



**S. R. Sankaran Chair (Rural Labour)
National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), Hyderabad**

National Seminar

On

“Land Market and the Rural Poor”

18-19 January, 2018

Access to and control of land of rural households is important for gaining secured and sustainable livelihoods in the rural areas. It is a crucial factor in the eradication of rural poverty, food insecurity and also for overall rural development. Secure access to land often provides a valuable safety net as a source of shelter, food and income in times of hardship, and a family's land can be the last available resort in the instance of disaster (FAO 2007). Land is considered as an important asset for the survival of socially and marginalized vulnerable groups and it enables them for sustaining their livelihoods. It also provides social and cultural identity to them.

The landless and near landless resource poor households are compelled to enter into exchange relation with resource rich parties which are mostly unequal and unfavourable to them, which arise due to the insecurity of their access to land. In view of this, land and tenurial reforms could work as a first step in breaking the hegemony of the stronger party in rural areas. Even seemingly small amount of ownership of land can mean the difference between hunger and self-sufficiency to them. In view of this, the proper functioning of land market is crucial for achieving efficiency and equity in the context of agriculture development and hence, improving the livelihoods of the rural poor.

It has been well recognized that there is a direct relationship between women's right to access to land and gender equality, economic empowerment, food security and poverty eradication. A gender approach to land rights can enable shifts in gender power relations and assure that all people, regardless of sex, benefit from, and are empowered by, development policies and practices to improve people's rights to land. Women do not have adequate representations in property rights including, right to land. For instance it was noticed that nearly one third of rural households in the country are de facto female headed due to widowhood, marital breakdown or male migration (Government of India 2008). Households depend on women for managing farms and bearing the burden of family subsistence which arises as more men migrate to urban areas for non-farm employment.

Land has important efficiency and equity implications when women own and control lands. According to Agricultural Census (Government of India 2014), women own only 7 percent of the total agricultural land. In the absence of land right, women are unable to cultivate land efficiently because they lack access to institutional credit. The Hindu Succession Act has been amended in 2005, which gives equal rights to men and women in matters of inheritance of both self-acquired property and joint family property. There is a need to understand as to how this Act is implemented. Similarly, in the case of redistributive land given to households under land reform laws, women's right on the land was not included in the ownership document (*patta*) for long. Few states have passed executive orders to give joint titles to both husband and wife. But, in practice, no substantial change has taken place. As a consequence, rural women in general continue to be deprived of secure access to land. This is one of the important reasons of persistence of poverty, poor management of land and exploitation of women in the country.

Over the years the pace of land acquisition of private/ communal or state owned land either by the central or state governments has been accelerated for a variety of development purposes. Private land from individual owners is acquired under the Land Acquisition Act 1894 earlier and now under Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 and under the laws passed by state governments. Several issues are important in this context: How land was acquired from the owners? How compensation is paid in such acquisition? How acquired land is valued and at what prices compensation for land is paid, etc.? It is imperative to understand these issues especially relating to poor farmers and in tribal areas with a view to develop appropriate strategies to rehabilitate the affected parties and ensure their future livelihood.

Land alienation, both private and communal, in tribal areas is an important phenomenon which deprives the tribal from their traditional and assured sources of livelihood. Even though, several state governments have adopted the policy/ law of prohibiting the transfer of land from tribal to non-tribal and for restoration of alienated tribal lands to them it is still persisting.

The (Panchayats Extension to Schedule Areas (PESA) Act is one of the progressive acts for improvement of governance and reduction of exploitation of tribal. It provides self-governance and recognises the traditional rights of tribal communities over resources around them. The PESA mandates that Gram Sabha or Panchayat at the appropriate level should be consulted or discussed with local or tribal people before the acquisition of land in Scheduled Areas for development projects and for a number of issues which affect their livelihood. But, the

implementation of different provisions of PESA in several PESA governed states is tardy and ineffective. Several factors have contributed for this. There is a need to identify such factors and find way forward for effective implementation of the Act.

Improving the access to land rights of households is an important policy implemented by governments at the Central and state level. Under this households are given rights (individual or communal) to land. Under collective/communal tenure regime a group of people holds secure and exclusive collective rights to own, manage and/or use land and natural resources including agricultural lands, grazing lands, forests, fisheries and wetlands etc. Such land tenure especially among indigenous groups enable secure livelihoods, conservation of resources and prevent land alienation. Temporary transfer of users' right to tenants by the owner of land is a form of land right which is used for cultivation. Lease farming by self-help groups/neighbourhood groups has been gaining importance as one of the popular instrument of poverty eradication strategies. In Kerala, lease farming by neighbourhood groups of women is a part of *Kudumbashree project*. Both government and private land are leased in and utilised by the group for crop production. Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, lease farming by self help groups of women started as part of a project on 'Sustainable Dry land Agriculture by Mahila Sanghams', called 'Samatha Dharani'. Such types of lease farming have helped in regenerating fallow and degraded land for cultivation which provides supplementary income to poor women and also improved their socio-political status. There is a need to document and understand its function for scaling of this policy in other areas.

It is now universally recognized that provision of clear records of land rights to the actual owners, and their periodic updating, is an essential pre-requisite of an effective agrarian reforms strategy. Attempts have been made by state and Central governments to improve the quality of land records, and make them accessible to different stakeholders. The computerization of land records started during 1988-89. It was followed by strengthening of Revenue Administration and the updating of land records. In 2008, all these schemes were merged into a centrally sponsored scheme, the National Land Records Modernisation Programme (NLRMP). The scheme has now been renamed as the Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP), and is a part of the Digital India Initiative. It is desirable to know about the current status of the scheme in various states and identify factors constraining its progress.

In this context, the S.R Sankaran Chair at National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), Hyderabad, is organising a two day National Seminar on "Land Market and the Rural Poor" during 18-19 January, 2017.

Indicative themes of the Two day Seminar:

1. Access to land rights for different socioeconomic groups (including SCs/STs);
2. Women, land rights and empowerment;
3. Land acquisition and rehabilitation, especially in tribal areas;
4. Land Acquisition for industrial/urban development
5. Land alienations in tribal areas;
6. Improving land rights of rural poor (individual and collective land rights (SHGs, NHGs, etc.); and
7. Progress relating to digitization of land records

The main objective of the seminar is to assess the progress, identify the bottlenecks and explore the ways of improving the access to land resources that aims at improving the livelihoods of rural poor. The seminar facilitates the participants to share their views and express opinions on various themes as outlined above. Original and unpublished papers on theoretical formulations and/or empirical evidences on the above themes are invited.

Important Dates:

Submission of Paper for review: 20th December, 2017

Intimation of selected papers for presentation: 24th December, 2017

Communication

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