

## ENGAGING COMMUNITY IN SLUM REDEVELOPMENT IN RAIPUR AND GANGTOK, INDIA

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### Introduction

The concept of “democracy” in India since independence has been heavily politicized. The importance of democracy to grassroots communities in urban contexts was realized in 1992 when the 74th Amendments to the Indian Constitution were introduced to strengthen urban-governance by empowering municipalities to make certain decisions (including financial ones) on their own by consulting local communities.

Because their implementation and efficacy was disputed (Vidyarthi, 2004), programmes with a pan-Indian scope have remained largely unresponsive to the growing demand for bottom-up planning. An analysis of the major programmes launched post-independence reveals that the common deliverables were mostly preordained by political entities, bureaucrats and experts (mostly seated in the capitols) without considering popular opinion, and funds were allocated based exclusively on statistics (MoHUPA, 2010). When implemented, these programmes either faced mismanagement of funds, lack of harmonization between the centre, state and local polity, legal barriers, or simply were not adopted. Consequently, these “blanket” programmes either achieved marginal success or failed. Such paternalistic and non-participatory approaches are widespread across India in all programmes and have grievous effects when extended to urban-poverty eradication programmes, especially in the development of slum-areas. The urban housing shortage in 2012 stood at 18.78 million dwelling units, whereby 56% of households making under Rs.5000 per month experienced a dearth of housing (MoHUPA, 2012). Meanwhile, governments (both centre and state) time and again resorted to tenure-based, often violent evictions and/or resettling people in city-peripheries without their consent (Mathur, 2012). This has aggravated the already raging housing poverty (un-housed or under-housed families) and unleashed spatial injustice, unemployment, and many other problems..

Research also suggests that the absence of tenure-security has aggravated housing poverty where it has been repeatedly utilized for legitimizing eviction. In the absence of a robust land records management system, land ownerships are often disputed. Properties left vacant for speculation ultimately experience encroachment by the state. The settlements that have no legal standing are not accommodated in the city-wide infrastructure networks and become squalid over time, falling prey to environment ‘improvement’ plans of government (Desai, 2012).

This paper presents community engagement experiences using model Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) in creating Slum Free Cities under Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) Scheme. It

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acknowledges the dynamics of participatory consultation and decision-making for DPRs in Raipur (Chhattisgarh State) in central India and Gangtok (Sikkim State) in the North.

### **Basic Services for Urban Poor (BSUP)**

Because of their indifference to the housing and health of poorer sectors, the BSUP under Jawaharlal National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM) proposed an elimination of tenure-based biasness and non-inclusion in decision-making between 2005-2012. It was launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA) – a government agency which, unlike its predecessors, introduced public participation and cost sharing between the central government (50%), the state and urban local bodies (ULB) (38%) and a minimum of 12% for beneficiaries of upgrades to slum-housing and infrastructure. It was touted as “The Great Indian Mass Housing Project” which, in spite of the promised participatory nature and settlement upgrading, set aside the agenda of infrastructure development and transformed into a slum rehabilitation scheme carried out by almost all major cities. (Mahadevia et al, 2013).

Social audits undertaken by various research organizations to assess BSUP schemes throughout India observed a lack of understanding regarding the relationship between housing, livelihood, and tenure-rights, as well as an overall presence of haste, mismanagement, official callousness and disregard for basic human rights. Owing to the absence of a comprehensive selection procedure, slums selected for the programme were mostly those in prominent locations. Some have argued that BSUP was used as a tool to rid high value, centrally located lands from slums, resettling slum-dwellers to the peripheries where they would have no connection to city-wide infrastructure (Prasad, 2013). The household survey (which identified beneficiaries and attempted to understand their expectations) was also criticized on the grounds that it was carried out with no slum-dweller involvement. The survey records were mismanaged and the list of targeted areas was often completely inaccessible to public. This resulted in ineligible beneficiaries being included in the list, as the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) has pointed out (Chakravartty, 2012).

During project implementation, evidence of piece-meal developments were observed in many cities under BSUP and IHSDP where ULBs only made temporary structures called kucchis (made out of clay, tin, cardboard, etc.) more permanent. This fulfilled the 25m<sup>2</sup> ‘minimum floor area’ criteria but failed to redesign public space, resulting in narrow streets, poor ventilation and a space-crunch for service providers (Shelter Associates, 2012). Even the “technically right” housing designs by professionals reflected insensitivity towards the culture, aspirations and needs of the people, resulting in insufficient space, poor choice of latrine locations and arbitrary site planning. In certain cases, abrupt changes in layouts and infrastructure facilities were made to suit the available budget without seeking public opinion.

Problems also existed in relocation sites, normally located on the city-fringes. Often the slum households were allotted completely vacant lands, where evictees themselves had to build the transit infrastructure. The lack of funds, dearth of developable land, elusive land ownership documentation, and operation and maintenance responsibilities resulted in slow implementation that forced people to personally invest in their transit tenements. Those that were allotted dwelling units complained about the small room sizes, inferior construction

materials, and the total absence or deplorable condition of basic facilities like water-supply, sanitation, waste management, health and education. Among these deficits, the absence of livelihood opportunities affected the residents most (Mahadevia et al, 2013). Moreover, the BSUP principle of providing tenure-rights to slum-dwellers was altogether neglected. For example, in Pune, rehabilitated slum-households were not granted tenure-rights over their new houses, providing no respite from threat of eviction (Shelter Associates, 2012). In Bhopal, only the evictees with conditional occupancy-rights issued by the state (called patta) were rehabilitated (Mahadevia et al, 2013). It has also been reported that some funds meant for projects under BSUP were diverted to other non-poor programmes, jeopardizing the inception or completion of essential pro-poor projects.

Such outcomes are evidence of an insensitivity of governments towards the urban-poor, severely hindering the project's progress. For example, eight years after the program's launch, only 5% of the 18.78 million DUs required in India have been approved for construction. 40% of these remain incomplete and 30% of those completed remain unoccupied.

As an alternative to the paternalistic approach and to empower slum communities with their own habitat improvement and management, Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) was initiated in 2009 to realize a "slum-free-India" with inclusive and equitable cities in which every citizen has access to basic civic and social services and decent shelter.

## **RAY**

RAY is a reform driven scheme that builds on the foundation laid by JnNURM. It acknowledges the urban poor and their settlements as an integral part of a city and institutionalizes inclusivity in habitat planning by strengthening access to services and establishing tenure rights. RAY aims to achieve this vision by encouraging the state to tackle the problem of slums. They encourage an integrated approach that brings those forced to live in extra-formal spaces into the formal system. It advocates for making services and amenities available to those who have been denied these rights, and for creating legal title in city spaces. It aims to correct the deficiencies of the formal systems of urban development and town planning that have failed to create conditions of inclusiveness and equity. It is envisaged that new urban families have access to housing with municipal services, rather than be forced to create encroachments and slums and lead extra-legal lives in deprived conditions.

RAY funds the development of housing and infrastructure from a number of sources: the Government of India provides 50% of the expenses, the state (and the ULB) 38% and the beneficiary 12% to encourage a sense of ownership over the asset created. Tenure-security is of the utmost importance, because the central funds can only be accessed if the state grants land titles to slum-dwellers, thus helping to protect them from evictions, secure credits, and realize social inclusion. In addition, institutional reforms in the form of bye-law amendments, pro-poor policies, establishing slum-development agencies in collaboration with slum-dwellers, and including community-based organizations and NGOs in decision making etc. were proposed.

Under RAY, every state has to prepare a Slum Free City Plan of Action (SFCPoA) at the municipal level and a Detailed Project Report (DPR) at the settlement-level. The SFCPoA

identifies all underserved areas and assesses the spatial, infrastructural, institutional, and financial feasibilities for slum-upgrading or rehabilitation in consultation with the urban local body and the slum-dwellers, while the DPRs are prepared to transform the SFCPoA policies into implementable engineering solutions for individual slums, incorporating feedback from slum-dwellers and other key stakeholders. However, with their SFCPoAs still pending, many states went ahead with preparing model DPRs for slum-development.

### *Raipur*

Raipur is the capital of Chhattisgarh. Being the only major agricultural, commercial, industrial and educational centre in the region, it attracts large numbers of immigrants. With a total municipal area of 143 square kilometres, it's divided into 70 electoral wards and 8 planning zones and governed by the Raipur Municipal Corporation (RMC). The city initially grew around three central lakes and expanded rapidly in all directions with a current population of 1.01 million (Census, 2011) that has doubled since 2001.

Meanwhile, the slum population has leaped by 264% owing to its prime location. The spurt in construction of housing complexes and large-scale infrastructure projects has attracted numerous migrants from the neighbouring states. The rise in land prices has made migrants unable to afford housing in the formal land market, compelling them to live in the city's low-income and underserved areas. The number of reported slums in 2001 (154 with 1,59,120 people) has grown to 282 in 2011 with 5,16,829 people, constituting 52% of the total municipal population living without access to basic urban services. Almost 91% of the slum-settlements are located within 5 kilometres from the city-centre and together claim almost 5% of land in the city.

### *Jorapara Slum*

Being part of the peripheral ward of RMC, Jorapara is connected to the city-core by the Bilaspur Road. Jorapara (Jora meaning 'lake' or 'pond' and Para meaning 'settlement') dates back to the 1950s, and is composed of 198 households, or 887 people (RAY-DPR, 2013). It measures 5.4 hectares, and is an encroachment on state-government land. The households have owned pattas since 1998, which merely allow occupancy rights and do not confer legal status by design. Jorapara is not connected to city-wide trunk infrastructure. While water demand is met by borewells or handpumps, private toilets equipped with cesspits cater to sanitation. However, the socio-economic survey suggests that 45% of households continue to defecate in the open.

### *Gangtok*

Gangtok is the capital of the state of Sikkim. Its administration is shared by the Municipal Corporation, State departments (particularly the Urban Development and Housing (UDHD)), and Public Health Engineering Department (PHED), which look after the civic functions of garbage-disposal, water-supply, tax-collection, license-allotments, and civic-infrastructure. The city has a total population of 0.1 million people (Census, 2011) spread across 15 municipal wards encompassing 19.62 square kilometres. 88% of the total state urban population resides in Gangtok, attracting a major share of developmental investments from the state.

Gangtok is urbanizing rapidly because it is the state capital, the primate city, and a popular tourist destination. The heavy civic-investment in Gangtok has resulted in lop-sided development concentrating around the city and threatening its fragile ecology. Sharing a

border with other Indian states and culturally similar counties like Bhutan and Nepal, Sikkim (especially Gangtok) receives a heavy in-flow of migrants. Rapid urbanization coupled with topographically restricted developable land resulted in the creation of slums. Presently, there are 58 slums in Gangtok covering an area of 1.15 square kilometres with a total population of 23,580. Gangtok has more protected forest than habitable area, so most of the slums in the city lie either in non-conforming areas or are precariously interspersed between residential areas in the city and the periphery.

There are three categories of slums:

- Slums within commercial areas. These are mainly low-cost rental houses with poor ventilation and bad lighting. Sanitation facilities are either shared or non-existent.
- Slums that are encroachments in protected forest land. These slums lack basic amenities like drinking water, good sanitation and solid waste management. The land is also prone to frequent landslides because of the Jhoras (mountain streams).
- Slums on private land. These slums also lack basic amenities because land owners restrict the residents from constructing infrastructure like houses, toilets or drains.

#### *Bhanugram Slum*

Bhanugram is one of 12 notified slums located in the Diesel Power House (DPH) ward. It has a total area of 0.2 hectares with 2073 people constituting 538 households. Bhanugram is located in the heart of the city, encroaching on state government land. Owing to a lack of legal status, the slum lacks basic services like water and sanitation. Also, dilapidated housing coupled with poor ventilation pose a great threat to the life and health of residents.

### **Community Participation for DPR preparation**

Community participation and decision-making forms the backbone of DPR preparation under RAY. The following are steps RAY has taken to engage the communities of Raipur and Gangtok at every step of the process.

#### 1) Environment Building

For both the slums, a ‘Process Ignition Workshop’ was hosted, gathering slum-dwellers, ward-councilors, and officials from ULBs and state departments. It introduced RAY and highlighted the necessity of participation, while discussing issues facing the ward and the slums. A community mapping exercise was undertaken to understand the way the people of Bhanugram see their settlement and to help them locate the neighbourhood features that may need upgrading. The slum-dwellers were also asked to pick from a pile of picture cards depicting toilets, houses, lighting, water-supply, schools, dispensaries, tenure, etc.,

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from which they could select their biggest concerns. Based on the activity, neighbourhood groups were formed to identify which issues to address. The main concerns that emerged from the workshop were housing, garbage-disposal, and taming the Jhoras.



Environment Building and Process Ignition Workshop-Bhanugram, Gangtok: Prioritization of Issues

Community representatives were selected in Raipur for the purpose of raising awareness about RAY and animating street-meetings. They were successful in creating a general awareness about issues in the community and in equipping residents (especially women) with the skills needed to identify issues and implement solutions. In Bhanugram, a pre-existing Community Based Organization (CBO) took up a similar mandate.

## 2) Participatory Poverty Mapping

Conducted only in Jorapara, this exercise helped to gauge the slum-dwellers' understanding of the positive features of their settlement through creating an interactive map. Household items such as wheat flour, pulses, vermilion, earthen utensils, tree leaves etc. were used to draw the map. Women especially took to the exercise, quickly developing a map that highlighted the ponds, temples, sitting places, individual houses etc. of the community. The organic drawings helped explain the spatial distribution of poverty and vulnerability in Jorapara. Later, the participants brainstormed poverty indicators in their settlement and identified the houses they thought were most disadvantaged. These were classified into three vulnerability groups falling under RAY's mandate. It was found that approximately 75% of Jorapara households were poor with certain pockets demanding immediate intervention.

## 3) Street Meetings and Issue Prioritization

Further discussions were undertaken through street-level meetings to identify the causes of and solutions to problems facing the community. In Bhanugram, one major issue was that the major Jhora passing through the settlement was replete with

household garbage. Participating households agreed that indiscriminate dumping of garbage into the Jhora should stop and that garbage vats should be used more effectively. However, garbage collection was still irregular, so the community decided to approach the Gangtok Municipal Corporation (GMC) about rectifying the situation.



Street meetings with women groups in Jorapara, Raipur

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Women in particular took action on the slow extinction of the Bada Jora because of garbage dumping and the sludge from crude toilets. Representatives held many meetings to persuade community members to discontinue throwing garbage into the lake, encouraging them instead to collect garbage in bins and throw in the road-side municipal vats. Most households quickly adopted the practice. The initiative received widespread praise, including from the Mayor of Raipur.

Regarding housing, we learned that many families lived in abandoned houses with a scarce water-supply. Because Sikkim has no neighbourhood-level water supply, water had to be piped in from the main source – a very costly process. Poor families would often share costs to make water sourcing more manageable. However, the sharing of costs also generated frequent disputes over maintenance responsibilities. While the CBO has been discussing this issue with the community, a more sustainable solution is awaited.

#### 4) Participatory Household Survey

As mandated under RAY, a socio-economic survey of all the slum-households was conducted in the local language. Because some of the content of the survey was sensitive (such as toilet usage practices and drug addiction rates), chosen enumerators from the community were trained in conducting the survey. In Raipur, the slum-survey was conducted and managed entirely by a group of female volunteers from the community, while the CBO was responsible for data-collection in Bhanugram. Every surveyed household was given a unique ID that would later link to a GIS-based map of

the settlement created with the survey data. The inclusion of local people in the survey process helped to quickly build a rapport with the community and made the data collection schedule more flexible. The collected data was entered into an online platform specifically designed for analysing the socio-economic conditions of the slums.

Once completed, the survey data was publically displayed and community comments were invited. With only minor changes, the data set was approved by all households involved and the ward-councillor.

#### 5) Total Station Survey (TSS)

Mapping the settlement and infrastructure facilities in the vicinity fulfills a critical aspect of RAY's mandate. Although mapping of the two slums was completed with the support of professionals, street-meetings enabled community members to validate and correct the data throughout the process.

#### 6) Options Validation

Unlike for previous slum-upgrading projects, the options for housing and infrastructure development were finalized with the help of technical experts and shared with the community in accessible language. In Jorapara, while the community approved of the housing designs and space allocation, it was concerned about unused land ownership rights, transit accommodation, the fixed size of dwelling-units and construction methods. Most slum-dwellers wanted to build their own dwelling units without the involvement of contractors.. The community representatives played a very crucial role in clarifying misconceptions and clearing doubts with the community. With regards to sanitation, residents agreed that owing to the absence of a city-wide sewage system, a decentralized system would be the best option. A Decentralized Wastewater Treatment System (DEWATS) was unanimously favoured owing to its simple usage and maintenance regime. Although deciding on a location for the system was contentious because of concerns over land ownership and system maintenance, the community eventually selected a piece of public land beside the BadaJora for construction of the DEWATS plant and agreed to take on maintenance responsibilities. A memorandum to that effect was presented to the government as part of the DPR and awaits approval.

In Bhanugram, UDHD officials shared housing design development challenges with the community including issues related to plot dimensions, ownership of land, topography, choice of construction materials, street morphology etc. Specific meetings were conducted with a group of all kuchha houses, all semi-pucca houses (houses with either only floors or walls cemented), dilapidated, small space houses etc. to understand their particular requirements and aspirations. The final designs were vetted by all stakeholders and forwarded for approval in the DPR.





Discussion of options for developing housing and infrastructure with the community at Jorapara

#### 7) Implementation and Monitoring

Community participation was also extended to implementing and monitoring the civil works sanctioned under the DPR. In Jorapara, Raipur, the community opposed the involvement of public contractors, preferring to raise their houses themselves, along with managing the DEWATS. However, residents eventually agreed to the provision of technical input support from the municipal corporation.

In Bhanugram, the DPR proposed a two-pronged monitoring system. Firstly, it made the ward-committee responsible for ensuring smooth implementation and timely delivery of milestone reports from the contractor. Secondly, it was agreed that the community would oversee the implementation of civil-works in Bhanugram by identifying area supervisors. These supervisors would be informed of each contract's obligations and be tasked with informing the UD&HD/GMC of any issues to be addressed and ensuring timely and appropriate follow up action.

#### Ongoing issues

A common issue identified in both of the experiences was the general fear of eviction regarding government housing programmes. Since land-ownership records are badly managed in India, tenure insecurity is a daily reality for the urban poor. People have little faith in government projects that have historically been designed to exclude, resulting in low turn out rates at public meetings. At the outset of the programme, people were sceptical of RAY's commitment to full community participation in planning. They feared "token participation" where end-products would bear their signatures but largely reflect government

priorities and perhaps even lead to their eviction. This collective fear also affected the volunteers who were dissuaded by their family to continue engaging with RAY.

Additionally, because the outcomes of initiatives under RAY often take a long time to materialize, the community would often lose faith in the process, requiring great efforts to be re-engaged. Reconciling these delays with government deadlines for DPR submissions was an ongoing challenge.

Another challenge was maintaining partnerships with community groups and representatives that were created under RAY. Although the DPRs claim to provide ongoing assistance to the community in communicating with government, there is possibility that the long process for project approvals coupled with shift of focus of the government might reduce their usefulness. Once again, maintaining the community enthusiasm, throughout a time-consuming process, is a big challenge. Because the community representatives are only volunteers who receive no monetary compensation for their work, there is little incentive for them to maintain interest in the process over the long term.

## Learning

Working for RAY, we came to understand that with guidance and encouragement, communities can engage in fruitful discussions related to urban development. It can be a time-consuming affair, requiring lots of patience. Political interference is not uncommon, and external deadlines can be difficult to work with. But ultimately, slum-dwellers are able to suggest simple solutions to complex problems. Important questions around issues such as land tenure, water supply, and cost-sharing were consistently raised at public meetings in thoughtful ways. Holding mass meetings may often create more problems than they solve if the marginalized cannot have their voices heard. But small street-corner meetings have yielded splendid results with a spectrum of important issues being given space for discussion. This experience provides excellent insight into the possibility of meaningfully incorporating community opinions into an end-product, whether it is housing design, infrastructure provision, or other urban development challenges. It must be understood that the community's knowledge and opinions on development models are formed through experience and will not always align with policy maker priorities. For community-based urban development to be realized, programmes must inculcate patience and a zeal for ongoing community dialogue in order to ensure that their aspirations are understood and respected in the planning process.

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