

# An Insight on Slums

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**Abstract:** For generations slums have been considered to be a negative factor in the overall development analysis of any developing country. Forced evictions and continuous humiliation is not the solution of this growing problem. This paper tends to comprehend the basics of what slums actually are and what kind of problems the residents of a slum face. More over the paper will suggest possible ways of development and up gradation of these poor areas of the society in an economical, feasible and relatable fashion.

**Keywords:** Inhabitable, substandard, informal, tenure, forced evictions, UN-HABITAT, migration, globalization, up-gradation, redevelopment, labor force, infrastructure, participation, awareness,



Satnami Nagar Slum Bhopal  
(<http://www.walkthroughindia.com/lifestyle/major-slum-areas-in-top-indian-cities/>)

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

While driving our way to here and there we often come across those filthy areas that are like a big dirt spots for the otherwise beautiful city. These areas known as the slums are considered to be a stigma in the society as people like to believe. House of crimes and an unending well of countless health problems, is what slums are better known for, however people who don't live in slums hardly ever bother to know about those who actually live in those places that are considered to be a stain on the white sheet of society. That being said, the upper class population or rather the more sophisticated one generally repels those unfortunates who have no other option but to live in those inhabitable conditions. Before dwelling into the problems of slums and a more discussed topic which is the threat slums have on their neighborhoods, it is of vital importance to understand what slums actually are.

## 1.1 SLUMS

Slums can be defined as informal settlements and in simple language, houses of the poor. These are houses with substandard and low living conditions which range from being permanent solid structures to temporary shacks. Slums can be easily identified amongst the well maintained houses as slums creeps in the dirty lanes

with unhygienic habits and no maintenance whatsoever. According to UN Habitat, houses that lack in any of these following elements fall under the category of slums

- 1.1.1 Access to Water:** If there is no direct and affordable access to fresh water for drinking and other household domestic purposes then the system comes under the category of being a slum. Water is the most basic need for survival and if one has to struggle or put an effort to get it, then that has to be a problem in a great need for some sort of solution.
- 1.1.2 Access to proper Sanitation:** One of the major area of concern while considering a residential area is perhaps the availability or presence of an efficient sanitation system. If an area lacks in the access of a proper excreta disposal system then it can be called a slum. Sanitation can be either personal or private toilet i.e. one for each house or it can be a public toilet which is being shared between a reasonable number of people, in any case having access to it is what matters.
- 1.1.3 Security of Tenure:** Lack of security of tenure for the people residing in slum makes them vulnerable to forced evictions and other forms of harassments. Such actions of forcefully evicting people from their so called houses, leads them to go even deeper in the tunnel of poverty which in turn stimulates the formation of more such slums.

**1.1.4 Durability of Housing:** Having a proper and safe shelter to reside is the most basic right of every human. If there is no permanent and adequate housing then the area having such problem can be termed has a slum.

**1.1.5 Sufficient Living Area:** If the people living in a particular area don't have the sufficient area that they need, in order to comfortably live then that area shall come under a slum category. Not more than two people should share the same room in normal conditions.

In the lack of any above described element the area is considered to be a slum. These criteria's have been formed by the United Nations agency UN HABITAT to address and hence improve the condition of the existing slums in the world which is constantly increasing due to the increase in population in the developing countries. Slums are the reflection of a country's poverty as they are a manifestation of the lowest level of income of a place.

## **2.0 EXISTENCE OF SLUMS**

There are many reasons for slums to develop in a city, however if we need to summarize the reasons to help formulation possible solutions to the various problems that occur due to them, then those reasons would be, according to the UN- Habitable, as follows:

### **2.1 Rapid urban- rural migration:**

Due to a significant increase in the reduction of the population engaged in agricultural activities

and an increase in the job opportunities in the urban areas, people from agricultural backgrounds are migrating at a great pace in the urban areas. Thus the massive increase in the population of cities becomes a huge problem for the planners to cope up with. As a result slums are formed in these cities.

**2.2 Insecure Tenure:** Another reason is having insecure tenures which prevent the residents of slums from having any sorts of developments in the area on a community level. Studies have revealed that community led slum development initiatives, formal or informal, are more likely to work and succeed.

**2.3 Globalization:** Rapid globalization has led to a major problem that equally contributes to slum formation as any other factor. Globalization led to capitalization which further increased the social problems of inequality and an uneven distribution of new wealth. This increased the poverty in both urban and rural areas leading to the formation of slums.

### **3.0 RE-DEVELOPMENT OF SLUMS**

Throughout the years the only solutions of the increasing problems of slum formation have been eradication, forced eviction and perhaps neglecting the problem. These are

not the solution but rather mere delaying the development and in some cases prevention from the same happened due to these actions. Slums don't need to be removed as they have the labor force dwelling there without which the whole system of works can get disturbed. This needs to be given through thoughts and an understanding of the chosen site in order to create conditions for long term poverty reduction and to gradually raise the quality of life in poor neighborhoods. Comprehensive study of the various aspects that creates inhabitable situations in slums and providing people with proper, affordable and feasible solutions is the only way to improve the existing conditions and lay the foundation of a more secure future for slum dwellers.

**3.1 Expansion of urban infrastructure:** Upgrading the existing slums if they are in reasonable condition and development for the ones that are in poor conditions in an affordable fashion without getting the residents to put extreme efforts to relate to the change seems to a definite way of redevelopment.

**3.2 Improvement in terms of providing with water and sanitation facilities and Health issues:** Development in terms of health and hygiene comes first and foremost. With combined efforts of public and private sectors together with involvement of community and NGO's there should be

establishments of 'Neighborhood Committees, which would be mandated to look into the location and provision of health facilities, Preventive health messages on general health/hygiene, malnutrition, immunization, cancer screening, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and female infanticide should be taken care of. Involvement of community in sanitation and the role of women in this activity should be encouraged.

**3.3 Training and skill development:** Participation of slum dwellers in development programs and various processes involved in them. This is important as it reflects people's will and confidence. There is a need to sensitize and impart training to the personnel involved and participation in city planning practices. Training on aspects like public health, hygiene and sanitation, communication skills as well as on group dynamics and personality development are needed. PLA (Participatory Learning and Action) methods should be employed by local NGOs (as have been done in places around the world) with communities to understand them, assess their needs, formulate goals /objectives based on the identified needs, and assess resources and constraints Training in micro level skills

would help the slum dwellers to raise their income which would further lead to more development options.

**3.4 Increasing Awareness:** Slum dwellers somehow get involved in various anti social activities in order to earn a living. Slums have the most important labor force; they provide the middle and upper classes of society with a network of services without which the entire urban system might just halt. Having known this, there are also anti social activities like involvement in drug abuse, stealing activities, child labor etc. To overcome these issues, awareness should be created amongst people should be encouraged which shall inform and introduce them of the negative impacts of such activities on their own development and the development of the whole society of which they are a part of. Also new job options should be created by making them participate in various developmental activities.

**3.5 Encouraging Education in slum areas:** Together with awareness about different factors it is of utmost importance to educate the people. At first it can be a repelling thing to do but interesting and creative initiatives should be taken on the community level to promote the

importance of education. Also cooperation from municipal cooperation's of different areas would be much appreciated.

**3.6 Design that Slum dwellers can adapt and appraise:** When we say that the infrastructure needs to be improved it is not advisory to convert their dwellings into flats. The needs of slum dwellers are much more different and complex than that of the regular urban population. So while designing for a different class the design methodology would be very different. There should be a deep analysis of the activities, future possibilities and the psychology of those people.

#### **4.0 WORKS ALREADY BEING DONE FOR THE REDEVELOPMENT OF SLUMS**

There are many NGO'S that work for the re-development of slums on various levels. Sahyog is a NGO working in these slums for upliftment of females in the slums in Bhopal. Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission is a massive city modernization scheme launched by the Government of India under Ministry of Urban Development. It aims on infrastructural services, increase self-sustaining capabilities of cities, ensuring adequate investment of funds to fulfill deficiencies in the urban infrastructural services, planned development of identified cities including peri-urban areas, out

growths, urban corridors, so that urbanization takes place in a dispersed manner, delivery of civic amenities and provision of utilities with emphasis on universal access to urban poor and urban renewal programmes, i.e., re-development of inner (old) cities area to reduce congestion. Another such NGO is Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY) announced by the Hon'ble President of India on 4<sup>th</sup> June, 2009, for the slum dwellers and the urban poor envisages a „Slum-free India“ through encouraging States/Union Territories to tackle the problem of slums in a definitive manner. Many other NGO's and government agencies have been working for the re development of slums.

#### **5.0 CONCLUSION**

Quite often it is observed that governments and local authorities hold themselves back from any development projects for slums because slum dwellers, if given a better option and alternative, somehow do not appreciate it and move back to slums due to financial conditions and slums appears to be the best way to survive in the urban scenario. The aim should not be to remove slums and forcefully evict people from their houses. There are many drawbacks of a slum but one cannot neglect the facts that due to the existence of slums and migration of rural population to urban cities there is development of those people to a significant level. We come across many headlines stating student from slum reached university. So it is not just the negative aspects of slums that should be considered

while deciding their fate but importance to the future possibilities and advancement should be given an equal weight-age. If consistent efforts are made for the understanding of the needs of slum dwellers, and providing with sufficient job opportunities is achieved then the word slum would not hold the same meaning as it does today and instead of being considered a hindrance in the path of overall development it would be appreciated for having contributing towards it.

UN-Habitat 21<sup>st</sup> session of the governing council 16 - 20 April 2007, Nairobi, Kenya

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