

The Recognition of “Slums” and challenges for formalising the informal in Pune

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Pune city has become one of the most popular urban agglomerations in India. It has emerged as second largest in Maharashtra and eighth largest in India. This needs to be looked into the context of typical ‘third world’ growth of city characterized by haphazard development of settlements, improper urban planning and growth in informal sector. Pune has experienced migration of the rural folks for survival since colonial times (especially due to drought) and employment opportunities that exists in the city. This is clear as there is significant increase in the growth rate from 2001 to 2011—about 110 percent—of the marginal workers in Pimpri-Chinchwad area. As an implication it has led to the growth of informal settlements i.e. ‘slums’ in Pune. These informal settlements have extremely poor basic amenities and standards of living. Approximately 40 per cent (10.25 million of 25.38 million total population of Pune in 2001) of the Pune’s population stays in ‘slums’. It is estimated that the slum population has risen to 43 per cent in 2011(of the 33.04 million in PMC and 17.28m in PCMC). Therefore, the informal urban settlements have become an inevitable part of urbanization process.

Recognizing the inevitability as well as importance of the people residing in these slum dwellings for the urban economy the ‘state’ has taken up to provide basic amenities and raise their standard of living. This has manifested in formally recognizing the rights of those residing in these dwellings to basic services and amenities in the city, though in limited way. The Maharashtra Slum Improvement and Clearance Act, 1971 makes provision for the local authority to declare such dwellings that are having living conditions below a specified standard as ‘slum dwelling’ so that they are eligible to avail the service provided by local body. In Pune of the 564 slums 353 were ‘declared’ slums while the remaining 211 were ‘un-declared’ slum dwellings. In Pimpri-Chinchwad of the 72 slums 38 were ‘declared’ slums and remaining 34 were ‘un-declared’ slum dwellings. The ‘declared’ slums are eligible for extension of service provision by civic bodies.

From the ‘Survey of Slums’ by the 65th Round of National Sample Survey in Maharashtra (July, 2008-June, 2009) it is apparent that the civic bodies have provided the basic amenities to slums in Maharashtra. Also they have brought into ambit more slums under the ‘declared’ category to provide maximum slum population the much needed basic amenities. Yet the survey clearly indicated the gap in the basic amenities and hygiene in these two categories of slums. One of the critical factors was the lack of toilet facilities –as 45 per cent use public/community toilets and 30 per cent population in ‘non-notified’ slums were not having toilet facilities.

Though the 'state' has taken to provide basic infrastructure and amenities to slums in cities but some critical issues that complicate the process of formalizing the 'slums', especially in Pune.

1. In Pune, the 'declared' slums area is just four percent of total city's land indicating high congestions and other risks involved. The average size of households in slum is around 6-8 members and most of them stay in single room.
2. One of the issues with the 'undeclared slum' is that they are not eligible for service provision and slum improvement schemes.
3. The services in 'declared slums' are affected as the 'undeclared slums' just grow around the 'declared slum' creating pressure on local bodies for providing basic amenities. Further, the boundaries of 'declared slum' are not updated and hence the service provisions in these also gets setback.
4. Though most of them had access to independent water supply but it is critical that there are just six water tap connections for every 1000 slum dwellers. Most of the dwellers have common/public toilet facility. But it is critical that there are just 12 seats of public convenience for every 1000 slum dwellers.
5. The big challenge of slum dwellers is to secure their dwellings (house and land). They may hold a legal tenure of their house but may not be the legal owner of land. Those residing in 'declared slum' cannot be evicted and have right to develop their shelter the way they want by participating in the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA). The dwellers in the 'undeclared slum' do not have this right.
6. Even from the side of government the situation is not encouraging for providing affordable housing as there is lack of finance provision. Buying a house is unaffordable due to heavy stamp duty and other fees.

To conclude, though the civic bodies have resorted to formalize the informal settlements but the types of informalities get complicated and confounding in such urban settings.