



## Sanitation needs of the urban poor in Lucknow

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THE GOMTI RIVER Pollution Control Project at Lucknow (GRPCPL) Phase 1, funded by ODA (UK), is working to develop service masterplans for solid waste, sanitation/sewerage and drainage services for the city of Lucknow (the capital of Uttar Pradesh, India), through an integrated planning process to improve the health and well-being of the people of Lucknow and the condition of the River Gomti. The project forms part of the Ganga Action Plan Phase 2 which is promoted by the National Rivers Conservation Directorate in Delhi. The project is managed by a Project Management Unit within the Department of Urban Development, Government of Uttar Pradesh. Nullah Community Improvement Projects in two drainage catchments are being piloted as action research sub projects to develop workable solutions to urban environmental problems using slum communities as entry points. The projects follow a process approach by working to develop and test appropriate structures to facilitate the development of transparent, community based planning mechanisms with the close involvement of local government agencies. NGOs play a key role as researchers, community mobilisers, innovators and intermediaries.

### Sanitation and the urban poor

#### Gomti River Pollution Control Project Phase 1

Pre-project surveys identified a large number of katcha slum bastees and low income mohallas located along the main nullahs in the core area of the city where the problems of poor solid waste management, drainage and sanitation are closely interrelated and particularly severe. (There are many other areas in Lucknow which face severe environmental health hazards, chiefly related to poor water supply that are not included in Phase 1.) Furthermore, Table 1 reveals that up to 607 768 people (105 749 households) can be classified as low income groups in the city of Lucknow based on an eightfold classification aggregated from data on caste, occupation, monthly per capita expenditure and capital assets.

The urban poor in Lucknow in common with other cities in Asia are marginalised, poorly served by infrastructure and social services in comparison to middle and high income groups and tend to live at severe environmental stress points in the urban fabric. Many of these settlements are unauthorised and therefore unable to access government services. They create major bottlenecks in the successful operation of sewerage and drain-

age services. It was therefore necessary to adapt the integrated planning approach to the specific requirements of low income areas.

The traditional way of ensuring integration is to adopt a completely technocratic top-down approach; however the result of this approach, whilst it may be integrated is rarely appropriate, affordable, sustainable or replicable. The development of local community based plans is a means of moving towards a more appropriate outcome.

### Community participation

#### Environmental sanitation and the urban poor

##### *A brief overview*

In the past community participation in development in India has tended to be restricted to rural areas either in the form of traditional religious or caste based organisation or through government interventions such as the Community Development Project. Until the late 70s urban areas were largely left to their own devices. The few government schemes in existence focused on infrastructure development. Most of these schemes avoided slum areas through a deliberate policy decision to treat them as illegal encroachments and therefore not to be encouraged through permanent infrastructure provision.

In practice however a minimum level of service has been provided from humanitarian motives or more commonly through the efforts of the urban poor themselves or pragmatic government functionaries. The rise of the urban NGO during the last two decades and development of national and donor sponsored experiments (including: GoI EIUS (Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums), ODA SIP (Slum Improvement Project), World Bank UDP (Urban Development Project), UNICEF UBSP (Urban Basic Services for the Poor), etc. has led to increasing attention being paid to the urban poor and particularly their right to housing and services in the burgeoning cities of India. Other programmes such as the Ganga Action Plan came to a realisation that large slum populations impact on the wider urban and river environment and ultimately on the sustainability of major capital investments (leading to the introduction of low cost sanitation schemes).

The impact of these initiatives in urban areas has been mixed; whether government or NGO intervention. External interventions have rarely stimulated the formation of genuine community based initiatives to analyse, plan, design and implement effective and sustainable

Table 1. Low income groups in relation to the overall population of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

infrastructural improvements that are linked to local government institutions.

**Government initiatives** targeted at urban slums have been top down in nature with limited consultation with beneficiaries and a limited information base. There are a number of policy guidelines in this area; the implementation of which is constrained by procedural bottlenecks and resistance from junior functionaries many of whom continue to view slums and low income communities as a temporary abhorrence. Few officials have either the scope, training or vision to tackle these problems in their routine work. A common failing is that government programmes are based on norms and procedures which allow very little space for innovation.

**NGO initiatives** are often sector specific, fragmented and under resourced. There are few NGOs active in urban areas in India; this is particularly so in Northern India where NGO activity in general lags behind the South. NGO action is often viewed as a charity oriented rather than a development activity which leads to a service delivery approach with limited community participation or genuine empowerment. In the eyes of the government, the general public and the western donor NGO involvement is often viewed as being synonymous to community involvement: this is often not the case. There are a small number of NGOs however that are working with the urban poor using an empowerment strategy that links the community to local and state government structures generally in the fields of housing; health; education; credit and income generation. A few are trying to work in an integrated manner encompassing environmental sanitation.

**Community Based Organisations (CBOs)** (which exist in many shapes and forms including unions; caste panchayats; womens groups etc.) generally focus on single issues or the business of survival and tend to be

excluded from formal decision making processes at the town or city level. They do not have the means to improve their immediate environment. In consequence decision making in many programmes has been captured by elite interest groups. The Seventy Fourth Constitutional Amendment is slowly making inroads in this respect yet there is a danger that decision making will be captured by elites and continue to exclude the poor and in particular poor women. Devolution of powers to ward level will not equate with local level decision making if people are disenfranchised from the political process.

It is perceived that with increased levels of stakeholder participation projects are likely to be more effective with a greater chance of sustainability. Experience has shown that participation does not occur without support. Attention must be paid to the institutional and operational aspects of participation by encouraging primary and secondary stakeholders to work together, learn together and establish channels of communication.

### Nullah community improvement projects

GRPCPL is trying to develop this approach by piloting action learning projects based on NGO, CBO and GO partnerships in katcha and semi-pucca slum bastees in two drainage catchments; Pata and Sarkata Nullahs. NCIPs essentially follow a learning approach with very few guidelines which provide scope for innovation and opportunities to develop new relationships between the different stakeholders. The key features are summarised in Table 2.

Firstly, the project aims to create capacities in communities to understand and articulate their problems and seek solutions through collective effort and maximising the utilisation of the communities key internal resources.

Secondly, it aims to create a sensitivity in state and local government agencies to understand and accept commu-

nity involvement as a key to effective and sustainable urban management.

Thirdly, it aims to bring communities and agencies together and jointly seek solutions to the problems of solid waste, drainage and sanitation. Figure 1 outlines the planning process and explores the links between the different actors.

Fourthly, it aims to document the issues raised and the procedures developed and feed them into the city wide masterplanning process. The overall intention is to institutionalise the learning drawn from this process to develop replicable procedures for joint implementation of environmental sanitation improvements in the phase 2 project that are desired, planned, designed, implemented and managed by communities and linked into city wide services in a sustainable manner.

The projects commenced in December 1995 and to date the approach adopted in the NCIP is progressing well. Two NGOs, SEWA and SPARC have been recruited to work as Community Planning Consultants in Sarkata and

Pata Nullahs. There is a good understanding of the situation, problems and priorities faced by the poor in relation to environmental sanitation within the project areas, which forms the basis for the development of solutions and the administrative procedures to deal with implementation in an effective manner. The level of activity varies from bastee to bastee but a number of mini-projects are already being implemented in relation to drainage and solid waste management in several communities.

The key issues that are arising relate to technology choice; contracting arrangements; links between community initiatives and local government activities; subsidy levels; willingness to pay and resolution of critical issues such as land tenure. It is too early to draw firm conclusions from these activities but it is clear that urban poor in Lucknow have both the motivation and resources to work towards environmental sanitation solutions. It is equally clear that local government must be prepared to meet them half way if there is to be any significant impact on the urban environment of Lucknow.

**Table 2. Key features of Nullah community improvement projects (GRPCPL)**

Figure 1. The planning process (GRPCPL - NCIPs)