

Housing For the Urban Poor: A case for the Homeless in Delhi

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Status of the poor and the homeless in urban India

A vast number of the marginalized and the poor live in the urban centres, particularly in the metropolitan cities, without shelter, facilities and amenities for bare existence, deprived of basic needs and means of livelihood. Out of nearly 285 million people who inhabit in these urban settlements, nearly 100 million (35%) are said to be living in slums and destitution, mostly below the poverty line. Such marginalized people could be found either on the streets, in slums or in other illegal and unauthorized habitations with no semblance of civic amenities. They could be unorganized daily wage earners, construction workers, vendors and hawkers, rickshaw and cart-pullers, porters and loaders, street and working children, or simply the vagrants and homeless. Most of these people, including the homeless, are our active economic agents turning our urban centers into 'engines of growth', while creating goods and services.



When it comes to analyze the factors behind the sub-human existence of the urban poor, some blatant myths are propagated and quickly lapped up by those who seem to believe that the cities belong to them. The popular theory that the rural is always idyllic and urbanization driven by migration is a dirty process goes against the very essence of history, the socio-economic changes and development. While admitting the 'low level of urbanization' in India, 27.7% of the total population as against nearing 50% in the developing and developed world, the Planning Commission has obviously appreciated the need for the planned urban growth. The poor decadal urban to total population (%) growth of India, (1981-23.34, 1991-25.72, 2001-27.78%), i.e. nearly 2% decadal increase, is also an indicator of our slow development process. The other myth about the much-maligned wild growth of slums may be dispelled with the percentage of space vis-à-vis population occupied by them in the cities of India.

Although, there is practically no estimate of the shelterless people even in the capital city of India, there have been several authentic parameters on which the shelterless population can be estimated. Enumeration of homeless population becomes difficult in the absence of any fixed abode (sans domicile fixe), identity or address. For the first time, Census 2001 has brought out a figure of 13 million 'houseless households', each household accounting for 5-

6 members, the total population of such houseless (or shelterless) being at least 6.5 crores in the country. This is a mind boggling figure casting an extremely onerous responsibility on the government, the housing related agencies and the civil society. Millions among them in our country have no food, shelter or the basic facilities that constitute dignified human existence. Odd and shifting habitations, migratory movements, lack of identity and absence of unanimous definition of the homeless are some of the factors that make it difficult to ascertain the exact magnitude of homelessness anywhere, including in Delhi. The issue being directly related to poverty and destitution, the numbers are in crores, as is being estimated. The deprived children, the helpless aged, women, men, disabled and even the migrant population afflicted by famine, drought and natural calamities who suffer hunger and deprivations, inhabit the endless number of villages, towns to bigger cities and the metropolises like Delhi.

In 1991, with the outset of the new economic policy that encompassed liberalization, privatization and globalization, India adopted a more expansive (not necessarily 'inclusive') view of economic development by emphasizing that it must integrate with the global economy. The National Housing Policy which had been formulated in 1988 was given further re-orientation in the face of changing national as well as global scenario. The National Housing Policy 1994, a product of this economic point of view, also sought to increased supply of land serviced by basic minimum services with a view to promoting a healthy environment. The National Housing and Habitat Policy, 1998 laid greater emphasis on the aspect of 'Habitat' as a supplementary focus to housing. The emphasis on providing housing continued in this Policy with quality and cost-effectiveness, especially to vulnerable sections of society. However, the essential character and demands of the new economic order did not go hand in hand with the rightful aspirations of the burgeoning poor in urban India, and the shelterless were left to fend for themselves.

As on 1st March 2001, out of the total population of 1027 million in India, about 742 million lived in rural areas and 285 million in urban areas. The net addition of population in rural areas during 1991-2001 has been to the tune of 113 million while in urban areas it is 6 million. Even the sluggish decadal percentage growth of population in rural and urban areas, 17.9 and 31.2 percent respectively, could not be planned out. Consequently, as reported in Census 2001, 61.82 million persons or 23.1 percent of the urban population was found in the Slums, a figure which is only increasing swiftly. The National Sample Survey Organization (NSSO) 61st Round reports that the number of urban poor is raised to 4.4 million persons during 1993-94 to 2004-05. And, as far as the magnitude of the housing shortage is concerned, at the end of the Tenth Five Year Plan, it was estimated by a technical group in the context of formulation of Eleventh Five Year Plan to be around 24.7 million households. The group further estimated that over 90% of this shortage pertains to EWS and LIG sectors. Although, no separate estimation has ever been done, the most deprived among them, the homeless, happen to be in vast multitudes.

National Policy and the Housing for Poor Homeless

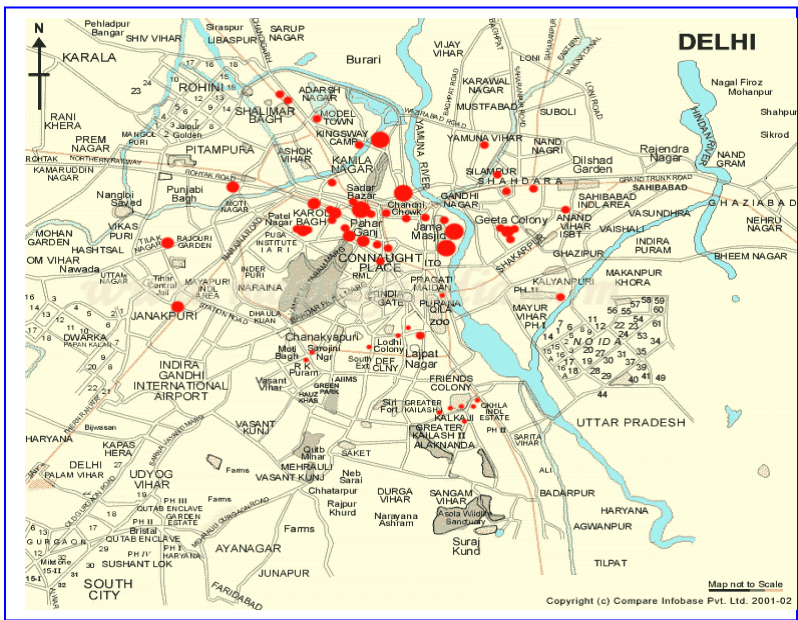
National Agenda of Governance (NAG) has identified 'Housing for All', both in urban and rural sectors, as a priority area with particular emphasis on the needs of the vulnerable groups. Although, shelters or housing for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWSs), Low Income Groups (LIGs), slum dwellers and shelterless may be a common concern in the rural as well as urban sectors alike, the problems of the homeless are more acutely

pronounced in the urban sector, particularly in the wake of large scale migration and the phenomenon of rural-urban transition. There is, however, some perceptible shift in the policy, the substitution of mass forced evictions and confrontations by negotiations and participation, in situ slums development, provision of better infrastructure and habitable living conditions etc.

More than one-fourth of India's population (28%) inhabiting nearly 5161 urban centers, (2001) already being in the cities, by 2021, 40% of the population is projected to be in the urban centers. The outcry for Good Urban Governance with policy emphasis on productivity,

environment, community health, education, quality of life, equity and poverty alleviation is extremely well placed since nearly 2/3rd of the national income is generated in the cities. The contribution of the 93% (unorganized) work force being employed to create proportionate goods and services for India's fast growing economy has to be looked upon in its holistic perspective. For those who are primarily responsible to run these 'engines of growth' there is very little space and infrastructural facilities created in terms of shelters, working and living conditions befitting their dignified existence.

The Union Government is responsible for the formulation of a policy with regard to programs and approaches for effective implementation of social housing schemes, particularly those pertaining to the weaker sections of the society. The Housing and Habitat Policy 1998 was drafted to address the issues relating to sustainable development, infrastructure and strong public-private partnership for shelters, in pursuance of the said NAG. It was proposed to facilitate construction of 20 lakh additional units every year, with emphasis on EWSs and LIGs of the population, as also to cater to the needs of SC/ST and other vulnerable groups. Working Group on Housing has clearly mentioned that over 90% of housing shortage is for EWS and LIG, HUDCO's 55% of the allocation being for these segments. For unexplained reasons, however, the shelter needs of the most vulnerable and deprived among them,



the shelterless becoming destitutes, hasn't been assigned the priority it deserves in the national policies and programs.

'Homeless' outside the ambit of Housing for All

Apart from above-mentioned provisions of the NAG and the Habitat Policy 1998, there are several much talked-about pro-poor policies and programs. They include, National Slum Development Program, Indira Awas Yozana, 10th Plan Approach for urban poor and marginalized, SJSRY, VAMBAY & Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan and, last but not least, the half-hearted HUDCO's 'Scheme of Shelter and Sanitation of Footpath Dwellers'. It may be seen that except for the Scheme for The Shelter and Sanitation for Footpath Dwellers, having very limited coverage, there is hardly anything for the shelterless under the government's program for these poorest among the poor. One finds in the same context that that the international commitments, such as, Habitat Agenda, 1996 and Istanbul Declaration have not been put into action, though ratified.

The 11th five year plan and the National Urban Housing/Habitat Policy 2007 have set-up a national goal for 'affordable housing for all'. At the end of 10th Five Year Plan the housing shortage was estimated to be 24.7 million for 67.4 million households, 99% of them being from EWS/LIG sectors. Strictly speaking, they do not refer to the homeless population as such, but the 'houseless households' obliquity refers to the same. Among the poor and the weaker sections, the urban homeless deserve to be given special attention, which is not happening.

In this regard a new National Urban Housing and Habitat policy 2007 by Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India is formulated to carefully analyze ways and means of providing the 'Affordable Housing to All'. Moreover, the core focus of the new policy lays emphasis on vulnerable sections of society, such as, Schedule Castes/Schedule Tribes, Backward Classes, Minorities and the Urban Poor. However, it does not talk about the homeless poor, in particular. Although, the Homeless groups overlap with the Urban Poor but still this section of our society requires special attention, which is sadly missing.

While we discuss the housing problems of the EWS/LIG and the urban poor residing in the slums, who were estimated to be 61.82 million in Censes 2001, we tend to over-look the homeless population in the cities. Somehow, this most deprived segment of population was not considered for focused discussion in the successive national housing/habitat policies, 1994 to 2007. They were not to be covered under Two Million Housing Programme (TMHP), nor under Balmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojana (VAMBAY). The latest 2007 National Urban & Habitat policy, at best, discusses the 'urban poor' in the special action plan for them which also refer to National Shelter Fund for

EWS/LIG housing, but the homeless are not covered. Most unfortunately, the most deprived among them – the women, children, elders and disabled, do not find any coverage. Infact, with the discontinuation of the neglected and often unused scheme for the urban shelterless, since 1st April 2005 there is nothing left to fall back upon.

Night Shelters for the Urban Shelterless

At the national level, the above-mentioned solitary 'Night Shelter Scheme for Footpath Dwellers' as a centrally sponsored scheme in the metropolitan and other major urban centers was being implemented through HUDCO, was extended to cover all urban areas, wherever the problem of footpath dwellers exists. This scheme sought to provide night shelter facility to footpath dwellers at a per capita cost of Rs. 20,000/- with 50% subsidy from the central government and 50% as contribution from implementing agencies or through HUDCO loan. Through a process of consultation, including a presentation by the author, the revised scheme 'Shelter and Sanitation of Urban Shelterless', proposed some pro-active features including- increased subsidy upto 80%, provision of land/ infrastructure by Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), NGOs/ CBOs to implement the scheme and manage the shelters with social services like health, education and protection of neglected children while providing the minimum standards for users space and facilities.

Although the Scheme of Night Shelter for Urban Shelterless was in operation since 1988-89, it was modified in August 1992 to cover all urban Centers having concentration of footpath dwellers/homeless and was renamed as Scheme for Shelter and Sanitation facilities for Footpath Dwellers. A component for Pay & Use toilet was added to the earlier scheme. Only existing scheme in India operated through the Dept. (now Ministry) of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation, GOI, Scheme for shelter and sanitation for footpath dwellers, had so far undertaken only 114 projects throughout the country with coverage of nearly 17000 beds for the homeless, on an expenditure of Rs. 8.6 crores. The Govt. of Delhi chose not to avail this scheme for itself, and generally remained limited to its local funds to construct and run the Raen Baseras. This scheme, in any case, was deficient in many ways and not inclusive of the NGOs participation. In October 2002, the scheme was renamed as Night shelter for Urban Shelter less and the component of Pay & Use toilet had been withdrawn. The Scheme being demand driven scheme and progress of the Scheme depended upon the proposals mooted by the State. Cumulatively, as on 13th October 2004, HUDCO had sanctioned 99 night Shelters/Pay and Use Toilets Schemes. On completion, these projects would provide 17,599 beds, 17,165 WC's, 2,637 baths and 2,372 Urinals. A subsidy of Rs. 1580.21 lakh had been released by HUDCO for these schemes apart from loan releases of Rs. 1159.05 lakh. The scheme has been discontinued since 1st April 2005.

The existing scheme beneficiaries (Footpath Dwellers) in the last counting included several states like Rajasthan (12) and Madhya Pradesh (66), a few

completed and work under progress in others. In Chandigarh, two such schemes have been completed with a total cost of Rs. 56.04 lakhs and space for 474 beds. In Bihar, one scheme has been completed for 560 beds involving a cost of Rs. 46.26 lakhs. Kerela completed three such complexes for 358 beds with a cost of Rs. 50.68 lakhs. Surprisingly, this scheme has neither been implemented nor proposed for Delhi, which has perhaps one of the largest number of footpath dwellers among the urban centers in the country.

The poor in Delhi and the nature of homelessness

The poor and marginalized people in city's 14 million population, including the slum dwellers who live under most difficult circumstances and the other most deprived among the city dwellers, put together, could be easily about 4 million. Slum and unauthorized reported colonies alone form 52% of Delhi's population. The most deprived among them are the homeless, i.e., those without any dwellings whatsoever, destitute, old and neglected children, handicapped, leprosy and TB patients, street sex workers, rag pickers, rickshaw pullers, construction workers, vendors or porters- of all ages, communities, religious and regional denominations, mostly found on the roads. Whereas, a good number of them are residents of Delhi, majority are

drawn to our city, which acts as a mega-magnet due to the opportunities it offers, or they are here since pushed out of their homes from the impoverished regions in UP, Bihar, Rajasthan or MP. In June 2000, with the help of Prayas and other NGOs Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan (ActionAid India Society) counted 52,765 homeless people in certain areas of Delhi. Another NGO, Lokayan's study on the rickshaw pullers indicated that 22 % of the 4 lakh rickshaw pullers in Delhi were homeless. Even DDA considers that at least 1% of the population could be homeless, i.e 1.4



lakh at present. By any estimate, over 1 lakh people are homeless in Delhi alone, which does not include almost equal number of street and working children, rickshaw-cart pullers, homeless daily wagers, vendors etc.

The town planners perceive them as 'encroachers' and a blot on the fair face of the city. There is hardly any provision for actual space, be it for housing or for livelihood, for the homeless and such marginalized in the planned development. While not admitting these basic facts, the deficiency in the legal system and the planning, the town planners and the city administration mostly target the poor for evictions and socio-economic incompatible relocations.

The common people believe they have no stake in this situation and their response is indifference to occasional sympathy and charity. Privileged few call them 'outsiders' or the uninvited immigrants and most commonly they would like to find the solution in systematically stemming the tide or in pushing them back, both impossible to achieve. The moot point is, 'who is not a migrant, in the cities, including in the capital city of Delhi'? Cities are created and sustained by the migrants while becoming the so-called 'engines of growth'. The official records point out that land distribution is mostly in favour of the affluent and powerful. Out of 70,000 hectares of urbanizable land available under the Master Plan of Delhi, only 4,000 hectares (5.71 %) is being occupied by the 40,00,000 slum dwellers i.e. 28.5% of Delhi's total population.

Administration, which is supposed to take at least a welfare oriented or charitable view towards them, if not inclusive, goes by the insensitive, at best, legal requirements of the detention, removal even trial and custody. Even the Department of Social Welfare does not run dedicated program for such over 1 lakh homeless, except criminalizing and institutionalizing more helpless among them, as beggars, under the Bombay Prevention of Beggary Act, 1959.



Several provisions under the laws treat the homeless in a manner as if their poverty and destitution itself is a crime. Poor, in any case, become easy target for any legal action. Limited analyses of the actions under the Preventive sections of laws like Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, anti-beggary, mental illness and police Acts indicate that such poor and homeless are generally held by the police even convicted, and they also suffer unjust detentions and incarcerations since nobody stands surety for them. Most of the arrests, convictions and institutionalizations are related to the poor. Police beating and chasing, even extortion and harassment coupled by the actions taken by the municipal and land-owning authorities are often reported by the homeless people.

Police consider them thieves, drug-addicts, unwanted and easy targets for filling up the records. Realizing that the homeless are in such large numbers that majority of them can not be locked up; the police keep chasing them from one area to another. On the occasions of national festivals, major arrangements and VIP visits, the given areas are 'sanitized and cleared' by completely removing them. VIPs mostly do not get a chance to see what is actually happening with the homeless and the marginalized.

Municipal Bodies are the only agencies duty bound to create shelters and facilities for the homeless but they lack both political will and administrative resources. Not only the night shelters are less in number and poor in upkeep, but municipal officials are also reluctant to take such responsibility. No serious efforts have ever been made in Delhi by the MCD or any other urban local bodies to provide more space or shelters for the shelterless, though multiple policy pronouncements; even decisions and formal schemes cast such responsibility on them.



The positive aspects of cities as engines of economic growth in the context of national economic policies were not much appreciated and, therefore, the problems of urban areas were treated more as welfare problems and sectors of residual investment rather than as issues of national economic importance. In the cities, those who can't afford despite all efforts made, primarily manual workers in the unorganized sectors, get deprived- shelter being a major problem for them. Delhi with its huge investments and highest per capita income completely overlooks such people who contribute significantly towards its creation.

Delhi for Change: An action-based study project on Delhi's Homeless

Associated with the national governance and the city policing for over 33 years, such issues were not of direct concern to me except in the context of the policing related to slums and unauthorized habitations, their removals and the routine, albeit callous, legal and administrative treatment given to them and to the shelterless, who are targeted for action as 'public nuisance'. However, during the past 20 years, my association with Prayas JAC Society, an organisation for homeless, neglected and delinquent children, marginalized youth and women, provided me insights into the problems of the poor people in urban areas, particularly the homeless; their socio-economic and legal protection, habitation and life, education, training and rehabilitation. It also led me to understand the problems of destitution, most acutely felt, experienced and suffered by the children and their families for whom Prayas has created multiple programs.

A workshop had been organized on 19 Nov.1999 in the Planning Commission under the Chairmanship of the Secretary to deliberate on the issues relating to shelterless poor, street children, migrant labourers, pavement dwellers etc. in Delhi and to formulate an action plan. I happened to participate as a police officer and as Secretary, Prayas to discuss the problems relating to the homeless in the city of Delhi. Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan (AAA), a project

for the homeless, supported by Action Aid India emerging from this above-mentioned Planning Commission meeting, was joined by several organisations, including Prayas, to further look into the problems of the homeless.

Clinching the penultimate opportunity to directly experience the state of governance, with the most vulnerable among the urban poor, I availed my study leave from Delhi Police to take up this action-based study project on the issues of urban homelessness, 'Delhi for Change', supported by Action Aid India. The project visualized a more just, humane and caring city in which the poor and homeless, marginalized women, men and children could live a life of dignity, taking support from the government and the larger civil society on a sustainable basis. We worked towards evolving a policy for the homeless and an action plan to create shelters and space for them; actual programmes for their rehabilitation and also initiate the process of implementation.

Delhi Experiment: Joint Apex Committee for Improvement of Shelters and Facilities for Shelterless.

Our team of civil society organisations joined by the Government and the Slum & Resettlement Wing of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi, took the cue from a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan (AAA) in the High Court of Delhi to improve the conditions of the night shelters and to enhance the capacity and facilities. Though the matter was being discussed in the court, we decided to bring the parties together to cooperate on the issue, with due assent from the Court. A Joint Apex Committee was thus constituted in the Slum & Resettlement Wing of MCD. This committee with AAA as a key member, later joined by some leading NGOs like Sulabh International, Prayas, Child Watch India, Butterflies etc besides drawing individuals from all sections of the society-Ministers, bureaucrats, social &

religious leaders, councilors, representatives from NGOs/ Associations, municipal bodies, corporates, businessmen, academicians, journalists, residents and traders associations, students and volunteers, who kept assisting us and attending the proceedings. For once, in the field, JAC became a model of Govt.-NGOs partnership, meeting every Thursday at New Delhi's India Habitat Center to discuss, decide and then ensure the implementation of the action plan drawn up to help the homeless.



As mentioned earlier, about 1,00,000 homeless people had been vaguely identified through surveys, whereas in 2002 only 1750 were found being accommodated in the existing 12 Raen

Baseras (Night Shelters) run by the MCD. So the obvious course of action was to create more space for the homeless people. Creating more shelters was a long drawn process with multiple requirements of land, buildings/ infrastructure, staffing, provisions like blankets, durries and program related running cost etc., also involving some political and administrative will which appeared to be absent. Another option was to create temporary shelters or makeshift arrangements, at least during the winter, particularly considering the cold and the consequent casualty. The Delhi Police had already provided the horrifying data to me about 3070 unclaimed and Unidentified Dead Bodies (UIDBs) found in 2002 and the figure up to November 2003 already having reached to 2977. It is anybody's guess who these unidentified dead bodies could be? Creating shelters, both regular and temporary, became the most urgent measure to save such lives.

Winter and the homeless: crisis intervention strategy

Winter being the most difficult on the streets, homeless turned towards any kind of space and shelters. The Delhi administration used to set up temporary shelters for such shelterless people. However, it was discontinued for some unexplained reasons. In winter 2002-03, JAC played a major role in setting up temporary shelters. About 24 such shelters were created, accommodating about 4000 people. The Slum & JJ, MCD was requested to open some of its Community Centers (lying vacant or underutilized in the proximity of the homeless concentration areas) for shelter purposes. Altogether, 24 temporary shelters were created, including some in schools and college, Gurudwara, temples, etc. With the optimum space for about 350 people, 5 Community Centers, which were lying in disuse and had become centers of illegal activities, are now sheltering more than their stated capacity. The homeless people not only found the sleeping space, toilet, bath, water, electricity as the basic minimum facilities for a shelter, but they also benefited through multiple activities and rehabilitative services being conducted by the respective NGOs at these places. The next year, we come up with a plan to set up about 35 temporary shelters in unutilized MCD buildings and in tents being pitched up by the Dy. Commissioners as relief measures, with the help of NGOs and, most importantly, 100 youth volunteers. Health services by the Directorate of Health Services, GNCTD was also to be provided again in all the shelters. Over the past few years, the JAC becoming inactive several services have gone in dis-use, but the practice of setting up shelters for couple of thousand homeless by the Govt and the Municipal bodies became institutionalized.

Formulating Policy in Delhi's and at National Level

During the harsh winter of 2002-3, the adverse publicity led the politicians and the government officials, including the Chief Minister herself, to take interest in the issues relating to the homeless and several meetings were held for creating a system and a policy to deal with the problem. A high level meeting in Delhi Govt Secretariat attended by the Divisional Commissioner,

GNCTD, Commissioner, MCD, Addl. Commissioner, Slum & JJ Dept, MCD and others, chaired by the Chief Secretary Ms. Shailja Chandra, reviewed the homeless situation in Delhi and related problems. This appeared heading towards a comprehensive policy on the shelterless in Delhi associating different departments of the government, the municipal bodies in which a special role was being found for the Joint Apex Committee, but it never materialized despite the interest taken by the Chief Minister Mrs. Sheila Dikshit.

When Delhi Master Plan 2021, was being formulated, an attempt was made by us to provide more space for the marginalized and homeless in Delhi. Although, the shelter had been very beautifully defined in the Master Plan of Delhi 1991, giving due importance to socio-economic compatibility, livelihood, education, health and other priority areas in the context of the EWS/ LIGs, but in terms of actual space and facilities, particularly for the homeless, it remained completely untranslated on the ground. The previous Delhi Master Plan had defined 'Shelter' as an essential need of a family, including components like water, electricity, waste disposal, education, health, recreational and other facilities'. It further mentioned about 'tenure and socio-economic compatibility to development'. This wishful document correlated 'housing and shelter needs' with livelihood options of the poor and appreciates the need for employment opportunities for the economic functioning of the city. It also mentions about vendors and hawkers, reported to be 200,000 in Delhi (250,000 in Mumbai, 150,000 in Kolkata and 100,000 in Ahmedabad) in the Government's 'National Policy for Street Vendors' as providing employment and necessary affordable services to the urban population, their fundamental rights under article 19(1) (G) and 39 (A) and (B) now recognized by the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

The presentations made before the Vice Chairman and the senior DDA officials created an impact, but in the policy guidelines announced at the political levels, the land/ infrastructure for the homeless did not find any space. The Delhi master plan 2021 has a provision of night shelters to cater to the shelterless, which are proposed to be provided near the railway terminals, bus terminals, wholesale/retail markets, freight complexes etc. as per requirement and keeping in view major work centers. The Master Plan 2021 further suggests that at least 25 sites (possibly, corresponding to our homeless-Concentration areas) should be earmarked in Delhi for night shelters. Self-sustaining night shelters, one for a population of one lakh each, have been proposed to be set-up by the local agencies with the Govt. of NCT Delhi, which are yet to be planned out.

In the context of marginalized and vulnerable urban poor, a vast number of people live in Delhi without shelter, basic facilities and amenities for existence and adequate means of livelihood. According to the Delhi Development Authority and Municipal Corporation of Delhi, over 40,00,000 people live in 80,000 Jhuggi-jhopadi units, 15 lakh are living in resettlement colonies. Adding the population of unauthorized colonies as estimated about

35 lakh, we are left with only 29% people in city's 14 million populations who are supposedly legally authorized to live in this city. Of late, the city- govt. and the political parties of all hues in their attempt to garner the vote-bank of the poor have decided to regularize the unauthorized colonies. Some attitudinal change appears to be taking place, but the homeless are yet to draw anybody's attention perhaps for the simple reason that they don't form a constituency.

In any scheme of housing for these poorest among the poor, there is an urgent need to integrate space in city's short and long term planning processes along with the allied services like health and sanitation, training and education, counseling and rehabilitation. The model of 'Govt.-NGOs-Corporate partnership', in which government allocates space/ sites/ infrastructure along with its maintenance, NGOs to provide the management and rehabilitation services, and corporates with requisite financial support, could be the basis of such a policy in the broader framework of private-public- partnership (P.P.P).

Whether in the context of Delhi or on the larger national canvas, the land, tenure or the right to space utilization is crucial. We cannot live with a planning process that overlooks the rightful claims of the majority. Whereas, practically all local, national and international policies recognize such rights, on the ground they rarely translate into action. Besides the cities' Master Plans, National Housing and Habitat Policy, National Agenda for Governance providing 'Housing or affordable for All', National Slum Development Program, HUDCO's Scheme for Shelter and Sanitation, 10th Plan approach paper, 11th plan documents and the myriad schemes that provide for the Economically Weaker Sections (EWSs) and Low Income Groups (LIGs), proposing 90% allocation within the overall housing shortage, one needs to find out the present status of each segments including the 'homeless'.

Very little has been done to satisfy the basic housing rights and shelter needs of the completely shelterless or homeless urban population. For the estimated over 4 to 5 lakh homeless in the city of Delhi, besides statutory and non-statutory homes for children, women, elders, mentally and physically challenged being run by the Directorate of Social Welfare and some voluntary organizations, the only dedicated facilities created were the above mentioned 19 Night Shelters (Raen Baseras) by the Slum & Resettlement Wing of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi. Now, reduced to just 12 – and two of them being managed by the NGOs, they serve less than 2000 homeless. Indeed, there is an urgent need to find a solution to this life threatening situation for such people, whether within Delhi's Mater plan, policies and schemes, or within the national level 'Affordable housing for All'-which purposes to cover the EWS and LIGS- among whom the homeless should be taken as the first claimants.