

# **Madras Slums-A Study**

**Dr. I. Princes**

Assistant Professor

Department of History

Loyola College (Autonomous)

Chennai-34.

## **ABSTRACT**

Slums are neglected parts of cities where housing and living conditions are appallingly lacking. Slums range from high density, squalid central city tenements to spontaneous squatter settlements without legal recognition or rights, sprawling at the edge of cities. Slums do not have basic Municipal services like water, sanitation, waste collection, storm drainage, street lighting, paved foot paths or roads for emergency access. The National Slum policy aims to support the planned growth of urban areas in a manner that will help to upgrade all existing slums and informal settlements with due regard for the protection of the wider public interest. Chennai, one of the major metropolitan cities in India, facing the problems of mushrooming of slums and squatter settlements. Recognising the plight of the slum dwellers, the Government of Tamilnadu setup a separate organisation, namely Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board in 1970. In the resettlement areas, the private sector or non-governmental organisations should be involved for additional inputs.

## **KEY WORDS**

Demography, Over Crowding, Stake Holders, Resettlement, Rehabilitation, Metropolitan, Tenements

## **Introduction:**

The existence and rapid growth of slum settlements has been noted as a general urban phenomenon in recent years. For the first time, the Census 2001 has collected demographic data regarding the slum settlements in all urban centres with a population of 50,000 or more throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> The total slum population in the country works out as above 40 million accounting for 14.12 percent of the total urban population. The states reporting high share of slum population in total urban population are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana, constituting 25.9 percent, 25.1 percent and 23 percent of the urban population respectively. West Bengal and Delhi too have exhibited moderately higher shares of slum

population than the national average. Some of the developed states, which are also highly urbanised, like Gujarat, Karnataka, Punjab and Tamilnadu have reported shares of slum population, which are much below the national average.<sup>2</sup>

## **The concept of Slums**

The Government of India Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act of 1954 defines a slum “as any predominantly residential area, where the dwellings by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement, lack of ventilation, light or sanitary facilities or any combination of these factors are detrimental to safety, health or morals”.<sup>3</sup> The concept of slums and its definition vary from country to country depending upon the socio-economic conditions of each society. Irrespective of location slums have been characterised in the following ways.

1. Physically, an area of the city with inadequate housing, deficient facilities, overcrowding and congestion.
2. Socially, slum is a way of life, a special character which has its own set of norms and values reflected in poor sanitation, health values, health practices, deviant behaviours and social isolation.<sup>4</sup>

Generally slums are neglected parts of cities where housing and living conditions are appallingly lacking. Slums range from high density, squalid central city tenements to spontaneous squatter settlements without legal recognition or rights, sprawling at the edge of cities. Slums do not have basic Municipal services like water, sanitation, waste collection, storm drainage, street lighting, paved foot paths or roads for emergency access.<sup>5</sup> In view of the magnitude of the problem, in the Comprehensive National Housing Policy, the first priority is to remove houselessness. In the Annual plans, fund allocation has been earmarked by the planning Commission for the shelter scheme for rehabilitation and resettlement of slum dwellers.<sup>6</sup>

## **Draft National Slum Policy**

The main objectives of this policy are:

1. To integrate slum settlements and the communities residing within them into the urban area as a whole by creating awareness amongst the public and in government of

the underlying principles that guide the process of slum development and improvement and the options that are available for bringing about the integration.

2. To strengthen the legal and policy framework to facilitate the process of slum development and improvement on a sustainable basis, and
3. To establish a framework for involving all stakeholders for the efficient and smooth implementation of policy objectives.<sup>7</sup>

This policy endorses an upgrading and improvement approach in all slums. It does not advocate the concept of slum clearance except under strict guidelines set down for resettlement and rehabilitation in respect of certain slums located on untenable sites. This policy aims to support the planned growth of urban areas in a manner that will help to upgrade all existing slums and informal settlements with due regard for the protection of the wider public interest. Urban local bodies should work in collaboration with all other stakeholders to enhance the impact of slum development and improvement activity by building the capacities of the poor and empowering them to improve their own living conditions.<sup>8</sup>

## **Growth of Slum Populations in Chennai**

Chennai, one of the major metropolitan cities in India, facing the problems of mushrooming of slums and squatter settlements. There are 1500 slums areas in Chennai city. One third of the city's population live in slums. These slums were hindrance not only to the municipal authorities in implementing civic and developmental works and also affecting the quality of life of the total city population in various ways. The slums and their population are inevitable to the development of urban areas since they are inter dependent on each other for services and sustenance.<sup>9</sup>

## **Formation of Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board**

Most slums in Madras are rather small, the majority having between 100 and 500 shelter units.<sup>10</sup> Recognising the plight of the slum dwellers, the Government of Tamilnadu setup a separate organisation, namely Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board in 1970 with the motto "We shall see god in the smile of the poor" to look after the housing needs of the downtrodden.<sup>11</sup> Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board was setup for the clearance and

improvement of slum areas so that the slums might not become a source of danger to the health, safety or well being of the public.<sup>12</sup>

## **Objectives of the Board**

The main objectives of the Slum Clearance Board are:

1. To clear the slums especially those located in flood prone and other vulnerable areas and to provide self-contained hygienic tenements or serviced plots in safe places.
2. To prevent private land owners from evicting the slum dwellers from their huts and to provide security of tenure for the latter, and
3. To provide basic amenities like drinking water supply, street lights, storm water drains and sewer lines to all the slum areas
4. To prevent further growth of slums in Madras city
5. To give protection to the slum dwellers from eviction and to rehouse them in modern tenements.<sup>13</sup>

## **Organisational Setup**

Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board is functioning under the control of the Chairman assisted by the Managing Director, TNSCB. The various programmes of Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board are being implemented by three circles in Chennai, one circle each at Madurai and Coimbatore and fifteen divisions in Chennai, two divisions at Coimbatore and one division each at Madurai, Trichirapalli, Salem and Tirunelveli. The structural and Quality Control (SQC) wing looks after both structural designs of all the projects of TNSCB and quality checks at the field.

## **Programmes of the TNSCB**

1. Slum Clearance Scheme
2. Tamilnadu Urban Development Project
3. Accelerated Slum Improvement Scheme
4. Shelter for shelter less
5. Sites and Services Scheme
6. Resettlement and rehabilitation of households living in objectionable areas
7. Community Development Programmes<sup>14</sup>

**The Growth of Slums in Chennai (1927-1990)**

Year	No. of Slums	No. of Slum Families	Total Slum Population
1927	147	15000	NA
1932	181	15942	NA
1953	306	57346	265000
1961	548	97851	412168
1971	1202	163804	712531
1981	1287	178161	933936
1986	1413	241778	1235000

Source: TNSCB (Economist Group Survey Report, 1986)

**Chennai Resettlement Project**

Since 1951, Government of India has been implementing slum clearance and slum improvement programmes to provide basic services and infrastructure facilities in slum areas. The basic objective of the rehabilitation programme was “provision of serviced sites to the displaced households is an organised lay-out with basic services”. This includes acquisition of suitable land for resettlement, developing it with water supply, sanitation, electricity, drains, schools, hospitals and other social services to ensure a clean habitat to the beneficiaries. The beneficiary is encouraged for building his dwelling unit by using low cost technology on his site.<sup>15</sup>

**Problems of the existing resettlement and rehabilitation schemes in Chennai city**

Minimum basic amenities are lacking in these areas. Protected water supply and drainage arrangements do not exist in these areas. Houses are built up in close proximity not allowing free air to get in. The numbers of persons living in the slums are increase everyday without restrictions and the condition of these areas are worsening day by day. As the population is increasing in the city, not only the slums of the above descriptions increase, but the built up areas, which were once having all facilities of free ventilation and other hygienic conditions also take a turn for the worse and the built up areas get unduly crowded. A house where six tenants can live with comfort is occupied by more than a dozen and this unhealthy and heavy congestion in the street houses makes the area worse than the hutted slums.<sup>16</sup>

Quality of life largely depends upon the environment in which the people live. The environment affects all aspects of life in a community. For any settlement, it is necessary to evolve a strategy based on certain norms and standards for the provision of physical amenities. It is felt that proper assessment of socio-economic facilities and physical standards are essential. In the absence of the above, the residents have faced the following hardships.<sup>17</sup> Social facilities like schools, hospitals, public distribution system and police station were within their reach. Because of scarcity of land and its cost in the inner city, most of the housing resettlement schemes are located far away from the city. As a result, the poor have to spend considerable portion of their income and time on transport to and back from their work places. Madras city has grown without any plan for factories, office buildings and housing. Improvement of housing conditions is one of the aspects of socio economic development. The principle goals of housing programme usually are to provide homes for homeless, replacing wherever possible improvised housing units by permanent units.<sup>18</sup> Most of the households were in thatched and semi structured buildings. Shifting to tenement buildings could not be accepted by many. Hence they were dissatisfied and complaining about the houses provided.<sup>19</sup>

To ease the difficulties of the slum dwellers, attempts were made earlier to clear the slums in Madras city. In North Madras, the Corporation of Madras and in South Madras, the City Improvement Trust and subsequently, the Tamilnadu Housing Board were looking after the slum clearance work. Apart from, they constructing flats for the law and middle income groups, allotted open developed plots, measuring 20'X40' in certain areas to slum families. However, further allotments required vast areas of land, and the scheme was given up owing to scarcity of land within the city.<sup>20</sup>

Majority of the resettlement areas face hardships in procuring drinking water. The supplied water through tankers is highly insufficient. Due to lack of space and finance, only public convenience units could be provided. In the absence of household toilets and lack of maintenance, people resort to open defecation resulting in environmental degradation.<sup>21</sup> Improvement of health conditions and provision of the requisite health services constitute an essential aspects of socio economic development, good health being an indicator of the quality of life as well as a pre-requisite for high levels of productivity.<sup>22</sup> There should be a

provision for the health centre within the scheme and New Health Insurance Scheme also introduced by the government<sup>23</sup> and NGO's should be encouraged to run health centres for the benefit of households. Periodical health camps and checkups should be organised in coordination with the government and NGO's.<sup>24</sup>

In education it is suggested that the provision of primary, middle and high schools must be made in the layout and schools should be commenced prior to shifting of the squatter families. Relocation should be taken by the government or the concerned departments only at the end of the academic year for making arrangements at new site for school admission. The availability of public transport has to be examined in terms of distance of a place of employment, time spent on travelling and expenditure incurred on transport. It was observed that due to contacts in their previous settlements, the people daily travel for the job opportunities. For that, the government could think of alternative transport like mini buses for the convenience of the resettlers to the nearest bus stand or railway station which would reduce their strain on travelling. The TNSCB launched Entrepreneurial Development Programme for women. Women have been trained in vocational skills. The women will be trained in batches of 30 during week long programmes. About 60 members of NGO's and community based organisations have been trained as teachers for the purpose.<sup>25</sup> This would enhance the income levels of both men and women, resulting in the betterment of their living standards.<sup>26</sup>

TNSCB has constructed 59,023 tenements/houses and spent Rs. 2,753.42 crore on the various programmes implemented during 2011-2012 to 2015-2016 as detailed below:

S. No.	Name of the Programmes	Tenements/Houses constructed		
		During		Total
		2011-2012 to 2014-2015	2015-2016	
1	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM)	33,234	6,752	39,986
2	Emergency Tsunami Reconstruction Project (ETRP)	6,292	-	6,292
3	XIII Finance Commission – State Specific Grants	4,227	-	4,227
4	Reconstruction of dilapidated tenements	554	2,964	3,518
5	Construction of new tenements under State funds	508	300	808

6	Rajiv Gandhi Rehabilitation Package (RGRP)/Tsunami Rehabilitation Programme (TRB)	500	218	718
7	Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY)	158	3,316	3,474
<b>Total</b>		<b>45,473</b>	<b>13,550</b>	<b>59,023<sup>27</sup></b>

The problem of resettlement and rehabilitation is not just a problem of shifting from a congested place to a vacant place by provision of fringe benefits. The real problem is concerned with the retention of normalcy in the day-to-day lives of the people at the resettlement areas. Most of these problems can be solved through a separate national policy on resettlement and rehabilitation for slum dwellers. In the resettlement areas, the private sector or non-governmental organisations should be involved for additional inputs. Sites and services schemes of Tamilnadu Housing Board could be replicated for retention of beneficiaries in the resettled areas.

## END NOTES

1. Sivaramakrishnan K.K, Hand book of urbanisation in India, An analysis of trends and process, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2005, p. 107.
2. Ibid, pp. 107-108.
3. Rama Arangannal, Socio-economic survey of Madras slums, The Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board Press, Madras, 1975, p. 5.
4. Venkateswarlu D. Hanumantha Rao M, Bhaskar S, Facets of Urban society in India- Processes, Problems and Development, Serials Publications, New Delhi, 2006, p. 228.
5. Anup Mitra, Urbanisation, Slums, informed sector employment and poverty – An exploratory study, BR Publishing Corporation, Delhi, 1994, pp. 3-9.
6. Venkateswarlu D. Hanumantha Rao M, Bhaskar S, Facets of Urban society in India- Processes, Problems and Development, Op cit, p. 239.
7. Ibid, pp. 239-240.
8. Ibid, p. 241.
9. Ibid, pp. 246-247.
10. Joop W. De Wit, Poverty, Policy and Politics in Madras slums, Dynamics of survival, gender and leadership, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1966, p. 109.
11. Rama Arangannal, Socio-economic survey of Madras slums, Op cit, p. 6.
12. Joop W. De Wit, Poverty, Policy and Politics in Madras slums, Dynamics of survival, gender and leadership, Op cit, p. 114.
13. Rama Arangannal, Socio-economic survey of Madras slums, Op cit, p. 6.
14. Venkateswarlu D. Hanumantha Rao M, Bhaskar S, Facets of Urban society in India- Processes, Problems and Development, Op cit, p. 247.
15. Anup Mitra, Urbanisation, Slums, informed sector employment and poverty – An exploratory study, Op cit, p. 222.

16. Nambia P.K., Census of India, 1961, Vol. IX, Madras, Part XI-C-Slums of Madras city, Superintendent of Madras, Census operation, 1965, p. 5.
17. Joop W. De Wit, Poverty, Policy and Politics in Madras slums, Dynamics of survival, gender and leadership, Op cit, pp. 122-124.
18. Goswami D, Housing and urban poverty alleviation, SAAD Publications, New Delhi, 2012, pp. 140-141.
19. Sabir Ali, Dimensions of urban poverty, Rawat Publicatons, New Delhi, 2006, pp. 328-329.
20. Rama Arangannal, Socio-economic survey of Madras slums, Op cit, p. 5.
21. Joop W. De Wit, Poverty, Policy and Politics in Madras slums, Dynamics of survival, gender and leadership, Op cit, p. 104.
22. Ibid, pp. 124-125.
23. G.O Ms, No. 202, 30 June 2016, Finance Department.
24. Venkateswarlu D. Hanumantha Rao M, Bhaskar S, Facets of Urban society in India- Processes, Problems and Development, Op cit, pp. 253-253.
25. The Hindu, 6 December 2001.
26. Venkateswarlu D. Hanumantha Rao M, Bhaskar S, Facets of Urban society in India- Processes, Problems and Development, Op cit, p. 254.
27. Ibid, p. 255.