

Strategies For Community Participation In Upgrading Slums: A Case Of Thiruvananthapuram City

Slums have been an inevitable outcome of rapid urbanisation and the deficiency on urban policy and planning in bringing new interventions for slum upgradation. There have been lot of government efforts for implementing a wide range of schemes and programmes for slum upgradation over the years, but most of the slums have not received the right kind of development. However, the main drawback with these programmes is in recognising the real needs of the poor and involving them in the planning process. Failure to mobilise community participation have resulted in local protest and unwillingness of beneficiaries hence leading to cancellation of 13 slum-development projects worth Rs 75 Cr under the BSUP in Thiruvananthapuram City alone. This research work attempts to make a strong argument on the importance of participatory planning in upgrading slums and to propose strategies for community participation in upgrading slums in Thiruvananthapuram city area.

Initially a critical appraisal of the proposed / already implemented slum upgradation programmes within the city area was done. Karimadom Colony was upgraded under BSUP scheme in 2010 proves to be a successful example of slum upgradation through participatory planning and hence chosen for case study. While Thycaud Poundkulam colony on the other hand, the project was remaining unimplemented due to local protest / lack of community participation and has been selected as the primary study area.

A detailed site study was conducted to understand Overall Slum condition, effectiveness of Community groups / community feeling, level of community participation in the previous project, reasons for local protest, issue identification and the referred development approach /priorities. Various methods like Household Survey, Interview with key informants, Focus group discussions are used. Apart from statistical analysis of the primary survey data, Arnstien's Ladder of Participation 1969, Forms of People's Interaction by N S Saini 1987 is used as framework for analysis. Based on this general tools for beneficiary participation over various stages of slum upgradation are recommended which can be adopted for formulating an appropriate framework for participation in upcoming slum upgradation programmes. Also strategies specific to the site conditions to ensure community participation in future slum upgradation project has been given.

From the studies it is observed that low level of community participation during project formulation or the initiation stage is the main reason for the project failure. So the possible and the chosen development approach is partial verticalization on site but people still have misconceptions regarding the proposed approach leading to protest. Even the influential people in the community have conflicting opinions, which lead to manipulation of opinions. Thus the slum is of one such settlement which has community organisations with strong community participation but has failed completely to bring physical / environmental improvements to the settlement.

Within the limitations of an academic study, few strategies that have been formulated like giving awareness on the real issues of the site, understanding their spatial need at Dwelling unit and community level, discussions on preferred development approach, knowledge on land readjustment and compensations are carried out in the study area through focus group discussions. Based on the outcome of this discussion and study inferences, a basic slum upgradation plan for the study area has been prepared. Thus participatory planning for Slum upgradation is a city-wide inclusive approach with economically and socially feasible models which can be used for integrating slum dwellers into the broader urban fabric

Keywords: *Slum Upgradation, Participatory Planning, Community Participation, Neighbourhood Groups, Slum Improvements*