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## **Policy Paper**

# **Urban Slums in India: Improving Redevelopment and Relocation Policies**

**LexQuest Foundation**

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### About the Organisation

LexQuest Foundation (LQF) is an independent, non-profit, research and action organisation, established in 2014, in New Delhi. We are striving to create, advocate and implement effective solutions for a diverse range of development issues.

To endorse participative governance, we engage with a broad spectrum of stakeholders, from various sections of the society, to ensure that policy-making remains a democratic process. We utilize pragmatic and futuristic research to disseminate actionable knowledge to decision-makers, experts and the general public.

Our key activities include capacity and skill-building workshops, policy advisory programs, public outreach, and stakeholder consultations. We collaborate with the government, other organizations and individuals for impactful policy formulation and execution.



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By employing sustainable and equitable solutions through our multidisciplinary, intersectional initiatives and programs, we are constantly working towards creating empowered communities.



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## **Distribution of Slums Dwellings in Metropolitan Cities**

According to the 2011 census, 22.5% of India's population lives in slums, distributed among 2613 towns/cities of the country and 9 large States comprise 81% of the total slum population. There are three kinds of slums- notified, recognized, and identified. Besides this, there are also unlisted or unrecognized slums.

### **Space**

44.8% of slum households consist of only one room, followed by 29.5% with two rooms. The majority of the slum households consist of a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 8 people who live in a one-room household.

### **Living Conditions**

The majority of slum dwellers are only dependent on untreated tap water for drinking and other utilities with open or no drainage at all points. Since 34% of the slums do not have a latrine within the premises, residents either use public latrines or resort to open defecation. As it is the informally employed urban poor who reside in slums, they also have the worst health indicators among the urban population, with poor access to healthcare services. Slums are a perfect example of the fact that with increasing urbanization, income inequalities and the ability to afford decent living conditions are also increasing between the urban poor and non-poor.

Overall 6.5 crore of India's urban population resides in slums. Notably, the majority of the slum population comprises the informal sector labor force who are employed in low-paying jobs. **Due to the migration of people to urban areas in search of employment, slums spring up in Indian cities within a matter of days.** With an increase in population from the 1990s, growth in the slum areas is registered which implies that the proportion of slums is directly related to the population. According to the latest data, while the distribution of the slum dwellers in different States vary, 35.2 percent of India's urban population live in slums. Considering the slum population, Maharashtra has the highest number of slum dwellers at 1.18 crore followed by Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal



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whereas Delhi and Karnataka were reported to have a significantly lower slum population.

In Bangalore, about twenty percent of the slum dwellers live without any basic amenities and are gripped by poverty. In Kolkata and Mumbai, there exist large settlements in specified areas that have considerably increased in size and population but remain devoid of any basic amenities. The distribution of slums in Delhi is further scattered all over the State while many slum settlements also exist in the floodplains of the Yamuna river; however, **more than half of the Jhuggi Jhopri clusters in Delhi are Kutcha houses.**



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### Challenges of Living Without Basic Amenities

Given the lack of WASH facilities in slums, the residents face massive challenges born out of the absence of decent living conditions in these housing units. The **biggest and probably only reason for slum propagation and dwelling is the lack of affordable alternatives for the informal sector workforce of our biggest cities**. Some of the major concerns with respect to slum dwelling vis-a-vis citizens' right to housing are as follows:

**Health hazards:** Lack of basic sanitation, drainage, and portable drinking water facilities in slums creates an unhygienic environment for residents leading to the risk of more diseases. Slums are also overcrowded which poses additional problems while dealing with widespread communicable diseases which is evident from the instance at Dharavi slum in Mumbai where the **COVID infection spread like wildfire** due to the overcrowding.

**Risk of disasters:** Slum-dwellers are most prone to disasters like floods and earthquakes as there are no planned infrastructure and safety measures in existence due to the poor building structures and lack of regulatory mechanisms to oversee the manner of growth and propagation of housing units in slums.

**Environmental pollution:** Slums are considered significantly responsible for contributing to the pollution levels in cities. With poor garbage management policies, unattended accumulation and decomposition of waste leads to increased water and air pollution. Similarly, lack of basic WASH facilities compels slum dwellers into open defecation which leads to soil and water contamination and increased risks of water-borne diseases.



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## **Status and Impact of Slum Upgradation Policies**

The outlook towards slums and the objectives of the policies have substantially shifted over the years. Initially, slums were considered a nuisance to city development goals and they were frequently demolished. While this trend continues, over the years, slums have been recognized as housing units for the urban poor. Policies have therefore also been formulated to upgrade and ensure basic amenities for liveable conditions in the slums. The **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) launched in 2015, has revamped the Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) seeking to make India slum-free by the year 2022.** The policy seeks to provide affordable housing to the economically weaker sections in the urban areas. It proposed to build over two crore houses for the poor initially but after estimating the housing demand in different States, the proposed number was brought down to 1 crore. While initially, the scheme was linked to providing **affordable housing to low-income groups (LIG) and the Economically Weaker Section (EWS), it was amended in 2017 to also include middle-income groups (MIG).** The features of this scheme are divided into four components including slum redevelopment, affordable housing through credit linked subsidy, affordable housing in partnership, and subsidy for beneficiary-led housing. The beneficiaries can take advantage of any one of the above-mentioned components of the scheme.

The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) was another ambitious program that **was aimed at community participation in encouraging urban reforms and addressing infrastructure requirements.** The component that aimed at basic services for the urban poor was meant to address the concerns of slum dwellers. JNNURM had two sub-missions, Basic Services for Urban poor (BSUP) and Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP). The aim of the former was to integrate the development of slums through various projects for the provision of shelter, basic services, and other civic amenities. Both these sub-missions addressed concerns such as the provision of shelter, affordable water, and sanitation facilities. JNNURM addressed the concerns of the living conditions of the slum-dwellers explicitly



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however there **was no mention of relocation of slum-dwellers to better housing units.**

Taking the federal route, RAY was implemented in two stages. However, **with the launch of RAY, the progress made under JNNURM was lost.** While the concerns of shelter, basic services, and other civic amenities were addressed by JNNURM, RAY failed to include them and the provisions were never implemented properly. **RAY devised redevelopment and upgradation strategies within slums as the preferred mode of improvement.** More importantly, slum relocation was also seen as a part of slum redevelopment. For doing so, there were various intervention strategies involved, such as the provision of new, incremental, and rental housing. Thus, RAY elaborated quite a bit on the relocation of slum dwellers. While the focus under PMAY remains on providing subsidies and better housing construction in a manner that is suggestive of an emphasis on relocation, the **aspects of improving sanitation and living conditions in the existing slums seem missing from this policy.**

The aforementioned policies **were criticized for the poor quality of housing units constructed which defied the point of relocating slum dwellers as the quality of housing was much worse than slum dwellings.** Most of these houses also lacked sanitation facilities and didn't meet the basic infrastructure requirements.

State-level policies such as the **Delhi Slum and JJ Rehabilitation Policy 2015** promised rehabilitation of slum dwellers before demolition of any slums in the State of Delhi. This was supposed to ensure city development alongside slum rehabilitation whereas **poor implementation and lack of proper and sufficient housing units continue to render most slum dwellers homeless since slum demolition is a common feature of various development projects undertaken by the State of Delhi.** The **Karnataka Affordable Housing Policy, 2016** formulated to improve the living condition of the low-income group people by seeking to provide affordable housing for all, highlights how private developers can help in providing affordable housing by construction and redevelopment of





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structures. This has been achieved by providing incentives to the private players by the government.



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### Identified Policy Gaps

- The concerns of sanitation, safety, and living conditions of the slum dwellers have been addressed very briefly in all major policies of slum redevelopment and improvement.
- The population density of slums, public health challenges have only been mentioned in policies in passing. However, no actual concrete strategies have been devised to address the increasing health challenges faced by slums with increasing population density.
- Provision of clean drinking water to tackle water-borne diseases and the provision of regular electricity for all also seem to be missing from these policies.
- The policies also tend to only focus on the aspect of class in addressing the concerns of slum dwellings. Caste seems to be missing from the discussion entirely whereas it is an important aspect to consider for such policies since lower caste people need the protection of rights especially when they are living in neglected urban quarters such as slums. As the [majority of urban Dalits are slum-dwellers](#), caste is neither irrelevant nor invisible in cities. Caste-based discrimination only increases in terms of not renting out housing units to Dalits even in slums.
- [Research](#) suggests that slum relocation strategies require the people to move, however, the fact that slum dwellers tend to work in areas adjacent to the slums is often ignored by the relocation policies. As an outcome, relocated population groups often prefer to go back to their old slum dwellings as opposed to living in new housing units located in areas far from their place of work.
- There is a clear lack of convergence of slum redevelopment policies with policies concerning improvement in health and sanitation facilities. As an outcome of this, the impact of such policies is diminished in slum areas even after them being effective and functional for years.
- Notably none of the slum improvement policies have addressed the issue of non-notified and unlisted slums. According to [NSSO](#), close to 50% of the slums are non-notified, thus are unlisted. This means their needs are



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not listed or recognized and hence they cannot avail or claim any basic amenities easily available to notified slums.



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### **Policy Recommendations**

- Understanding caste dynamics as they play out in slum dwellings in cities should be a significant parameter to be considered in the policy formulation concerning slums.
- As slum dwellers tend to work in areas adjacent to the slums, relocation strategies need to consider employment opportunities and incentives to be brought about around the new housing units to encourage the possibility of relocation without the motivation to go back to the old slum dwellings.
- The frequency of the disease spread in slum dwellings is high as the status of healthcare services in slums is abysmal. Easy access to health care services through dispensaries and dedicated primary health care centers needs to be incorporated in the city planning wherein healthcare to slum-dwellers is prioritized.
- Slum redevelopment plans need to build toilets that especially cater to the needs of women and girls. This goal must converge with the goals of better sexual and reproductive health through menstrual hygiene management schemes meant for women and girls. To attain the necessary outcomes, policies such as the Rashtriya Kishori Swasthya Karyakram aimed at quality healthcare for adolescents should be implemented in tandem with slum upgradation policies.
- In addition to building toilets, improvement in sanitation facilities is essential to reduce the burden of diseases in slums by limiting the exposure to pathogens. A part of requisite WASH facilities should focus on better sewer management facilities to avoid the pollution of water bodies thereby reducing the probability of contaminated water and water-borne diseases.
- Convergence with the Swachh Bharat Mission would ensure that improved housing structures have standard sanitation infrastructure.
- The affordability of the new housing units would depend on the ability of the residents to afford travel to and from their place of work from their place of dwelling. For ensuring this, accessible and affordable public



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transport needs to be made available for the population relocated under slum relocation policies.

- A drive to make slums notified for them to receive basic civic amenities should be an important part of slum redevelopment policies. Doing so would also help identify the beneficiaries and formalize the system in case of allotting new and/or improved housing units.
- As per the [Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions Code, 2019](#), migrant workers are to receive a displacement allowance equal to 50% of the monthly wages payable to them. Furthermore, salient features of the [Draft National Urban Rental Housing Policy, 2015](#), which expressly addressed the need for urban rental housing properties for the poor migrant population, should be included in the newly launched scheme of the Central government under PM-AY. This would allow the tenants/beneficiaries to get a housing unit on lease from the government for a fixed number of years.
- It must also be acknowledged that the slum-dwelling migrant population is mostly illiterate and unaware of their rights, hence dominated by silence, they are compelled to arrange for their own living spaces most of the time. Since it becomes a burdening expenditure, they sometimes also tend to remain homeless by temporarily sheltering themselves in open spaces. Much like many other government policies that seem promising only on paper, it is important to raise awareness among slum dwellers about their eligibility to claim housing rights under various policies mandated by the Constitution. For this purpose, helplines and help desks should be set up in every State, as done by the State of Odisha.



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### Concluding Remarks

Despite large numbers and an integral role in the urban economy, India's slum-dwelling population has been deprived of its constitutional rights **due to poor housing policy formulation and implementation**. An analysis of the condition of slums reflects that our policies have failed to address the crucial aspects of an adequate standard of living which is in absolute violation of constitutional and human rights mandates. Also, slum dwellers lack adequate food and clothing facilities because of the informal nature of their means of income and their poor economic background. A major part of the slum-dwelling population in India comes from distant towns and rural areas of the country. **In the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, reverse migration was observed as the norm, a trend that traces its roots in the lack of secure housing facilities** for the labor population migrating from their place of residence for want of better employment opportunities.

India, being one of the founding members of the International Labor Organisation, should ideally adhere to and implement the [Workers Housing Recommendation, 1961](#), which has the primary objective to ensure “adequate and decent housing and a suitable living environment” for the labor force of countries that have ratified to the ILO Conventions.

As is evident though, there are a lot of inconsistencies in India's labor laws, which has also contributed to the failure of the government to provide shelter to its urban workforce. As a result, some modifications should be brought about in the labor laws and policies.

Housing for All will mean nothing if positive and evolutionary changes are not introduced for the most disadvantaged section of the population who are also highly critical for sustaining the urban economy. Due arrangements must be made by the government to regulate and foresee the protection of the rights of the slum-dwelling population. This will help devise a context-specific policy to tackle the problems faced by them, out of which, the right to safe and decent living conditions can prove to be a crucial starting point.



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