

RNI Title Code: TELENG/2017/74418

ISSN 2581-6322

RNI Title Code: TELENG/2017/74418

ISSN 2581-6322

# SPWI JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL WELFARE

(A Multi Disciplinary Peer-Review Bi-Quarterly  
Social Science Research Journal)

Volume 4 Issue 4, October-December 2021

*Editor*

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**SOCIETY FOR PUBLIC WELFARE AND INITIATIVES**

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	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPWI JOURNAL FOR SOCIAL WELFARE</b> (A Multi Disciplinary Peer-Review Bi-Quarterly Social Science Research Journal) <b>Volume : 4 Issue : 4 October-December 2021</b> <b>An ISO 9001-2015 Certified Journal</b></p>
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## **IMPLEMENTATION OF LAND PURCHASE AND LAND DISTRIBUTION SCHEME IN TELANGANA – A STUDY**



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### **Introduction**

In India, where over 70% of the total population and 80% of the poor live in rural areas, the land is central to livelihoods. Landlessness is the best indicator of rural poverty in India, better than caste or illiteracy. Ensuring access to land for landless agricultural workers, women, tribals and other vulnerable groups is crucial for their food security. Creating a land base is not only one of the quickest ways of plunging out of poverty but also provides the landless agricultural families with a stake in their village society. In addition, securing land ownership is also important in the context of sustainable farming practices, the implications of which can be seen only in the long run.

The land policy of the country, after Independence mainly aims at the abolition of intermediaries, regulation of tenancy, imposition of ceilings on landholdings and redistribution of ceiling surplus land. Several State governments while, not in a position to distribute a sufficient quantity of ceiling surplus land, adopted the policy of distributing the government wastelands and Bhoodan and gram dan lands acquired. Around 14.7 million acres of government land have been distributed to rural landless poor families by various State governments so far. The distribution of government wastelands was most vigorously implemented in the State of Andhra Pradesh which has a high percentage of landless labourers. The State has distributed 1.7 million hectares of government wastelands, followed by Uttar Pradesh which distributed about one

million hectares of government land to the landless poor. There has not been much opposition to the redistributive programs of wastelands from the landed elite because of the following land:

- The uncultivated wastelands by definition termed as 'lands which are degraded and cannot fulfil their life-sustaining potential. Much of the government wasteland distributed was of poor quality which needed much investment to be used for productive purposes.
- The process of encroachment is very common among the landed class. At the time of the abolition of intermediaries, it was presumed that the corpus of wastelands acquired would be used to provide land to the landless. While part of this corpus was certainly used for this purpose, it is also common that the practice has deviated for other purposes. For example, the major component of The Comprehensive Wasteland Development Program launched by the government of Tamil Nadu, launched during 2003, was to develop five million acres of government wasteland by involving the corporate sector for commercial agriculture.
- Implementation flaws with the hasty and improper distribution of lands. For example, the field investigation in Andhra Pradesh had shown that about 30% of the reported beneficiaries/households did not have legal as well as physical possession of the allocated.

Poverty and inequity in rural Andhra Pradesh are centrally linked to land ownership. Approximately 10% of rural households in Andhra Pradesh are landless and another 36% own less than half-acre of land. Only 6% of rural households in Andhra Pradesh own more than five acres of land. The distribution of land at the disposal of the government, commonly known as Banjar land, constitutes an important component of the land reform program in Andhra Pradesh. It has been estimated that by 2010, about 52.53 lakh acres. have been assigned to the landless poor, catering to about 31.59 lakh beneficiaries/households. That is, the land distributed on average was 1.6 acres.

However, the organizational challenges posed by the smallholdings for the efficient utilization of land, water and other inputs and also the diffusion and adoption of various technologies set a limitation for land distribution programs.

### **Size Of Holding Vis-A-Vis Productivity**

Posterman and Hanstad (2012), suggested four points concerning land productivity gain and the size of the holding. First, smaller holdings generally produce more than larger ones according to total factor productivity. Second, family-operated farms generally produce more than collective farms and farms dependent on wage labour. Third, on any given holding, a cultivator with ownership or secure tenure is far more likely to make long-term capital and 'sweat equity' investments that improve

and conserve the land, than is a cultivator with insecure tenure. Finally, a cultivator with ownership or owner like tenure is more likely to use improved seeds, fertilizer and other inputs than a tenant. A highly motivated intensive application of family labour was the reason cited for higher productivity.

Evidence was shown that given the facilities of irrigation, credit, favourable prices and market for agricultural inputs and output even these small and marginal farms may no doubt show greater skills in raising the productivity of land and thus bridging the productivity gap between the farms. In addition, small farms utilize land more efficiently and labour absorption and employment generation on small farms are much more compared to their medium and large counterparts. Another argument in favour of small farms is the introduction of wage employment programs in rural areas like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme which has led to an enhancement in the bargaining strength of the rural labour. Therefore, farms contributing more internally-generated labour stand at an advantage vis-a-vis farms hiring in more labour. This is likely to lead either to the disintegration of the large and medium farms into smaller units or to the mechanization or capitalization of large farms. The processes are already in evidence.

But the most formidable problem of raising sufficient income for the maintenance of the family and the farms through full utilization of the available family labour on such farms would remain. According to an estimate, given the country's best situation as obtained in some parts of Punjab, the average size of 0.39 hectares of land for marginal farmers would give a net return of Rs. 923.18 per annum only, which would be inadequate to provide the necessary means of livelihood for an average family of five members not to speak of any saving for investment in further land improvement. Similarly, an average small farm of 1.42 hectares would yield a net income of Rs. 3361.31 per annum only. The actual productivity levels in other parts of Punjab and the rest of the country, however, are much lower and therefore, the conditions of marginal and small farmers are worse off. Small and marginal farmers constitute the bulk of the cultivating population in India and therefore, any agricultural development to make sense must make its impact felt through improvement in their economic conditions. Besides, they cultivate as much as 23.5% of the total area where the growth rates of productivity of land and labour are likely to be slow, thereby slackening the pace of aggregate growth of the economy. The problems of small and marginal farmers, therefore, need to be tackled from the points of view of both social welfare and economic necessity. Some of the problems of economic development associated with small and marginal farms may be had from the following discussions.

### **Labor Productivity**

The productivity of labour tends to increase with farm size. Large landowners tend to economies on labour relative to capital and land and hence output per worker usually is higher on large farms. Land productivity and labour productivity thus

move in opposite directions as the size of the farm increases. Given that labour is abundant (and hence has a low opportunity cost), and land and capital are scarce (and hence have relatively high opportunity costs), small farms have higher total factor productivity than large farms and hence utilize resources more efficiently. Whether this analysis holds for the beneficiaries/households of the land-based programs whose dependence is more on-farm and non-farm labour for sustenance, is a point of concern.

The man-land ratio on small and marginal farms is relatively higher than that on large farms and the available family labour remains either unemployed or underemployed. It is true that during the agricultural peak seasons, usually at planting and harvesting, even these small and marginal farms hire labour for their timely agricultural operations. But during these peak periods, the overall demand for hired labour far exceeds the supply and the wage rates also remain high as compared to the lean periods. As a result, the small and marginal farmers find it difficult due to resource constraints to hire labour up to the optimum level. Delays in operations and sub-optimal use of labour during the peak periods, reduce the amount of crop production on such farms.

### **Access to Factor Markets**

The market environment in which the beneficiaries/households of land who are small farmers and the large landowners operate is quite different. The 'law of one price does not prevail, particularly in factor markets, and, as a result, small farmers often adopt different techniques of production from large landowners viz less mechanization, which in turn leads to differences in factor productivity.

It is also widely recognized that the cost of finance capital is, in general, lower for large landowners than for small farmers. Large landowners have access to commercial banks and other formal-sector lending institutions, whereas small farmers often are denied access to commercial banks because they are illiterate, lack collateral, have insecure titles to land, or are perceived to be less credit-worthy for other reasons. The consequence is that small farmers usually have to rely on informal credit markets-specialized moneylenders, merchants and shopkeepers, traders and (in the case of tenants) landlords. This situation tends to vary further between original small farmers and the small farmers who were beneficiaries/households of the land distribution program for whom investment is needed for land development apart from cultivation.

Dasgupta (1977) observes that most of the finances for the purchase of new inputs have come from farmers themselves while the reliance upon institutional finance is less than one-tenth of the total borrowings. He attributes this to the rigidity of bureaucratic formalities faced by the poor landless and tenants in gaining access to institutional credit. Hence, the continued dependence on the traditional sources of credit. This continuity has significant implications for understanding the interactions between the different sections of rural society. Bigger landowners and moneylenders, therefore, are found to be the major sources of credit for the rural poor.

The small and marginal farmers often choose between cultivating their land themselves and leasing it out to the local big farmers and moneylenders. In the latter case, they depend on big farmers for both rent and occasional loan facilities and then work as agricultural labourers instead of wages. In fact, in many parts of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab, this kind of interlocking of various markets accounts for the continued existence of tenancy cultivation.

The agrarian structure thus consists of different sets of relationships which in turn are influenced by different capacities and socio-legal statuses in which people hold their function concerning cultivable land. Cultivable land is thus at the centre of all social formations and of the web of agrarian relations in a rural setting.

### **Issues Emerged**

Some of the issues that emerged based on the above discussion are:

- Access to factor markets for small farmers is different to that of large farmers. Requirements of small farmers for land distribution programs are much more different to that of original small landowners because of the need for initial investment.
- Labour productivity tends to be higher as the size of the farm increases. The man-land ratios on small and marginal farms are relatively higher than that on large farms and the available family labour remains either unemployed or underemployed.
- Legal, as well as physical possession of land, is a concern inland distribution program.
- The land that is distributed is normally of poor quality, which needed much investment, to be used for productive purposes.
- The total production per hectare and total factor productivity of small holdings are higher. But this higher productivity is not translating into economic gains.

### **Land Distribution Programs in Undivided Andhra Pradesh**

The State Government of Andhra Pradesh, since its inception in 1956, made efforts towards equitable distribution of land through various programs like ceiling surplus land, government wasteland and Bhoodan land. Around 52 lakh acres of land have been distributed so far to 31 lakh beneficiaries/households. The program has picked up from the year 2004 onwards as the land has been distributed under various phases in the State from the year 2004.

The institutional support for the development of these lands for certain categories had been vested upon Scheduled Caste Corporation and Scheduled Tribe Corporation. In addition, the State also has launched the Comprehensive Land Development Program (CLDP) under Indira Kranthi Padham (IKP) through which it has initiated the development of distributed land of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe beneficiaries/households. Besides, some other programs were also initiated in this direction. For

example, the Development of lands of beneficiaries/households of land-based programs through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme works of the Ministry of Rural Development.

Besides the land distribution program, the other land-based program that was put forth by the Government of Andhra Pradesh to promote land-based equity was Land Purchase Program by Scheduled Caste Finance Corporation. The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Caste Cooperative Finance Corporation of the Government of Andhra Pradesh is involved in the land purchase program for the Scheduled Castes who occupy 16% of the population in the State (Annexure-II). The land purchase program of the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty, an autonomous body of the Department of Rural Development, aided by the World Bank, was another recent initiative. These land purchase programs aimed to purchase land and allocate it to the landless with some price and loan attached to it. The present study is an attempt to understand the impact of these programs on the economic growth of the beneficiaries/households of these programs.

In view of the above, the two specific issues that need to be looked into are:

- Access to land and inputs
- Access to supportive development programs

So far, we do not have much to report at the micro-level on these issues, and how the institutions of development address the needs of different land-based programs viz; land distribution programs and land purchase programs. Against this background, there is a felt need to study these issues by taking a livelihood approach. The present study attempts to fulfil this need.

### **Land Distribution Programs in Telangana State**

The former State Government of Andhra Pradesh, since its inception in 1956, made efforts towards equitable distribution of land through various programs like ceiling surplus land, government wasteland and blood land. The program has picked up from the year 2004 onwards as the land has been distributed under various phases in the State from the year 2004.

The institutional support for the development of these lands for certain categories had been vested upon SC Corporation and ST Corporation. In addition, the State also has launched the Comprehensive Land Development Program (CLDP) under Indira Kranthi Pathakam (IKP) through which it has initiated the development of distributed land for SC and ST beneficiaries. Besides, some other programs were also initiated in this direction. For example, the Development of lands of beneficiaries of land-based programs through the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme works of the Ministry of Rural Development. Besides the land distribution program, the other land-based program that was put forth by the Government of Andhra Pradesh to promote land-based equity was Land Purchase Program by



Scheduled Caste Finance Corporation. The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Caste Cooperative Finance Corporation (present is TSCCDCL) of the Government of Andhra Pradesh is involved in the land purchase program for the Scheduled Castes who occupy 16% of the population in the State. The land purchase program of the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty, an autonomous body of the Department of Rural Development, aided by the World Bank, was another recent initiative. These land purchase programs aimed to purchase land and allocate it to the landless with some price and loan attached to it. The present study is an attempt to understand the impact of these programs on the economic growth of the beneficiaries of these programs. From 1982-1998 to 2013-14 financial years, around 41220.75 acres of land have been distributed so far to 31032 lakh beneficiaries.

**Table 1: Land Purchase and Distribution from 1982-98 to 2020-21**

SI. No	Financial Year	No. of Beneficiaries	The extent of Land Sanctioned (in Acres)	Total Expenditure Incurred (Rs. in Lakhs)
1	1982-83 to 1997-98	12987	18839.10	3139.55
2	1998-99	3634	4938.28	936.42
3	1999-00	2000	2554.39	527.16
4	2000-01	2415	2961.52	691.72
5	2001-02	1420	2021.34	522.58
6	2002-03	3113	3734.36	995.74
7	2003-04	1422	1799.16	477.82
8	2004-05	924	1266.47	309.03
9	2005-06	1318	1415.90	612.24
10	2006-07	1187	1026.22	624.93
11	2007-08	291	241.56	142.53
12	2008-09	54	50.61	43.77
13	2009-10	48	47.51	46.05
14	2010-11	87	60.25	38.67
15	2011-12	40	19.00	10.45
16	2012-13	92	89.00	93.00
17	2013-14	0	0.00	0.00
	<b>Sub Total</b>	<b>31032</b>	<b>41065.67</b>	<b>9210.66</b>
1	2014-15	774	2043.35	7505.59
2	2015-16	1884	4913.07	20437.39
3	2016-17	861	2300.21	9990.57
4	2017-18	1461	3455.05	13556.96
5	2018-19	924	2270.13	9994.02
6	2019-20	481	1070.02	4475.16
7	2020-21	277	486.06	866.26
	Total	6662	16537.89	66825.95

Source: <https://lplds.cgg.gov.in/cumulativeDailyProgressReport.do&https://tsscfc.cgg.gov.in/getHomeMenuServices?optionId=57>

After the formation of the Telangana State, from 2014-15 to the 2020-21-year Government of Telangana has distributed 16537.89 acres of land has distributed to 6662 Scheduled Caste Landless under the Program Bhoomileni Nerupeda Dalita Vyavasaya Aadharitha Kutumbalu which is launched in 2014-15 financial year and administering by the Telangana Scheduled Castes Co-operative Development Corporation Limited. The details are depicted in table 1:

Table 1 reveals that the majority of the landless SC women benefitted during the 2015-16 and 2017-18 financial years which contributed 50.21% of total beneficiaries. It is also observed, that the number of beneficiaries is gradually decreasing from 2014-15 to 2020-21 financial year.

A comprehensive package envisaged to include the provision of irrigation/drip facilities, seed, cost of cultivation, fertilizers, pesticides, ploughing, micro-irrigation, energization of pump-sets etc. for one crop year in addition to providing funds for Land Development, preparation of nursery and agricultural inputs. The amounts for meeting the cost of cultivation etc. shall be directly transferred into the beneficiary's account towards one-year crop assistance.

The Agricultural Land Distribution Program was implemented with 100% subsidy and without any contribution from the beneficiaries and also without bank linkages.

## Conclusion

Landlessness is a serious source of worry. It can unsettle the ruling classes by assuming revolutionary character. So, government policy must address itself to mitigate this problem. Telangana has a dubious distinction of having a large share of land under fallows. If the landless could be made to gain access to these lands, they could use them, if not for growing high-value crops, for growing fodder crops, so that they could take up dairying to supplement their incomes. Further, by strict implementation of the ceiling's laws, some more surplus land can be acquired and distributed among the landless. As the new agricultural technology has decreased the economically viable size of the farm, and it is size-neutral, even small pieces (about 0.40 ha) can also be cultivated by the beneficiary. *Even now, as the redistribution of land is on the agenda of the ruling elite, only if there is political will, the reform can assume some radicalism.*

As the marginal and small farmers/farms are on the increase, the provision of complementary infrastructural and institutional facilities assumes importance, where the state has to assume responsibility. Particularly our institutions – credit, extension, insurance, marketing – are to be geared more towards these farmers/farms, as they are highly biased toward the large farmers. This change helps them to go for agricultural intensification and diversification.

The institution of tenancy has the effect of improving the access of land to the petty cultivators. So, it need not be curbed. What is called for at the present juncture are the efforts to reduce the exploitative nature of the lease contracts. This is possible if

tenancies are registered and tenants are made to pay legislated rent to their landlords, as in West Bengal. Therefore, there is a necessity to revise the laws to be advantageous to both lessors and lessees, giving scope for transparency. That is, the landowners, who are under ceiling limits, should not fear giving land on lease. Only in such a case, the tenants will develop land and invest in agriculture to increase land productivity, being under the security of tenure.

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