



## Systemizing Land Record Management in DAIL

*making a positive impact in sub national governance*  
*a step towards improving service delivery*



People travel from far and wide from the different districts of Kabul province to the land department office (LDO), DAIL<sup>1</sup>, situated in the heart of Kabul city to get a variety of information related to land records. This information may be regarding ownership details, getting information about type of land, location, size of land or simply getting duplicate copies of title of ownership (in cases where land record is lost by the owner or in cases where record is damaged due to war or fire). LDO provides information not only to the people of Kabul Province but also to other agencies/authorities like, Attorney General, courts municipalities, and other government and private agencies. The office thus provides service to meet a variety of needs like individual property management, general administration and disputes settlement. Because of the criticality of the information, an added responsibility of the land department is to keep land records in a safe and secure manner.

At the LDO, all land records are kept in a record room. Till recently, one official, Mr. Aminullah, in charge, archives section, had the dual responsibility of looking after the land records and of providing services to the customers seeking information. Usually, the time taken to provide information is large, at least half a day and most times more than a day. For information retrieval, Mr. Aminullah performs several steps in a sequence: he first collects the requests for information, then locates the record in the record room, retrieves the information and then passes it on to the person who has requested it. Though a seemingly simple task, it takes a long time because land records are not properly managed. There is no proper filing, no sequencing, no proper marking and consequently records are not kept in an organized manner.

As part of its capacity development (CD) initiatives, CAP team visited the land department to conduct coaching need assessment for providing coaching on basic management and administration areas. On assessing the situation in the department, the team felt that land record management should be given top priority as it would greatly help to improve the service delivery of the land department. At the same time it was also realized that even though this area needed immediate help in terms of systemization, the pressing need or the sense of urgency was not felt by the department's officials. Further, the land department is located physically away from the rest of the Agriculture directorate and over a period of time, this has meant that the modernization needs of the land department have got ignored.

CAP team realized that in order to rectify the situation, i.e. introduce a systematic Land records management system in LDO, several steps had to be taken.. The very first thing to do was to sensitize the officials of land department, especially Mr. Aminullah on the need of systemizing the land records. This was done through a series of meetings and coaching sessions on the efficacy and importance of a well organized records section. In these sessions, the benefits of systemization to both, the officials as well as customers of Land department were communicated. It was also decided to introduce the new systems on a pilot basis.

Once the officials of LDO were onboard, actual activities related to records management were started. Simultaneously, training programmes and coaching sessions on different aspects of records management were designed. Specific coaching was provided as to how to implement the new system. Concept of filing was explained. A format for labeling the file was designed so that all files have uniform labeling. This format was explained to the officials. Coaching was also provided on proper sequencing, how to file the paper in sequence and how to prepare index sheet. Concept of reference sheet was explained that could be pasted on the cupboards to locate the files. Marking of the cupboards was also explained to the officials. It is important to mention here that due to the physical isolation of the LDO, its officials invariably got left out from the various training programmes organized for the DAIL staff. The CAP team thus made a new beginning and ended this long and dry patch of period of no trainings for the LDO staff.

Subsequently all activities for which initial training was provided were taken up step by step. At the same time, coaching and actual activities went hand in hand. Officials were made to do the each task on their own, with guidance from Cap team. This enabled the officials to learn the process of filing. It would not be out of place here to mention that CAP project has pioneered the model of using coaching & mentoring for CD in Afghanistan and it has been very effective. This story is just one of the many shining examples of successful use of this model.

<sup>1</sup> LDO is a department under the Directorate of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (DAIL), which in turn falls under the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL).

As had been decided during the initial sensitization discussions, the filing system was implemented in a pilot mode. First as trial run only one lot (all files in one cupboard) was taken. A list of files was prepared. Papers were placed in folders, index sheet was prepared, labels were printed and pasted on the folders and they were numbered in a sequence. Folders were then organized in cupboard in a sequence as per labeling. Reference sheet was prepared based upon the folders present in that particular cupboard and this sheet was then pasted on the door of the cupboard.

Once one cupboard was ready, small management exercises were conducted wherein different officials were asked to locate records, once from the unorganized cupboard and once from the organized one. This made them realize the usefulness of the filing system. This also motivated the officials to get very interested in filing system and they started work on the remaining cupboards as well. As a result, now lot by lot filing system is being implemented for the whole records section. This is a small but significant achievement. Another direct outcome of this exercise was the recognition of the usefulness of records management by Director DAIL, who decided to post an additional hand in the records section so as make it more efficient and fast in service delivery.

Though success was achieved in awareness generation and kick-off of the work, there were some logistic challenges: shortage of folders, shortage of cupboards and a lack of modern equipment. These shortages and shortcomings were significant and after a round of discussions it was decided to prepare a project proposal on modernization of land records room.

At this stage coaching was provided along with assistance in preparing first a concept note and then a proposal to upgrade the facilities in land record room and modernize it by using electronic means like scanners, computer, etc. Subsequently, a proposal was submitted to Director, DAIL to further take it up with MAIL and donor agencies for approval and funding. CAP team would continue to provide help in this just like before.

The process of implementing systematic filing system in LDO was an example of a small change management exercise wherein some initial steps of change management,<sup>2</sup> such as creating a sense of urgency for the change, developing a vision and communicating it to all concerned etc were taken successfully. Even though a small success has been achieved, CAP team is not complacent and realizes, in the words of *Robert Frost*:

**“We have miles to go before we sleep.”**

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**The record room before CAP team’s initiative of implementing systematic filing system in LDO**



**The record room after CAP team’s initiative of implementing systematic filing system in LDO**



Properly labeled file folders



Cupboard with properly indexed file folders



Properly indexed file folders

<sup>2</sup> As suggested by John Kotter in his famous book on change management, “*Our Iceberg is melting*”.