

(iii) The procedure followed in the decision making process, including channels of supervision and accountability

The importance of Settlement Operations in Himachal Pradesh is all the more as people are dependent on land for Agriculture and Horticulture. Besides land has got economic as well as emotional value for them. This dependence on land makes it imperative that people know about their holdings. Further, being the superior owner, it is the duty of the State to ensure that Land records are available in the shape of field maps as well as Record of Rights.

The system of preparation of Land Record dates back to the Mughal period, when Raja Todar Mull introduced it. During his brief regime around the same period, Sher Shah Suri also strengthened the system.

The measurement of Land in old times was taken in 'Kadam' i.e. step which later came to be known as 'Karam' denoting different measure of length at different places-54, 56 and 57.5 inches. To overcome this anomaly, a uniform unit of measurement was needed and as a result, in present Settlement, Metric system has been introduced and the unit of measurement is Metre.

The base line which was hitherto laid before carrying out measurement with the traditional 'Shist' is now laid with the modern equipment called Theodolite which is more accurate and time saving. More sophisticated systems like the GMS and the Total Station are on way to make measurement more accurate and time saving.

As for the procedure, prior to taking upon a village for Settlement Operations, old Revenue Record is taken from the Mohal Patwari. The Kanungo reads out entries of the current Jamabandi, and the Shajra Nasab before a gathering of the village landowners and after attesting the entries prepares new Shajra Nasab and Khataunis entering Khata/ Khatauni numbers. After this a base line is laid by Kanungo with the help of Theodolite by fixing three points on the spot and further Chandabandi is done by the Patwari by fixing further points with the help of the Base line to facilitate measurement of the fields. Once this process is complete, the Patwari starts the measurement of fields and plots the fields on the Musavi fixed on a Patri with the help of Shist. Measurement is always started from the North –West side and the fields so measured and plotted are assigned numbers beginning from one. The lines are drawn with pencil and are confirmed with ink only after the Kanungo every Khasra Number has checked every Khasra Number.

After the measurement is complete, other record viz Misal Haqiat, field book, Khasra index, Khasra Girdawari are prepared by the Patwari and are checked by the Kanungo to the extent of 100% and by the Naib Tehsildar, Tehsildar and the Assistant Settlement Officer to the extent of 25%, 20%, and 5% respectively. For the recording of inspections done by the superior officers, the Patwari is provided with an inspection diary called Roz namcha and the Patwari and other officers have to comply with the directions recorded therein by the superior officer in a time bound manner. It is only after the final attestation that the Record becomes ripe for issuing copies.

In spite of the utmost care taken in preparing the records, the people are not always satisfied with measurement and the entries made in the record so prepared. If aggrieved they may apply to the Assistant Collector II Grade for correction. Further Appeal lies to the Collector, Commissioner, and Financial Commissioner (Appeals).

The Forest Settlement Work is also undertaken in Shimla Division, in which proposals are received from Forest Department for demarcation of Undemarcated Protected Forests to get them notified as Demarcated Protected Forests by the Govt. The Forest Settlement Officer also determines the rights of people in such D.P.Fs and the same are

also notified by the Govt. Forest Settlement work is done under the provisions of Indian Forest Act, 1927.

Since over a period of time, the average yield from the land also increases, reassessment of land becomes necessary. There is a prescribed procedure for assessment of Land Revenue under the H.P. Land Revenue Act, 1953 & Assessment Rules at the time of Settlement. However the Land Revenue so assessed should not exceed by more than one-third of the current rates.