Regulatory Frameworks for Crime Prevention Through Design in India

Submitted By: Association for Building Security India (ABSI) & the International CPTED Association (ICA)



Regulatory Frameworks for Crime Prevention Through Design in Housings in India

Organization Profile

Organization Name: Municipal Corporation of Delhi

Organization Type: Subnational government

Website: https://mcdonline.nic.in/portal

Practice Details

Country(ies): India

City(ies): New Delhi

Start Year: 2010 **Ongoing:** Yes **End Year:** N/A

Main Adequate Housing Components:



Housing Thematic Areas:

- Housing Rights & Social Inclusion
- Housing, Land & Spatial Planning
- Housing Policy, Legislation & Governance

Relevant SDGs:



UN-HABITAT

Problem & Context

Urban immigrations create phenomenal demands for housing in Delhi, resulting in horizontal sprawl, traffic congestion, air pollution etc, to control which the Government undertook densification of the city by allowing more dwelling units on residential plots across Delhi.

Simultaneously, the crime rates were alarming. While densification efforts achieved their intermediate goals, they had an adverse impact on the physical parameters that support natural and social forms of crime prevention that had been performing traditionally for decades.

These were pushing residents to suburban high security enclaves, adding to the sprawl. The administration brought-in mixed-use and other systemic changes towards socio-economic sustainability. The favourable impact of this second round on crime prevention principles in the Delhi Housing environments and thereby on crime demonstrate the role of regulations in creating the right framework for crime prevention and liveability.

Solution Developed

The Housing practice is to 'embed crime prevention principles' and 'appropriately' apply in housing environments, enforced through regulations that applied to all kinds of housing developments and benefits all socio-economic sections of residents across Delhi, gradually transforming the crime rates as the implementation happens over years.

The research analysed two middle income neighbourhoods where the original objective of the regulatory changes was to increase housing but the side effect on natural surveillance, territorial and community action are valuable findings.

The mixing of commercial use in residential areas was innovative, meant to reduce traffic and decentralise the city into self-sustainable districts. In CPTED (Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design) parlance, this created secondary functions that compounded surveillance, access control, territorial control, familiarity and community institutions.

The Resident Welfare Associations (RWA) empowered with legal powers recaptured the liveability by clamping down on crime. The right regulatory framework has made a great example of citizen empowerment to reclaim territorial control of their urban space.

Implementation

Significant actions:

- Permission for 4th dwelling unit with stilted car parks was a significant change that created real-estate interest in redeveloping properties, revitalised the sidewalks, cleared up sightlines and created better opportunities for resident to street interactions.
- The low-rise bungalows became mid-rise apartments with larger balconies that help surveillance.

- More dwelling units house more, enhance affordability and generate real-estate investment towards rebuilding. This accelerated the pace of implementation establishing multiple owner patterns as the new norm that creates socio-economic and culturally heterogenous demographics, favourable for community driven sustainable security.
- Home offices for consultants and retail on the larger roads was done to reduce travel and create sustainable neighbourhoods, but these sustainable secondary activities also keep the housing precincts active, watched and secured through night and day.

These are only some of the significant changes favouring liveability but only in new constructions and the previously built structures continue till they rebuild. The process is slow but demonstrative of how regulations can influence physical parameters, crime, liveability and the socio-economic sustainability of housings, positively or negatively. The balance of policy making, municipal enforcement, partnership with RWA type NGOs and real-estate funding have been critical to this on-going redevelopment process.

Enablers & Obstacles

The interventions meant to accommodate the population growth affected crime unfavourably at first but is just right in the prevalent iteration. Hence knowledge of the relationship between the design of a habitat and crime therein, is vital for policy makers and enforcement agencies, given the time taken for implementation over decades.

Socio-economic evolution of cultural markers like family size, gender equity and other generational shifts impact significantly but collective action and citizen involvement emerged as effective drivers best mobilised by legal regulations.

Very few owners had the capacity to rebuild, let alone build 4 units. The real-estate players enabled this with a unique solution wherein they rebuild with 4 DUs, 3 of which continue to belong to the owner while they cover their costs and profit by selling only one. This worked for the owners who were looking to accommodate their growing families and has accelerated the pace of change dramatically.

Results & Impact

Crime data in India is never an accurate representation of the real crime situation but the on-going improvements in crime prevention mechanisms are perceptible. The evidence on ground has been convincing enough to adopt the CPTED theories in the National Building Code of India 2025 that advises the regulatory norms across the country.

It is however incorrect to attribute crime control to these environmental factors alone. The impact of crime reduction is evident in living, working and recreational experiences of 20 lakh households in Delhi. Urban crime is a collective factor, it harms collectively and needs to be corrected collectively.

Low-income households are constrained in budgets and cannot afford to hire security. These groups especially females are most vulnerable and often persecuted instead. The collective impact of perceptible, social and community security dramatically enhances productivity, economic growth, gender equity and social equitability for a country where more than 75% of the population falls in this category.

For developing economies, crime prevention is an infrastructural pre-requisite, towards the overarching United Nations Sustainable Development Goals 1, 3, 5, 8-11 and 16. Crime and fear hamper productivity, health, well-being, gender equity, economic growth and infrastructure. They exaggerate inequalities and injustices, and threaten socio-economic sustainability, community living, inclusion and constitute a basic human right.

Replication & Scale Up

This housing practice is applicable to Delhi comprising more than 20 lakh households. The impact analysis based in 2 representative neighbourhoods, is replicated across similar communities of varying socio-economic status.

The main factor for successful replication is the regulatory framework and becomes the prototype for many across the country especially the adjoining states. Though the compulsions can vary, the National Capital Region including the satellite towns of Gurugram, and Noida, face similar issues and their regulations reflect similar developments.

CPTED is at the root of this Housing practice, as the methodology of design of the physical and social environments to deny opportunities for crime. Though they originate in the developed world, they equally entrenched in Indian traditions but commonly undermined in modern development.

Research in India, Asia and Latin America has highlighted their relevance for disadvantaged economies. Honed since the 1970s, CPTED is included in regulatory codes from ISO, US, Australia, EU and UK. These have been adopted in the NBC'25 and will be part of every regulatory framework in the country by 2030.

Policy Uptake

This housing practice has informed or been partially integrated into policy discussions, strategies, or pilot-level policy instruments.

CPTED is already an accepted strategy of design, planning and crime prevention in the Global North and an effective tool for the disadvantaged. CPTED values are embedded within traditional practices in India but require slight realignment with modern contexts.

This housing practice demonstrates the collective impact of CPTED on long term sustainable forms of security. India has taken its first steps by adopting them into the NBC and other Indian

standards. However there is a long way yet to actual enforcement and translation of these initiatives into positive effects on future generations.

Lessons & Takeaways

1. The height and design of Boundary walls as mandated is not followed, enforced and it is critical for urban security.
2. Car parks must be restricted within the stilted floor and not allowed to extend to the road.
3. Owners of unfinished, unoccupied or under maintained environments with graffiti or other disrepair should be penalised.
4. Contrary to developed nations that base their principles on low populatedness, India needs special consideration to crowding within and beyond Housing.

All these have been included in the NBC'25 and should find their way into regulations soon.