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Community Response to the Crisis of Slums in Delhi

Submitted By: Architect-Planner/Ex Commissioner (Delhi Development Authority)



Organization Profile

Organization Name: DDA/DUSIB

Organization Type: National government

Website: https://dda.gov.in/

Practice Details

Country(ies): India

City(ies): New Delhi

Start Year: 1976

Ongoing: Yes

End Year: N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

- Housing Affordability & Financing
- Social Housing
- Communal & Self-Build Housing
- Housing & Informality

Relevant SDGs:



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Problem & Context

About one-eighth of Delhi's population is living in about 675 slums and Jhuggi-Jhompri (JJ) clusters, covering about 1000 Ha of land. According to GNCTD Survey (2022) about 21.6 lakh people are living in about 4 lakh jhuggis /hutments. During the emergency (1975-77), a massive program of slum resettlement, covering 1.54 lakh plots of 21 sqm each (7 lakh people) living in the slums and Jhuggi-Jhompri (JJ) clusters was undertaken by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA). Touted as one of the world's largest resettlement projects, DDA's Slum and JJ Resettlement Programme during the Emergency (1975-77) attracted global attention and also created controversies.

In 2025 the Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the policy of Jahan Jhuggi -Wahan Makaan for Delhi. The Delhi Development Authority's (DDA) in-situ projects at Kalkaji with 3024 flats , and at Jailorwala Bagh with 1675 flats have been completed recently.

Solution Developed

Delhi has shifted from Site and Services approach to provider's model. However, the growth of slums continues unabated. The question remains- whether the slums are a problem or a solution? Can there be other options for slum redevelopment? John Turner in his 1976 book 'Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments' wrote that "only a minority can be supplied housing in centrally administered ways using centralising technologies, and then only at the expense of an impoverished majority and the rapid exhaustion and poisoning of the planet's resources." In 2022, the World Bank study 'Reconsidering Sites and Services' pleaded again for its revival. The greatest advantage of the site and services strategy is that it is rapid, low cost and provides freedom to the families to design their dwellings according to their needs, resources and tastes. As compared to the flats in a multi-storied building, the site and services schemes facilitate connections with the ground, so important for the children, women and self-employed.

Implementation

In-Situ Slum Rehabilitation also covers the options of upgradation, relocation, land sharing, reconstruction and reblocking. As compared to provider's model, it is longitudinal and community led, where the community plans and implements. This involves surveying and mapping and preparing slum resettlement plans, together with resolving the tenure and infrastructure issues. This is different from the conventional project-by-project approach, in which a few scattered communities may be improved, but they are neither linked with each other, nor linked to the overall development processes.

The conventional slum rehabilitation depends upon the government agency, resources and subsidies which cannot cope with the scale of need. The strategy of using resources and the

strength of the communities should be the starting point in the process of in-situ rehabilitation, where the communities plan and implement the projects themselves.

The government takes the role of facilitator and supporter by creating building centres, building material banks, and tax/GST exemptions for low-cost housing, which is a massive economic multiplier. Secure land tenure is the foundation of slum rehabilitation. The communities can negotiate their own tenure arrangements through strategies such as cooperative land purchase, long-term lease contracts, land-swapping or user rights. The emphasis is on collective and cooperatives rather than individual land tenure.

Enablers & Obstacles

In contrast to delivery-based housing and resettlement supports-based slum rehabilitation is based on participatory and evolutionary processes.

As the city services are not immediately available in the slums and resettlement schemes, the alternative, packaged and self-contained units, such as Compact Water Treatment unit, Compact Sewerage Unit and a Tunnel Reactor for solid waste treatment can be provided. To facilitate skill development a Building Centre can be a useful aid in self -building as it was proposed in Dwarka Sub-city. A Community-Hall-cum-Building-Centre may be provided for every 1500 to 2500 plots.

Results & Impact

The Central and State governments in Delhi have committed the policy of Jahan Jhuggi-Wahan Makaan, that is In-Situ Slum Resettlement , replicating the Dharavi Model of Mumbai. While the policy is already mandated in the Delhi Master Plan, its implementation involves putting in place people centric, evolutionary and support-based tools that are more longitudinal and avoid the providers', vertical model.

Replication & Scale Up

The Government of Maharashtra has undertaken the redevelopment of Dharavi comprising as per the provisions of Maharashtra Slum Areas (Improvement, Clearance and Development) Act, 1971, and under the Regulation 33 (9) (A) and 33 (10) (A) of Development Control Regulations, 1991 for Greater Mumbai. The area has been divided into five sectors of which sector 1 to 4 are to be developed through private developers, who shall construct free housing for the eligible slum dwellers and occupants, including amenities and infrastructure as per the norms.

The Delhi Development Authority has taken up several projects of in-situ slum rehabilitation. These are Planned under the public-private partnership, and faced several hurdles , such as court cases, disputes among the occupants, tenants and eligible/ ineligible residents, and political interventions. Part of the land has been used by the private developer for 170 freehold

residential flats and of commercial space for market sale to make the project financially viable and to subsidize the construction of resettlement housing.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has been fully adopted into formal policy frameworks and legislation, and is being implemented at scale with institutional support.

A radical change is that the money is controlled by the communities, who decides how to use subsidies, land, building resources and managing their construction. This means adopting support-based approach led by local community who plan and decide together. An important aspect of the program is to provide professional guidance to the communities by the NGOs, architects, institutions or engineers. In this way a new partnership between communities, local governments and other organisations can be established, integrating social, environmental and economic well-being of the local communities.

Lessons & Takeaways

In-Situ Slum Rehabilitation covers the options of upgradation, relocation, land sharing, reconstruction and reblocking. As compared to provider's model, it is longitudinal and community led, where the community plans and implements.