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PRIA



Status Paper on

Voices of the Urban Poor - Building Organisations to Access Sanitation Services

Preface

Considering the fast pace of urbanization and its challenges affecting a diverse population in India, there is an urgent need to institutionalize citizen participation in developmental planning. One of the most crucial concerns globally, is the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6 of clean water and sanitation. As Indian cities face the increasing pressure of accommodating its old and new residents, the lack of proper sanitation services has surfaced as an especially difficult hurdle. This is amplified by the lack of critical data, which disables comprehensive planning.

The lack of sanitation and other basic services in urban areas particularly affect the urban poor, who live in informal settlements, work in the informal economy and remain voiceless in the planning, implementation and monitoring of basic services. PRIA's long standing history of organizing vulnerable and marginalized communities continues to insist that involving people in the planning of their cities is the only way to make development inclusive and sustainable.

Based on that belief, PRIA implemented a 4-year project 'Engaged Citizens Responsive City' or ECRC supported by the European Union in the three cities of Jhansi, Ajmer and Muzaffarpur. ECRC focused on mobilizing, and organizing the urban poor across all the informal settlements around the issue of sanitation in the cities to build their capacity. Furthermore, the project also worked with external/middle income segment institutions to capacitate them to support the urban poor and create an environment that supports basic sanitation services for all.

This paper sheds light on the processes of organizing the urban poor to access sanitation services and capacitating external/middle income segment institutions to support the same to make sanitation inclusive.

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List of Acronyms

AMRUT	Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DUDA	District Urban Development Authorities
ECRC	Engaged Citizens Responsive City
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSSM	Faecal Sludge and Septage Management
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GPS	Global Positioning System
IEC	Information Education Communication
JNNURM	Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PMKVY	Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana
PRIA	Participatory Research in Asia
PSE	Participatory Settlement Enumeration
PUA	Participatory Urban Appraisal
RWA	Resident Welfare Association
SBM	Swachh Bharat Mission
SBM-U	Swachh Bharat Mission- Urban
SC	Scheduled Castes
SIC	Settlement Improvement Committee
ST	Scheduled Tribes
SWM	Solid Waste Management
UIT	Urban Improvement Trust
ULB	Urban Local Body
VS	Versus

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Executive Summary

More than half of the world's population resides in urban areas today, and it is predicted that over 66% of the world population will be based in urban areas by the year 2015 (United Nations, 2014). India has been experiencing this very real shift as well, with its capital Delhi being the second largest city in the world with 25 million plus inhabitants. Indian cities are witnessing the centre of poverty gradually shift towards urban centres and are crumbling due to infrastructural lags and their inability to provide basic services for all (PRIA and Indicus Analytics, 2013). The mapping of slums according to the Census (2011) shows a conservative figure, as it does not take into account multiple 'informal settlements' where most urban poor live. This deters government efforts from targeting their interventions in such settlements to improve quality of life. This worsens the already vulnerable conditions of urban poor who experience multiple deprivations of poverty and remain unaccounted for.

This paper sheds light on who are these urban poor and the challenges they face in terms of societal invisibility and lack of access to basic services such as sanitation. It highlights the lack of strategy in past and present government programmes in enabling citizen participation in the planning, implementing and monitoring of services and including voices of the poor. The objective of the paper is to highlight why organising the urban poor is essential for inclusive development and the approaches and processes to achieve such organisation.

The urban poor need to be organised to empower them with a collective voice and technical skills that will harness them with critical data for demand articulation. It is essential to enable them to be negotiators of their own development, rather than remaining passive recipients of programmes and policies that are unable to capacitate them. Their organisation is critical to challenge the vertical relationships of government planning and the phenomenon of 'unmapping' the urban poor in it. Organising the urban poor is essential to help them build social capital, a sense of ownership towards the city and their ability to influence decisions in city planning.

There are multiple approaches to community organisation. Some are: social action, locality development or civil organising, social planning, community building, and women centred/ feminist organising. Each approach comes with its set of presumptions, strategies and focussed goals for specific groups or individuals. The requirement of the community at hand and their existing problems decide the appropriate approach. Approaches are also influenced by whether the organisation is being facilitated by an external organisation, is project driven, or community driven.

Through PRIA's project 'Engaged Citizens Responsive City' or ECRC supported by the European Union, this paper breaks down the processes of organising the urban poor. Premised on its theory of change that calls to the urban poor and external/middle class institutions to work together to improve sanitation services in the city, this paper breaks down the processes of the theory's execution. Each process is a part at least one of the 4 stages of organising the urban poor - a) **information** or the understanding of and exchanging information about the conditions; b) **awareness** or building individual and collective awareness of the hurdles and opportunities around the conditions; c) **mobilisation** or organising communities to unite for a goal; d) **action** or jointly undertaking processes to achieve the goal. Through ECRC, this paper elaborates on how to organise the urban poor and the thought behind each process.



Chapter - 1

Understanding Urbanisation and Urban Poverty

The current momentum of urbanisation in India has been unprecedented. By 2015, over 400 million people lived in Indian cities. With a steadily increasing trend, it is estimated that more than half of India's population will be living in cities by 2030. Furthermore, in 2012 the Planning Commission estimated that Indian cities were contributing 66% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is expected to increase to 75% by 2031. Despite becoming the engines of growth, urbanisation in India is unplanned, unsanitary and unsupportive of the urban poor.

Who are the urban poor?

The fast pace of urbanisation in India is faced with the challenging disparity between distribution of economic opportunity, growth and civic services (PRIA and Indicus Analytics, 2013). The challenge of rising poverty in urban centres is further worsened by high population density, poor infrastructure, hostile housing and urban policies (Mahadevia, 2013) and service provisioning for the poor. According to the Census (2011), 66% of all statutory towns in India have slums and 17.4% of total urban households are currently slum households. This is a conservative estimate, as a large number of households are left out of this estimation, despite living in similar or worse conditions than those living in slums, as they do not fit the Census criteria of what constitutes a slum (PRIA and Indicus Analytics, 2013). These are 'informal settlements' and are the primary dwelling units of where most urban poor live, faced by the multi-dimensional nature of poverty. They work in precarious conditions in the informal economy, experience poor response from public institutions, have limited access to civic services and are not an organised community. Urban poverty can be seen (and measured) through inadequacies in consumption levels (such as food intake), income levels (and thus in affordability capacities for food/ non-food needs), housing and living conditions and access to social services (Satterthwaite, Mitlin and Patel, 2011). The official statistical base for these four indicators remain limited, if not incomplete. Despite the lack of authentic and consistent data on the scale of urban poverty across Indian states, a ballpark figure of approximately 140 million (nearly 35%) of the urban population was considered to be poor in 2014-15. An estimated 33,510 slums existed in urban India with approximately 8.8 million households in 2012 (ibid).

What are the challenges faced by urban poor?

It is certain that the fast pace of urbanisation have left the urban poor vulnerable to incomes too low for food/ non-food needs, living in shanty overcrowded accommodations which lack basic services such as water, sanitation and drainage. Such overcrowded accommodations are often termed as 'slums' or 'informal settlements' in which the land is occupied or developed illegally. Consequently, the reach of basic services and infrastructure (including sanitation, health care services and schools, policing and social protection) are severely limited if not absent (Satterthwaite, Mitlin and Patel, 2011).

The global economy is linked to the restructuring of the urban economy and the former's fluctuations effect the urban population. Thus, many urban households stagnate in poverty due to lack of access to employment, or their resignation to informal, insecure employment that are labour intensive and exploitative. The lack of secure shelter, especially those in the purview of demolition or arbitrary eviction drives in

cities is another huge challenge faced by the urban poor. Most urban poor families do not have access to education and children coming from these families often discontinue education due to lack of money, resources, evictions, demolitions or because they are pushed to 'resettlement sites' in the peripheries of the city (ibid). Rural to urban migrants live in alarmingly abysmal conditions, at low wages, with no access to civic rights or social protection, thus unable to overcome poverty (Mahadevia, 2013). Such lack of access amplifies ill health and the high costs of primary healthcare due to the lack of public healthcare facilities decrease their life expectancy even further. These are compounded with their lack of access to treated water, sanitation facilities and high air pollution levels which subject them to water and air-borne diseases.

Furthermore, such challenges and poverty incidences are not uniform across social groups. Urban poor communities such as the Scheduled Tribes (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC), women and religious minorities such as Muslims face a harder brunt than others. Due to the historicity of Indian cities and traditional fragmentations based on caste, class, religion, gender, etc. the marginalisation of the urban poor is multi-layered in India (Bhattacharjee, 2018). Such groups, and the urban poor in general, are excluded from government processes and have no say in the planning and decision making processes of their cities (Satterthwaite, Mitlin and Patel, 2011). In some cases, this is due to the fact that the informal urban settlement dwellers may not be entitled to be on the electoral roll, as most lack a legal addresses or the required documentation. This also creates 'clientelist' relations between politicians and local communities wherein the urban poor settlements are seen as vote banks for politicians to promise (and to some extent execute) immediate changes such as installing water taps, concrete pathways etc. (Satterthwaite, Mitlin and Patel, 2011). However, such relations do not create systemic change and such vertical relations of clientilism reinforce dependency, social structures and enable violence. There is a general absence of government initiative in ensuring citizen participation, which is also influenced by the limited enumeration of the actual number of people in the cities. Voices of the marginalised remain uncounted and invisible in the city.

This is not to say that there have not been national programmes in the past and present that focus on citizen participation. Launched in 2005, the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) set out to address the missing citizen participation, reinforce governmental commitment towards devolution of power from States to municipalities, promote participatory governance at local level and including uncharted poorer locations in the same. JNNURM's mandatory reform conditions such as Community Participation Law, to enable the creation of Area Sabhas within municipal wards, and the Community Participation Fund (CPF) were the first of its kind to pay attention to citizen participation processes in urban areas. However, JNNURM failed on multiple accounts. One, the role of union ministries was conflicting for it had to disburse money to States as well as perform audits and verification. Two, the ministries mandated unrealistically high standards for approved projects, thus causing delays and frustrations. Three, many cities such as Delhi received infrastructural funding from multiple sources, thus making JNNURM irrelevant (Nagpal et al, n.d).

The Smart City Mission, launched in 2016, suggested that Indian cities should be made smart through processes like retrofitting, redevelopment, greenfield development, or a combination, and have to focus on two parallel activities: Area Based Development, and Pan City Solution (ibid). While the Smart Cities guidelines did take cognizance of the need to focus on citizen participation, it relied on a campaign approach for citizen engagement which was episodic and relied on the good will of municipal officials. It failed to constitute permanent institutions for citizens to engage in the planning, implementation and monitoring of projects. Institutional mechanisms for direct accountability of ULBs and city authorities to the citizens was

missing, especially vis-à-vis urban poor. This especially reflecting in the over reliance on IT based platforms to enable citizen participation, which does not address the existing digital divide within cities. Such a straight jacket approach to citizen participation does not pay attention to the participation of urban poor and other vulnerable communities within cities.

Similarly, Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), launched on 2nd October, 2014 aimed to ‘clean India’, end open defecation and make sanitation more inclusive. While the Mission aimed to do that by constructing 11 crore toilets in 5 years (Ravichander and Pillai, 2018), it failed to create the environment for community led total sanitation due to its non-inclusion of the end-users, which resulted in lack of ownership and behaviour change (ibid). Not only were the toilets faulty, but a large number of households that secured toilets through the scheme still did not use toilets and defecated in the open instead (Alexander, 2019). There was a lack of awareness on healthy sanitation practices and the health risks of open defecation. This is especially because SBM’s approach to citizen engagement relied on a campaign approach, which as established are episodic. Furthermore, their tools of enabling citizen participation and behaviour change were based on online platforms such as the ‘Swachhata App’, Google Toilet Locator App and Swachh Manch (KPMG India, 2018). This excluded a large section of urban poor dwellers from informal settlements that did not have access to or proficiency to utilise online mediums.

Such exclusion from government processes and their inability to enable citizen organisation and participation marginalise the urban poor further and render their existence invisible in the political economy of India.

Why is organising the urban poor important?

The failure of the government processes and programmes point towards a serious deficiency of organised and capacitated communities of the urban poor. This is precisely why the urban poor need to be organised; for them to have access to a collective voice and bargaining power that ensures that they are taken into account during the conception and implementation of programmes and policies. It is only through community building, fostering a sense of togetherness that will result in better participation in development. Without a sense of ownership towards one’s community and city, the effect of programmes and policies will remain constricted to only infrastructure.

Urban planning does not address the deep socio-political and economic divides that plague Indian cities. Informality is systemic to the processes of urbanisation. It is inscribed in the ever-shifting relationship between what is legal and illegal, what is authorised and unauthorised. This relationship is fickle and arbitrary and enables a site of state power and violence. As Ghertner (2008) notes, nearly all of Delhi violates some planning or building law, such that much of the construction in the city can be viewed as ‘unauthorized’. And yet, it is only the slums that are designated as ‘nuisance’ and its dwellers as ‘secondary category of citizens’; distinguished from ‘normal’, private property owning citizens. Ghertner (2008: 66) highlights that ‘developments that have the “world-class” look (e.g. Akshardam temple) despite violating zoning of building byelaws are granted amnesty and heralded as monuments of modernity’. Such biased differentiation, between the informal and the informal (rather than between the legal and the paralegal) is a central axis of inequality in urban India today (Roy, 2009). Regimes of urban governance also operate through an ‘unmapping’ of cities (and the poor in it) which makes the state a deeply informalized entity, one that actively utilizes informality as a tool of accumulation and authority. As deduced from the example of Delhi above, planning cities in India cannot be understood as forecasting growth or its management.

Instead, Indian urban planning has to be seen as the management of land and other resources and basic services through a dynamic process of informality. It is one where “peri-urban” fringes of a city, or unmapped territories that are left out of a city’s published plan (like non-notified slums) allow the state significant territorial flexibility to alter land use, access to services, etc. to undertake alternative growth strategies that cater to better profits and the majority of its subjects (ibid). It is the systematic and structural denial of access and influence to the poor in the city that underlines the need of community organization and participation (Tandon, 1996: 4). Thus, the structural nature of informality is a calculated strategy of planning.

Thus, mobilizing and organizing urban poor communities and its civil society is critical to challenging such vertical relationships with politicians and governmental planning. Community organizing provides a mechanism for ordinary citizens to impact public decision making in order to improve their social and economic conditions (Ohmer and DeMasi, 2009). It allows vulnerable communities such as the urban poor build social capital, which is essential to be able to influence city planning decisions that directly affect them. It is especially crucial to enable urban informal settlements to create their own space of participation. This is because participation within a community, especially in the case of rural communities, urban middle/upper class communities come with their shared language, food, kinship patterns, etc. However, in the case of urban poor informal settlement dwellers, they are often migrants, economically desperate who begin living together due to affordability and exclusionary factors, than a shared bond. They still remain individual families focusing on everyday survival, and lack a common vision. One needs an organization that can bind people together around their common causes, interest or common goods.

Where local governments respond to citizen participation/ feedback positively, the depth and scale of poverty reduction goals increases and improve urban governance for the better (Satterthwaite, Mitlin and Patel, 2011). Most importantly, it is important to recognize that engaging with the urban poor and their civil society has the potential to strengthen democracy and human rights. Public discussions on challenges facing the urban poor such as poor water and sanitation services, sparked by community organization, can serve as powerful entry points to raising awareness and strengthening democratic processes, by applying a rights-based approach. Organising the urban poor is the first step to raising critical consciousness, and includes capacity building processes such as campaigns, enumerations, public discussions and other forms

Various sets of principles have been stated within the literature on community organisation. Following is a derived set of principles, adapted into 9 key principles:

- Principle of specific objectives
- Fact finding and need assessment
- Principle of Inclusion and anti-discrimination among members of the community.
- Equality in opportunity (to participate, voice their opinion and be heard)
- Community participation to planning and decision making.
- Creating partnership between community and external agencies, governmental or non-governmental who are expert with the area of issue
- Democratic decision making of action.
- Active and effective line of communication between any external association and community
- Inclusion of an inter-group approach to planning, decision making and actions undertaken.
- Optimum utilisation of indigenous resources.

Source: IGNOU material, “Community organisation: concepts and principles”

of gathering critical data about their communities. Harnessed with such critical data, the urban poor can stand at par with the local governments to articulate their demands and negotiate what works for their settlements. Community organization can empower urban poor communities to preserve and apply their local knowledge to make development interventions sustainable and be active partners of the government instead of passive recipients.

What are the approaches to community organization?

Community organisation enables organised collective action, which is an essential prerequisite for facilitating people centred and people controlled development (Jaitli and Tandon, 1998). Unlike statutory groups or stringently project-controlled groups, committees driven by the people themselves work around the needs of the community and its future. “Community” in such contexts is not necessarily understood in the sociological or physical sense, but instead as clusters of households and their common interests (Tandon, 1996). It is the systematic deprivation of the urban poor, the ‘have-nots’ that is implied in the phrase ‘community participation’ towards organisation. Participation and organisation, in this sense, becomes empowerment – especially of poor and vulnerable groups such as women, youth and Dalit groups (Tandon et al, 2016).

There are multiple approaches to community organisation. The main ones that intersect with organising the urban poor are the following:

Social Action: Social action approaches assume the existence of an aggrieved or disadvantaged section of the population that needs to be organised to enable demand articulation to the wider community for increased resources or equal treatment (Rothman, 1995 in Ohmer and DeMasi, 2009). It looks to make fundamental changes in the community, like redistributing resources, gaining or strengthening access to decision making for marginalised communities, changing legislative mandates, policies, and institutional practices.

Locality Development/ Civil Organising: Locality or community development is a neighbourhood-based strategy used to engage a broad range of key stakeholders in developing goals and taking civic action (Rothman, 2001). It aims to build the capacity of community residents to address and solve issues, enable social integration, and build harmonious relations between diverse groups (ibid). The civic model (Smock 2004 in Ohmer and DeMasi, 2009) of organising is similar, however its main motive is to restore social order and social control via informal resident forums to discuss concerns and partnering with the public spheres to solve them.

Social Planning: Social planning is an approach of community organising that works on technical processes of problem solving vis-à-vis substantive social problems that utilizes the expertise of professionals (Rothman, 2001). Its goals include the design of formal plans and policy frameworks for delivering goods and services to people who need them (Rothman, 2001). It aims towards bridging social capital based on normative ties.

Community Building: Community building encompasses elements of locality development and social planning approaches. It focusses on strengthening the social and economic fabric of community by connecting them to outside resources (Smock 2004 1995 in Ohmer and DeMasi, 2009), much like bridging agents. It aspires to build internal capacity within communities, with a focus on their assets/ strengths,

and engaging a diverse range of community stakeholders to develop high-quality and technically sound comprehensive plans (Smock, 2004 in Ohmer and DeMasi, 2009).

Women-Centered/Feminist Organizing: This model challenges the traditional separation between the private lives of women and families and the public sphere (Smock, 2004 in Ohmer and DeMasi, 2009). It includes elements of locality development and social action. It aims to create equal power relationships through democratic processes, and relationships and partnerships are built on the premise of understanding and responsibility, rather than individual self-interest (Eichler, 2007 in Ohmer and DeMasi, 2009). This model primarily facilitates bonding social capital (e.g., small social networks of women) based on affective, intensely personal ties (Smock, 2004). Bridging social capital is also developed by fostering bonds between small networks of women and external institutions and communities (ibid).

Considering the diverse nature of urban poor communities, elements of multiple approaches of community organisation may be used to effectively address local problems and power dynamics. The approach of community organisation depends on the goal of the intervention; are we mobilising to build technical capacity? Are we trying to change behaviours? Are we trying to avail/access services? Such questions are important to develop the approach of community organization, and consequently its objectives, processes, activities, outcomes and impact. The following chapter will discuss the processes of community mobilisation among urban poor and the thought behind each.



Chapter - 2

Engaged Citizen Responsive City: A collectivisation initiative in Ajmer, Jhansi, Muzaffarpur

Participatory Research in Asia, supported by the European Union began an initiative to strengthen civil societies of the urban poor and enable them to meaningfully participate and influence planning and monitoring of sanitation services in Indian cities. The project began its processes in 2016 and focussed at 3 smart cities and their informal settlements – Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur.

ECRC's theory of change

The project is premised on a theory of change that *if the capacities of the urban poor civil societies are enhanced, and municipalities, middle class residents, traders, market and professional associations (TMPAs) are sensitised, and local academic institutions and media can be engaged to work together with civil society of the urban poor in planning, implementation and monitoring then sanitation services in the city can improve substantially, which may positively impact every citizen in the country.*¹

The ‘unmapping’ of cities in urban planning results in the invisibility of voices of the urban poor. Sanitation is a case that exhibits multiple deprivations caused by such invisibility. Thus, ECRC's approach to responding to this negligence was a mix of approaches mentioned above, with a specific focus on community building around women and youth leadership, and organising people to come together around common issues for participatory social planning. PRIA's strategy was simple – if invisibility and thus access to sanitation services was the problem, then the solution is to give visibility to the urban poor (informal settlement dwellers) and the issues plaguing their settlements. How do you give visibility to the urban poor? By counting them. How do you give visibility to the issues plaguing them? By mobilising them to articulate their demands for basic services such as sanitation.

Thus, ECRC focussed on mobilising and organising the urban poor to counter the ‘informality’ attached to their existence and the services they receive, but most importantly it ‘mapped’ them and their settlements. ECRC focussed on a four phase action strategy wherein it created an environment that enabled change and action. These 4 phases can conceptually be distinguished into four stages:

- a) **information** or the understanding of and exchanging information about the conditions
- b) **awareness** or building individual and collective awareness of the hurdles and opportunities around the conditions
- c) **mobilisation** or organising communities to unite for a goal
- d) **action** or jointly undertaking processes to achieve the goal

¹ Excerpt from Interim Narrative Report, Jan 2016 – Dec 2016

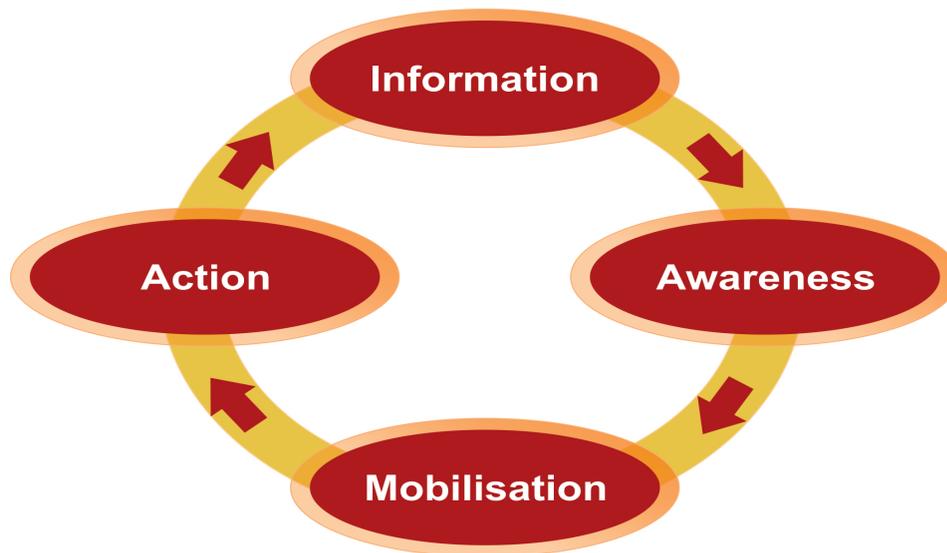


Figure 1: Four Phase Action Strategy

All the processes undertaken by ECRC in the attempt to count and mobilise fell into one of these 4 stages; sometimes separately so while other times simultaneously. The following section will elaborate upon ECRC's processes towards building organisations of the urban poor to access sanitation services, and the thought behind them.

2.1 The process of organising the community under ECRC:

a) Citywide identification and mapping of informal settlements

ECRC's field team, along with the ward *parshad*², began with mapping and updating lists of informal settlements to counter the lack of authentic data regarding urban poor settlements³. Building relations with local *parshads* was essential to secure a credible 'in' into the community, as the sudden entry of an external agency can cause alarm or indifference. The mapping process physically identified, plotted the settlements in the city, and their basic information irrespective of their legal status (or the lack thereof) recognised by the city authorities. This was because information on informal settlements available with city authorities/agencies are either not updated or not inclusive of all informal settlements. This excludes large clusters of communities from consideration during city planning or development. Consequently, people living in these unrecorded settlements are always at the risk of eviction and lack basic amenities like water supply, sanitation, electricity, and other services.

Apart from creating an authentic database of those living in the city, the mapping process also created an opportunity to initiate the first phase of interactions with the communities living in these settlements. The project team utilised formal strategies of rapport building such as Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with

² This contact was connected by municipal authorities.

³ Different type of socially derogatory terminologies are used for settlements of urban poor in the government records and policies (e.g. they are termed as Kacchi Basti in Rajasthan, Malin Basti in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh and Jhuggi Jhopari/ Gandhi Basti in many other states). The project named these settlements as 'Informal Settlements' instead of using the local terminology to exhibit dignity of the people living in these settlements.

different communications of residents, undertook transect walks through the settlements and collected information on each informal settlement through a structured format, in order to prepare a profile for each slum. These profiles were essential to establish the location (geo coordinates), brief history, total number of households, age of the settlement, status of the settlement (notified, non-notified, resettled), history of any eviction, and available infrastructure, and sanitation services. However, it was the informal engagements, over tea, local '*addas*' or with bystanders around the area that helped getting first-hand information in terms of what was happening underneath these general factors in the settlement and who had real power.

It helped identifying active citizens and leaders in the community as well as other Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and social institutions that were dormant or active in the settlements. While this process used secondary data such as records on the lists of notified and non-notified slums from respective Municipal Corporations, District Urban Development Authorities (DUDA) and Census 2011 as baseline, the informal interactions exposed discrepancies in the same. For example, in Ajmer the number informal settlements as reported by municipal records were 83; however, the mapping and listing exercise physically identified as many as 125 informal settlements with the help of local residents. In Jhansi, 75 settlements were identified on the ground against DUDA's record of only 57. In fact, Census 2011 did not have any record of these informal settlements in Jhansi at all.

These discrepancies, along with information on relevant stakeholders secured through formal and informal community interactions helped secure significant data and access to officials from Municipal Corporations, ward councillors, former councillors, community leaders, various caste based organisations, etc. To sustain these interactions, the project team simultaneously held meetings with other citizen groups, media people concerned about city and sanitation issues, and active Non- Government Organisations (NGOs) in all three cities. This was essential to build an environment where official stakeholders were beginning to be held accountable by civic stakeholders around the identified lags in sanitation and other services. This was directly fit into the 'information' stage of ECRC's strategy wherein information regarding service inefficiencies, and different stakeholders involved travelled between different groups. These (informed) interactions and analyses of primary and secondary information not only helped in locating informal settlements in the city but also triggered platform building for later stages of the project intervention of awareness, mobilisation and action.

This is not to say there were not any challenges. As an external party, the project team faced a lot of difficulties in certain settlements where community members were resistant to the intervention. This resistance came from the historic accumulated mistrust and justified disappointment with external organisations in the past that were extractive and exploitative under the façade of development. Furthermore, certain elderly men for their wisdom and middle aged men for their political affiliations were looked up at as 'settlement guardians', who wanted to negotiate 'for' the people instead of empowering them to articulate their own demands. Nevertheless, without their cooperation nothing moved in the settlement. Questions such as "you have come here, what are you going to give us?" and "this is your project, only you will get benefits out if this" were common but difficult questions to address, especially because of their lack of trust in the wider society.

Nevertheless, the project team relentlessly returned to the settlements every day for community meetings, informal *addas*, public information dissemination sessions on securing schemes and pursued settlement guardians or secured them on board by convincing local elected representatives to support the project

team. These informed interactions, especially as there were hardly any CBOs working for the settlements and the clear imbalance in power dynamics between different stakeholders, built a collective understanding at ground level. The informal settlements dwellers came to an understanding that it would be beneficial to establish active organisations within the communities. There was especially a keen focus among women and youth to actively participate in ECRC's initiative. This was because women and youth were acutely aware of the power imbalance as most settlement and household related issues were settled by 'settlement guardians'. This made life difficult for women, as sanitation is an extremely gendered issue⁴ and effects the working capacity of the youth⁵.

Such support from marginalised stakeholders secured through the initial interactions paved the way for the project team to approach other existing groups such as women's active self-help groups and youth groups like Ganesh Mandals. The team approached the active members of these groups and explained the initiative, objectives and the role of these groups for the future of informal settlements around them. The information stage was building onto the 'awareness' stage of ECRC's strategy. Such awareness enabled buy-in from the active members of these groups, which played an instrumental role in reaching out to other community members and securing their confidence.

b) Organising 'AAM Sabha' (general meeting)

To move onto the 'awareness' phase of the strategy, more residents and groups needed to be mobilised. Thus, once the process of mapping and collection of settlement data was completed, more general meetings, also known as '*Aam Sabhas*', were targeted. Here, multiple other groups such as caste and religious based organisations were also roped in, as they influenced informal settlements through charity and advocacy work. The idea behind these Sabhas was to amplify as much participation as possible from the settlements, as well as create a co-learning space. In this space, details of the project, objectives and opportunities around organising, listing of settlement issues were shared. It was also a space where sceptical community members could ask the project team as many questions while the project team clarified their doubts.

The Aam Sabhas were also meant to raise awareness about why forming community organisations is important. Due to negative past experiences of the communities with external organisations, they had many questions such as, what will they do as a committee? What is capacity building? What will be PRIA's role? Who will manage the committees? The project team had to explain that it is only through getting organised in the form of committees that their voices will be able to compete, if not be at par, with decision makers within and outside their settlements. PRIA hoped to build their capacities of collecting and analysing critical data about their settlements, especially in terms of sanitation services. This was particularly important to secure healthier future for the youth of the settlements, as well as bring women to the forefront of leadership to challenge traditional suppressions. The project team would play the role of a facilitator to create an enabling environment for settlement dwellers to participate in the planning, implementation, and monitoring of services in their settlements and that the committees would be run and managed by the

⁴ Women of informal settlements have to walk for miles to get water when it isn't available at home. They deal the most with water as they have to wash clothes and utensils, clean the house, cook food, etc. Women without household toilets also have to time their visits to the toilets during dawn or late at night due to traditional customs of modesty, which effects their health severely as not relieving one's self can cause UTIs/ constipation, etc.

⁵ Poor sanitation manifests diseases and low immunity, which directly effects the number of working days. This is especially relevant in a country like India, where the over 50% population belongs to the age group of 15-64 that makes up the majority of the workforce.

people themselves. This would help communities take charge of their own development, instead of being passive recipients of government plans and programs that were not practical or sustainable due to lack of ownership by the people. Here, the project team faced challenges as they realised that many residents had expectations from NGOs such as PRIA to create livelihood options, self-help groups that would regularise income supply, or even build infrastructure directly such as toilets. Residents also expressed apprehension in engaging with a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) due to the experience of fraudulent activities in the past. Thus, the project team had to persevere with local volunteers and host multiple Sabhas and rounds of explanations in order to convince the communities about the merits of public participation in development planning, as it is directly linked to whether policies address their communities or the issues they face. Sharing stories of similar work being undertaken by PRIA and other organisations in the nearby settlements, as well as the support of the parshads helped.

What are Settlement Improvement Committees?

Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs), are representative bodies established with nominated residents of the informal settlement. Each SIC has a total of 8-15 members. The project has made a conscious emphasis towards a larger involvement of youth and women as member of these committees. SICs can act as bridges between the service providers and the community. SICs work as organisations that speak in unison about the communities' needs and rights. They are the focal points through which external stakeholders can connect with the communities.

c) Organising Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs)

Once the Aam Sabhas gathered enough consensus and raised awareness about the need for informal settlement dwellers to organise, the 'mobilisation' phase of ECRC began. The members of the Aam Sabha were asked to nominate potential members for the SICs, and a democratic process⁶ was undertaken to form SICs – an immediate outcome of the Sabhas. There was a special focus on women and youth leadership, as already mentioned above, sanitation is a gendered issue and requires ingenuity of women who address it the most every day. Unlike other project interventions which approach women and youth empowerment through constituting exclusive groups, ECRC focussed on mainstreaming women and youth leadership into the intervention as a whole and build their capacity at par with men and the elderly. It was also essential to identify youth leadership as they would be the future of the settlements and it was important to empower them as responsible citizens and address issues that were effecting children and youth in the informal settlements related to sanitation, health, and education to sustain SICs and their goal.

The citywide identification and mapping of informal settlements revealed that there were 125 informal settlements in Ajmer, 75 in Jhansi, and 105 in Muzaffarpur. The total number of informal settlements identified in three cities were 305. The aim thus, was to create 250 SICs across the 3 cities.

While the project provided support to the urban poor dwellers of informal settlements in organising the SICs, the SICs were developed and managed completely by the urban poor in each settlement. This was essential for community members to identify such mobilisation as their own stake, their own project. This is because the SICs were essentially meant to provide community members a space and venue where their settlement's problems could be reflected upon, community needs could be identified, and joint solutions

⁶ To read more on the steps and processes of SIC Formation, visit [link to SIC manual](#) and [link to SIC AV](#)

were strategized based on what works best for them and by working with other institutions. The mobilisation of the SICs was meant to help communities build bridges with institutions outside and ameliorate their sanitation services and living conditions through collaborations. To pursue such collaborations, the SIC, harnessed with critical data and strength in numbers, was the strong entity that could challenge the ‘unmapping’ its members and settlements had been experiencing for years. The inhabitants of informal settlements had very little, if not no voice for their rights and entitlement. As a result, they had been experiencing severe lack of access to basic infrastructure and sanitation services. This form of community organisation, or SICs, aimed at fostering mutual understanding among residents and empower them in the long term to negotiate with their local governments. The SICs were an instrument of disseminating information, co-learning and applying local knowledge to developmental challenges – behavioural and infrastructural. Through the SICs, people were mobilised, organised and developed strategies as a group, as well as sought to renew their approaches to interact with government agencies.

ECRC’s motivation behind the SIC was confirmed by a study⁷ which revealed that the main motivations for community to join as members of SICs were: (i) to ameliorate their access to infrastructure and sanitation services; and (ii) to gain voice and recognition as inhabitants of informal settlements for accessing property rights. The study also pointed out that the early stage of community mobilisation sets a path for empowering the urban poor. The mobilisation of the SICs have increased dialogues among the informal settlement dwellers as well as with external actors. In fact, over time, there was also willingness by the members for a larger form of mobilisation, later formed as the SIC Forum (elaborated later). Finally, the support of PRIA was perceived as a strong factor for strengthening and sustaining the newly formed SICs. Through these processes, the project has constituted and capacitated 245 SICs across the 3 cities from mid-2016 to early 2018.

d) SIC orientation and SIC meetings

To strengthen the awareness of SICs and equip them towards the mobilisation phase, the project organised a series of orientation programmes for the SIC members. It was important for these orientations to build a strong sense of ownership and responsibility of the members and was thus planned in 3-4 rounds of immersive interaction sessions. The project team also ensured the planning of these orientations around the schedules of the SIC members, with the understanding that it was important to build stake and interest among individuals rather than forcing it upon them. Furthermore, most members are daily wage earners and could not afford to lose their daily earnings by attending meetings/ orientation sessions. Such contextual planning is essential to foster an environment friendly to community mobilisation.

The orientations were conducted in a participatory manner wherein a number of short training modules were designed around the principles, approaches and methods of community organising (and its need), leadership development, conducting community meetings, etc. These orientation sessions enabled SIC members to expand their perspective towards the issues around informal settlements and joint strategies to address them in an informed and constructive manner.

After the orientation, the project had entered the mobilisation stage, and it was essential to sustain the momentum and strengthen mobilisation for action. This was challenging, as participation from the elected

⁷ The study on “Grass-root community organisation in informal settlements: Empowering vulnerable communities and ameliorating their access to sanitation services” was conducted by a project intern from Trinity College, Dublin.

10-12 members saw a common decline to 9-10 members in most SICs. Thus, the project team had to motivate members of the SICs to sit twice a month, and it did so by encouraging individual members to take up different roles in the meeting to stay motivated. One such strategy was for members to maintain a register to document the minutes of each meeting on a rotation basis. The thought behind this was creating a sense of defined role as well as the responsibility of monitoring the progress of the meetings, their agendas and actions over the months. In the first SIC meeting, the members went through a defined process of need assessment where they began by following a sequential stage map:

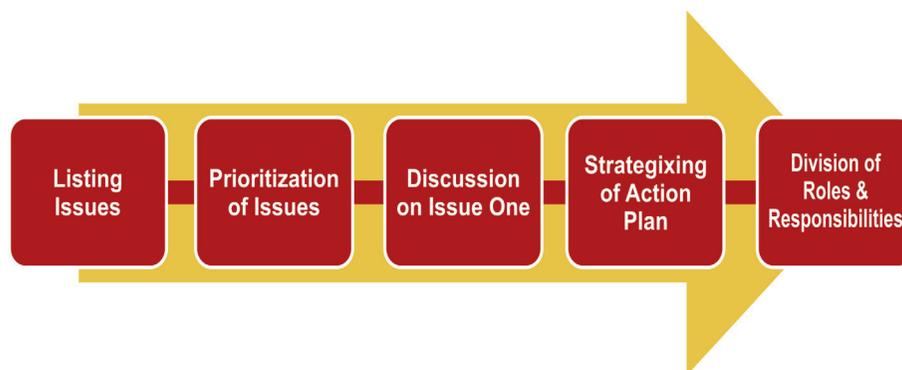


Figure 2: Need Assessment : Sequential Stage Map

The issues listed were on the state of sanitation, cleanliness of their surroundings, availability of toilets, clean drinking water, livelihood, water supply, drainage facility, concrete roads instead of mud paths, unavailability of electricity. These inputs helped the project team understand settlement specific priorities as well as blanket issues across informal settlements in the 3 cities. These inputs acted as pointers for what the survey processes (elaborated later) should focus on. The value put on member’s inputs on identifying issues and the division of roles and responsibilities to implement action plans solidified people’s ownership and bred the ground to shift from ‘mobilisation’ to ‘action’.

Communication strategies adopted during SIC meeting

While organising SIC meetings the PRIA facilitator made a conscious effort to follow certain communication strategies. These were adopted (from the manual on ‘How to communicate effectively with grass-root women’, Series: Women’s participation in development (1987)) to bring in participatory methodology where members get a fair opportunity to voice. These strategies adopted meeting were on:

- a. **Sitting arrangement** - All the members sat in a circle facing each other. This particular formation creates a space where all participants can physically see each other and are more conditioned to participate. Various studies and experiments have highlighted that a group sitting in a circle responds with a sense of ‘belonging’. The geometrical shape of a sitting arrangement acts as a subtle environmental cue to bring their individuality or inclusiveness. (Zhu 2014)
- b. **Opportunity and space to articulate** - Men women or youth all the members were motivated to articulate their thought. Apprehensions and challenges were attentively heard. And suitable actions were taken to overcome them.
- c. **Opinions and ideas be heard** - The issues and need expressed by the community were heard. During on the settlement meetings the members articulated the need for support in livelihood. The need was not dismissed rather the community was elaborately informed about the PMKVY scheme.

- d. **Participation beyond age, caste or sex** - Criteria for the formation of SIC was designed to bring membership from all age groups, sexes and castes. This was done with two objects. One, to bring acceptance from all the residents of a settlement toward SIC. Two, to create a platform where issues of all ages, of males and females are collated; where suggestions and ideas have fresh or alternative perspectives; and for the SIC to sustain.
- e. **An environment where the community is urged to perform** - Rather than seeking advice from the PRIA facilitator the members are urged to assess the steps they can undertake. The role of the facilitator is to simply capacitate them with the knowledge and skill required for them to perform. (G. S. Rajesh Tandon 1987)

The SICs played a vital role in representing and negotiating the issues within their settlements to external agencies⁸ or local authorities⁹ - an elaboration of which will follow in the sections below.

e) Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA)

Once the SICs were oriented, the process of Participatory Urban Appraisal began simultaneously with regularising SIC meetings. Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) is a participatory action research method and is used as a tool for mobilising communities, collective reflections, raising awareness about community organisation and the importance of collective action to demand better services from the service providing institutions. With the help of SIC members and local animators, the idea behind ensuing this process was to bring communities together to reflect upon their settlement in a more concrete manner than before, foster intra-community interactions and catalyse collective action. PUA was necessary to give a more structured framework to co-learning process with the community members and exhibit the power dynamics in the community. Before PUA, all such observations were deliberated either within the project team or through organising and orienting the SIC members. However PUA was essential to highlight this at a public level, and approach an in-depth understanding of the social environment of informal settlements which was essential to strengthen community organisation and mobilisation. The processes under PUA were essential to plan the 'action phase' of the intervention with the community members.

For example, the PUA began with the process of **transect walk**. Here, the SIC members, project team along with residents of the settlement walked around the settlement to establish a clear understanding of its location, geographical spread, housing conditions, and availability of services. However, the main motivation behind transect walks is the opportunity it presents to build rapport with the community and verifying previously discussed issues during the initial meetings of the intervention. The transect walk, while it starts out with a few residents, attracts other community members and bystanders out of curiosity. As people get curious to find out what is happening, the walk accumulates people from the respective settlements under observation and increases resident involvement. Similarly, the process of creating a **timeline** with the community is to list key events, changes and landmarks in the past and arranged in a chronological order. Here, the project utilised elder members of the communities who helped the project team and SIC youth understand how the informal settlement had grown over time, what were its recurring

⁸ External agencies are understood within this context as any funding or non-funding organisation which is willing to provide support to the causes and issues of that settlement. This support can be in terms of capacity building, creating linkages with other federations or larger platforms working toward the same issues, inform them about the scope of outreach and/or providing the knowledge on government schemes, policies, rights as well as govt. institutions for support.

⁹ Local authorities are government bodies like municipal corporations responsible for providing as well as regularising services like social care, education, road and transport, sanitation, etc.

problems and local fixes through a historical perspective. The project valued this process immensely as it gave the community elders a sense of leadership, not merely because of their age/ caste/ class/ gender, but because of the knowledge they held with them and it being valued for the first time. To expand this sense of leadership from the elders to all residents, the processes of **participatory social and resource mapping** was undertaken. The SIC members mobilised the community to sit together and generate a social and resource map of the informal settlement. The purpose of this process was to gather information on the spatial layout, infrastructural facilities, population and the prevalent social stratification. It also helped to ascertain the existing status of the resources and who controlled them. Quieter participants were tactfully involved by project facilitators by requesting them to draw the settlement based on what others were saying – the simple act of using a pencil on paper or outlining on sand stimulated their responses, attracted more bystanders and fostered a space where caste and gender was not a barrier to joint deliberation. These processes created enough dialogue between different parties to develop a **stakeholder analysis**. This process helped concretely define the key people in the informal settlements. The community members came up with a map on which individuals and institutions could be engaged in the community building process as well as seek alliance for the actions to be taken.

Thus, these processes under PUA helped SIC members create settlement profiles and identify issue. However, the intention behind conducting a PUA was to develop an active base of citizen participation and stakeholder engagement. It became a milestone for the communities whose local knowledge stood at par, if not more, with external technical knowledge for the first time in their experience as urban poor.

f) Capacity building of SICs

The project's vision for the SICs, especially as it moved from the 'awareness' to 'mobilisation' phase was to mainstream women and youth leadership from informal settlements. Through the SIC formation, orientation and PUA, indeed women and youth emerged as the primary mobilisers of the SICs. The project team wanted to understand the kind of handholding support and leadership training required to enable a fluid transition from mobilisation to action. Thus a **profile of each SIC member was prepared**. An analysis of these profiles and a **capacity need assessment** suggested that the community members needed further awareness and information about the working procedures and methods of the municipal corporations. The idea was to equip members on technical and behavioural skills to interact with municipal officials and ward councillors. The needs assessment also highlighted the need for PRIA to continue playing a facilitation role, as the members believed it brought them more credibility and confidence in articulating community's development needs to the city authorities. The needs assessment also reflected a clear increase in awareness on local developmental issues. The SIC profiling and needs assessment helped the project understand settlement specific lags and thus develop relevant structured training sessions on leadership development, community organising, and assessment of sanitation situation in the informal settlements. This was especially important after the SIC orientation and PUA to hone SIC member's skills on how to proceed with basic information (PUA), to baseline information (via surveys) to finally reach action plans. This was a primary priority of the project as the SICs were the main leaders who would facilitate (if not wholly conduct) a census survey of all informal settlements, as well as a survey at ward level – as will be explained in the following section.

g) Undertaking Mobile-to-Web based participatory surveys on sanitation services in informal settlements

Now that the communities were sufficiently aware and mobilised, the project had reached its action phase. As mentioned earlier, the project aimed to challenge the ‘unmapping’ of informal settlements, its dwellers and their problems. Thus, the first aspect of its two-pronged strategy, i.e.; organising urban poor had reached significant accomplishment. The second aspect was ‘counting the unaccounted’, and in order to do so as well as capture the status of sanitation services, two different mobile-to-web based surveys were developed. One, for the informal settlements where a comprehensive survey or a **Participatory Settlement Enumeration (PSE)**, covering all the households in an informal settlement) was planned and the other one included **sample survey at the ward level** (a mix of colony and slum households).

The purpose of doing a comprehensive survey, specifically for informal settlements was twofold; to ascertain the total number of households in each informal settlement and get them on the map through GPS plotting; second, to get information about availability, usage and disposal facilities of toilets.

A team of SIC members and students belonging from the informal settlements were trained as community enumerators to undertake the PSE and ward level surveys. This involved demystifying technology through an android-based app created using Commcare open source software managed by Dimagi Inc. The surveys developed through the app were pre-tested and consulted with various stakeholders in the field. SIC members and field enumerators were trained on operating the handset, using the app, and their skills on GPS mapping, collecting data and checking for inconsistencies while conducting the survey were built. This technical training was essential for boosting their confidence about being equally adept at ‘technologically sound’ aspects of interventions – an image they always associated with external ‘experts’ from the city. The surveys collected data on solid waste management, toilet facilities, water outlets and drainage, water supply, bathing facilities. The training aimed at bridging the local knowledge of our enumerators with the technical logics of how the sanitation system works – what kinds of toilets do their homes have? What kind of drainage systems are connected to the same? What is the connection between having legal documents with securing individual household latrines? Such questions and more also evolved a co-learning process, where the field enumerators taught the project team about local *jugaads*’ or ‘quick fixes’ that are regularly implemented by informal settlement households to save time, money and resources. This is why the community residents were invaluable in this intervention, for they knew how local ingenuity trumps technical standardization in everyday life.

The process of undertaking comprehensive survey in informal settlements began with the house listing of all the households (based on Census 2011 definition of household). The SIC members not only participated but were trained to lead the process of household listing and numbering. This pre-survey process was invaluable in two ways; one, in many informal settlements, especially in non-notified slums, the community members were ecstatic as many of their homes were given an ‘address’ for the first time as a recognition of their existence. Two, the house listing process also made many dwellers fearful of eviction. Here, the SIC members stepped in and played an instrumental role in assuring communities and sensitising them about the purpose and potential positive impact of the PSE through door to door dialogues and community meetings. The assurance that it was people from their own communities who would be collecting their data gave people the confidence to share their information with enumerators and be active contributors to the collection of authentic information.

The idea behind such intense community engagement through the survey was to also foster an opportunity for everyone to re-connect to each household in the settlement and understand common issues plaguing them all and challenge the isolation experienced by most people in their daily struggles. As the PSE and ward level survey began in batches across the 3 cities, its use and ease encouraged a few SIC members and community youth to volunteer as trainers for those who wanted to undertake similar surveys in the informal settlements. The atmosphere in the informal settlements was electric as all households opened their homes to the enumerators, provided authentic information and participated in making lists of households without toilets, community/ public toilets that were out of order, and debates about the emerging data. SIC members continued to be the point of entrance for each informal settlement and helped maintain a protocol that the project team established to monitor the quality of survey. While the project team's backend support provided support for any technical malfunctions, SIC members, enumerators and field supervisors verified any doubts/ discrepancies immediately on the field.

After the completion of the enumerations in each settlement as well as ward, the data was analysed and the findings were consolidated. Validation and sharing meetings were organised, first with the SICs wherein their observations and comments were added to the analysis. This helped creating an environment where the community was ready to own the results of the surveys. Following up, the SICs, field animators and enumerators organised validation meetings with the entire community on mutually agreed dates and time, where immediate external stakeholders such as municipal councillors were also present. The shared findings and the proceeding discussions helped each settlement prioritise their specific sanitation needs. For example, each settlement came up with a list of households which would require individual households. For households that did not have enough space for constructing individual toilets, community toilets were prioritised and their potential locations were narrowed down. Over 235 SICs worked with their respective community members, developed and submitted sanitation improvement proposals to their municipalities out of which 207 proposals received positive action from the ULBs. Such a feat, of community members collecting their own data and pitching their demands based on it, was unthinkable amongst community members at the beginning of the project. It especially moved the informal settlement dwellers with hope and confidence. The data generated through the comprehensive survey for various informal settlements was timely and relevant for respective municipal corporations, as they were in the midst of planning and implementing activities under Swachh Bharat Mission - Urban (SBM-U) and AMRUT. For the first time, community owned data had begun to influence local sanitation planning in secondary Indian cities.

Furthermore, the findings of the surveys mobilised SICs to organise various camps for legal documents such as Aadhar card, voter IDs, birth registration, bank account registration, etc. for households that were identified as lacking those in the survey. Health camps and sensitization campaigns were also organised by field animators, women and youth. Multiple physical changes such as improved toilets, drainage lines, waste collection services and water supply were also issues acted upon by SICs. Examples of such impact will be addressed in the last chapter.

h) SIC Forum

A significant part of maintaining the momentum of the 'action phase' of the SICs was scaling it up from the bottom (or settlements) to the city level – an aspect missing in most developmental projects. While each SIC implemented something transformative in their neighbourhoods after harnessing the survey findings, their presence at the city level was missing. As the SICs launched into the surveys and associated

actions, the need for a city level SIC institution was felt. Such an institution would be able to influence city-wide decision making processes and support individual SICs. Thus, SIC members began building their organisation towards an **SIC Forum**; a city level network of SICs.

The idea and purpose of the SIC Forum was to expand the resource and network bases and the bargaining power of the urban poor civil society at city level. It created a multi-stakeholder interface with city associations such as the Citizen Forum (elaborated below), academic institutes, Traders, Markets and Professional Associations, Residence Welfare Associations (RWAs) and connect them to individual SICs. Such an elaborate network increased its credibility and enabled its members to address development challenges beyond sanitation in the future. Launched in the 3 cities between the months of October and November 2017, the SIC Forum also focussed on equal leadership from men, women and youth representing various informal settlements. The project team intensified engagement with its urban poor stakeholders by organising exposure visits to partner cities. This facilitated exchange of experiences amongst members from various SICs, helped them initiate dialogues and facilitate negotiations with city authorities and other stakeholders. The Forums continue to help communities articulate their needs and facilitate their participation in city level sanitation planning, implementation and monitoring.

2.2 The process of organising middle class/ official stakeholders to support urban poor under ECRC:

Along with building capacity of the urban poor, it was essential for ECRC to tap into the middle classes and institutional stakeholders for the intervention to be truly successful. True organisation building of the urban poor civil society, especially towards better sanitation services would only be possible when the middle class and its institutions supported the initiative and strengthened them through their participation. That would not only challenge the ‘unmapping’ phenomenon, but also pave way for inclusive development that thrives on its people’s participation. Thus, ECRC’s approach expanded to addressing such middle class groups over time, so as to secure a long term, sustainable and equitable sanitation for all.

a) Sensitizing RWAs, TMPAs and constituting Citizen Forum

One of the motivations behind the sample survey at ward level was to exhibit comparisons of sanitation services of neighbouring slums and colonies and the stark difference between the two despite sharing a ward. The sharing of these findings at validation and community meetings helped bring facts and behavioural lags into perspective for the middle classes, who were often blind to the daily struggles and conditions of informal settlement dwellers across Jhansi, Ajmer and Muzaffarpur. With these findings as anchors and in order to sensitise middle class colony residents on the issues related to the urban poor, multiple rounds of discussions took place. The idea was for the SICs to initiate and lead the meetings, so as to stand as a united and informed voice focussed at building partnerships with middle class institutions. The SICs, led by women and youth animators were encouraged to undertake the process of preparing profiles of Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) / Housing Societies/Flat Owners Associations, Traders, Markets and Professional Associations (TMPAs) in all three cities with the project team. The idea behind this was to utilise their own ingenuity, connections, common sense and communication skills with different stakeholders to identify the spread and types of such groups in the city. From identifying RWA leaders from billboards across the city to visiting offices of popular traders and philanthropists; this would not only build their knowledge but sharpen their skills of stakeholder mapping, communication and aspects of strategic

partnerships. The SICs then held meetings with TMPAs as well as RWAs / Flat Owners Associations/ Housing Societies. These formal meetings, support from project team and the organised structure of the SICs enhanced their credibility – a stance that was absent in their (already rare) negotiation with organised middle class groups in the past.

These dialogues led to the creation of ward level forums in Ajmer to facilitate dialogues between municipality officials and colony residents, in support of issues of the informal settlements. As such awareness increased, the ‘action’ phase was strengthened through the uptake of sanitation lags such as poor sewerage lines in informal settlements by colony residents as well as a rising momentum of utilising citizen feedback mechanisms by the ULBs. The project team especially worked towards creating such an environment to help bridge the communication gap between city residents and their ULBs.

These processes along with the presentation of the sample survey findings at city level consultations in each city comprising of informal settlement and colony residents, SIC members, SIC Forum, municipal officials, and media created an unprecedented commitment among middle class institutions in working towards the upliftment of urban poor. This commitment was marked by the constitution of the Citizen Forum – a similar model to the SIC Forum, but one that includes members from all stakeholder groups including the urban poor and that would enable them to work together in favour of improving access to sanitation services in informal settlements. The SIC Forum was a project strategy to ensure the absorption of the voices of the urban poor at city level, beyond the exclusivity of SIC Forum. While the latter established credibility of the urban poor, the Citizen Forum created a space for their voices to be heard and considered as equal stakeholders vis-à-vis other citizens, RWA members, residents of informal settlements, traders’ associations, Ministry and city government officials, NGOs and academic representatives.

b) Campaigns

The ECRC project had a campaign approach embedded in it – starting from campaigns used to disseminate information and generate awareness, those aimed at mobilising people together acting towards positive change. The intervention utilised various national and internationally celebrated days to target the same for 2 population groups – the urban poor and the middle class population in the city. For example, International Women’s Day was commemorated by supporting women sanitation workers raise awareness about the daily struggles of the SC communities engaged in sanitation work around their wards. The purpose was to bring women sanitation workers at the forefront as educators - to generate awareness among RWAs and middle class youth about the conditions of sanitation workers and the ways in which middle classes can support their work by being more mindful in terms of their attitude as well as waste disposal practices. Similarly, campaigns were launched on World Environment Day and World Cities Day by roping in youth, RWAs and TMPAs. Student led awareness rallies, street plays, painting and essay competition, and slum walks were conducted in different areas of the cities to bring middle class groups and youth into the conversation of how the urban poor live, their contribution to the middle class households on a daily basis, the urgent need to adopt healthy waste segregation and disposal practices and the role privileged citizens can play in securing access to basic services for informal settlements. World Toilet Day also became a great opportunity to raise awareness, reflect on lives of frontline sanitation workers who are involved in cleaning of streets, drains and toilets and facilitate discussions around safe sanitation in the city with special reference to urban poor.

Such campaigns aimed at problematizing the lack of awareness among most city dwellers on where the

‘informal workers’ or the urban poor of the city come from, live and do to make lives of the middle classes easier. These include domestic workers, construction workers, sanitation workers, electricians, plumbers, gardeners, etc. These campaigns were purposed with increasing citizen participation first, in being aware of who all constitute a city, and second, in actively undertaking actions to make the city for inclusive and sensitive to those who live in its peripheries despite contributing significantly to the sanitation system and beyond.

c) Capacity building of government local bodies (like municipal authorities)

To organise urban poor communities, especially in terms of successfully securing access to sanitation services, the support of the government local body or the municipality is essential. This is because the municipality/ municipal corporations are the primal body responsible for extending basic services and social development in their cities. Thus, from the very inception of the project on ground, several rounds of meetings with municipal staff such as Commissioners, Mayors, and councillors were held to appraise them about the project and their role in its success. Simultaneously linkages through awareness meetings were developed with parastatals like DUDA, Urban Improvement Trust (UIT), etc. Not only were the authority letters issued by the three Municipal Corporations to conduct survey but also the oath¹⁰ to enumerators and field supervisors were administered by the Mayors and officials in the cities. The idea behind this was to establish an interface between the ULB officials and the community members, one where the former expresses support in the latter’s cause. This also acknowledged that the data that was to be gathered by the community would help the municipality plan its sanitation system better, in terms of toilets and other service provisions; an aspect that was missing in city development so far.

The project adopted the strategy of roping in ward councillors, mayors, sanitation inspectors and other officials into community meetings and letting them listen to the community’s deliberation and prioritised needs. This, especially in cities where new councils were appointed in the middle of the project, contributed to building relationships and understanding between elected councillors and the community/ SIC leadership. Separate sensitisation workshops were held with city authorities to sensitise them about the real conditions of the field, which is often difficult to fully grasp while handling the day-to-day running of the municipality. Trainings for elected representatives were held in multiple rounds to a) build technical capacity of sanitation systems such as FSSM, SWM, drainage, etc and b) build behavioural capacity to understand how caste, gender, religion effect urban poor communities and their access to dignity and basic services/ entitlements by discussing the findings of a study on women sanitation workers under ECRC. These two different types of capacity buildings were necessary for the elected representatives to work effectively in improving the conditions of informal settlements.

Constituting this two-way dialogue between SICs, community residents and their local government was important to bring in people’s participation in equitable sanitation planning. The recognition that the community can be the most authentic source of awareness generation was clear when JMC invited our field facilitators and SIC members to join their ward level “*Swachhta Protsaban Simitis*”, AMC invited all women field facilitators as ‘*Swachhta Doots*’ for monitoring sanitation services in the market places and MMC designated all the SIC leaders as ‘*Swachhagrahis*’.

¹⁰ An Oath Taking ceremony was organized in each city for the survey enumerators and field supervisors as symbolic gesture to adhere to the integrity, etiquette and protocols of surveys.

The project also co-opted into the celebration of various international days such as World Toilet Day, World Environment Day, World Cities Day etc. with the municipalities, created IEC materials based on the municipal agenda and contributed to their dissemination and awareness generation strategy. This was done to secure a two-way relationship of mutual respect and commitment to positive action between the project, its communities and the ULBs.

Finally, the sharing of the study findings of the study on women sanitation workers, complimented by the loopholes and opportunities exposed through the ward level sanitation surveys kept regular discussions alive. It enabled small as well as large meetings of deliberations between SIC members, project staff and women sanitation workers with the officials of urban local bodies and other city authorities.



Chapter - 3

What were the impacts?

Considering the motivations, strategy and depth of the processes mentioned above, the impacts can be broadly classified into 5 categories:

- a) **Critical and community awareness:** Before PRIA's entrance in the informal settlements of Jhansi, Ajmer and Muzaffarpur, certain common issues plagued all of them. The informal settlement dwellers, while aware of their own individual conditions, only knew the general situation of those surrounding them. Their struggles and fears were individual, and not collective. Due to this isolation, there also existed a lot of scepticism about one's neighbours, legitimate doubts against the intentions of external NGOs, fear of evictions and deprivation from the lack of basic services.

However, from ECRC's intervention, specifically the formation of SICs in all settlements, people became aware about not just their own but the reality of their settlement as a whole. The processes undertaken through the SICs, especially the ones that focussed on community building brought some cohesiveness in their thinking. The macro picture put forth common patterns of experiences among all dwellers, which helped them overcome the loneliness that came with everyday survival. Lack of access to sanitation services was no longer 'my problem' but 'our problem' – extending immense strength to the collective nature of the organisation.

Identifying common problems paved the way to collective discussions on solutions and actions. The SIC, in all its forms and contribution to data collection became the first instance of a cohesive collaboration of the urban poor, one where they had a 'formal' voice that challenged their invisibility. Women emerged as leaders equally able to men, and the youth's voice of reason was taken at par with the elders. From a time when neighbours blamed each other for mishaps and felt unequipped to participate in development, Janki (SIC President, Jhansi) said the SICs taught them "community monitoring, better follow-up and collective action" is the way ahead.

"The formation of the SIC has brought people together to talk about their problems. These issues are not the problems of individuals anymore, but of the whole community"

- Baby Devi, SIC member, Muzaffarpur

- b) **Increased demand generation of government schemes:** The government programmes and schemes, such as SBM, are demand driven. While providing support to those in need of services, such as individual/ community toilet provision, it relies on people filling out applications and demanding the toilet subsidy. The lack of demand or success of the programme comes from the lack of awareness – regarding the programme itself and the way to access its benefits. One of the major outcomes of the ECRC intervention was two-pronged. First, it sensitised the communities involved in the process about sanitation as a system, the need to improve it, and the contents of sanitation related programmes such as SBM. Over 1,341 meetings and capacity building sessions with the SIC members created 'information ambassadors' in the 3 cities who further sensitised their own neighbourhoods and generated awareness about provisions under the flagship programme. Second, it taught people how to undertake the process

of availing the benefits (such as filling out the form, the legal documents to be attached, etc.), assisted groups of people who were afraid to do it on their own or SIC members and field animators filled forms on the behalf of families – thus creating physical demand for the programme itself. There emerged various other demands as by-products – such as the demand for Aadhar cards, ration cards, birth certificates and ration cards. These were addressed through setting up camps in different wards for people to come and register for these legal documents, which were eligibility prerequisites to access subsidiary benefits.

“After a long struggle, we got the municipality to construct our community toilet. For the building and water, we had to visit the department offices several times. The SIC played the most important role in seriously taking up the matter, submitting the application, and conducting follow-ups. The common people of this settlement also came forward in support. The women and girls of our settlement had undergone untold distresses in going to the patch near the drain to defecate in the open. Finally we have found a solution to this problem. Our hard work has not been wasted”

- Manorama, President of SIC, Jhansi

- c) **Thinking spatially/ strategically:** While awareness and action regarding sanitation services was an immediate outcome of organising the urban poor community, the ripple effects were larger. The informal settlement dwellers began thinking spatially and strategically about their locality. Organising themselves together towards participatory planning, implementation and monitoring of services led to two things. One, people, especially women, came together to analyse the social and infrastructural resource maps of their settlements, specifically after the PUA and comparisons of colony VS informal settlement from the ward level survey. This included thinking about the geographical spread of wells, community toilets, hand pumps, etc. as well as unsafe areas where gambling, drinking and other substance abuse occurs. These factors were taken into consideration while proposals for sanitation improvement were drafted by SICs, considering foresight for things that may facilitate or hinder any kind of development.

Second, the capacity building trainings with the SICs, community building meetings and deliberations, as well as the survey processes capacitated people to think strategically about securing access to services and accountability. The community members learnt how to formally and legally articulate their demands from ULBs through these processes and assistance from project team. SIC members built relationships with municipality officers such as the Chief Sanitation Inspector, Sanitation Inspectors, Executive Engineer and even Mayor by familiarising them with frequent travails. Simple tactics such as showing up often helped register their presence as a ‘regular and familiar’ one, decreasing the lack of comfort between the parties involved. After some practice and assistance from the project team, SIC and community members got into the habit of writing formal letters following standard formats, as well as attaching them with specific legal documents to apply for a service/ articulate needs/ complain to the ward councillors in Ajmer and Jhansi. Similar letters were written to Circle Officers in Muzaffarpur, MLAs, Mayor and Commissioner. Photocopies of letters were kept as evidence, and in the case of no response, communities learnt to go together as a collective, with those photocopies to personally, politely but firmly seek accountability from the respective officers. Furthermore, young school-going girls were brought to the forefront as those writing letters on behalf of their informal settlements, appreciating their skills learnt from schools as much as young boys for the first time. These girls were also the

designated 'minutes of the meeting' keepers for SIC and community meetings for them to be more aware of their settlements and critically engage with it. Such positive changes, along with women undertaking door-to-door awareness generation responsibilities enhanced women's strategic needs and not merely immediate needs.

"The men of the settlement used to make all the decisions, but since the formation of the SIC, the women have started going out and participating in decision-making too."

- Saraswati Devi, SIC member, Muzaffarpur

- d) **Increased ULB responsiveness:** Considering the enhanced demand articulation and negotiation skills at community level, the municipalities in all cities increased their responsiveness towards the informal settlements. While this responsiveness may not be systemic, the officials at the lower/middle level did begin to engage. The municipalities were overall happy with the increasing citizen participation, particularly in cases of citizen activism for securing individual and community toilets. The knowledge and following of due process on behalf of the community while filling out applications or articulating demands was difficult to ignore, as they were well informed with critical survey data and legal documents. The municipalities began engaging with the immediate demands of settlements, such as distributing blue/green dustbins and awareness generation regarding healthy sanitation practices. Combinations of officials such as sanitation inspector, Chief sanitation inspectors, ward councillors, etc have appreciated and designated women SIC leaders and youth leaders to raise awareness about open defecation and healthy waste segregation. Representatives of local councillors have come on board to assist SICs and communities in filing applications for IHHL and community toilets as well. Out of 235 sanitation improvement proposals submitted to the 3 municipalities by SICs over 3 years, over 207 have received positive action, and with alacrity. The project's processes aimed at creating a two-way dialogue between SICs, community residents and their local government encouraged ULBs to recognise the need for people's participation in sanitation planning. The immediate outcome of that was JMC inviting our field facilitators and SIC members to join their ward level "Swachhta Protsahan Simitis", AMC inviting all women field facilitators as 'Swachhta Doots' for monitoring sanitation services in the market places and MMC designating all the SIC leaders as 'Swachhagrahis' – all aimed at creating a space for citizen awareness co-generation.

"We never used to think about going to the Municipal Corporation or Ward Councilor for anything. Now we know that if we want development, we must work for it ourselves. The formation of the SIC has given us the courage to voice our concerns clearly."

- Manju Devi, SIC Member, Muzaffarpur

- e) **Increased information:** All the mentioned impacts above are a product of the processes and the impact of an overall increase in availability of and access to information. From the initial PUAs to mobilising action through the SICs and its Forums, each process contributed to as much awareness generation and information dissemination as it did on mobilising physical change. The PUA and surveys, at the informal settlement level and at ward level, contributed towards the information generation regarding people's settlements. Community building processes before and after the survey were perpetually motivated and disseminating information to communities about government schemes, programmes and policies meant to enable their communities. The SICs became the source of awareness for all

communities, in terms of adapting behavioural changes to undertaking procedural change. It is only with such increase in information that people's awareness rocketed and their confidence in negotiating as an equal stakeholder in how their city's sanitation system works emerged. This has strengthened the urban poor civil society where the community is now aware of their rights, how to demand services and how to ask for accountability from their representatives.

"After the formation of the SIC, it feels as if we have woken up from a deep slumber. There were so many problems, but all of us marched along unitedly towards a solution. Now we take the initiative and ownership to work on solving our problems."

- Geeta Devi, SIC Member, Muzaffarpur

Conclusion

As mentioned in the beginning, informality is systemic to urbanisation. With it come multiple challenges for the urban poor who are constantly unmapped and unaccounted for. In such a context, ECRC worked towards mobilising and organising urban poor communities in Jhansi, Ajmer and Muzaffarpur to build their capacity to challenge vertical relationships between citizens and government planning. The hardest part of the intervention remains mobilising people together through information and awareness as most informal settlements have been exploited in some way or the other by external institutions/groups. Thus, securing their confidence in the civil society NGOs is challenging. However, it is not impossible and rests as a responsibility for developmental institutions and practitioners to address it with urgency.

The processes mentioned above focussed on two stakeholder strategies. One, capacitating the urban poor and second, capacitating middle class/ official stakeholders to support urban poor. The ultimate goal of better sanitation for all would fall limp without the success of either of the two stakeholders, as the two interact and effect each other on a daily basis. Until the middle classes recognise the contribution made by the urban poor in the economy of their households and city, and willingly support their quest to better sanitation, sanitation for all will not be achieved. Capacitating the middle class, along with academic institutions, media, ULBs to respond to the needs of those pushed to the city's periphery is the indispensable to achieve the sustainable development goals of clean water and sanitation and sustainable cities and communities.

While PRIA progressed with a focus on feminist community building and participatory social planning, there are myriad of other combinations to community organisation that can be used. Nevertheless, any participatory development project must rest on the 4 cyclical cornerstones; information, awareness, mobilisation and action. The processes, starting from the citywide identification and mapping of settlements to establishing a city level SIC Forum, exhibit an in-depth flow chart of organising and capacitating the urban poor. Each process was designed with a single question in mind – how does this help give visibility to the informal settlement dwellers and the issues plaguing their settlements? Furthermore, the processes mainstreamed local knowledge as the centre of all planning, implementation, monitoring and action. It focussed on facilitating, rather than doing it for the people; it insisted on creating active citizen partners and not subjects. For a community to own its problems as well as solutions is the only way for an intervention to be sustainable, after the project team leaves the field.

Thus, deducting from ECRC's 4-year long experience in the 3 cities with over 253 settlements, with 250 urban poor organisations strengthened, over 5000 women and youth trained, over 150 RWAs currently engaging with the urban poor and hundreds of officials capacitated to support the same, the processes and the thought behind them are paramount to consider when planning an intervention to organise the urban poor.

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