

Engaged Citizens- Responsive City

A Case on 'Leaving no one behind'



Engaged Citizens, Responsive Cities: A Case on Leaving no one behind

Summary

When you bring people together, ideas and solutions abound. And when you bring diverse groups together, bigger and better ideas are generated. Why then is planning, design and development of cities ideated and implemented only by "experts" (planners and policy makers)? Achieving the ambitious agendas of SBM and AMRUT cannot be merely the responsibility of municipalities. It will require inclusion and participation of all citizens. The diversity in a city's population -- from all walks of life, with different abilities, and capacity to innovate – is a city's strength. This case study will showcase PRIA's solution to citizen engagement that leverages inclusion and diversity. It will highlight how solutions were co-designed to meet a recognised social need and how support to city authorities and other actors was provided to implement and apply citizen-inspired solutions at the local level.

This case study elaborates on the processes through which different stakeholder groups within a city can be informed on any issue of wider relevance and mobilised to engage in collective action and demand accountability from governance institutions. The first section describes the challenges of urbanisation especially with respect to urban sanitation. The second section gives a background to the 'Engaged Citizens Responsive Cities' project which is the basis of this case study. The third section enumerates the processes through which community mobilisation and action was done. The fourth section enumerates the impact of the project. Fifth and the final section concludes the discussion in the case and presents how the local action enabled in contributing to achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

1. Context: Challenges of Urbanisation

The momentum of urbanisation in India is unparalleled. As of 2014-15, over 400 million people live in India's cities. By 2030, it is estimated more than half of India's population will be living in cities. Indian cities, like in other parts of the developing world, are becoming engines of growth. The Planning Commission estimated in 2012 that cities in India were contributing 66 per cent of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which is expected to increase to 75 per cent by 2031. Notwithstanding the current levels of growth, urbanisation in India is unplanned, unsanitary and urban poverty has increased. While it is very difficult to get authentic, consistent and valid data on the extent of urban poverty in any city across all states, it is estimated that in 2014-15 approximately 140 million (nearly 35 per cent) of the urban population are considered to be poor. In 2012, an estimated 33,510 slums existed in urban India with approximately 8.8 million households.

Rapid urbanisation has led to strain on civic services, in particular sanitation services. The state of urban infrastructure and delivery of public services is highly unsatisfactory, and is far short of what is required to sustain more inclusive, sustainable economic growth. The abysmal lack of sanitation services is omnipresent in Indian cities and poses extraordinary threat to the health and hygiene of the urban population, particularly the poor who live in informal settlements within cities. Census 2011 shows that close to 8 million, or 12 per cent, urban households do not have access to toilets and defecate in the open. Another 8 per cent use public and shared toilet facilities which are unclean and unhygienic. At the all-India level, 31 per cent of slums had no access to any kind of latrine, 71 per cent had no access to underground sewerage system, 31 per cent slums had no drainage system, 27 per cent had no arrangement for garbage disposal and 46 per cent slums faced water-logging (due to rainfall) of either the slum, or the approach road to the slum. Open defecation in urban settings with higher population densities and untreated sewerage is the biggest source of water resource pollution in India. Lack of safe spaces poses further challenges, as it affords little dignity and grave security risks for women.

Unfortunately, the urban poor, who reside in informal settlements, are seen as "outsiders", typically viewed as the ones who make our cities economically and environmentally unviable.¹ Socially too these settlements and their residents are "outcast", denigrated as "dirty". The fact that they make an enormous contribution to a city's economy² is not widely known or acknowledged. Such social, political and locational marginalisation feeds their own inability to raise voice to make their contribution known or demand equitable access to public services. They remain "invisible" and excluded from most government policies and budgetary allocations. While the urban poor are subjected to multiple deprivations – lacking access to education, health, housing, gainful employment – it is the lack of quality sanitation and water services which has the most severe negative impacts. Their health and hygiene being compromised results in loss of productivity and income, which they can ill afford.

¹ In a study conducted by PRIA on the contribution of urban informal settlement dwellers, initial reactions of non-informal settlement households about contribution of informal settlement population were extremely negative – about 50% felt informal settlement dwellers did not contribute positively to the city. (see

http://www.pria.org/pdf/Urban_Poor_Economic_Contribution_Final_Report.pdf)

² PRIA and Indicus Analytics, 2013, "Contribution of Urban Informal Settlement Dwellers to the Urban Economy in India", Study Report (available at: http://www.pria.org/pdf/Urban_Poor_Economic_Contribution_Final_Report.pdf). This study, based on a participatory survey of 5350 households and 24500 individuals of the urban poor across 50 cities shows total contribution of informal settlement dwellers to urban GDP of India is 7.53% (assuming that urban GDP is about 60% of total GDP). Total output multiplier from informal settlement dwellers for economic sectors is 2.90.

2. Background of the project 'Engaged Citizens Responsive Cities'

Keeping this context in view PRIA believed that access to sanitation services, including household, public and community toilets with water facilities, connection to either onsite or networked sewerage disposal system and scientific solid waste management is a pre-requisite to inclusive and sustainable growth of Indian cities. A clean city, as a result of an effective sanitation plan, would be attractive for business and provide more opportunity for economic development. Clean and sanitary surroundings will positively impact the health of the city's residents, the urban poor in particular. With better health leading to fewer losses in productivity for the urban poor, they can participate more effectively and benefit from the economic opportunities that arise from growth in a city's economy.

However, this would not happen without the constructive engagement with municipalities. In order to build sustainable relationship with the Urban Local Bodies (ULB) a vibrant, active and organised civil society is significant. If civil society, especially of the urban poor, is empowered and capacitated to demand their rights, and public institutions are sensitive to all voices, then diverse stakeholders can work together to meet the common goal of clean cities and change the urban landscape in India. It is critical that all residents of a city and their civil society associations actively engage in this endeavour. It places a responsibility on civil society, particularly of the urban poor, to learn to demand their rights, to be heard and be included in the planning and monitoring of civic services.

A vibrant, active and organised civil society can change the urban sanitation landscape in India through constructive engagement with municipalities as well as with citizens at large. Engagement with associations of middle class residents (RWAs) is required to enhance their appreciation of the contribution of the urban poor and understand the benefits in exploring opportunities for joint action in planning and monitoring of sanitation services. Traders', market and professional associations in cities hardly have any history and lack the mechanisms to work with other civil society, especially of the poor, and municipalities. Engaging them in monitoring and holding municipalities accountable will be important.

Further, these associations are often dominated by men, undermining the leadership potential of women and youth. Municipalities lack sensitivity, capacity and incentive to engage with and seek participation of citizens, particularly the urban poor, in providing sanitation services. Senior officials in municipalities do not value the skills and contributions of front-line sanitation workers who primarily belong to Scheduled Castes and many of whom are women, leading to low self-esteem, and a demoralised and dispirited workforce. All these problems cumulatively and additively undermine the potential to harvest rich social and cultural diversity in the citizenry in general and institutions in particular.

2.1 Plugging the gaps

PRIA ascertained existing gaps with respect to citizen engagement in urban sanitation landscape as follows:

Civil society capacity challenges: While civil society in rural areas of India is vibrant, civil society organisation and capacity in urban India is weak. It is largely fragmented and frequently works at cross-purposes. The divides along class, caste, gender, age and conflicting interests make civil society in urban India ineffective in exacting accountability from public institutions. They lack access to information, resources and capacities to become active agents of change. The capacity of the urban poor in particular to engage with institutions of governance to demand services is extremely weak. A few intermediary non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have facilitated the organisation of the urban poor in order to protect their legal rights, but this is primarily along occupational lines (e.g., associations of street vendors/ hawkers, rickshaw pullers,

rag pickers, self-help groups, construction workers, etc.). PRIA's work with facilitating FIUPW (Forum of Informal Urban Poor Workers) has shown that organising around economic activities ignores the life of the urban poor in their informal settlements, where they remain vulnerable due to lack of organisational, leadership, intermediation and negotiation capacities. Some NGOs are engaged in service delivery to the urban poor, but very few of these groups have the capacity to engage with municipalities to ensure effective public service delivery.

Lack of granular data on sanitation issues in informal settlements: One of the major bottlenecks in city-wide planning of urban sanitation services is lack of authentic data. Municipalities often do not have the necessary capacities to generate updated data for realistic planning. Data sources like the Census of India are difficult to utilise for local planning because collection is decennial, and desegregated information at the level of the ward with colony (mostly inhabited by the middle and upper economic class), and slum (mostly inhabited by weaker economic class) is not always provided. These data sources are also complex and not easy to understand by ordinary citizens. Such limitations deter citizen participation, as lack of access to data prevents understanding or monitoring the real situations at local, state and national level. For citizens, data is a critical requirement to effectively seek interventions from the municipalities, but is usually scantily available at the granular level. For cities to develop, a critical requirement is that of close coordination between different economic classes (poor and better off), municipality and other State stakeholders. One of the first steps towards participatory planning and decision-making is to empower communities with critical data

Lack of capacities amongst middle class residents, TMPA to support urban poor as well as participate in urban sanitation planning, implementation and monitoring: RWAs, traders', market and professional associations, are usually indifferent to the concerns of the urban poor and do not use mechanisms to engage with municipalities. They are hardly involved in preparing a sanitation plan for the benefit of all residents of the city in which the underserved areas of the city (which are typically the informal settlements) are prioritised for efficient delivery of sanitation services. If they are adequately sensitised on the issues of urban poor, capacitated on the issues of urban sanitation such as planning and monitoring of urban services using social accountability mechanisms then these groups have great potential to participate in joint monitoring of services related to city development. These groups include Pensioners Association, Central Lions Club, Rotary Club, Chamber of Commerce, TET Teachers Association, All India Transporter Welfare Association, Cane Development Association, Bank Officer's Federation, Teachers Association of Government Engineering College, Indian Medical Association, State Employees Association, Bar Association are important local organisations

Lack of capacities amongst the elected representatives on issues of urban sanitation and their role: City mayors, councillors and administrators have important stake not only in ensuring the delivery of civic services but also to create spaces for effective citizen participation. However, most of them lack the sensitivity to listen to diverse voices, in particular those of new migrants and poor households when planning for delivery of sanitation services. Municipal authorities lack mechanisms to engage with diverse stakeholders. If they are sensitised to the issues of the urban poor and organise multi-stakeholder dialogues and participatory forum it will advance the voices and concerns of all sections of society to these institutions of governance. Elected representatives within the ULBs such as ward councillors and mayors are the elected representatives and have the great potential to transform the ways in which citizens engage with local authorities on the issues of urban sanitation.

Lack of capacities amongst sanitation workers to contribute in sanitation planning: The sanitation worker is clearly disregarded as unimportant in planning interventions. Unfortunately, municipal officials and staff, elected representatives and even city residents dismiss their

contribution as unworthy as most sanitation workers belong to the Scheduled Castes. Most front-line sanitation workers are women, and they are seen as adding no value. These workers themselves lack dignity in their labour. Sanitation workers however are key to keeping a city's roads clean, in garbage collection and disposal, and cleaning public toilets. Valuing their contribution (institutionally and by city residents), including them in planning and monitoring, and enhancing dignity in the work they perform will provide a substantial boost to the efforts to keep India's cities clean. Further, the hazardous work conditions they often have to work under and associated health risks must be acknowledged by the institution in an endeavour to put in place new practices

Lack of conducive spaces for citizen engagement: The urban development ministries in the state governments are apathetic to civic engagements and participation, but control important resources and decision making in municipalities. Although centrally sponsored schemes such as SBM put a lot of thrust on citizen participation through swacchata survekshan, swacchata app, grievance redressal units located within ULBs etc. their engagement is limited. This is because their participation is not enabled. Citizen participation is enabled when they are informed and aware of the critical issues, when they are organised, when they have a voice and choice through enforced social accountability mechanisms and finally when they have access to institutional spaces. The authorities such as the ULB, state governments and other related institutions need to create open and conducive environment to supporting engagement with civil society of the urban poor at the city level

Hence, PRIA proposed actions that prioritised the issues related to urban sanitation services as the rallying subject to organise different civil society groups and foster cooperation with municipalities in the cities of Ajmer, Rajasthan; Jhansi, Uttar Pradesh and Muzaffarpur, Bihar.

2.2 Overview of the three cities

In the Indian context, a city with half a million population is a realistic size to showcase a model that makes city-wide sanitation possible. The three chosen cities vary in size from 350,000 to 500,000. The choice of three cities (as opposed to a single city) supported the potential for innovation in practice.

Ajmer city is governed by Ajmer Municipal Corporation (AMC). The city is divided into 55 wards for municipal administration and governance. Jhansi city is governed by Jhansi Nagar Nigam (JMC). The city is divided into 60 wards. Jhansi also has two cantonment boards (Jhansi Cantonment Board and Babina Cantonment Board) as well as the Jhansi Railway Settlement. Muzaffarpur city, divided into 49 wards, is governed by Muzaffarpur Municipal Corporation (MMC). The reasons for selecting these cities for intervention are as follows:

Regional location of the city: The three cities are located in less developed regions/states of the country (Ajmer in Rajasthan, Jhansi in Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and Muzaffarpur in northern Bihar). They all have strong commercial and economic relevance to the regions in which they are located. Historically, the western and southern regions of India, rather than the northern and eastern parts of the country, have seen higher investments in developing medium sized urban centres and in capacitating public institutions to manage these cities. Governance of cities in northern and eastern India is poor and municipalities suffer severe capacity and revenue deficits.

Deficiency in institutionalised participatory planning: The municipalities of these cities do not have a history of inviting community participation in planning and monitoring of services. Ajmer prepared a City Development Plan (CDP) under Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JnNURM), Jhansi started preparing a Detailed Project Report (DPR) on Solid Waste Management (SWM) in 2006 and Muzaffarpur began preparing a DPR on water supply in 2008.

Unfortunately the plans for Jhansi and Muzaffarpur were incomplete in the year 2016 when this project was initiated.

Urban poor lack capacity to participate and of civil society to work together: The urban poor in these cities lack capacity to engage with municipalities and multiple stakeholders to ensure their access to sanitation. Middle class residents, and traders, market and professional associations remain largely apathetic to the concerns of the urban poor, do not appreciate their contribution, and are unable to actively engage with municipalities and hold them accountable. Most importantly, front-line sanitation workers, who are mostly from the Scheduled Castes and are usually women, are not valued for their contribution in keeping the city clean.

Connect with current government initiatives in urban development: In June 2015, the Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD), Government of India (GoI) launched Atal Mission for Rejuvenating Urban Transformation (AMRUT) for 500 cities. At the request of MoUD, the respective state governments have identified Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur in the list of first 100 'Smart Cities'. Smart cities are technology enabled, and the learning of new technology-based skills (GPS, mobile based surveys) by organisations of the urban poor will enable them to relate confidently and "smartly" with their future city. The proposed intervention intended to support the preparation of such plans to help in the effective implementation of the SBM guidelines by 2019.

The astounding challenge of clean cities led the Indian government to adopt a National Urban Sanitation Policy in 2008. This was further bolstered by the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) announced in 2014. The SBM guidelines require all municipal authorities to develop city-wide sanitation plans with participation from the community and civil society. Additional resources are also being mobilised towards the implementation of SBM through introduction of a new cess, tax deductible business contributions and CSR, in addition to increased budgetary allocations by the centre and states. Three mega urban schemes, viz., Smart Cities Mission, Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) and Housing for All in urban areas to enable better living and drive economic growth were launched in June 2015. SBM envisages access to sanitation, including toilets, as a pre-requisite for transforming India's cities into liveable habitats for inclusive and sustainable growth. Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur have been shortlisted as 'Smart City', and therefore may have access to additional resources. The municipalities of these cities do not have a history of inviting community participation in planning or monitoring of services. Lack of capacity of civil society and of municipal authorities could be an impediment to the effective utilisation of these additional resources and preparation of participatory sanitation plans. This can only be achieved if civil society is empowered to demand their rights; governance institutions are sensitive to all voices, and all stakeholders work together to meet the common goal of clean cities.

2.3 Theory of Change

The project 'Engaged Citizens Responsive Cities' is premised on a theory of change that if capacities of the urban poor are enhanced and municipal authorities, middle class residents, traders', market and professional associations are sensitised to work together with the civil society of urban poor, then sanitation services in the city can improve. Supported by European Union, the project is being implemented in the three cities for the period 2016-2019.

3. What do engaging citizens mean?

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

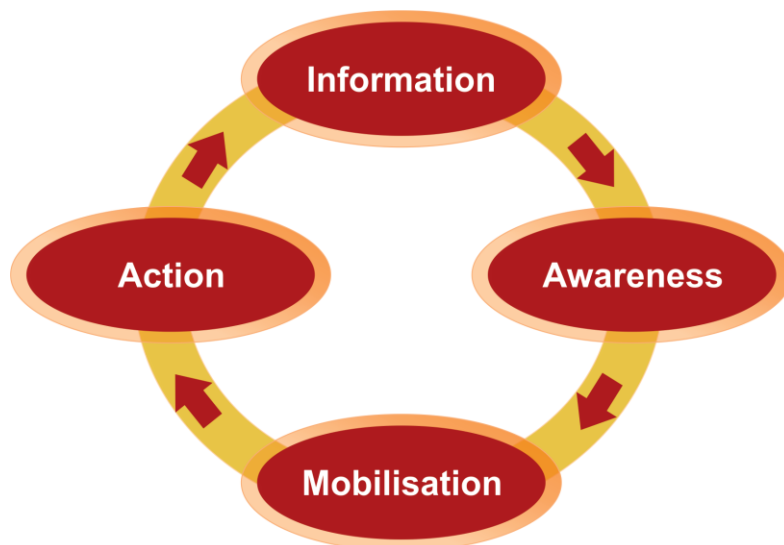


Figure 1: Four Phase Action Strategy

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. ECRC's processes towards building access to sanitation services inclusive comprised of multiple actions taken simultaneously as well as sequentially. These are as follows:

- 1- City-wide mapping of informal settlements and forming Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs) in each settlement and federating SICs into SIC forum at the city level in each city
- 2- Comprehensive assessment of sanitation services in informal settlements through Participatory Settlement Enumeration (PSE) tool
- 3- City-wide assessment of sanitation services including slum and non-slum households (focusing on toilets, SWM, sewerage, and drainage)

- 4- An assessment of the status of women sanitation workers and diversity assessment of ULBs
- 5- A comprehensive assessment of the status of public and community toilets using geo tagging
- 6- Continuous awareness generation activities in partnership with other stakeholder institutions such as schools, business enterprises, local CSOs, forums, government functionaries etc.
- 7- Sensitisation of middle class residents, trade and market promotion associations and constitution of citizen forum.

The following section describe the process undertaken to operationalise the aforementioned activities.

3.1 Citywide identification and mapping of informal settlements: ECRC's field team, along with the ward parshad³, began with mapping and updating lists of informal settlements to counter the lack of authentic data regarding urban poor settlements⁴. 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) 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

³ This contact was connected by municipal authorities.

⁴ 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.

record of these informal settlements in Jhansi at all. In Muzzafarpur, the municipal records suggested 90 informal settlements while the mapping exercise found 105.

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 of 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 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 issue⁵ and affects the working capacity of the youth⁶.

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

⁵ *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.*

⁶ *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.*

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.

3.2 Organising 'AAM Sabha' (general meeting)

Once the information based was laid, the next step was to move to the 'awareness' phase of the strategy, where mobilisation of more residents and groups was needed. 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 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.

3.3 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 process⁷ 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 affecting 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. The total number of informal settlements identified in three cities was 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 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 study⁸ 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

⁷ To read more on the steps and processes of SIC Formation, watch [From indifference to participation- Organising Urban Communities](#)

⁸The 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.

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.

3.4 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 10-12 members saw a common decline to 9-10 members in most

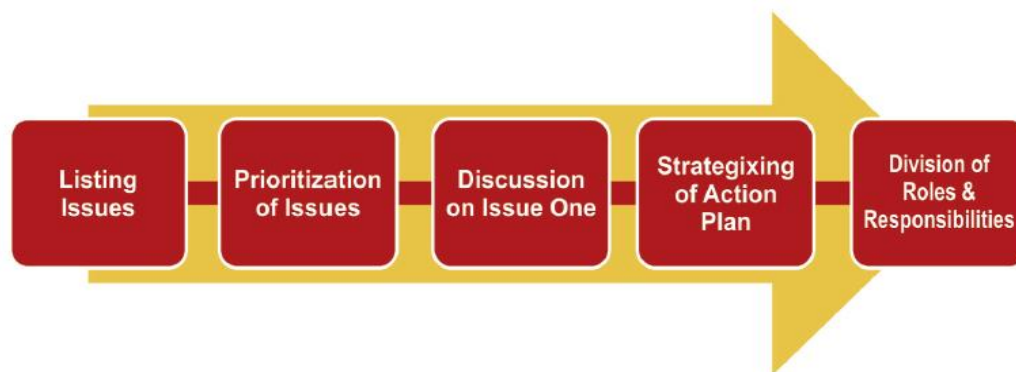


Figure 2: Need Assessment : Sequential Stage Map

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:

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'.

3.5 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

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.

3.6 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.

3.7 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.

3.8 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.

3.9 Sensitizing RWAs, TMPAs and constituting Citizen Forum

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.

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.

3.10 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.

3.11 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.

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.

3.12 Highlighting role of women sanitation workers in city sanitation planning: A phenomenological research was conducted with women sanitation workers in the three cities to highlight the day to day work related issues that these workers face. Conducting this study helped in developing critical reflection amongst the WSWs, the government officials and ward councillors on the issues of their delayed payments, occupational hazards, absence of grievance redressal mechanism and efforts were made to bring these issues in forefront of the state authorities. 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. In all the three cities the WSWs engaged with the city authorities to demand their rights of a dignified and safe working space.

3.13: Assessment of Community/Public Toilets to highlight the gaps in access to basic sanitation service for urban poor and people on the go: A comprehensive study of community and public toilets across the three cities was done by the community volunteers using geo tagging and mobile based survey. The consolidated report was submitted to the respective municipalities explaining the status of each toilets, requirement of additional PT/CT in population dense wards, market places and near informal settlements that had no space for construction of individual household toilets.

4. What is a responsive city?

Technically speaking a responsive city can be conceived as a space which creates favourable environment for community demand, enable spaces for negotiations and the city authorities respond to their needs on one hand while on the other the citizens facilitate the processes of governance through responsible behaviour. The project has been able to showcase exemplary results in the arena of citizen engagement on the issue of urban sanitation through their participation in the local governance. The ECRC project created the following impact towards making the cities responsive as follows:

Critically aware Citizens: 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. Similarly middle class residents and members of TMPA became aware about their own role and attitude towards urban sanitation issues as well as the issues of informal settlements.

"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

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

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

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

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.

Joint action by ward councillors, citizen forum and SIC forum: The forum members have undertaken multiple projects jointly such as revival of community toilets, repair and maintenance of drains, initiating plantation drives, cleanliness drives of ponds, approaching municipality for provisioning of basic services in certain localities such as piped water connection, installation of public toilets in market places etc. For example, the data sharing of settlement and ward level survey on status of sanitation services in ward 14 of Jhansi is one example of such mobilization. Jhansi is a historic city in Uttar Pradesh that lies in Bundelkhand region in central India. Its wider urban agglomeration has a population of nearly 6 lakhs (547,638 as per 2011 Census) and it is a designated Smart City. Water scarcity is a problem here because of the dry climate. At the sharing meeting, the data presentation helped residents from the ward realize that there were four wells in their ward which were being littered daily. This contaminated a significant water source which could become an asset for the ward's water and sanitation needs. The elected councilor present at the meeting, who was surprised that such major water resources were located in the ward he was representing in the municipality, immediately took up the issue at the Jhansi Municipal Corporation (JMC) and with support from RWAs and SICs escalated the importance of the matter. In a meeting organized with the JMC, officials agreed to clean the four wells in ward 14; in fact the municipality decided that all wells in Jhansi should be cleaned and their water levels deepened to sustain city water sources. The clean water available in the wells

in ward 14 are now being used for washing clothes, toilet cleaning and other sanitation purposes. “Chajjas” (net covers) were planted on the wells so that they could not be contaminated with litter again. The data presentation in one ward encouraged mapping of all the wells in Jhansi, and by March 2019 almost all of the 30-35 wells in the city have been cleaned! Some are now being used to source water for community toilets in the informal settlements of different wards. This was a result of collective action between the colony, slum residents and local councilors.

5. Conclusion

Participatory development believes that without people’s participation and a collaborative effort from institutions at all levels, development cannot be inclusive and sustainable. The Engaged Citizens Responsive City (ECRC) project has been working towards strengthening the urban poor civil society and sensitizing the middle class to play a supportive role and work in partnership with municipal authorities in three cities (Ajmer, Jhansi and Muzaffarpur) to improve access to sanitation services at local level for urban informal settlements.

The participatory surveys conducted in the informal settlements as well as at ward level in Jhansi, Ajmer and Muzaffarpur helped create democratically recruited Settlement Improvement Committees (SICs) which comprise leaders from informal settlements and a city level SIC Forum as a representative body of the urban poor civil society. There has been specific focus on mainstreaming women leadership through SICs to amplify gender equality (SDG 5) at local and city level.

The surveys were conducted by SICs members and local animators to capacitate urban poor civil society to share and apply their local knowledge to make sanitation inclusive. This is especially important for sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) which promote citizen ownership. This contributed towards SDG 17 which targets capacity building in developing countries to support national plans like sanitation for all as well as increase North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation in knowledge building. ECRC also facilitated the creation of Citizen Forums in the three cities as collective spaces for the urban poor and middle class to interact and build on solutions together to reduce inequality (SDG 10).

The survey results were shared at ward level meetings which included multiple stakeholders such as middle class colony residents of the ward, Resident Welfare Association (RWA) members, Citizen Forum and SIC members, and elected representatives, along with the informal settlement dwellers. The data exposed the lags in sanitation services between informal settlement and colony residents despite living in the same ward. It sensitized middle classes to step up and support clean water and sanitation for all (SDG 6). Ward level meetings became catalysts for building partnerships for local action. Such partnerships directly led to creating opportunities to achieve SDG 6 targets (improving water quality by reducing pollution, increased water-use efficiency, implementing multi-level integrated water resource management and, most importantly, supporting and strengthening the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management).

The Citizen Forum curated through ECRC’s efforts has also played an instrumental role in building networks for and strengthening citizen-led interventions for local development. Its composition of SIC, SIC Forum, RWAs, Traders, Market and Professionals Associations (TMPA), educational institutes, and media has made it an influential space for inclusive citizen participation and partnership among different societal rungs and institutions, leading to local interventions. Though small in the grander scheme of global SDGs, such partnerships form the base of sustainable development.

Much like SDG 17 which supports the efforts of other SDGs like a scaffolding, ECRC's interventions strive to enable partnerships that incorporate as well as respond to multiple other SDGs. ECRC's processes and activities are SDG 17 in action – which helps neighbourhoods, wards and cities converse among each other. These local partnerships give us lessons that can enable global partnerships to create gender just, equal, sustainable cities and communities where clean water and sanitation reaches every home.

About Engaged Citizens, Responsive City

Engaged Citizens Responsive City is a four-year long intervention supported by the European Union which focuses on strengthening civil society of the urban poor to participate in planning and monitoring of sanitation services. The project works across three cities in India (Ajmer in Rajasthan, Jhansi in Uttar Pradesh, and Muzaffarpur in Bihar). It primarily engages the urban poor through capacity building activities to enable them to become active citizens, and to use the new skills learnt to participate in planning (at city level) and monitoring (at the ward level) of sanitation services. Partners in this change include urban poor and middle-class residents, with leadership of young women and men; mayors, elected councillors and related government departments; traders and market associations; civil society, academia and media; and women sanitation workers.

About PRIA

Established in 1982, PRIA (Participatory Research in Asia) is a global centre for participatory research and training based in New Delhi. PRIA realises its vision through building knowledge, raising voice and making democracy work for all. Over 35 years, PRIA has promoted 'participation as empowerment', capacity building of community organisations, and people's participation in governance. PRIA's programmes on the ground focus on promotion of participation of the poor, especially women and youth, to claim rights and basic services



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by PRIA



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by the European Union

For more information, contact

PRIA
42, Tughlakabad Institutional Area
New Delhi- 110062
Phone Nos.: +91-011-29960931/32/33
Email: info@pria.org

Connect with us:



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