

IKP-BHOOMI: SOCIETY FOR ELIMINATION OF RURAL POVERTY ANDHRA PRADESH



ELIMINATING LANDLESSNESS THROUGH SELF-MANAGED INSTITUTIONS

Context

- Landlessness is a key cause of poverty and vulnerability in rural India, more so among lower caste communities. A key reason behind the continued landlessness and land-deprivation despite pro-poor reform legislation has been poor legal awareness and access to legal services.

“Possession of land is not just economics. It is a symbol of dignity. It is self-respect, it is politics, it is power. It makes you or unmakes you. You are worth the earth you possess.”¹

Interventions

- Realizing the significance of land in poverty eradication, Andhra Pradesh launched the Bhoomi (IKP-land) program to assist the poor in access to land, land development, land purchase and to identify tenant farmers for distributing loan eligibility cards.
- The IKP- land paralegals mechanism follows a bottom-up approach building on trusted local resource persons, which was highly efficient in achieving tenure security for the poor at low cost.
- Education and awareness activities were carried out through the women’s Self Help Group (SHG) institutional mechanism to improve the land literacy of the poor and vulnerable.

Lessons

- Along with pro-poor land-legislation, the poor need to be made aware of and exercise their land rights through interventions like land literacy.
- Land problems can be solved also by involving institutions outside the Land Revenue Department viz. education, research institutions and NGOs.
- Trained human resources at multi-levels can better provide legal assistance and undertake community surveys to address complex land issues affecting the poor through strategic partnerships with NGOs and Panchayats.
- As land issues concerning the most vulnerable viz. members of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women are important, a robust system of identification and monitoring their issues and empowering local institutions for decentralized and pro-poor land revenue service delivery is critical.

¹Quote mentioned in the SERP-Bhoomi webpage

Introduction

The Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP)² in 2000 launched a state-wide community-driven program in the erstwhile state of Andhra Pradesh, by the name of Indira Kranti Patham (IKP)³. The objective of the program was to strive towards building self-managed institutions as platforms to come together and take collective action to help overcome rural poverty. With this objective, the poor were organized into self-help groups (SHGs), federated at the village, mandal⁴ and district levels as Village Organizations, Mandal Samakhyas and Zilla Samakhyas respectively. A full description of the functioning and structure of these community-based organizations (CBOs) is provided in Annexure 1. Trained facilitators supported these CBOs in taking up activities connected to access of land, credit, marketing, health and education, as well as helped facilitate employment creation and other activities related to rural livelihoods.

Landlessness is one of the indicators of poverty in India as per the Draft National Land Reforms Policy, and the same is evident from the socio-economic surveys conducted over time (GoI, 2013; GoI, 2011). Post-independence, the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) made efforts towards implementing land reforms focusing on equitable land distribution. Despite policy and legislative initiatives to improve access to land and achieve tenure security, impacts have been limited (Hanstad et al., 2008).

The SERP initiative found that the government Land Administration system has been unable to make the poor aware of their land rights as mandated by various pro-poor legislations. The initiative observed that when the poor are aware of their rights, they seldom demand that their rights be upheld, And, when they in fact demand so, the

implementation mechanism more often than locked in litigation, abetted by the poor state



Image Credit: Ritayan Mukherjee /World Bank

not doesn't have the wherewithal to enforce these rights. About 30 percent to 40 percent of poor people in every village require legal support, and about 95 percent of villagers are not aware of their land rights (Government of Andhra Pradesh [GoAP], n.d). Ideally, the land administration system should protect the rights of the rural poor to own, enjoy and dispose of their land without any legal obstacle or obstruction. It should help facilitate clear title over land- both in terms of physical possession and in terms of the documents required to assure title guarantee.

In the absence of this, the rural poor, already victims of multi-dimensional poverty, also lack access to a secured title or to the possession of land. When they have both title and possession, their land is often

of the Land Records, that winds its way through a hierarchy of courts at the end of which their prospects of justice look bleak (Government of Andhra Pradesh [GoAP], n.d).

²SERP in the undivided AP has a long history of several externally funded poverty alleviation projects that were gradually scaled up. It started with UNDP funded South Asia Poverty Alleviation Project (SAPAP) from 1995 to 2000 in 20 Mandals of three districts. The World Bank funded DPIIP was implemented in 316 Mandals of 6 districts from 2000 to 2006. The next decade of 2003- 2013 saw the World Bank funded Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project (APRRP) with a spread to 656 Mandals of 22 districts. After the bifurcation of AP into Telangana and AP, 13 districts are with AP and 9 in Telangana. <https://www.inclusivefinanceindia.org/uploads-inclusivefinance/publications/1048-1004-FILE.pdf>

³The Department of Rural Development, Government of Andhra Pradesh established the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) in 1998 with a comprehensive multi-dimensional strategy to alleviate rural poverty. In 2000, SERP has piloted a program Velugu, which grew into a pan-state programme called Indira Kranti Patham.

⁴In the state of Andhra Pradesh, districts have administrative divisions called revenue divisions. These divisions are sub-divided into mandals. The mandals are in turn divided into villages and hamlets.

Objective

The Bhoomi designers felt that organizing the poor into collectives could help the latter demand the realization of their land rights. A necessary precursor to this was to spread awareness among them about the rights they possessed. Recognition of land as a critical resource for the poor during the formulation of the Andhra Pradesh Rural Poverty Reduction Project (APRPRP) led to including the Land Component in Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP-Land; IKP-Bhoomi in the Telugu language), sanctioned with an outlay of Rs.526 million rupees.

The Bhoomi design also recognized that any attention paid to the computerization of land records and digitization of cadastral survey maps is inadequate and superficial so long as an efficient enforcement of rights mandated to the poor remains absent.

The program was operational between 2004 and 2015 with the objective of overcoming different implementation barriers to land reforms faced by the rural poor through institutional innovations and to ensure a decentralized and pro-poor land revenue service delivery system (Hanstad et al.,

2008). The program was financially supported by the Government of Andhra Pradesh and the World Bank (as part of APRPRP; Kumar, 2013; Chowdhury, 2017) and technically supported by Landesa (Kumar, 2013).

Implementation

Under IKP-Bhoomi, land-related activities focused on two key areas. One was Land Purchase i.e. securing the poor's access to productive lands by facilitating the purchase of good quality irrigated lands; and the other was Land Access i.e. helping the poor have control over their lands- in terms of a secure title, access to dispute resolution, increased awareness of the measures taken by the Government to protect their interests- in convergence with the Revenue Department (viz. Land Licensed Cultivator Act, 2011⁵, free land registration in the name of women⁶, Revenue Sadassulu⁷). In addition, land development of the poor was also facilitated through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), which allows for the development of private land owned by members of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and those living below the poverty line (BPL).

Under MGNREGA, 43,842 poor households were facilitated to have their lands developed. Subsequently from the land

inventory information, 1.86 million works on 3.05 million acres were identified with an investment of INR 88,710 million. Works were completed on 53,959 acres with expenditure of Rs.6610 million. In addition, irrigation facilities to 1 million acres were also facilitated under the State Government program of Indira Jala Prabha (IKP & World Bank, 2015).

Land Access Inventory and Development:

Land Access: Despite the existence of legislation to protect the land rights of poor and vulnerable communities⁸ (esp. SC, ST and women), they often fight protracted unsuccessful legal battles, mostly due to their lack of legal awareness and lack of access to affordable legal support (Government of Andhra Pradesh [GoAP], n.d). Initially, Land Access support was offered to support all the poor and Poorest of the Poor (PoP) households⁹. In the year 2010-11, the focus shifted to members of the SCs/STs, who are typically the poorest among the PoP households (IKP & World

Bank, 2015).

Land Inventory and Development: Land Inventory and development was implemented with the financial support of MGNREGS in 22,833 Revenue Villages of 956 Mandals in the State. The objective was to map the lands of the SCs/STs to help them have a secured title to and guaranteed possession of their land and to facilitate land development under MGNREGA¹⁰ (under the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act), as well as to increase incomes by helping the beneficiaries access sustainable agriculture schemes (GoI, 2012; Sharma, 2014). The Land Access Unit has taken part in format and module development for the land inventory survey, trainings and also in monitoring this work.

- As a first step, a land inventory containing details of the land of poor and marginalized communities especially SC/ST was prepared with the help of a cadre of paralegals/ Community surveyors/community

⁵ AP enacted the Land Licensed Cultivators Act, 2011, following the recommendations of the Koneru Ranga Rao Committee on land reforms, which was set up and facilitated by this project (Murty and Reddy, 2017)

⁶GoAP had exempted registration fee, stamp duty and transfer duty for the lands purchased by these women; G.O.Ms.No.763, Revenue (Registration and Mandals) Department, dated 28.9.2004 and G.O.Ms.No. 85, Panchayat Raj and Rural Development (PTS.III) Department, dated 22.3.2005

⁷Sadassulu is a village conference on land issues, in which villagers to get direct guidance from government officials (viz. land revenue department) to discuss and solve land disputes and issues; elaborated later in the text

⁸As per the Project Report, IMP Land Unit, Dalits and Tribal are the most vulnerable groups in terms of land ownership. More and more lands are passing into the hands of non-tribals & non-tribal hold as much as 48% of the land in Scheduled Areas. To prohibit transfer of lands in favor of non-tribals, Andhra Pradesh Schedule Areas Land Transfer Regulation (LTR) was enacted in the year 1959 and subsequently amended in 1970, 1971 & 1978. But the tribals are not able to access justice due to factors like lack of legal awareness, absence of legal support, alien adjudicatory system.

⁹The bottom 20% of population remains the poorest and the most vulnerable in terms of access to basic entitlements, livelihoods and human development. More than 80% of them belong to Dalit and tribal communities. Both the communities face huge gaps in development

¹⁰Under MGNREGA, land development, including plantation activities, can be implemented on the private land of SC, ST or BPL households while providing them wage employment simultaneously per the MGNREGA works field manual & Guideline for the new/Additional Work permitted under MGNREGA

resource persons (more details about them are provided in Annexure II) in partnership with MGNREGA¹¹.

- Initially developed from the Record of Rights (RoR), the inventory was later verified for actual possessions on those lands through field visits in 22,833 Revenue Villages of 956 Mandals in the State. The accuracy of the data recorded was cross-checked with the community. The Paralegals and Community Surveyors guided teams of Village Social Auditors (VSAs) and other Land volunteers in preparing the inventory of lands of SCs/STs. About 50,000 Land

volunteers/ VSAs were trained and participated in the inventory (Government of Andhra Pradesh [GoAP], n.d). Discrepancies between the RoR and the ground were documented. Land surveys were carried out when necessary.

- Out of 3.1 million households identified, 1.8 million households owned land and the remaining 1.3 million (42 percent) were landless. A total of 3.1 million land disputes covering 2.3 million acres of land were also identified (Roja, n.d). About 4.0 million acres belonging to 1.7 million SC/ST households have been physically

verified by 50,000 trained SC/ST rural youth along with collecting basic information about 1.2 million SC/ST landless households. All data collected from Land Inventory has been made available in the website.

- Land IKP SERP (IKP- Employment Guarantee Scheme), continuing its right based works, also ensured that the MGNREGA was deployed in selected Gram Panchayats to facilitate 100 days of employment guarantee to protect the poorest wage seekers and to develop their lands¹².



Image Credit: Ritayan Mukherjee /World Bank

¹¹The objective was to map the lands of the SCs/STs and to facilitate them to have secured title and possession and also to facilitate the land development under MGNREGS.

¹²The IKP-EGS program was implemented in 690 Gram Panchayats of 253 Mandals. The major achievement was in terms of average no. of wage days accessed by PoP wage seekers. The State Average in 2009-10 was 63 days whereas for IKP-EGS PoP households it was 106 days.



Image Credit: Ritayan Mukherjee /World Bank

Land Access through Dispute Resolution: The preliminary report showed that nearly 50% i.e. 1.92 million acres (of 1.08 million petitioners involving 1.82 million issues in 17,071 villages) out of the 4.0 million acres physically verified during the inventory process had some or the other possession related land issue. Once the inventory was finalized, each discrepancy was followed up by the paralegal teams with relevant collection of the required evidence and representations, which were subsequently submitted to the concerned revenue officers. Every case was pursued until resolved. Despite the existence of formal protective land legislation and good development programs, tribal people in Schedule V areas or Fifth Schedule Areas¹³ were not able to resolve their land problems. This

was due to their lack of awareness, poor access to information and lack of legal support. The SERP therefore started a similar land access initiative in tribal lands and the program was named IKP- Giri Nyayam. The word Giri in Telugu refers to aboriginal tribes in India and Nyayam is a Telugu word meaning Justice. (Process flow provided in Annex I)

There was no direct financial transaction in the project with the households in the Land Access model. The project incurred costs on capacity building, obtaining land records, legal expenses, maintenance of district land centers, monitoring and review mechanism etc. The households paid for the cost, if any, for things like Pattadar Pass Books, Title Deeds etc. From the investment that was made on

Land Access program, the per capita investment comes to Rs.294. (IKP & World Bank, 2015)

Land Purchase¹⁴: The objective of this activity was to facilitate the purchase of land for cultivation by landless poor women, especially the vulnerable sections viz. SC, ST and PoP. This land was to be of good quality under assured irrigation source and was expected to be registered only in the name of the women of landless households. Fees/charges applicable towards registration and stamp duty were exempted for the transaction¹⁵. Village organizations (VOs) would identify land, participate in the negotiation of rates and aid during the sale. The beneficiary was to pay an initial amount equivalent to 10 percent of the land value. Later, the government was to

¹³ Areas with preponderance of tribal population in India are categorised as scheduled areas and they have special governance mechanism. The cultural and economic interests of the scheduled tribes in these areas are promoted directly by the Government of India. The fifth and sixth schedules of the Constitution of India guides the creation and administration of the Scheduled Areas as well as Scheduled Tribes in the country. Fifth schedule is concerned about the Scheduled area in the states other than the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram, while the sixth schedule deals with the four states excluded in the fifth schedule. Therefore, scheduled areas according to the fifth schedule of Constitution of India are called as Fifth Schedule Areas. At present, the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan and Telangana (10 states) have fifth schedule areas.

¹⁴ <http://www.serp.ap.gov.in/BHOOMIAP/purchase.jsp> ; Implementation of Land purchase scheme since 2005 vide G.O.Ms.No.319, dated 08.09.2005.

¹⁵ Exempted from stamp duty and registration fee vide G.O.Ms.No 763 of Stamps and Registration Department.

pay 75 percent of the land value, and the remaining 15 percent was provided as a loan to be paid by the beneficiaries in affordable installments (Panth and Mahamallik, 2008). Initially, dry lands were purchased, with the cost of land development and provision of irrigation facilities being borne by the Project. Later, irrigated lands were purchased to yield immediate incomes. Land purchases were done in 190 villages of 128 mandals in the State with 90 percent of the beneficiaries belonging to SC and ST communities. The unit cost per acre was not uniform across the villages. It depended on the local market value of the lands (IKP & World Bank, 2015). About 1800 ha of land from private owners were purchased and transferred to 5300 women (World Bank, 2014). The Land Purchase program was a combination of grant, loan and

beneficiary contribution. Initially, the beneficiary family had to bear 10 percent of total project costs as their contribution (usually in the range of Rs. 5,000 - 10,000 per family). The IKP program provided a grant of up to 75 percent of total project cost (a maximum of Rs. 45,000 per family). The remaining 15 percent loan component also was given from the Project which the family needed to pay overtime the number of installments of which was decided by the VO in consultation with the families (IKP & World Bank, 2015). (Process flow provided in Annex I)

Land Leasing: In the state of Andhra Pradesh, land leasing activity was on the rise, particularly among SHG women as is evident from Micro Credit Plans of their SHGs. A considerable number of women who received bank credit were investing

in either the lease of lands or in its purchase. The Deccan Development Society (DDS), an NGO located in Medak district of Andhra Pradesh, has been helping SHG women to use group leasing practices since 1989 (Haque and Nair, 2014). About 25 percent of the rent is paid by group members, and the rest is covered by interest free loans from DDS, which is repaid by groups in installments. To help SHGs have enhanced access to land and remove future uncertainties, IKP facilitated a new legislation i.e. the Andhra Pradesh Self Help Groups (Leasing of Agricultural Land) Bill, 2010¹⁶ (The New Indian Express, 2010). The Bill was approved by the State Legislative Assembly but didn't get the consent of the President of India. Along with the efforts for bringing in favorable policy changes, IKP Land functionaries supported land leasing

Table 1. Project Timeline (adapted from IKP & World Bank, 2015)

2002-04	The design and implementation of the Land Purchase program: Revenue Department had accepted to lend their Deputy Collectors and other revenue officers on deputation to help assist with the program. This gave a great boost to it. Policy advocacy work started with the Govt. of AP appointing the Koneru Rangarao Land Committee for looking at land issues concerning the poor. IKP Land Unit functioned as a Secretariat for the same.
2004-05	Focus was exclusively on the Land Purchase Scheme; A Land Access pilot was conducted for resolving land disputes initiated in Kadapa district. The idea of village courts was experimented with.
2006-08	Land Purchase activity continued and Land Access activity was rolled out to 367 mandals of 22 districts. Partnerships were forged with different law colleges and with civil society organizations working on land issues.
2008-09	Land Purchase program ended; The resolution of Land issues continued. Land development activities were facilitated under MGNREGS.
2009-10	Resolution of land issues continued.
2010-11	Land Inventory of SC/ST lands in 956 mandals in partnership with MGNREGA. Land Development also took place under MGNREGA
2011-12	Land Inventory data entry completed; Land Facilitators positioned in 773 Mandals; Land development under MGNREGA and irrigation facilities to 10 lakh acres under Indira Jala Prabha initiated

¹⁶Features of the Bill include: land-owning women to be encouraged to lease out their agricultural lands to SHG women; Each woman will have access to one acre for a maximum period of 5 years; The govt will facilitate the lease between the two parties; As the lease will have legal frame work, SHG women can get farm loans as tenant farmers; All issues arising during implementation of the scheme shall be adjudicated only in revenue courts; The bill aimed to make every member of the SHGs a lakhpati (Owners of Lakhs) by 2014.

activities by landless PoP households; for this, a separate fund had been created under the PoP Strategy. These households were supported to lease in land at the then prevailing lease rates. Land lease fund was provided as a grant to those selected VOs who had requested for such assistance. An average amount of Rs.10,000 was provided to the family as a loan at 3 percent interest per annum. Wherever the lease rate was more than the fund provided, the member families contributed to fill the gap. The member family repaid the principal and interest to the SHG. SHG kept 2 percent interest with itself and the principal along with 1 percent interest was paid back to the VO to be recycled among other PoP households. The repayment schedule was as per the cropping season, though the members paid the interest every month. About 13,722 acres were leased-in by 15,830 PoP households in 19 districts, covering 201 Mandals in 1198 villages (IKP & World Bank, 2015).

Revenue Sadassulu: Under the Bhoomi program, SERP has conducted Revenue¹⁷ Sadassulu (conference in Telugu) in all the villages. Revenue Department conducted Revenue Sadassulu between January to March, 2012 and during March 12 to April 10 2013, to solve long-pending land disputes and redress the grievances of the poor and middle class in rural areas

(Shashank, 2013; Money Control, 2012). Prior to launching of the program, State and District level convergence meetings were held with political parties, NGOs working on land issues and officials. Ministers, Members of Parliament (MPs), Members of Legislative Council (MLCs), Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and other public representatives/ dignitaries were invited to participate in Revenue Sadassulu. Mandal tahsildar, revenue inspector, Village Revenue Officers (VRO) , surveyors, a representative of Indira Kranthi Patham, member of Grama Samakhya, field and technical assistants of MGNREGS and local officials of agriculture, endowment, Wakf, forest department, representatives of commercial banks, PAC secretary were constituted into a team for this meeting. The sadassulu studied various land-related documents before arriving at an amicable solution. District Collectors were directed to ensure that all the petitions received during Revenue Sadassulu were disposed of within three months. During Revenue Sadassulu held in 2012, a total of 0.69 million petitions were disposed covering 60,000 habitations. During 2013, the program was organized during March 12 to April 10, 2013, wherein 1.01 million petitions were received in 28,025 Revenue villages, out of which 75 percent were redressed (Gol, 2013b). More than 90% of these problems are pertaining to the

Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population. It is estimated that about 2% of land in rural areas are embroiled in court cases, and about 40 percent of land faces other problems (CIPS, 2016). This platform was also used to spread awareness among the public on Aadhaar, Mee Seva services and other revenue matters, including implementation of the Andhra Pradesh Land Cultivation Act, 2011.

These meetings, which brought together all the relevant local officials of the revenue and agriculture departments, as well as the Grama Samakhya, were instrumental in identifying the tenant farmers to distribute the loan eligibility cards (LECs) under the Andhra Pradesh Land Cultivation Act, 2011 (The Hans India, 2013). Although this was not the primary objective of the Revenue Sadassulu, it suggests that a combination of increased awareness among farmers and better coordination across the revenue and agriculture departments at the local level, with support from the local Panchayati Raj Institutions, could facilitate registration of tenant farmers and enable them to access government agricultural schemes.



¹⁷Revenue Department of every state in India is responsible for land administration activities

Institutional Arrangement

Bhoomi of SERP followed a convergence approach model operational primarily through women's self-help groups (SHGs) involving land administrators, civil society organizations and the community. A detailed explanation of different stakeholders involved in this program and their roles is provided in figure 1.

Land Sub-committees are formed with 3-5 members at all levels above SHG and are trained in the basics of land records and land enactments. The Committee members participate in Land Inventory and experience sharing cum review sessions conducted fortnightly or once a month. The issues are brought to the notice of land staff. The Land Sub-Committees also meet the revenue officers to put pressure on the system to resolve land issues of the poor.

Land administrators: Land administrators consist of two groups. One group is the project staff, and the other is the government revenue officials. The details of both the groups are provided in Annexure II.

Government staff: All the staff from the revenue department were associated with every activity of the Bhoomi – SERP. Some of them were also deputed to the project. They worked in convergence with the Bhoomi project staff, CBOs and civil society organizations.

Land centres: At every district headquarters, a land centre was established, and in scheduled areas, an additional land centre was established to address the complex land issues facing tribal people. These centres were managed by legal coordinators and land managers. Retired revenue officers were appointed as land managers to manage the centres and act as communication channels with the revenue officers. Land centres were the single window support systems at Zilla Samakhya where people could access all the services provided by paralegals, community surveyors and legal coordinators.

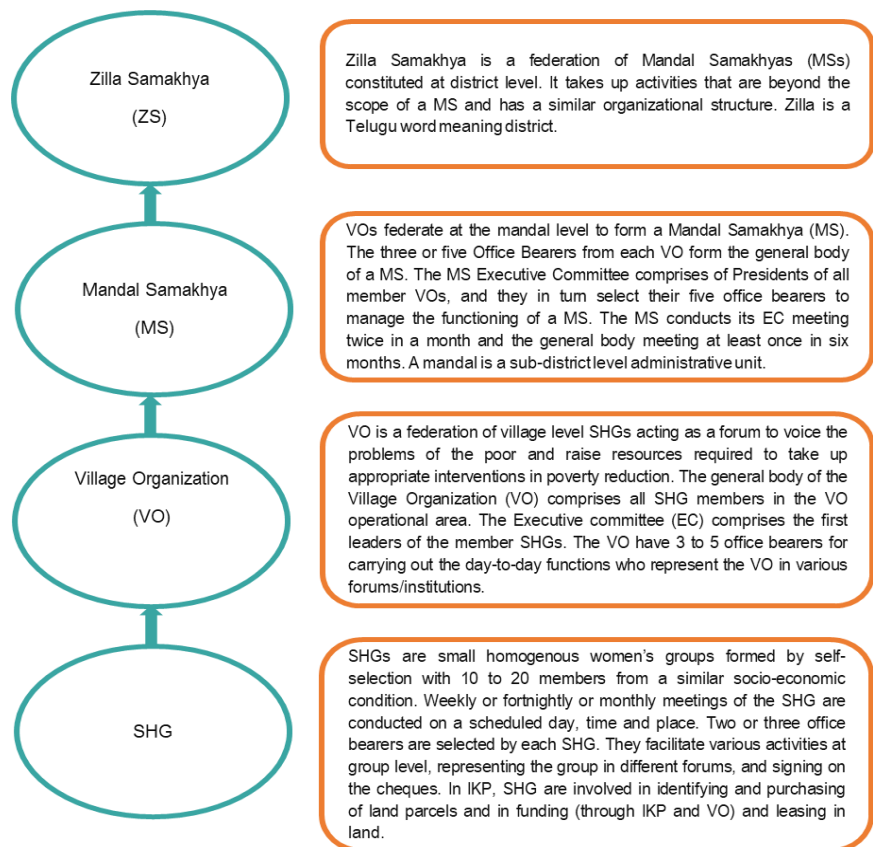


Figure 1: Structure of SERP Community-based organization (CBO) in Indira Kranti Patham

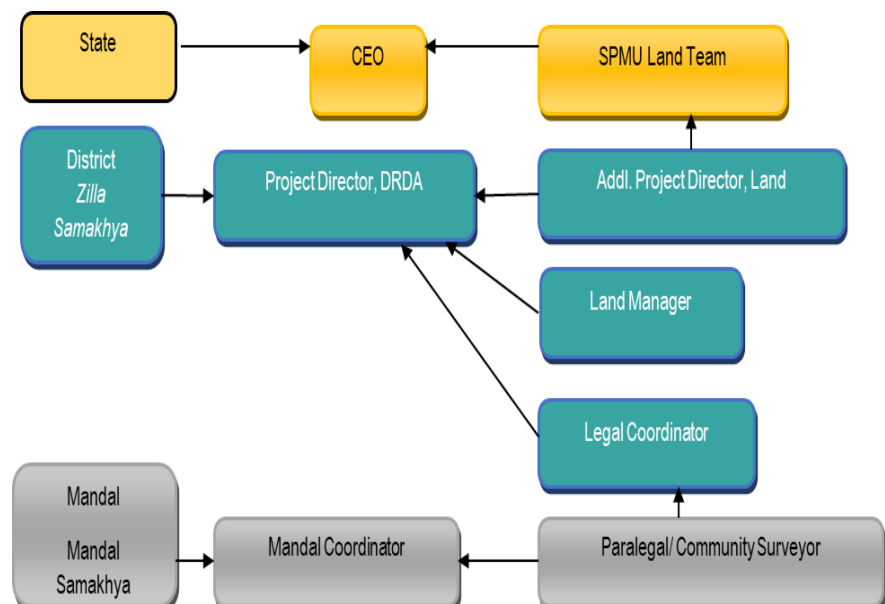


Figure 2: The support mechanism put in place from the Project side¹⁸

¹⁸Adapted from IKP & World Bank, 2015 and Para Legal Fact Sheet

Civil society organizations: Civil society organizations working on land issues also attempted innovative experiments to rectify inequities of land ownership in rural areas. The legal experience and knowledge of the civil society organizations were used to train the paralegals. The Government of Andhra Pradesh had issued an order¹⁹ that enabled civil society organizations to participate in the program. A partnership was forged with Praja Chetana, an organization affiliated to AP Vyavasya Vruttidarula Sangham (Government of Andhra Pradesh [GoAP], n.d).

Educational and training institutions: Agreements were made with educational and training institutions in the state for capacity building.

- Training programs are conducted for paralegals and community surveyors by Alimeneti Madhava Reddy Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development (AMR APARD).
- The state government had an understanding with NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad for -
 - * Selection, training and evaluation of

legal coordinators,

- * Provision of certificate courses to paralegals,
- * Researching issues related to tribal land rights.

Software applications were put in place for Land Purchase, Land Access and Land Inventory with support from TCS Limited, Hyderabad.

Landesa: Its primary roles were improving land literacy and capacity building (Kumar, 2013). Landesa provided technical support in design, implementation and periodic assessment of the program. Further, Landesa provided training material to all the paralegals, community surveyors and legal coordinators (CIPS, 2016). Several initiatives were taken up by Landesa after realizing the importance of land legal literacy. One example was partnering with a Telugu news channel HMTV to start a live phone-in program by the name "Bhoomi Kosam"²⁰. Broadcasted between January 2011 and March 2012 (56 episodes of 45 minutes each), the program was the first weekly television program providing information on land laws, land records and the process to resolve land problems. All the

episodes were compiled into CDs and distributed to people associated with the IKP-Land program in the state. Landesa in collaboration with NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad also established a Land Rights Center at the University to carry out research in the area of land.

Every project staff in the program worked to empower ordinary people to help them handle their land issues. This was achieved by the transfer of land knowledge and information to the communities at the village level. Paralegals, with support from the community surveyors, prepared the land inventory. As Bhoomi was implemented through the SHG mechanism, these women's groups and their families were empowered to raise the land issues they were facing for project support (Kumar, 2013). Issues raised by members of poor and marginalized communities viz. SC, ST were also considered and resolved.



Image Credit: Ritayan Mukherjee /World Bank

¹⁹The Government has already issued order institutionalizing convergence between the Land Administration, Civil Society Organizations and the community through G.O.Ms.No.1148

²⁰ bhoomi means "land" and kosam means "for". Together meaning "For Land".

Box 1: The Legal Support Strategy²¹

An innovative, multi-level, multi-disciplinary team with a multi-pronged platform was the bedrock of the legal services strategy employed by IKP to ensure a single-window land administration service for the poor aiming to secure their land rights. At the Mandal level, Paralegals trained on land matters and Community Surveyors (CS) having technical know-how were positioned to facilitate the resolution of land issues troubling the poor. Legal Coordinators (Law graduates) and Land Managers (Retired Tehsildars) provided them with both technical and functional support at district level. The entire land facilitating team works with the poor households and the government land administrators in tandem. They also equipped the SHGs and their federations with knowledge and the ability to resolve land issues themselves.

All the team members, especially those newly recruited, were trained well (presented in Annexure 2) and were provided with adequate learning material. These included:

- Bhoomi Chaitanya Karadeepikalu- process guidelines published by IKP in 2007-08 to guide the paralegals and the community in how to proceed in different kinds of land issues;
- Karadeepika was developed to guide the Paralegals, Community Surveyors and others involved in the land inventory process; and
- A handbook on land inventory for the Training of Trainers was also developed to train Village Social Auditors (VSAs) and land volunteers.

The process of identifying the land issues of the poor and helping them to pursue and resolve their claims were both labour-intensive and required an informed, pro-poor perspective. The steps involved in this process were:

- Land issues were collected from the community.
- Field Enquiry and collection of required material by Paralegals was undertaken.
- Community Surveyors completed a land survey wherever required.
- Representation was submitted to the revenue officers.
- Paralegals visited the Tehsildar office every Monday to follow up on issues until their resolution.
- For unresolved issues that escalated, Land Managers and Legal Coordinators sought the Joint Commissioner's intervention.
- Legal assistance was arranged for lands locked in both revenue and civil courts.

Physical inventory was one of the most effective strategies adopted by IKP to identify problems that limited secured land access and efficient land utilization by the poor. IKP-Land launched a major initiative to build a Scheduled Caste (SC)/Scheduled Tribe (ST) Lands database in partnership with MGNREGA. An offline software application was developed for capturing the land information of more than 1.8 million farmers with an exclusive focus on SC/ST lands (1.5 million acres of land belonging to 1 million SC/ST) along with the land issues, and the entire database was made available online for the use of other government departments to reach out the poor (AP State LGAF Report, 2014). This inventory was intended to facilitate land development of SC/ST lands under MGNREGA and also to identify the lands owned by the SCs/STs and help them get secured title and possession.

SERP recognized the need to address pending land cases and therefore to provide for lawyers, court fees and other legal support to the poor and established a Bhoomi Nyaya Sahaya Kendram (BNSK; Land Legal Assistance Centre) at Warangal, initially. Its success prompted SERP to establish BNSKs in 4 more Districts of the State.



²¹Adapted from <https://www.inclusivefinanceindia.org/uploads-inclusivefinance/publications/1048-1004-FILE.pdf>

Scale (coverage) / Implementation status

The Bhoomi program covered the whole state of Andhra Pradesh. Table 2 presents insights into the coverage/scale and implementation of the project. A more detailed

table summarizing the performance of the IKP-Land project is in Annexure 3.

Table 2. Coverage/Scale of the Bhoomi program in Andhra Pradesh

Sl. No.	Details	Status
Staff details (as per Project Evaluation Report, (Government of Andhra Pradesh [GoAP], n.d)		
1	No of Mandals where land staff related to Bhoomi are working	448 out of 656 mandals in
2	No of Legal Coordinators	26 (district) + 1 (state)
3	No of Land Managers	19
4	No of Paralegals	372
5	No of Community Surveyors	453
6	No of MBK (Master Book Keeper)	78
7	No of MTC (Mandal Training Coordinators)	53
8	No of Zilla Samakhya (ZS) Land Sub Committee members	36
9	No of Mandal Samakhya (MS) Land Sub Committee members	796
10	No of VO Land Sub Committee members	30,881
11	No. of members trained in youth trainings	3,69,185

Impacts

Hundreds of thousands of poor people benefitted from more secure land rights. For the first time, the land ownership and possession data of SCs and STs were collected and physically verified and also used to organize convergence with other government programs targeting these vulnerable groups. The inventory data also helped identify land disputes faced by 1.07

million poor families involving 1 million acres. To a great extent, the IKP-SERP land access activities helped place the issue of the land rights and claims of the poor back onto the agenda of the Revenue Department²³. The total land area accessed by poor was 6,22,481 acres, which was 207 percent of the target. Due to land access, 0.28 million household got access to credit.

(IKP & World Bank, 2015).

The Assessment Study done by the Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) on Impact Assessment of APRPRP noted an increase of 3 percentage points of land owners among the participant households. The figures stand at 4 percentage points for the PoP category and 3 percentage points for the poor. There was a clear increase in

Table 3. Investment and Impact of IKP- Bhoomi ²²

Intervention	Investment by Project	Resources leveraged from Govt.	Outputs	Outcomes
Land purchase	INR 293.745 million <i>Cost Benefit Ratio is 1.75</i>	-	4539.24 acres of land purchased	5303 landless poor women became landowners, out of targeted 5303 (100 percent achievement) <i>SC & ST – 90 percent</i>
Land Access	INR 181.5 million <i>Cost Benefit Ratio is 9.24</i>	-	1.18 million acres identified with issues for 0.61 million poor farmers	0.87 million acres of land extent got resolved for 0.43 million poor farmers out of 0.62 million target (70 percent achievement) <i>SC & ST – 62 percent</i>
Land Inventory and Land Development	-	Rs.400 million from MGNREGA	1.86 million works on 3.05 million acres identified with investment of Rs.88710 million	Productivity increase in 0.05 million acres of land developed and 0.83 million acres are in progress with investment of Rs.6610 million
Land lease	INR 158.3 million grant to VO	-	15830 household accessed 13, 722 acres of land through lease	On an average the benefit per household due to program was 0.052 acres of land leased-in.

²²Adapted from IKP & World Bank (2015)

the size of the landholding by 0.31 acres among PoP households and by 0.02 acres overall. IKP also contributed to an increase in the participation in the land lease market. They noted an increase of 0.32 acres (12 percentage points) in land access (own + leased in) per household due to the implementation of the program among PoP. The benefit per household due to the program was Acs.0.05 (1.3 percentage points) for PoP due to greater participation in land leasing activities (IKP & World Bank, 2015).

Based on IKP-Bhoomi's work, the Koneru Ranga Rao (KRR) Committee²⁴ was constituted by the Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) in 2004 to assess the overall implementation of land distribution programs of the Government and to suggest measures for their effective implementation. The Committee recommended that a sensitive support organization for the poor be put in place to enable them to take advantage of pro-poor land enactments and programs of the Government (GoAP, 2007). Accordingly, the GoAP in 2008 acknowledged²⁵ that the system put in place by IKP for the Zilla and Mandal Samakhya was working well in 400 mandals across 22 districts, with communities utilizing the services of paralegals, Community surveyors, Land Managers and Legal Coordinators with

support from the Revenue Department (GoAP, 2007). The Committee therefore requested the Collectors to take necessary action to extend the support mechanism of IKP to cover the remaining mandals of the State so that the poor could benefit in resolving their land issues. The IKP Land Unit organized a series of consultations with Revenue officers from all levels and civil society organizations working on land issues to share lessons learned with the KRR. The consultations played a key role in the preparation of the KRR Land Committee report submitted to the Government of Andhra Pradesh, and the government accepted 90 recommendations from the 104 suggested (Government of Andhra Pradesh [GoAP], n.d). The recommendations pertained to, among others, the management of government land, land reforms, tenancy, land records, protection of tribal land, land litigations etc. One key outcome of these recommendations was the enactment of the Land Licensed Cultivator Act, 2011.

A sample survey was conducted in four districts by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, New Delhi in 2006 to measure the impact of the IKP-land purchase activity (Panth and Mahamallik 2008). According to the study, the average gross income of the land purchase beneficiary household²⁶ increased by 31 percent from Rs. 10,365 to

Rs. 13,548. The total income in all the sample households increased by 30 percent to 75 percent post-intervention, and this increase in income was primarily due to gains from cultivation. The study also points out that following the land purchase initiative, dependency on borrowing went down, and 76 percent of the households managed to eat two square meals a day. Seasonal migration among the land purchase beneficiaries was also the lowest among the sampled groups.

In terms of system impact of the land access program, for the first time training to Revenue officers was imparted on the land issues affecting the poor. This was done in partnership with the Chief Commissioner of Land administration. Land records, which are otherwise not accessible to people in general, were made available to IKP CBOs to enable access for anyone in need. Community Surveyors, all from the poor community, were trained in cadastral survey. All of them were given survey licenses and were exempted from payment of license fees²⁷. Impressed by the IKP land inventory process, MGNREGA has adopted it for SC/ST land development (IKP & World Bank, 2015).

Challenges

Getting the last mile functionaries of the revenue department to accept and respond to the CBO support structure was a challenge, as per the observation of the project evaluation report in 2010-11 (Government of Andhra Pradesh [GoAP], n.d). In addition, the report noted that instilling a pro-poor perspective in the department as a whole and accessing

updated revenue and survey records were significant challenges.

Even though the project was spearheaded by the Rural Development Department, the involvement of the Panchayat in the whole process was limited. While the grassroots focus was a key strategy, with the engagement of various local actors viz. paralegal, SHG and Village Associations, it

is not clear why there was a lack of involvement of legitimate local self-governance institutions, like the Panchayat.

²³<https://www.inclusivefinanceindia.org/uploads-inclusivefinance/publications/1048-1004-FILE.pdf>

²⁴The Government vide G.O.Ms.No.1091 Revenue (Assn-1) Dept., dated 23.12.2004 had constituted a committee under the Chairmanship of Sri Koneru Ranga Rao, the then Hon'ble Minister for Municipal Administration & Urban Development.

²⁵ Vide CCLA circular No.P1/1024/2007 dt;10-9-08

²⁶In all 250 households were interviewed in the sample districts. This included households from IKP (land) beneficiaries, IKP (non-land) beneficiaries, landless households and Non-IKP (land) beneficiaries. The beneficiaries of land distribution scheme by the SC Corporation are considered as the non-IKP (land) beneficiaries.

²⁷G.O.Rt.No.634, Revenue Department, dated 04.03.2008

Lessons Learnt

1. Along with pro-poor legislation, the poor require exclusive and sensitive facilitation support, especially land literacy, to be aware of and exercise their land rights

The poor, especially SCs and STs, require dedicated facilitation support to resolve their land issues. The program underscored the importance of ensuring that the Revenue Department goes beyond bringing in pro-poor legislation and other measures to empower the poor with regard to their land rights. The adoption of key principles from the very beginning can lead to inclusive outcomes, for example: (1) Ensuring that no single land survey number of an SC and ST household is left out of the land inventory and (2) for all the survey numbers of the SC/ST households, required development activities are covered under the land development program of MGNREGA, as non-negotiables (Government of Andhra Pradesh [GoAP], n.d). Along with supply side measures, like improving legislation and having proper institutional mechanisms in place, demand side interventions viz. improving the land literacy of the poor are critical. Strategic steps to institutionalize land literacy and enhance access to legal and revenue services at the village level must be a top priority.

2. Land Problems are solvable, even by organizing interventions involving institutions outside the Land Revenue Department; the program highlights the role of education, research institutions and NGOs in helping Government address land problems

Despite the fact that land disputes are all-pervasive in India and resolving land issues takes time, the main reasons behind many

disputes seem to include a general lack of awareness about land rights and legal provisions. Therefore, providing adequate and timely legal awareness training for the rural poor can be very effective in reducing land disputes. Like a leaking bucket, land disputes drain the poor of their income, often accrued with considerable difficulty. That the IKP - a program of the rural development department - could launch and lead such a successful program also demonstrates the fact that political and bureaucratic will, adequate resources and institutionalization among other departments (besides the Revenue Department) can trigger massive transformation. IKP demonstrates that it is possible for rural development officials to facilitate and promote productive working relationships between grassroots organizations and Revenue Department officials to resolve disputes through formal and alternative mechanisms.

3. Systematic Institutionalization with strategic partnership and convergence is critical to address complex issues around pro-poor land access

Bhoomi (IKP-land) as a unique program in the country that demonstrated that multiple issues related to land, critical to the livelihoods of the rural poor, can be addressed through supporting trained human resources at multiple levels to provide technical assistance on legal issues and community surveys to address complex land issues facing the poor even in a poverty alleviation initiative. Since land is important for the poor and enhancing land rights can contribute to poverty eradication (Hanstad et al., 2008), investing in land literacy and legal aid can be impactful and strategic for similar poverty alleviation programs. Bhoomi demonstrates that a strategy of convergence, focusing on partnerships among the revenue department, civil society organizations and

the community, can resolve difficult land issues. There was an institutionalized convergence between IKP and the Revenue Department²⁸, with the latter agreeing to depute their Deputy Collectors and other revenue officers to SERP, which gave a boost to the program. Such convergence can be a way forward for other states. Expanding the land governance space by forging collaboration and fostering participation can ensure inclusive and effective land administration, as amply demonstrated by this example.

The involvement of education and research institutions can help in resolving land-related problems through capacity building, development of innovative solutions and monitoring the initiatives. Bhoomi showed the way forward by associating AMR APARD, Andhra Pradesh Survey Training Academy and NALSAR University in capacity building, and the initiative was successful.

²⁸he Govt. issued G.O.Ms.No.1148 in the first phase of the programme from 2002 - 04

Lessons Learnt

4. Targeting (i.e. focusing on land cases of the most vulnerable viz. members of scheduled castes and tribes and women, through robust database development) and localization (i.e. positioning expertise locally and empowering local institutions) are important for addressing land issues of the rural poor

Building on the way Bhoomi was organized, it is important to note that a well targeted, locally-adaptive and institutionally resourced program (with trained manpower at different levels backed up with bureaucratic support) can help the government address land problems²⁹ effectively.

Localization of legal assistance can make a real difference. Paralegals are more likely to improve land rights in rural areas. A study by Kumar (2013) found that the SERP paralegals mechanism was highly efficient in ensuring tenure security for the poor at low cost³⁰. Paralegals, who are typically from the families of the most exploited and vulnerable, are able to identify the issues affecting the poor and bring them onto the agenda of government administrators (Hanstad and Mitchell, 2008). Involving tribal youth/women as Paralegals is the best way to map and address the land issues of tribal people, provided they are from the same area and can speak the local language fluently. When trained well, they can competently support both the poor and the Revenue Department in (1) settling complex land disputes; (2) mobilizing community participation; (3) delivering legal services sensitively and effectively at the poor's door step; and (4) making the system more transparent and accountable.

A focus on women as beneficiaries and also as members of SHGs has been a key feature of the IKP land activity. This focus has received widespread support from both rural women and their husbands.

5. Bhoomi is a unique program in the country that shows a way forward for other states to resolve land disputes by implementing the strategy of convergence among the revenue department, civil society organizations and community to resolve land issues

Another key lesson of the IKP land activity was the importance of involving the target communities i.e. poor and PoP themselves in both land purchase, as well as the land access components of the program, e.g. updating the subdivisions on land and records; updating the pending mutations in land records; correcting the land records; and inducting poor, SC/ST into the lands which they have been assigned (data presented in Table 2).

The annual cost per SERP paralegal is approximately Rs. 100,000 (USD 2,200), which includes salary, travel, training and management costs (this is according to the study conducted by Landesa).

The Ministry of Rural Development Committee on State Agrarian Relations and Unfinished Task of Land Reforms in its report of 2008 - 09 recommended adoption of the IKP model by other States with such modifications as may be deemed proper to suit the local environment (IKP & World Bank, 2015).

An INR 900 million project was announced by the Government of India for setting up Paralegal Assistance Centers in 8 Left Wing Extremist affected Districts. Govt. of India is also adopting the IKP Paralegal model in all LWE affected districts in the country (IKP & World Bank, 2015).

²⁹E.g. updating the subdivisions on land and records; updating the pending mutations in land records; correcting the land records; and inducting poor, SC/ST into the lands which they have been assigned (data presented in Table 2).

³⁰The annual cost per SERP paralegal is approximately Rs. 100,000 (USD 2,200), which includes salary, travel, training and management costs (this is according to the study conducted by Landesa)

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Annexures

Annexure I: Implementation Process Flow IKP & World Bank, 2015

A. Land Purchase

Sl. No.	Details
1	IKP staff prepare Mandal Level Purchase Inventory (MLPI)
2	IKP Community Coordinator works with SHG and VO to identify land parcels for purchase
3	IKP staff confirm that land, SHG and beneficiaries satisfy program requirements
4	IKP Community Coordinator links available land with beneficiaries who form Purchasing Group
5	IKP assists Purchasing Group to prepares land improvement and use plan and examine the title
6	Purchasing Group meets with land seller, VO representative, IKP Community Coordinator and village official or MRO ³¹ to negotiate purchase price of land
7	Beneficiaries agree on subdivision and allocation of land among themselves
8	IKP Community Coordinator prepares Subcomponent Proposal for submission to appraisal team, attaching MRO certificate and other confirmation of seller's ownership
9	Appraisal team evaluates proposal and approves or rejects
10	IKP and the beneficiaries purchase land and register ownership in the name of beneficiaries
11	Beneficiaries take possession of land and undertake needed land improvements

B. Land Access

Sl. No.	Details
1	Land issues are identified through village visits and by sitting with the community, also in Sadassulu
2	Paralegal collects the material evidence and other land records and documents
3	Paralegal physically verifies the lands along with the community
4	Paralegal facilitates the community to file representation with the revenue officers for redressal
5	Community Surveyors do the field survey wherever required
6	Paralegal and Surveyor follow up with the revenue officers till the issue is resolved
7	Concerned CBOs also put pressure on the system for speedy resolution
8	Legal assistance is arranged for those cases pending with revenue ³² and civil courts

C. SC/ST Land Inventory

Sl. No.	Details
1	A preliminary list is prepared of all SC/ST households in a village by the team doing inventory
2	Team does door to door survey collecting basic details of every SC/ST household and also the land details available with the household
3	Team obtains important village & mandal records from the Revenue Office
4	Team marks the SC/ST households in the village record (Revenue records do not contain the information about caste)
5	Team visits, along with the household members, the lands held by each household and notes down the actual possession particulars
6	Team prepares a comparative statement as to how the land details like survey number, extent, names of the title holder and possessor etc. are recorded in different key revenue records and the actual possession of lands (de jure and de facto comparisons)
7	The final data is discussed and confirmed in the meeting of the Village Organization

³¹MRO is Mandal Revenue Officer now redesignated as Tahsildar

³²Generally Revenue Courts are charged with resolving land-related disputes in AP

Annexure II: List of project staff in Bhoomi and their responsibilities

S.No.	Position	Responsibilities	Admin level and interface Government/ Community Institution
1	Legal Coordinators	Law graduates were selected for this post. Every district had one legal coordinator and, in some cases, two. Works in coordination with the Zilla Samakhya. Their responsibilities include offering operational support to paralegals and community surveyors and dealing with court cases related to land disputes. A state-level legal coordinator was also appointed to take care of the legal activities in the High court.	District level (Land Centres) / Collector/ Zilla Samakhya
2	Community Surveyors	A shortage of surveyors hampered work related to the survey. Hence, in this program, youth with a technical qualification ³³ were recruited and trained ³⁴ well. This included 2 months' training in cadastral survey in the Andhra Pradesh Survey Training Academy, Hyderabad, followed by an apprenticeship with departmental Mandal surveyors in districts for a period of 12 months. On successful completion, they were issued licenses free of cost by the Department of Survey. They are appointed at Mandal level to coordinate with the Mandal Samakhya to perform cadastral survey of individual plots when required.	Mandal/Tehsildar/ Mandal Samakhya
3	Paralegals	Graduates recruited through written test and interview; they were trained well for their work. This included one month in the districts (including in villages) for understanding the challenges faced by the poor in rural areas; residential training at Andhra Pradesh Academy of Rural Development (APARD), Hyderabad for 5 days with practitioners and academicians; and a Paralegal Certification Course for 10 days conducted by NALSAR University of Law (NALSAR), Hyderabad. The general training module covered the basics of land governance, like the types of lands and land records, land enactments, procedures and identification and resolution process for land disputes etc. They worked in coordination with the Mandal Samakhya. A paralegal knows laws related to land, is competent in their application and conducts a local enquiry to understand the field reality and obtain information on issues around the land. Subsequently, (s)he follows up on the cases in both the revenue and civil courts with help from the legal coordinator.	Mandal/Tehsildar/ Mandal Samakhya
4	MTCs (Mandal Training Coordinators)	The qualification for Mandal Training Coordinators (MTCs) is graduation in any discipline. MTCs train the community in land matters so that they can handle their land problems on their own. MTCs are instrumental in raising awareness among the SHGs on issues related to land. They work in coordination with the Mandal Samakhya.	Mandal/Tehsildar/ Mandal Samakhya
5	Community Resource Person (CRP)	CRPs get involved in land development activities under MGNREGA. They are responsible for mobilizing and organizing labour groups of adult members from the poor households who regularly work under the employment guarantee scheme. CRPs also prepare the calendar for MGNREGA/ Labour Demand Micro Plan/ Land Development Micro Plans.	Mandal/Tehsildar/ Mandal Samakhya
6	Land Managers (Retd. staff)	Retired revenue officers, they manage Land Centers and liaise with the Revenue Department, working under the control of the Zilla Samakhya.	District
7	On Deputation	Special Grade Deputy Collector (Director) , Deputy Collector (SPM/Addl. PD) , Tahsildars (DPM)	District/State

³³The technical qualification for a surveyor in Andhra Pradesh is Diploma or BE or B.Tech in Civil Engineering

³⁴<https://www.inclusivefinanceindia.org/uploads-inclusivefinance/publications/1048-1004-FILE.pdf>

Annexure III: Impacts of Bhoomi program in Andhra Pradesh

Loan Eligibility Cards issued between		
1	No of Villages where LEC cards issued	6,211
2	Total No. of Cards issued	2,14,822
Land Access		
3	Total Land issues Identified	11,62,542
4	Total Land Issues Resolved	10,76,930
5	Total No. of Land issues Rejected	25,184
6	Total No. of Land Issues pending	85,612
Land inventory of SC/ST		
7	Total No. of villages where land inventory is completed:	26,614 revenue villages of 1099 mandals in the state
8	Land inventory for all SC/ST lands, completed	22833 revenue villages of 954 mandals*
9	Total No. of Households	13,22,986 (SC) 6,63,683 (ST)
10	No. of Households with land titles	3,91,711 (SC) 1,39,509 (ST)
11	No. of Pattadars with secure land titles *	4,92,685 (SC) 2,05,217 (ST)
Land Purchase		
14	No. of villages where the land purchase activity was implemented	190 villages, 128 Mandals
15	No. of women benefited from land purchase and area of land purchased.	4498 acres of land purchased by 5304 landless poor women with an investment of Rs.316.6 million* (90 per cent SC/ST)

ABOUT THE DISCUSSION NOTE SERIES

This note is part of the South Asia Agriculture and Rural Growth Discussion Note Series, which seeks to disseminate operational learnings and implementation experiences from rural, agriculture, and food systems programs in South Asia. It is based on findings from the Land Policy Reform for Agricultural Transformation in India Study, carried out under the India Agriculture and Rural Development Advisory Services and Analytical Program.

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