

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Shelter Security in Urban India: Path Ways, Barriers and Outcomes**, edited by Darshini Mahadevia, 2015, Published by Concept Publishing Company (P) Ltd., A/15 & 16 Commercial Block, Mohan Garden, New Delhi - 110 059, pp: 346, Price: ₹ 1,400.

The book under review is a compendium of articles based on the research work undertaken at the Centre of Urban Equity (CUE), CEPT University over the last few years. There are nine chapters written by different authors. However, more than six chapters were written by the main author herself after a detailed research on various aspects of urban housing. Each chapter is a free standing article brought out as the working paper of the Centre.

The research work undertaken over the last half-a-decade has been converted into chapters in this book to present insights into existing living conditions in urban informal settlements in Indian cities and learning from the interventions towards efficacy of public housing programmes. This book reiterates Roy's (2009) argument that the idiom of urbanisation in India has been informality and increase in national income does not mean much as the urban housing continues to remain and will remain informal for a vast majority of the population.

Housing or shelter security is the key to inclusive urbanisation, which many countries

have addressed in their own way. Post-Second World War the Western European countries stressed on shelter security, which acted as an important entry point for social security. Developing countries that urbanised rapidly, for example, Brazil, which is now 85 per cent urbanised, has addressed shelter security through 'Right to City Charter', which followed 'Right to City' movement. Significant participatory slum upgrading has been carried out in South-east Asian countries, Thailand and Indonesia. The socialist block in Asia, China and Vietnam has provided shelter security to the urban workers of all income groups through employee housing where housing is provided as a wage good. India has just embarked on this path through her first national public programme of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) followed by Rajiv AwasYojana (RAY). A new urban housing programme of NDA government is expected to replace this programme.

The book attempts to answer the following questions taking examples from different cities in the country: (i) what are the processes of development of informal housing in Indian cities? (ii) What are the living conditions and the processes that have led to improvement in the same? (iii) What factors create different levels of tenure security and what are the outcomes of the same? The chapters are the case studies of a city or a State and may answer one or more of the above mentioned questions.

The limitations of the book are that the case studies are embedded within the specific contexts of the State and the city and hence hard to generalise.

Chapter-I gives an overview of informal housing in India focussing on low-income housing and its interaction with the policy instruments and institutions which lead to an improvement in living conditions.

Chapter-II describes Rajkot's informal housing in an assortment through which such housing comes up. The author infers that such experiences change the status and security concerns of low and middle income households and provides them with access to housing. They choose the place of their habitation depending on their employment and affordability. They sometimes trade-off closeness to employment to quality of housing and housing expenditures with savings which they usually remit back to their home villages/towns. In case the settlements are on the lands belonging to the local state, the slum is vulnerable to eviction. In spite of all these odds, informal settlement dwellers tend to invest in and earn from housing and they in turn become small landlords and providers of housing.

Chapter-III presents a qualitative analysis of welfare extension made by the local state in improving the living conditions of urban poor in the city of Surat. The chapter discusses the geography, demography, economic history and importance of this city in the Indian economy and overall slum and land tenure situation.

Chapter-IV is an attempt to illustrate diversity in housing needs of low-income segment of urban population. It also argues that access to basic services is an important intervention that will change the lives of people at the bottom most segment of the urban population and if provided (by local authorities) the slum dwellers are willing to invest on them and get organised to improve their living standard which will help them to come out of the vicious circle of poverty. The chapter also raises the concern about housing needs of seasonal workers.

Chapter-V illustrates the process of mobilisation of slum dwellers to access basic services through the intervention of an NGO named 'Saath,' based in Ahmedabad. This chapter also narrates the process of community development in Pravinagar-Guptanagar with the assistance of an external agency. However, it is seen that there has been a gradual improvement in the physical environment, awareness and empowerment of the community in general and women of the community in particular. Experiences pronounce that women have acted as change agents and in the process empowered themselves to negotiate not just in the public domain but also in the private domain and triggered changes locally. The backdrop of this change is the introduction of a participatory slum development programme named Integrated Slum Development Programme (ISDP) by Saath in conjunction with Slum Networking Project (SNP) of the local government, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC).

Chapter-VI brings out the finer process of mobilisation of women of a slum for accessing basic services through the intervention of an external agency, a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO), the Mahila Housing SEWA Trust (MHST) situated in Ahmedabad. It narrates the process of community development in a slum called Sanjaynagar, its gradual improvement in physical environment and empowerment of the community in general. It also narrates experiences of women acting as agents of change and in the process empowering themselves.

It is evident from the data in Chapter-VII that public land ownership has a negative impact on the quality of housing. Most of the households staying on public lands do not possess the documents to support their residency in that place and are more vulnerable to threat of eviction. Thus possibility of having pucca housing decreases significantly in slums situated on the public lands since the threat of eviction has a significant impact on physical quality of life also.

Chapter-VIII argues that the trickle down does not work always. Supply side dynamics or policies play a very important role in the welfare of the poor as they reduce the time period of consolidation of an urban household. In a hostile policy environment the neo-liberal State is becoming increasingly hostile to the poor and predominantly there is elite capture of urban land and resources, therefore, the chapter highlights the importance of supply side policy interventions.

Chapter-IX questions- Do we have to wait till the urban poor can be extended legal land

titles or property rights as Hernando De Soto has been arguing? Optimistically this study indicates that we do not need to wait for these changes to occur. Small steps taken at the appropriate time, such as extending basic services and levying taxes as well as support of NGO's would help in improving the living conditions in the slum settlements. These would have beneficial impacts on employment and human development indicators also.

In conclusion, the book in the context of widespread urban informality in Indian cities, the dynamics of incremental upgrading of informal housing, the broader shift towards eviction and relocation over the past two decades and a re-emphasis on upgrading in future programmes, specifies that instead of conducting research on metropolitan cities, it would be appropriate to understand smaller cities and the inherent informal processes that shape them and the potential for development of shelter for urban poor. Lastly, the case on Bhopal city, which has been at the receiving end of different approaches to slum development in India where the city's slums first benefited from the Tenure Regularisation Policy of 1984 of Government of Madhya Pradesh followed by people-driven slum upgradation programme under the Department for International Development (DFID) programme and then mass housing under Basic Services for Urban Poor (BSUP), provides valuable learning lessons for those interested in urban housing programmes in India.

Thus, all the papers have been sequentially and systematically put together into the book in an attempt to understand housing

in itself as a broader concept for creating a liveable habitat for physical and mental health and well-being of the people. The editor has also discussed in detail, weaving together various chapters of relevance, to present the efficacy of slum upgrading approaches, extension of tenure followed by donor-funded programmes, searching for the efficacy of housing programmes and mass housing solutions through Social Audit.

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**Community Natural Resource Management and Poverty in India - Evidence from Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh** by Shashidharan Enarth, Jharna Pathak, Amita Shah, Madhu Verma and John R. Wood, Sage Publications India Pvt. Ltd 2016, Pages 414, Price: ₹ 1,150.

In the year 2000, the United Nations, after surveying all the economic, social, health and environmental problems of our planet, announced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). They agreed on eight goals, the first of which was declared to be the eradication of poverty. This was of immediate significance to all those concerned about poverty in India, which, going by the World Bank poverty standard of a per capita income of less than US\$ 1.25 per day, implied that India contained one-third of the world's poor (2010 figures). The poor thus formed 42 per cent of the Indian population and lived mostly in rural areas. Despite recent overall increases in India's growth rates and an official downward revision of poverty estimates, the absolute number of rural Indians living below

the poverty line is estimated at about 400 millions (2010 figures).

During the two decades leading up to the millennium, a new approach to rural development was introduced in many of the larger Indian States and this in turn gained governmental recognition. Titled as 'Community Natural Resource Management' (CNRM), it featured the decentralisation of the local management of natural resources to the rural communities (most involved in their use) by government departments. Thus, under the new approach, farmers were to take responsibility for the management of water; forest dwellers for the protection and management of their forests; and fishermen for the management of the fisheries on India's inland reservoirs.

The emergence of CNRM as a new strategy for managing natural resources by the local communities first appeared in the 1980s and spread widely in 1990s, and was touted as 'a new paradigm' for rural development in India.

Between the years, 1990 and 1995, the Government of India (GoI) took much of the initiative in each of the four CNRM programmes that were researched in this book, by promoting reform, setting up model legislations and providing financial support. At the outset, the CNRM idea was greeted with skepticism- as to how could farmers, without engineering or management training, take on the huge responsibility of water management? Similar doubts were expressed about the administrative abilities of forest dwellers or fishermen and their ability to overcome their dependence based on poverty, illiteracy and isolation.