referred to as L & L.R. Department or Department) plays a crucial role in West Bengal in terms of administration & management of Land Records Information. The department not only provides services to the citizens & industries but also interacts with other government departments. The department is one of the major revenue earning Government departments in the State.

The department has a far reaching interface with the citizens, businesses and other Government public sector departments in the State and interacts with these stakeholders on a day-to-day basis. The land records data administered by the department is voluminous and increasing day by day. For instance, the department maintains land related information of 42,159 mouzas and approximately 4.30 crore Khatians across the State. Management of such voluminous information, which is growing exponentially over the years, in manual systems, impacts the ability of the department in discharging its services to the stakeholders in an effective & efficient manner. Towards addressing the current issues in manual operations and with an objective to modernize its internal administration and to improve service delivery further, the department is focusing on adoption of Global Best Practices in land records management, usage of technology, upgrading the human capacities through development of internal skill sets, etc. This agenda of the department has been clearly underpinned by a sustained commitment to modernization and change throughout its service delivery. The department also wishes to adopt multi-channel service delivery model for providing convenient services to the stakeholders.

### LAND REFORMS AND MANAGEMENT

Land is of critical significance to the vast majority of the poor who derive their livelihood from agriculture. Physical subsistence, procuring a decent, dignified livelihood and the well being of entire family depends on land. The issue of land rights and access to resources is, therefore, one where land must be envisioned as a productive unit which sustains inter related livelihood resources.

Land reforms may be defined as a package of measures to remedy the ills, the agrarian society suffers from due to the skewed nature of distribution of land. Naturally, therefore, the Govt. has a legal and moral duty to ensure that this resource is put to the optimum and also socially acceptable utilization.

Implementation of land reforms and evolution of equitable agrarian relations are goals that we have

inherited from the Indian freedom movement. This is a part of our national psyche. West Bengal is one of the very few States of India where land reforms has been implemented to its hilt. The main components of our land reforms programme in West Bengal have been:-

- To implement ceiling laws and to distribute vested land among landless cultivators especially belonging to SC & ST.
- To protect the rights of small and marginal cultivators including share croppers.
- To prevent alienation of tribal land.
- Maintenance of real time land records.

Under [West Bengal Estate Acquisition Act, 1953](#), through due process of law, 26.48 lac acres of land was vested, and under [West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955](#), we have been able to vest 3.98 lac acres of land. However, only vesting of ceiling surplus land does not serve the purpose. So, through the provision of West Bengal Land Reforms Act, 1955, such huge amount of vested land have been gradually distributed to the landless people. Till date, we have been able to distribute 11 lac acres of agricultural land among 33 lac pattadars.

“[Nijo Griha Nijo Bhumi Prokalpa](#)” launched in the year 2011 is another feather in the cap of West Bengal Land Reforms Programme for promotion of all round development of the landless and poor people. It is an innovative scheme to secure ownership of a small piece of homestead land which is transforming many families from poverty to prosperity. Under this Scheme, so far, 2 lac landless people have been provided with homestead land.

“Operation Barga” somehow or other, has become synonymous with Land Reforms in West Bengal. It was quite an innovative crash programme undertaken by our department to record the name of bargadar in record of rights. Under this programme nearly 15.20 lac bargadars have been recorded in the State across 11.18 lac acres of land. After recording the bargadar has achieved significant reduction in the level of their dependency on the land owners and money lenders. They have become more articulate and have developed a sense of self-esteem. Moreover, a guaranteed tenure and increased entitlement to share of the produce motivate the bargadars to put in more labour and investment in cultivation, resulting in increase in overall agriculture productivity.

Effective implementation of land reforms requires proper management of land records and correctness of the records of rights. Land, being a dynamic entity, keep changing its ownership, boundaries and classification: unless these changes are promptly captured, the land records become obsolete. Such obsolete records do not resolve conflict but add to them. Mutation process being quasi-judicial, time consuming and machinery dependent.

Here, again, history has been created by the present Govt. by making amendment in age-old rule of mutation in making “Automated Mutation”. Through linking registration process with mutation and with some changes in procedure of disposal of mutation most of the sale – transfers will be immediately reflected in records of right. It is undoubtedly a giant leap in the field of land reforms.