



Land Rights for Slum Dwellers in Odisha: Making technology work for the urban poor

A Webinar Report



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The webinar Land Rights for Slum Dwellers in the East Indian State Odisha: Making technology work for the urban poor took place on 14 February, 2018.

The webinar discussed anecdotes of the land rights policy in the state, application of innovative technology, processes and partnerships in the project execution and best practices followed in gaining rights for slum dwellers.

The webinar was co-organized by the Government of Odisha, Tata Trusts, Azim Premji University, Cadasta Foundation, Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) with support from the NRMC Center for Land Governance and the Land Portal Foundation.

Moderator: Narayana Gatty, Professor, Azim Premji University

Panelists:

- G. Mathi Vathanan, IAS, Principal Secretary, Housing & Urban Development Department, Government of Odisha
- Amita Girish Bhide, Professor and Dean, School of Habitat Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences
- Frank Pichel, Chief Programs Officer, Cadasta Foundation
- Shishir Dash, Lead- Urban habitat, Tata Trusts

A complete recording of the webinar is available on YouTube:
https://youtu.be/wjDt_bEsAkk



Key Takeaways

- The Odisha Land Rights to Slum Dwellers Act, which came into force in August 2017, confers land right to slum dwellers on an in situ basis, meaning wherever they are residing on tenable land. For untenable lands, such as protected forests or rangelands that cannot be settled, slum dwellers will be located in a new habitat in a nearby vicinity acceptable to the community with their full consent.
- To complement the Act, the JAGA mission will transform the slums into livable habitats, including civic infrastructure, amenities and services, benefitting 350,000 households and a population of 1,000,000.
- Conferring land rights to slum dwellers ensures that gains will be passed on from one generation to another, as these land rights are heritable.
- Government support at all levels, from the recognition of a need to adopt a new policy that would allow for recognition of informal rights and then executing it to the willingness to test and try new approaches, has been key success of the Act.
- Detailed and accurate drone imagery, combined with community data collection, were powerful and effective means of determining property boundaries to the satisfaction of the community.
- The project adopted multi-stakeholder partnership strategy from the beginning, mobilizing each slum community into Slum Dwellers Associations (SDA), combined with capacity building for stakeholders and functionaries, and was very cost-effective.

Webinar Summary

1) WHAT IS THE CONTEXT AND ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE OF THE LAND RIGHTS TO SLUM DWELLERS ACT?

- The act covers 109 towns, more than 2,000 slums, with more than 200,000 households, and affecting a population of 1,000,000 people. Land rights have already been distributed to more than 40,000 households. There are 668 slums on untenable lands, which will be moved to land with tenable land status where land titles can be given. This work is complemented by JAGA mission, which aims to transform slums into livable habitats, with all essential civic infrastructure, amenities and services, ultimately benefitting 350,000 people.

2) HOW DO YOU THINK THAT THE PROJECT WILL CONTRIBUTE TO INCLUSIVE DEVELOPMENT?

- The JAGA missions adds new layers of development to it by participatory budgeting experiences, improving infrastructure and having norms with a minimum level to which every person staying in an urban area will be entitled, which does not differentiate between a slum dweller and a formal dweller, orienting cities to towards inclusivity.

3) WHAT TYPE OF INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY IS ADOPTED IN THE PROJECT FOR SLUM MAPPING, DATA COLLECTION AND NETWORKING?

- Using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), otherwise known as drones, allowed for the tight confines of urban settlements to be mapped and to digitize the boundaries in a way that is more participatory and inclusive with the community. Households are able to physically see the boundaries as they appear on the ground, making it very clear that their rights are recognized accurately and appropriately and creating trust in the process. Additionally, mobile technology and mobile applications allow community themselves to become data collectors. This information is integrated into a Geographic Information System(GIS), which allows it to be shared, analyzed and contextualized with other historical data layers.

4) WHAT ARE THE PARTNERSHIP AND CAPACITY BUILDING STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY THE PROJECT?

- The project adopted multi-stakeholder partnership strategy, mobilizing each slum community into Slum Dwellers Associations (SDA), who drive process, from identification of the slum boundaries and household surveys to the conferring of land rights to beneficiaries. Capacity building programs were organized for stakeholders as well as functionaries.

5) WHY WERE DRONES USED FOR SLUM MAPPING? HOW HAS IT HELPED IN AVOIDING LARGE-SCALE DISPUTE AND CONFUSION?

- Drones were used for geo-fencing of all the slums through aerial survey and producing ortho maps, which captured the minutest of the details of the slums, and are 95% accurate. These were integrated with the existing cadastral maps to identify the revenue plot on and whether were tenable or non-tenable. The public perception of the scientific basis of the survey, of leaving no scope for human intervention and manipulation, eliminated the possibility of complications and conflicts.

6) CAN THE SPATIAL AND HOUSEHOLD DATA COLLECTED IN THE PROJECT BE UTILIZED FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND AS AN EVIDENCE BASE?

- It opens up opportunities for asking new research questions an engaging and contributing to dynamic of how slum dwellers take charge of their own agency, the possibility that participatory processes generate and how the state systems respond to those participatory processes.

7) WHAT ARE THE RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FROM THIS PROJECT?

- It will allow for assessment of self-esteem and the effect on broader family relations, and comparisons with other forms of tenure, including complete informality. Other areas include the level of land conflict, changes in the investments people make in their property, changes in socio-economic development, status of women in society and perceptions of tenure security. Planning data and imagery enable significant analysis that was previously impossible, including the pattern of settlements in different slums based on their location and proximity to infrastructure and the ability to provide services based on the data captured.

8) WHAT ARE THE BEST PRACTICES ADOPTED AND LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM THE PROJECT?

- Community need not visit government offices to get their land rights, as the entire process completed at their doorstep. The use of technology reduced the per capita cost to 800 rupees per household. Intensive capacity building for functionaries and government officials was highly effective.

Notable Quotes from the Panelists



“IN THE PROCESS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SLUM DWELLERS ACT, WE REALIZED THAT LAND RIGHTS ALONE WON’T HAVE MUCH IMPACT ON LIVING STANDARDS, SO WE ROLLED OUT THE JAGA MISSION TO TRANSFORM THE SLUMS INTO LIVABLE HABITATS, WHICH WILL HAVE ALL ESSENTIAL CIVIC INFRASTRUCTURE, AMENITIES AND SERVICES.”

- G. MATHI VATHANAN, IAS, PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, HOUSING & URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT, GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA



“GIVING LAND RIGHTS TO SLUM DWELLERS MAKES THEM FORMAL CITIZENS, WHICH MEANS THAT THEY HAVE THE RIGHT DEMAND SERVICES ON PARITY AND IN COMPARABLE TERMS AS EVERYONE IN SOCIETY WHEN THEY ARE NO LONGER CONSIDERED AS ENCROACHERS AND ILLEGALS.”

- AMITA GIRISH BHIDE, PROFESSOR AND DEAN, SCHOOL OF HABITAT STUDIES, TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



“THE ABILITY TO ACCESS SLUMS USING TRADITIONAL METHODS ISN’T POSSIBLE IN THE TIGHT CONFINES OF AN URBAN SETTLEMENT. DRONE IMAGERY MADE IT POSSIBLE TO DIGITIZE THE BOUNDARIES IN A WAY THAT IS MORE PARTICIPATORY AND INCLUSIVE WITH THE COMMUNITY.”

- FRANK PICHEL, CHIEF PROGRAMS OFFICER, CADASTA FOUNDATION



“THE COMMUNITY DID NOT VISIT GOVERNMENT OFFICES EVEN ONCE TO GET THEIR LAND RIGHTS. THE WHOLE PROCESS WAS COMPLETED RIGHT AT THEIR DOORSTEP.”

- SHISHIR DASH, LEAD- URBAN HABITAT, TATA TRUSTS



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