

Chapter 11

A Study of the Implementation Status of Two E-Governance Projects in Land Revenue Administration in India

P. Senthil Priya

P S G College of Arts and Science, India

N. Mathiyalagan

P S G College of Arts and Science, India

ABSTRACT

This study is an attempt to benchmark two e-governance projects that totally revamped the existing revenue administration system in India. It employs Gartner (2000), Layne and Lee (2001) e-governance maturity models to assess the status of these land administration projects implemented in 15 Indian states. The study traces the current status, pace of implementation, integration of the projects across different levels and different functions of government, its benefits, transparency, accountability, and accessibility of the projects. It also identifies and investigates the gap that exists between the expected outcome and real outcome of the projects. Results shows that in states like Goa, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, where property registration project has been integrated with computerization of land records project, there exists a monitoring mechanism to facilitate genuine land transactions, and land records are automatically managed up-to-date with least human intervention. But, in all other states there is only sub-optimal utilization or non-utilization of assets, even after a decade of implementation.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-601-5.ch011

1 INTRODUCTION

India is the second most populous nation in the world. It is a very fertile land mass located in South Asia. English is the major language of trade and politics, but there are fourteen official languages in the nation. The country is divided into 35 states and 7 Union territories for administrative convenience. The central government is the federal institution of governance but the states elect their own provincial government with a chief minister at its helm to run the state administration.

In India, from time immemorial, land has always remained as a symbol of status, power and wealth. In olden times, there existed a privileged class called as “Jamindars” who were the official land owners of a particular geographical area. As they owned the maximum extent of any individual land holding, they were considered as the rulers of that particular community. The Jamindars allotted lands for the farmers to practice cultivation and in turn collected toll from that particular group of people or the community. Farmers brought back their cultivation to Jamindhars and they were paid a moderate sum for their produce. It was stored for future use of the community.

After the British Invasion, the system was moderately changed and their primary interests were the collection of huge land revenue and hence the system of land records was organized to serve that purpose. Britishers established regional land laws to serve local needs and that in turn raised the inconsistencies in management of management. During the British regime, several land acts were introduced, subsequently amended and regulated from time to time based on the specific needs of administration at that point of time. Land administration in India suffered seriously in the pre-Independence era, mainly due to the poor maintenance of land records and archaic procedures followed in land administration.

It took the Indian government nearly a decade after independence to streamline the land record management system. After independence, the In-

dian government emphasized on reliable statistics related to crop, irrigation and land use, so that these details could form the basis of future land development in the country. This process helped in strengthening the land records administration process. Simultaneously, land reform acts were executed by the government to implement acquisition of ceiling surplus land and transference of the same to landless poor. For the first time, land title documents were issued to make land holding legal for the citizen.

1.1 System of Land Transaction in India

The land record systems in India were originally designed to earn revenue for the government through collection of land taxes based on ownership rights of the property. Some of the main functions of land administration system were the collection of taxes, land-related conflict resolution, prevention of land seizure or encroachment of land, protection of land rights and to improve land-based economic development. But, inconsequently, even after 60 years of Independence, there is no single unique system of land record management followed within the country and at present, each state follows its own specifications and documentation processes in land administration.

Land administration and maintenance suffered seriously in the past mainly due to the following lacunae.

- Up-to-date maintenance of land data was not done on time, mainly due to work load pendency of staffs in the revenue department.
- The staffs of revenue department were also utilized for other governmental tasks such as elections, local civic activities, population census, welfare-aid distribution and other developmental works undertaken by the provincial government. So, regular of-

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