

 <p>16th WEDC Conference Infrastructure for low-income communities Hyderabad, India 1990</p>	<p>Slum upgrading programme in Tamilnadu</p> <p>Dr K N Ramamurthy</p>
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INTRODUCTION

Slums exist in all metropolitan cities of the world. Slums should not be seen as 'eye sores' and illegitimate settlements; they should be identified as communities of the urban poor which have arisen in response to the acute housing shortage that exists in the lower income communities. Though it is an accepted fact that housing is one of the basic necessities, none of the government agencies have been able to provide the housing and infrastructure at affordable cost to the urban poor, particularly in the developing countries. In the city of Madras, India, the slums contain more than 30 percent of the population of the city. It is estimated that in the Caribbean and other developing countries, the slums and squatter housing constitute about 30 percent of the existing building stock. It is a fact that the slum and squatter communities have exhibited their creative capabilities of inventiveness and self-reliance in erecting their shelters at affordable and low costs mostly through cooperative efforts and self-help. The government agencies should encourage active involvement of the residents in the provision and maintenance of the infrastructure and service facilities through collective self-help particularly in the low income settlements.

SLUMS AND SQUATTER SETTLEMENTS

Slums are formed mostly due to migration of the underprivileged from rural areas to urban centres, increased population growth and acute shortage of housing. The slums can be classified based on the method of formation: Linear slum along water front, Linear slum along road, Cluster of huts on identifiable sites and Planned hut developments. Slums in the city of Madras, India, cover 6 percent of the total area of the city and they contain more than 30 percent of the population.

Slums can be analysed from two view points. The traditional approach is to view slums as 'eye sores' and illegitimate settlements which do not conform to urban norms. The modern view is to consider the slums as the communities of the urban poor which have arisen in response to acute shortage of low income housing. The former attitude is based on superficial notions of beauty

and civic order, whereas, the latter is derived from an understanding of the needs of the urban lower classes and an appreciation of their creativity to satisfy their needs through self-reliance. The first approach leads to bulldozing type solutions and evokes stringent regulatory measures and other calls for a thorough understanding of the functional role of these communities and require public policies which would mobilise the peoples' inventiveness and self-reliance.

SLUM CLEARANCE AND IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMMES IN TAMILNADU

The Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board was formed in the Year 1971. The tasks assigned to the board are: Clearing all slums in Madras within a targetted period and Providing basic amenities in slums. Under the slum clearance scheme, the existing slums were demolished and multistoreyed buildings were erected on the same site. Each 3 to 4 storeyed block contains about 40 tenements with a plinth area of 25 square metres for each household. Each tenement has independent water supply, toilet and electricity facilities. But the experience has shown that the impact of the slum clearance programme has not been significant. The main reason for the failure is that while planning such tenements, the technical, functional and social needs of the residents were not considered. This gave rise to community resistance to such projects. When the multistoreyed tenements were constructed, they were raided by the higher income groups and huts used to reappear at the fringes of the tenements in some cases. In many cases the tenements were showing signs of rapid degradation. Under the Slum Improvement programme, even though some improvements were carried out, the desired objectives were not fully achieved since there was no organisational structure to take care of maintenance and further improvements.

SLUM UPGRADING PROGRAMME

The failure of the Slum Clearance and Improvement programmes paved the way for the introduction of the Slum Upgrading Programme. The improvements envisaged in the programme are the following: Drinking water supply with public stand pipes, Paved pathways, Public toilet facilities and other Community

facilities such as schools, clinics and shops. An important feature of the scheme is to provide land tenure to slum dwellers. Another significant feature of this programme is the supplementary programme of training the slum dwellers in various skills such as driving, handicrafts and cooking. In the upgrading programme the level of service facilities has been based on the affordability levels. While fixing up the priorities for the improvement, the views of the local inhabitants were given due consideration.

The upgrading programme (1976) was successful mainly because it provided the residents - A share in decision making, The opportunity to build, and An experience of close cooperation with the city council and among themselves. It has been noticed that when the slum dwellers are assured of their land titles, they take great care in improving their shelter and environment.

While promoting any environmental improvement programme, it is necessary to consider how the people want to live, how they live at present, the effect of environment on their lives, etc. It is here that the citizen participation in planning will provide a favourable contribution in the management of such programmes. It is to supplement and help the professional planners in providing additional information on the realistic needs, wants and special characteristics of the community.

While one of the slums in the North Madras was being upgraded a small number of families have been rendered homeless. They were offered accommodation in the neighbouring sites and services scheme.

It is necessary to make the community realise the importance of the protection of the local environment and proper maintenance of the sanitary facilities. One of the ways of achieving this is to involve the community while deciding about the location of such facilities and their maintenance. Similar approaches of comprehensive environmental improvement were followed in the upgrading programmes in Bombay and Calcutta, India.

SITES AND SERVICES PROGRAMME

Sites and services programme envisages development of building sites with the provision of infrastructure including water supply and sanitary facilities. The cost of infrastructure in providing the utilities will depend on the size and shape of the plots and the road layout. A radial layout pattern has been tried for the various sites and services schemes in Tamil Nadu, India, where the individual sanitary core units of a

group of plots are arranged around a central point. This eliminates the necessity of carrying the network of utilities along the length of plots. From the central core area, the utilities are directly made available to each of the plots in the circular group of radial plots.

SELF-HELP IN HOUSING

The squatters have shown the possibility of creating their own shelters by the use of locally available or used - second hand materials like automobile parts, wooden crates, tar drums, etc., mostly through cooperative efforts and self-help. In most of the developing countries including the Caribbean, the squatter housing constitutes more than 30 percent of the present housing stock. A social survey carried out in Trinidad has shown that the residents are interested in working collectively towards effecting environmental improvements. The government should come forward to encourage such active involvement of the benefitting residents in the provision and maintenance of infrastructure and service facilities through collective self-help schemes.

The potential of the aided self-help can be seen as it enables an organised and controlled contribution, using the low cost unspecialised labour and technologies appropriate to the local conditions. Self-help approach also provides supplementary employment to the residents, which thereby results in effecting improvement in their affordability levels. Self-help facilitates greater participation of the user in the planning and development phases of the residential layouts and will ease out any possible conflict which may arise out of possible relocation of the housing sites while carrying out an upgrading operation.

The 'Informal Bazaar Economy' has proved, in most situations, highly efficient in absorbing minimal capital resources and putting them to uses which generate considerable 'multiplier effects' and employment absorption capability. The informal housing sector must also be recognised as an integral part of the housing and the provision of service facilities should be extended in a phased manner, preferably through the collective self-help approach.

EVALUATION OF SLUM UPGRADING PROGRAMMES

In the past decade many countries in the Third World have successfully carried out slum upgrading programmes. It is a well accepted fact that slum upgrading is a means by which the poorest segments of the urban population are provided with low cost shelter

and with low cost access to employment. Zambia carried out slum upgrading to solve the problem of the squatter housing. In these programmes careful planning and great care were exercised to secure the trust, approval and active cooperation of the residents.

The upgrading facilitates step-by-step development according to the needs of the dwellers and resources. The role of the government is to create a framework in which people do things for themselves on a continuing basis according to their own needs and priorities, and in such ways that the resources are mobilised from among the local community. A United Nations Seminar held in 1970 identified the objectives of settlement upgrading as incorporating the initiative, organisational ability, and the capacity for work of the marginal population of the urban community for achieving the greatest social benefit with the limited resources available.

The magnitude of the urban growth, the increasing realisation that it cannot be prevented and the limited resources available for housing, have led many governments to accept 'Sites and Services' and 'Upgrading' projects. In many countries the two approaches are carried out in conjunction. This has the additional benefit of permitting the households displaced from an upgrading area to be offered a plot nearby with minimum of delay, and also permit the installation of facilities such as schools, health clinics and commercial centres if there is no space available in the existing settlement.

It is clear that from the extensive activity in housing by the occupants from all walks of life, rich or poor, that people are keenly interested in housing and are prepared to spend time and effort on it. The government should find ways to simulate participation of the people in housing action and mobilise the creative energy of the people through formal agency mechanism to achieve the societal objectives.

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