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SLUM UPGRADING TO RESETTLEMENT COLONIES: BUILDING INCLUSIVE, SAFE AND RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

The term "slum" connotes the informal and illegal tenements marked by inhuman and abysmal conditions of inadequate housing, overcrowding and lack of access to the bare civic necessities of sanitation and hygiene. Governments across the world try to address the problem of slum dwellers but they are hardly successful in their outcomes. Finding a lasting and sustainable solution to the problems caused by rapid proliferation of slums has always been elusive. Resettlement colonies are one of the solutions adopted by Local Governments in India to address the issue of slums where in large number of houses are built on the fringes of the city where cheap land is available. Moving to these resettlement colonies entail slum dwellers not only moving farther away from, but also deprivation of access to their work places, schools, social institutions and networks of support for their daily living. This paper examines the case of slum dwellers forcibly evicted and housed from Appasamy Street Slum, adjoining Chetpet, a posh

locality in the heart of Chennai, to a resettlement colony at Perumbakkam situated in the periphery of the city as part of Slum upgrading. This paper tries to capture the lived experiences of slum dwellers on moving to the resettlement colony through Focus Group Discussions and In-depth Interviews. The paper brings out that though the slum upgradation program has resulted in a relatively better housing compared to their earlier slum settlement, it has largely failed in addressing the livelihood needs and other basic civic amenities making them more vulnerable to poverty than before.

Keywords: Slum, Slum Upgrading, Resettlement Colony, Urban poor

INTRODUCTION

Rapid urbanization is noticed worldwide and it is more serious in developing nations. It is projected that three-quarter of the world's population will be living in urban environments by 2050. On one side urbanization provides accessibility to all but on the other side, it results in the formation of slums in these areas. The English term sanitation and insecure tenure. In India, according to the Slum Area Improvement and Clearance A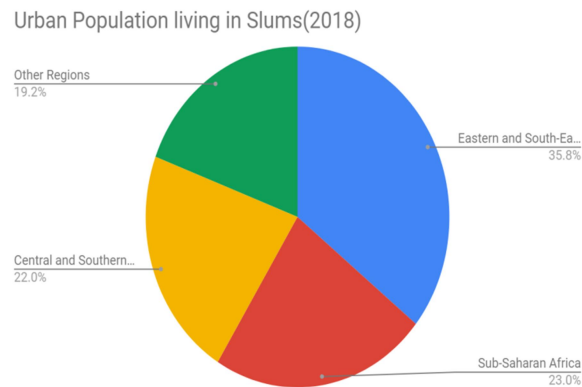ct,1956 - Section-3 slums have been defined as mainly those "residential areas where dwellings are in any respect unfit for human habitation by reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangements and designs of such buildings, narrowness or faulty arrangement of streets, (370 million), sub-Saharan Africa (238 million) and Central and Southern Asia (227

slum means back alley, street of poor people and numerous terms are often used interchangeably are shanty town, favela, rookery, ghetto, *Kudisai Pakuthi, Chaerry* (Tamil) and so on.

As per UN-Habitat, a slum is characterized by lack of durable housing, insufficient living area, lack of access to clean water, inadequate

lack of ventilation, light, sanitation facilities or any combination of these factors which are detrimental to safety, health and morals."

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Statistics Division found that the number of people living in slums or informal settlements grew to over 1 billion with 80% attributed to three regions: Eastern and South-Eastern Asia million).

Urban Population living in Slums(2018)

Other Regions
19.2%

Eastern and South-Ea...
35.8%

Central and Southern...
22.0%

Sub-Saharan Africa
23.0%

**Source: United Nations Department of Economic and
Social Affairs Statistics Division**

In the Indian Context, more than 40% of the populace on an average in the metropolitan cities lives in slums and squatter settlements in vulnerable locations.(Kumar, 2016) According to the Census study in 2011, 65.5 million people live in slums which has increased from 42.6 million in 2011.

1.1 SLUM UPGRADING

Slum upgrading is an integrated approach that aims to turn around downward trends in an area. These downward trends can be legal (land tenure), physical (infrastructure), social (crime or education, for example) or economic. Slum upgrading is not limited with supplying water, drainage, housing but putting into action the economic, social, institutional and community activities that are needed to turn a community around. These actions should involve all the members of the Community, different stakeholders, Government agencies related to that community. Slum upgrading

activities aim to provide basic services such as housing, streets, footpaths, drainage, clean water, sanitation, sewage disposal and also access to education and health care.

Therefore, Slum upgrading is an urban renewal strategy with an objective of removing the slums and improving the poor living standards of the slum dwellers. It focuses towards the betterment of the Physical, Economic and Social environment of slum dwellers.

## 1.2 SLUM UPGRADING: TAMIL NADU URBAN HABITAT DEVELOPMENT BOARD (TNUHDB)

The Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board (TNUHDB) formerly known as Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) is a Government Machinery involved in upgrading of slums right from its inception 1970. It has initiated several measures to upgrade the living standard conditions of the urban slum dwellers since 1974 onwards in a phased manner by implementing various programmes like In-situ tenemental schemes, In-situ plotted and infrastructure development and Rehabilitation and Resettlement schemes to improve the environs of the slums and the living standards of the urban slum families to achieve the Slum Free Cities Vision before

2023.

The main role of TNUHDB is to protect slum families from calamities like fire, floods, etc. Provide lost cost housing such as tenement built with a multipurpose room, bed room, kitchen, an independent toilet, with water supply and sewerage arrangements. In addition to that Paved access, street light, surface drain is provided. These tenements are allotted to the slum families on a heavily subsidized hire The details are presented on the **Figure 1**.

purchase system, at the rate of Rs.250/- per month for a period of 20 years. The slums located in unobjectionable areas, wherein equitable distribution of space to all is not feasible, are cleared and tenemental schemes put up.

The Socio-Economic details of the families living in the slum areas identified and declared by TNUHDB which situated on Government, private and temple land in the year 1971,1986 and 2014.

TNUHDB-Identification of Slums
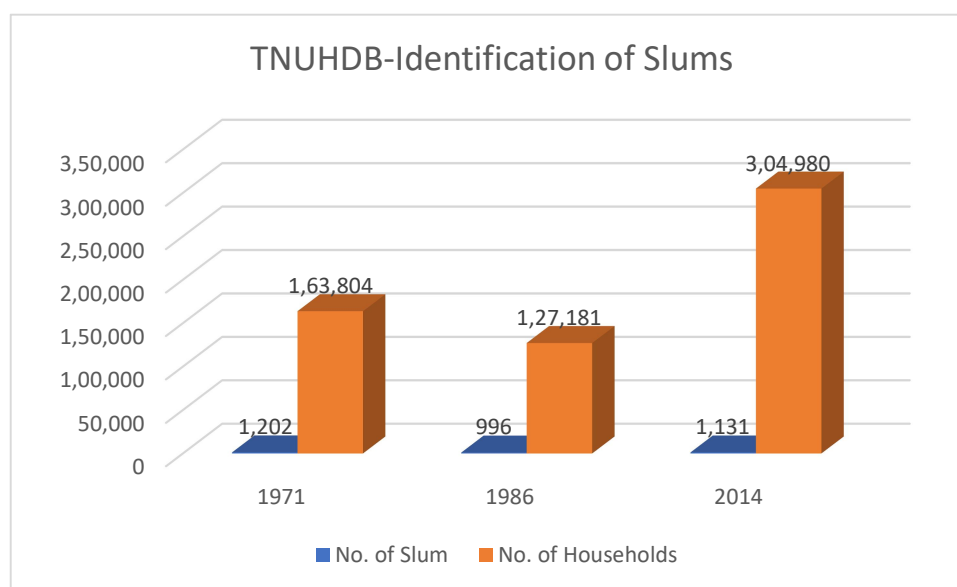
(Right to Information Act-RTI Reply from TNSCB dated 08.09.20-Ref.No.Lr.No.M1/8102/2020)

Chennai alone is estimated to have over 2 lakh families living without proper shelter. The number of informal settlements and pavement dwellers is often understated and the city's records of slums maintained by the

Slum Clearance Board and urban local bodies, particularly in smaller cities, are often not comprehensive.

The slum population has more than doubled from a reported 23 lakhs during Census 2001 (less than 10 per cent of urban population) to an estimated 59 lakhs (17 per cent of urban population in 2011). While the

range of estimates for slum population in urban areas varies between 59 lakhs to 86 lakhs in 2011, housing shortage is estimated in the range of 26-28 lakh.(Kumar, 2016)

Looking at the past, several measures were undertaken by the Governments and through International Funding to prevent and to promote the slums. As per the Right to Information Act, 2005(RTI)from TNSCB dated   08.09.20-Ref.No.Lr.No.M1/8102/2020

1.2.1 In-situ Tenemental Schemes with Infrastructure

Storied tenements are constructed on unobjectionable slums utilizing the maximum possible Floor Space Index (FSI) and allotted to the families living there.

1.2.2 Integrated Townships

Tenements are constructed on available nearby vacant lands for the families living in slums on objectionable lands like river banks, road margins and places required for public purposes as integrated townships with the necessary basic infrastructure like schools, College, Industrial lift with power back-up, water supply, sewerage infrastructure, electivity and social infrastructure like schools, Colleges, Industrial Training center, Parks, Anganwadi Centers, Primary Health Centers, Bus terminus, Vocational training

center, Police station, Convenient Shops, milk booth, community hall etc., and the encroached site are cleared and restored to their original use. At the time of resettlement shifting allowance of Rs.5000 and subsistence allowance of Rs.30,000 are disbursed. Livelihood activities, skill training and hob melas are conducted to ensure smooth resettlement in the new job locations

1.2.3 Constriction of houses by the beneficiaries

The urban slum families living in Kutcha house in poor conditions in thatched/tiles roof without a toilet and they cannot afford to construct houses on their own. Such families were given a grant of Rs.2.10 lakhs to enable them to construct permanent houses with RCC roof.

These initiatives were successful in physical upgrading of slums but turned out badly to make positive social and economic changes. Some of the fundamental issues for this stagnant state are

- Proliferation of slums
- Lack of Community Participation
- Inadequate facilities
- Lack of Financial Resources
- Lack of Monitoring
- Lack of land security
- Lack of Sustainability

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)-Goal 11-Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable communities are directed towards the upgrading of slums which will help cities grow in a more sustainable and inclusive manner. This paper explores the degree to which the slum redevelopments have been fruitful in refining the socio-economic, physical quality of human settlements and improving the living conditions of the slum dwellers specifically to a slum upgrading project at Appasamy Street Slum in the city of Chennai, India. The paper is structured into two segments. Firstly, it examines the slum upgrading initiatives in the Appasamy Street Slum since 1970 till 2017 and secondly it presents the findings of the empirical study conducted with the displaced people through Focus Group Discussion from the same slum who are presently resettled at Perumbakkam Resettlement colony, Chennai, India.

1.   Appasamy Street slum locality- A CASE STUDY

Appasamy Street was declared as an objectionable slum by the TNSCB in the year 1973. It is a slum situated in the banks of Coovum River. The people who were settled here were all from different parts of the city. This place is formerly known as Appasamy Mudali Street where there are Mudaliars living in that place use to come to Coovum River for Bathing. Appasamy street slum is very unique as it has both objectionable slum area and non-objectionable slum area. It is situated in the extreme end of Harrington road and surrounded by big bungalows and residential areas. The slum is not known to outside world because it is covered by these areas. The people from these slums work as domestic workers in nearby areas and during natural calamities the were given a good support. By these rich men staying nearby. The slum is easily accessible to all areas and well connected with transport facilities.

A part of the objectionable slum area was upgraded by the TNSCB in the year 1975 from huts to an in-situ Tenement with 2 blocks for 64 Families and the rest of the people in the objectionable areas continue to live there as they did not get any housing facility.

The Government on and off provided services for those who were living in the objectionable areas as they were prone to fire outbreaks during Summer and to flood during Monsoon rains because they are very living on the banks.

Table 1: Represents the major flood and fire accidents from 1995 to 2017

Year	Major fire accidents	Major Floods
1995	Fire Accident	
1999		Flood
2005		Flood
2008	Fire Accident	
2009		Flood
2015		Major Flood
2016		Vardha Cyclone
2017	Displacement to Resettlement Colony	

Table 2: Represents the slum upgrading projects taken place since 1996

Year	Services Provided	No. of Families Benefitted
1996	*KalNaarThittam* – Huts converted to Cemented Sheet	120
1999	EB connection for Huts	150
2015	Low cost housing in partnership with Action Aid, INGO	110
2017	Displaced to Perumbakkam Resettlement Colony	350

2. SLUM UPGRADING TO PERUMBAKKAM RESETTLEMENT COLONY

Re-settlement colonies are the end result of any developmental projects. Due to paucity of Space, the TNSCB moved from in-situ settlement to resettlement colonies in the outskirts of the city. In the mid 90's, TNSCB started to promote re-settlement colonies and slowly added more to it which is almost 25-35 km away from the city. The TNSCB has promoted 9 re-settlement Colonies [1]

The re-settlement Colonies in Chennai has

been designed only as a house but failed to consider their livelihood. The resettlement colonies in Chennai are branded as "City's Suicide Point", "Human Dump Yard", and Hellhole" emphasizing that the people are "Relocated and forgotten by the state".

Perumbakkam resettlement colony is 31 kms away from city. It has 19,200 houses in 200 blocks and in each block, we have 8 floors and, in each floor, we have 12 houses putting together 96 houses in one block. The apartment is well structured with lift facility and this is the first of its kind in a resettlement colony. Each house is in the size of 350 Sq. Ft which has a living room, bedroom, bathroom and a toilet. Individual electric connection is available at all houses and with water facilities.

3. BUILDING INCLUSIVE, SAFE AND

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[1] **3936 Tenements in Ezhil Nagar-Perumbakkam, 8048 Tenements OkkiumThoraipakkam, 10452 Tenements Perumbakkam Phase-I, 5988 Tenements Perumbakkam Phase-II, 1024 Tenements in Gudapakkam, 2048 Tenements in Navalur, 15656 Tenements in OkkiumThoraipakkam-Kannagi Nagar, 6764 Tenements in Semmenchery and 3616 Tenements in Thiruvotriyur-All India Radio Scheme altogether 57,532 Tenements. (Source: RTI)**

RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

SDG Goal 11 - Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. aims towards providing safety, affordability, accessibility and sustainability. This study examines whether this SDG Goal.11 targets has been achieved or not by assessing through the tool of Focus Group Discussion and in-depth Interviews.

The present tenements are designed **as** eight storied building with 12 houses in each floor altogether 96 houses in one block. The size of a house is 350 sq.ft with one living room cum Kitchen, Toilet, Bathroom and bedroom, which was felt as grossly inadequate by the people.

There were not many complaints about the availability of water supply. *"We get water on alternative days and that is sufficient for us"* was shared by most of the people interviewed. *"Sometimes, sewage water seeps in, especially during rainy days and we can make it out through the unbearable stench in the water, making it unpotable. Our children often fall sick with cholera, diarrhea, fever etc., during rainy days due to this issue and it is really alarming for us to use the water supplied by the local body".*

On the question of availability of electricity connection most of the people contacted for the study expressed their satisfaction. *"We do not have any issues with electricity connection. We have Fans, Lights, Television sets, Mixers, Grinders running on electricity. In our earlier slum locality, we had only illegal wired connections made from the main electric supply, which was sufficient for burning the light bulbs".*

On the question of ownership of the houses the respondents stated *"we do not have any ownership over the house. We have not yet been provided the patta or the sale deeds for the houses and it is only an allotment order. We have to pay a monthly rent of Rs. 350/- and an additional charge of Rs.200/- as maintenance charges, which we feel is quite high and this we have to pay for a period of 20 years. The slum clearance board can cancel our allotment order too, if we fail to pay the rent in time and we do not feel we have security of tenure. This would not have been the case if we own the house".*

Thus, the study records that the residents are mostly unhappy in their perception of the resettled colony to be safe and affordable, except for the availability of electricity.

Affordable and Sustainable Transport Systems

When questioned about the conditions of the roads the respondents stated "*We have got good roads and we have no concerns about it. But the only problem is about the*

inadequate bus facilities. Earlier we used to be in the center of city and we did not have to much travel to our workplaces. But we are dependent on public transport only and these days the bus fare are so high that a considerable portion of our wages go on transportation itself. As the public transport is very infrequent, we have to rely on Share Autorickshaws which are even more costlier compared to public transport" Most of the residents of this slum work as Domestic workers and one of the respondents stated " *Every day I have to travel 30 Kms to the home where I work as a maid. It almost consumes Rs.80 to Rs. 100/- every day, whereas at our earlier settlement I go to houses for my work just by walking from the settlement. I had never travelled before coming to this resettlement colony and never imagined this day would come. As a considerable portion of our earning goes on travelling, we have less money to run our families".* .

Thus it has come out from the study that the residents are happy about the condition of the road, but have lost easy access to their workplace.

Inclusive and Sustainable Urbanization.

When the respondents were asked whether they were given proper notice about their relocation, one of the respondents stated**"** In

November 2009, three Government officials came and asked us to pack things and keep them ready to move out to new settlement. But as we feared it did not happen then. After that we used to get rumors that we will be evicted now and then. When the officials told us about eviction on 8th Dec 2017, we did not take it seriously and thought it would just be an usual warning. There were no official notices but on the very next day, officials barged into our slums with bulldozers and began to raze down our houses one after the other mercilessly. We did not have even time to collect our belongings and we felt we were robbed of our citizenship and we felt like we are nowhere". " It was like a sudden Jolt on all of us, when we were forced to vacate on the same day, when the bulldozers came, we could not make out anything, we were in a state of shock and that experience is still giving me nightmares."said one of the participants in the FGD. "The same day my daughter had gone to school for writing half yearly exam, my husband had gone to work. Where would they see me, when they come back. What will be their state of mind to see the house they saw in the morning not before their eyes when they return" said another woman in the group.

It is still traumatizing to think that I had to

carry all my belongings 30 kms across the city in a garbage vehicle paying Rs. 1000/- on the day of eviction. Let them evict, but should there not be an adequate notice." quipped another participant.

Loss of Education - Children lost their education after the eviction. Most of the children were studying in schools in Chennai city. After the re-settlement they have to travel almost 5 hours to go to school and return home. Most of them became school drop outs due to distance and specially the mothers will take the girls to school drop them and, in the evening, pick them up from the school due to safety reasons. All of them shared that when they were evicted no schools were there but after 2 years only schools were established and in most of the schools lack basic amenities. Girls have no safety in schools functioning within the re-settlement colonies. Teachers use abusive language taking into the fact that they are poor and marginalized. Relocation has been the major reason for children to drop out of school. Children were forced to commute long distances by bus to their schools, which are located close to their original sites of habitation in the city.

Loss of employment – They lost their employment immediately after the

relocation because of the increased distance of Re-settlement colonies from their places of work. they have to travel 2 to 3kms to main road if they wanted to travel fast. In an average they spend Rs.75 to 100 for travel fare alone per day. The site is far from the original places of habitation of the communities (almost 30 kilometres). Many people thus lost their employment immediately after the relocation.

Community Participation is missing in Planning, designing, evicting and relocating. It is been forced than participatory.

Reduce the adverse effects of natural disasters

The people shared they were vulnerable for fire and flood in the area they were living. But in the resettlement colony we can't deny the fact that still they are prone of flood, water logging during rainy season. Since the building is very close to a water body it is flooded during rainy season and water enters the main road and electric supply is cut. Still they feel they are prone to the natural disasters.

Reduce the Environmental impact of cities

Waste Management system is very poor but it can't be denied that still people litter the place. Sometimes the garbage is cleared in alternative days and it leads to hazardous

situations.

Provide access to safe and inclusive green and public spaces

Green and public spaces for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities are allotted not yet created. Even after four years the development of these spaces takes a slow pace. These allotted places used as parking spaces for the residents.

CONCLUSION

The paper examined slum upgrading in the era of world-class city construction, with particular attention to the underlying processes and tensions through a case study of a slum upgrading project at Appasamy Street, Chennai. Slum upgrading is accompanied by benefits, in infrastructure but it also produced tensions stemming largely around urban space and lead to loss of livelihood activities for the community.

At the broadest level, slum upgrading is focused only on infra-structure developments but neglected the local context, in-sensitivity to urbanization processes, denial of people participation and failed to acknowledge the livelihoods of the urban poor. As the Appasamy street case shows, the slum upgrading process provided a good house but still land ownership is denied, good roads but less frequency to

public transport, Community Based organization are formed but no people participation, it has a narrow focus that broader vision of transforming the slum people in their total personality

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