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Migration and the Marginalised: Access to Basic Services in Urban Spaces

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Often addressed as "messy and hidden", migration and informal settlements that house rural migrants are the drivers of India's rapid urbanisation (Roy 2005).

INTRODUCTION

The importance of water, sanitation, and hygiene, collectively known as WASH, has been stressed ever since the unprecedented rise of COVID-19. The emphasis was especially seen in urban centres where "inadequate sanitation" across informal settlements is an issue of concern. Often addressed as "messy and hidden", migration and informal settlements that house rural migrants are the drivers of India's rapid urbanisation (Roy 2005). While projections suggest that India will add 41.6 crores to its urban population by 2050, the widening gap between the capacity of existing cities, growing population, and access to services casts doubt upon the long-term sustainability and liveability of these cities (United Nations 2018).

MIGRATION IN INDIA: BALANCING DEVELOPMENT OR INTENSIFYING URBAN EXCLUSION?

In medieval and colonial times, migration was characterised by the movement of pilgrims, merchants, and rulers. The independence era witnessed the partition, the largest mass migration in world history. In present times, the process generally refers to rural-urban migration (Tumbe 2018). According to census data from 2011, 35% of the Indian population consists of migrants, with an average of 50% migrants residing in metropolitan cities [Table 2]. The 2001 and 2011 census recorded an increase of 47.5% in total migrants and 86.8% of urban migrants, respectively (Table 1).

Table 1: Destination-wise decadal change in migration in India (2001-11)

	Total	To rural areas	To urban areas
2001	307100000	59500000	34800000
2011	453000000	80500000	65000000
Growth rate	47.51%	35.29%	86.78%

Source: Author calculated from Census of India 2001 and 2011

Table 2: City-wise decadal change in migration (2001-11)

		Mumbai UA	Delhi UA	Kolkata UA	Chennai UA	Bengaluru UA	Hyderabad UA
2011	Total Population	1839492	16349831	14035959	8653521	8520435	7674689
	Migrants (total)	9956713	6825323	5217088	4388362	4402244	4943869
	Migrants (%)	54%	42%	37%	50%	52%	64%
2001	Total Population	16357547	12874249	13293379	6604217	5763436	5751992
	Migrants (total)	7033745	5278442	3057477	1585012	2074837	1437998
	Migrants (%)	43%	41%	23%	24%	36%	25%

(UA= Urban Agglomeration)
Source: Livemint (2019)

Every year, lakhs of rural migrants arrive in large cities, looking for jobs, education, and a better life for themselves and their families. Although remittances received in cities are presumed to have a positive impact upon rural areas, migrants' low wage rates neither enhance their quality of living in the city nor in their villages. The absence of socio-economic homogeneity among migrants in addition to a constant

"elite capture" [1] further deepens urban exclusion of the migrants and results in reduced access to basic services (Mistri 2015) such as electricity, water, housing, sanitation, drainage, roads, etc. While some of them settle down in hostels and formal rental accommodations, the rest are forced to live in congested slums or on pavements. This article seeks to highlight the experiences of the latter in accessing water, sanitation and other basic services on a daily basis.

EXISTING PRACTICES AND POLICY MEASURES

In India, slums are primarily categorised as notified and non-notified. The notified ones are government-recognised slums with individual water and sanitation access while the non-notified slums comprise non-recognised ones, without individual access. The water tankers sent by municipal bodies often fail to quench the demand of slum dwellers, mostly in non-notified places. The inadequacy pushes migrants towards market-based commodified services which in turn reduces one's water intake due to financial incapacity to buy such services. Moreover, since the duration of a tenant's stay impacts service provisions, migrants are not eligible for individual piped facilities despite staying in notified slums (Sengupta and Benjamin 2016; Sundari 2003; Rains, Krishna, and Wibbels 2018). Homeless migrants suffer the most, often taking refuge in religious shelters, makeshift tents, and railway stations. Such severe circumstances coerce people into open defecation and also become an added challenge for menstrual hygiene, often leading to several infections and health issues (Anjum and Nagabhatla 2020).

Indian urban-slum policies (Figure 1 below) previously focused on providing basic services across all notified slums. This was done through the 1974 Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums scheme, the 1980 Low-Cost Sanitation Policy for the economically weaker sections category, and the 1991 Urban Basic Services Programme for the Poor.

The National Slum Development Programme of 1996 emphasised slum infrastructural development. The programme was followed by the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission of 2005, which highlighted the Basic Services for Urban Poor [BSUP], "universal access of basic services", tenurial security, and affordable housing (Burra, Mitlin, and Menon 2018). With the goals of individual service delivery and temporary rental accommodation, Rajiv Awas Yojana 2009, provided the impetus for community involvement in decision-making. Though numerous state-level policies exist for slum resettlement, they rarely consider migrants (Mohamed 2017). In 2015, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana promoted 'In-Situ Slum Redevelopment' where slums that are fit for redevelopment are upgraded, and denotified (Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban n.d.).

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[1] The skewed availability of civic services in middle-class and affluent communities in a city compared to slums and other lower income areas.

**Figure 1: Urban Slum Policies in India**
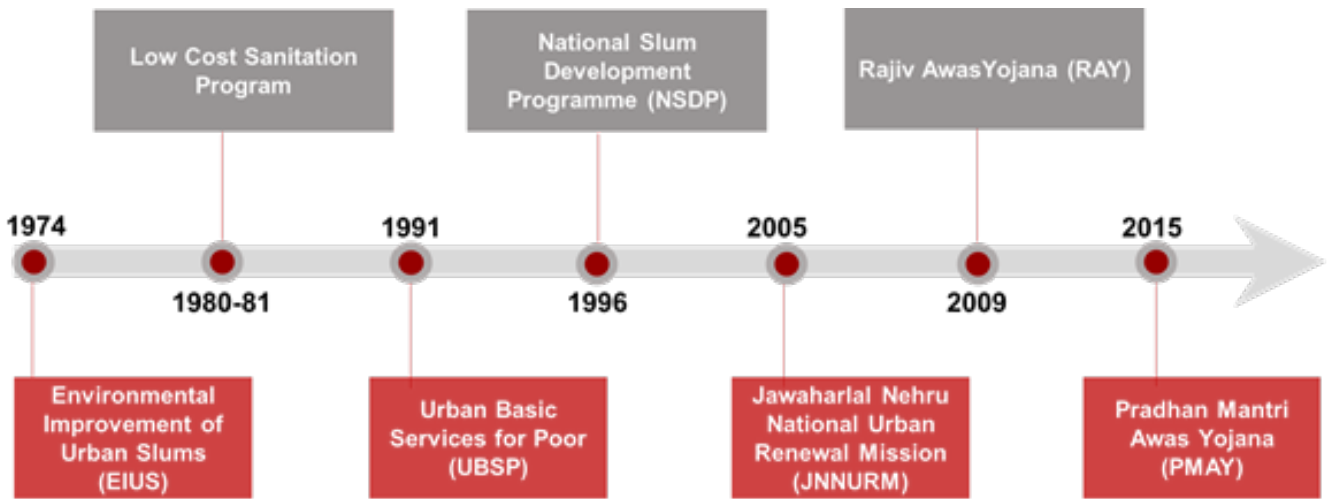
The Shelter and Sanitation Facilities for the Footpath Dwellers in Urban Areas policy of 1992 aimed at providing shelter to homeless persons till they independently find accommodation. However, the updated version, namely Night Shelter for Urban Shelterless of 2002, stressed building community shelters (Commissioners of the Supreme Court 2014: 9) (Figure 2 below). The Supreme Court of India issued a series of orders between 2010 and 2011, recommending the establishment of temporary shelters and promoting the distribution of Antyodaya Anna Yojana ration cards to homeless persons (Commissioners of the Supreme Court 2014: 14). Further, Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Urban Livelihoods Mission introduced shelter for urban homeless, recommending the construction of all-weather 24X7 night shelters" in cities with at least one lakh population (Indo-Global Social Service Society 2018: 6).

Figure 2: Policies for combating Urban Homelessness in India
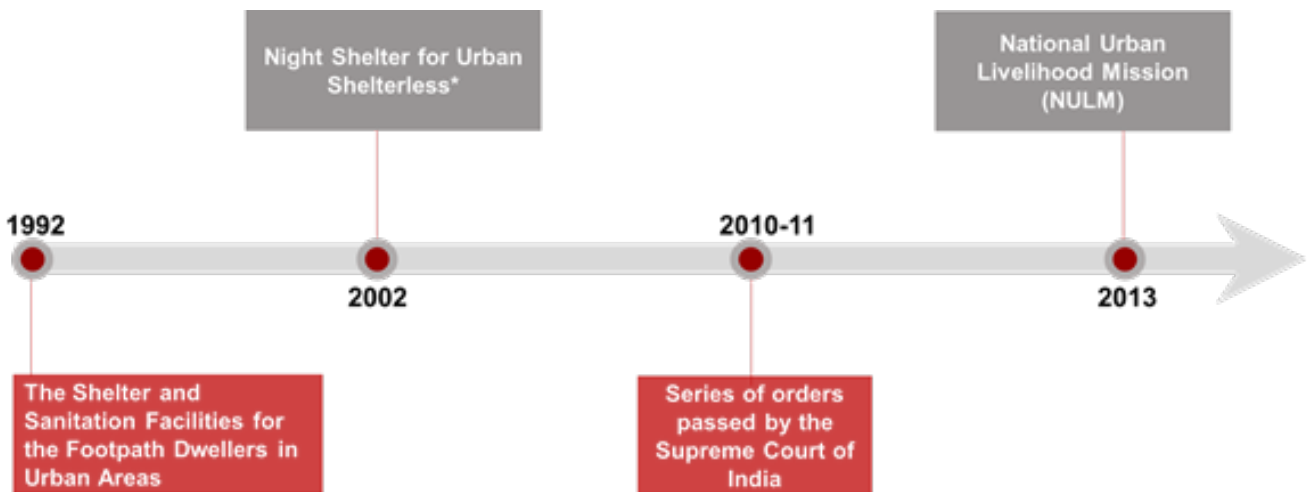
Despite the comprehensive policy frameworks in place, thus far, their implementation is lax. The blurriness surrounding 'cut-off dates'[2] often makes migrants non-eligible for resettlement and compensation, leading to their prolonged homelessness. Weak governance, market dominance, high relocation cost, and poor infrastructure create some major blockages in the implementation of Basic Services for Urban Poor provisions of 2005. Additionally, the Rajiv Awas Yojana's 'one-room rental tenements' remain vacant till date, owing to lack of policy awareness and stringent guidelines (Burra, Mitlin, and Menon 2018; Gupta 2020). Continuous emphasis on notified slums and anti-migrant alliance of In-Situ Slum Redevelopment has steered it towards failure while increasing the profits of private developers. Shortage of night shelters and denied access to the existing ones, either due to lack of awareness or no valid identity proof, have barred homeless persons from availing government measures. Additionally, less COVID testing in such shelters and low levels of maintenance discourage migrants from staying there.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a 'welfare state', India must strive for balanced development and public well-being. Basic services are fundamental to human living, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the infrastructural gaps in accessing these necessities. Therefore, it is important to update existing frameworks to fill these gaps.

1) Policy framework

According to the Indian Constitution, internal migrants have the right to settle anywhere in the country and access the same benefits as the local residents (Vaddiraju 2016). New policies should focus on offering rural migrants urban citizenship and monitoring the progress post-implementation. Individuals could be assigned for bi-yearly inspection and additionally, beneficiaries should be made aware of the regulations to ensure higher policy response.

2) Better governance

Institutional decentralisation will entrust the responsibility of finance and operation management to governmental urban local bodies. NGOs and non-profit organisations have been actively working towards uplifting the urban poor. Their work can be utilised for improving access to services for migrants. Daily responsibilities around the services can be allotted to civic society organizations, to promote better efficiency and success.

3) Slum notification

The primary distinction between notified and non-notified slums is based on the 'cut-off dates' where the notified ones are entitled to tenure security along with basic services, unlike their non-notified counterparts. Given the huge number of slums under the 'non-notified' category, the rigidity of these guidelines should be eased

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[2] The particular month and year decided by the national or respective state governments, to decide the eligibility for post slum resettlement and rehabilitation gains, e.g., new unit, tenure security etc.

by policies and concerned authorities, thereby allowing residents to access basic services.

4) DAY-NULM interventions

In existing night shelters, individual sanitation kiosks should be set up in each room. Besides providing a sufficient number of toilets and drinking water facilities, every shelter should house a medical professional with designated visiting hours per week. This would ensure an assured access to medical welfare and help combat the infections and health problems that result from living in night shelters.

5) Data availability

Data scarcity is a massive roadblock in the formulation of policy frameworks. Thus, grassroots research should be encouraged to create a comprehensive national database with specific data on migrants, homeless persons, and slum dwellers. This will help in accurately counting the migrants and providing adequate welfare services for them.
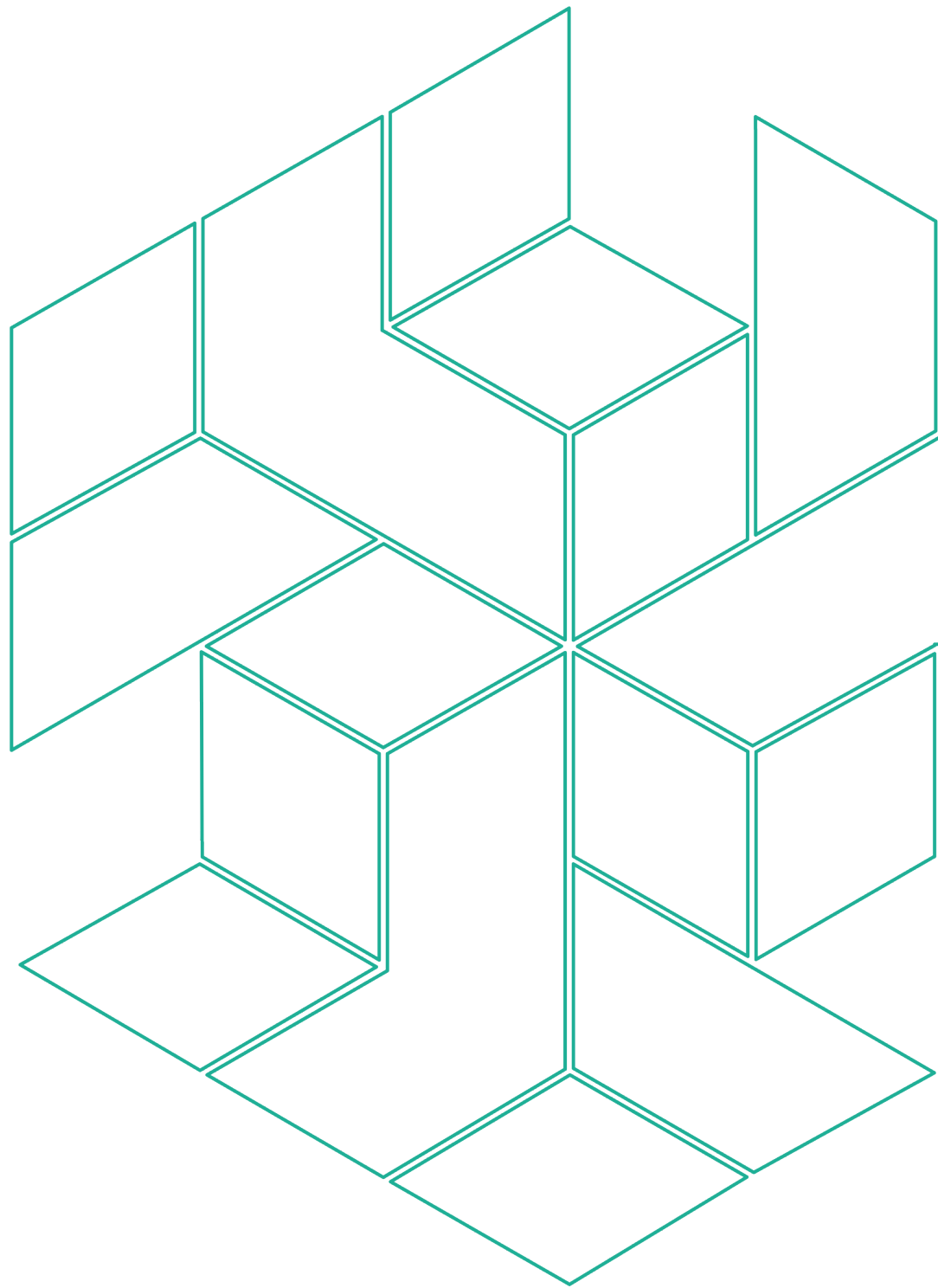
CONCLUSION

The United Nations regards the' Right to Water and Sanitation' as a fundamental human right. Likewise, the Indian Constitution recognises the same as a fundamental right under Article 21: 'Right to Life' (Kothari 2006; Walters 2014). However, the inability of the state to provide services to the poor migrants rejects their right to the city (Bhagat 2011). The latest draft policy for migrant workers prepared by NITI Aayog is built around a rights-based perspective but focuses largely on their working conditions, and not on socio-economic status. Given the rising regional inequality and urban-centric development agenda, rural-urban migration in India is bound to increase even more. Putting adequate measures in place today are bound to improve the livelihoods of many hereafter.

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