

## RE-EXAMINE THE MODEL TO MANAGE REVENUE COURT CASES IN UTTAR PRADESH

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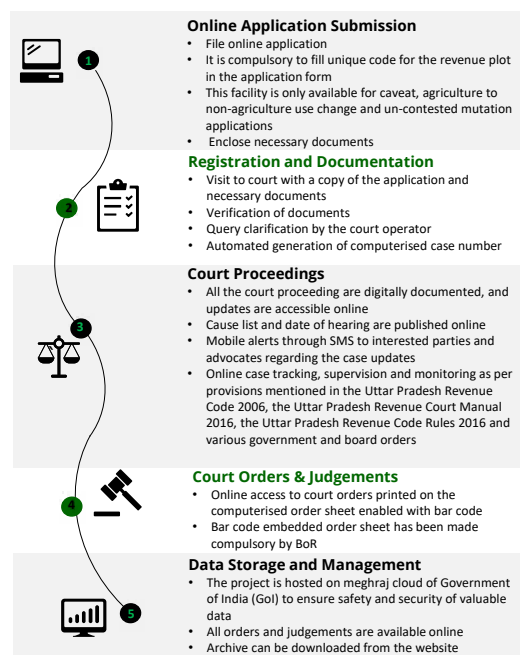
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### Introduction

Out of the 6,45,856 villages (Census, 2011) in India, Uttar Pradesh has the highest share—17 per cent (1,08,848). There are 7.65 crore revenue plots across the state. This has led to a much higher number of property transactions and, consequently, land disputes and revenue cases. This is a result of courts often have slow hearing and disposal procedures leading to long waiting period for case hearings. This is due to volume of pending cases, manual documentation and information processes, and lack of a case monitoring mechanism, , among other reasons. To address the concerns above, the Board of Revenue (BoR), Government of Uttar Pradesh, with the technical support of the National Informatics Centre (NIC)–UP, launched an online portal—Revenue Court Computerised Management System (RCCMS)—in the year 2013.

As of October 2021, the total revenue cases registered in RCCMS were 144.5 lakhs, out of which 127.6 lakh cases were disposed off and 16.9 lakhs cases were pending decision (Board of Revenue, n.d.). RCCMS provides the facility to fill an online application (See box for the step-wise process on RCCMS and other features). The 16-digit unique property code (Board of Revenue, 2017a) is mandatory for registration. Post registration, each case is assigned a unique computerised number consisting of information such as the hierarchy of revenue court, running year, mandal code, district code, tehsil code and serial number in ascending order. The bar code embedded order sheet is made mandatory through a BoR order dated 8th November, 2017 (Board of Revenue, 2017b). This ensures a faster disposal of cases via supervision and monitoring by competent authorities vis a vis

#### Box: Step-wise process on RCCMS



Source: Compiled by IIHS based on the discussion with BoR and NIC officials, Jan–Feb 2020.

the provisions and timelines mentioned in various acts and regulations (Board of Revenue, 2006). For example, it is mandatory to assign the next date of hearing within 48 hours of the last date of hearing. RCCMS can also be accessed through a mobile application.

Based on a study conducted by the Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS), the team has found that this portal has the scope for further improvement despite its technological advancements.

For such improvements, this policy brief compares RCCMS with the national level portal (the Supreme Court) and one state level (Madhya Pradesh RCMS).

## Issues and recommendations

Given the services offered by the portal, it is quite evident that the RCCMS has improved the transparency and efficiency in the functioning of revenue courts in UP. Besides the above-mentioned good practices, a few impediments could be addressed to further improve the mechanism. The issues and allied recommendations are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

### Issue 1: Non-comprehensive online application format:

(a) The online application facility is limited to only a few types of applications such as caveat, agriculture to non-agriculture use change and un-contested mutation.

(b) After the online submission of the application, the applicant has to physically visit the revenue court with a copy of the online application receipt and related documents to complete the registration process.

**Recommendation:** (a) Under this feature, other types of applications should also be included, such as illegal occupancy, partition suit and medhbandi (bundling). This will ensure ease of service to citizens and fewer manual interventions and help make these processes more transparent and efficient. For instance, Madhya Pradesh RCMS (Revenue Department, n.d.) provides an option to the users to file more than 14 types of applications. (b) BoR should enhance and automate the entire application process under RCCMS. A physical visit to the revenue court to complete the registration process should be avoided to make the process truly efficient. For example, in the web portal of the Supreme Court of India (Supreme Court of India, n.d.) and the Madhya Pradesh RCMS, users do not require a physical visit to the court to file a case. It can be applied through the online portal or citizen service kiosks.

### Issue 2: Updated information regarding a particular case to the user

In RCCMS, users have to visit the web page to get updated information regarding the case. There is no mechanism for the applicant to get an automated alert or update through SMS or email on a case.

**Recommendation:** BoR should consider automation of the case proceedings to make the RCCMS more effective. The applicant should get an alert or update regarding a particular case on their registered mobile number or email. Such practices have been observed in the Supreme Court of India's portal and the Madhya Pradesh RCMS, making the applicant better informed about the case proceedings.

### Issue 3: Tracking pending cases is a challenging task

Tracking pending cases is a challenging task for the revenue court. As per the RCCMS portal, as of October 2021, around 46,000 cases have been pending for more than a year and 20,000 cases have been pending for more than five years.

**Recommendation:** Tracking should be completely automated. Presiding officers and concerned advocates should get electronic alerts and notices to dispose off cases within the time frame through a mobile application, SMS or emails. This will accelerate the case proceedings and improve the closure rate. Such options are available in the Madhya Pradesh RCMS.

## Issue 4: Unavailability of the advocate interface

In RCCMS, there is no login interface for the registered advocates. Also, the list of registered advocates at revenue courts is not available.

**Recommendation:** A separate advocate login interface helps advocates track the development of a particular case and a list of registered advocates is useful for the applicant to select an appropriate advocate for a particular case type. These features will increase the efficiency and adaptability of the revenue court system.

The advocate interface is available in the Supreme Court of India portal and Madhya Pradesh RCMS.

## Issue 5: Lack of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) and e-filing user manual/ guide

**Recommendation:** FAQs and a e-filing user manual/guide would give the applicant quick information on the subject and guide them go through the application process, respectively. These features can increase the number of users and the system's adaptability.

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