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Container Homes: Prospects & Challenges in Indian Housing Scenario

According to census, over 65 million (The Hindu, 2016) of the Indian urban population live in poor quality housing in unsanitary environments of slums. This problem of inadequate housing is being catalyzed by rapid rates of urbanization and population growth. The low and middle income groups suffer the worst as property developers prefer building for the high end markets. Government too is unable to invest in mass housing for the LIG and EWS. Due to this, the percentage of development of slums is at a high. This has led to a point where more creative and innovative approaches are needed in addressing India's housing problem by introducing cost effective and environmentally friendly housing solutions. Shipping containers are universally available and it can be a low cost building resource as a lot of other researches have already demonstrated. This technology is by no means new in India. It is used as make-shift shops, emergency shelters, site offices, storage facilities but its usage as a major building component is relatively foreign to professionals in the building industry. Therefore, this paper explores the possibility of using shipping containers as a structural alternative for mass housing projects especially for the Low Income Group (LIG) and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in Indian context. It also looks into different aspects of sustainability such as the economics involved behind the whole process; its impact on environment as well as the social connotations associated with it and compares the prospects and challenges from a vantage point to check, if container-homes can actually solve the housing crisis that prevails in India at present.

Keywords: Containers, ISOtainers, Cargotecture, Shipping containers, Container modules, Container-homes, Container-housing, Intermodal freight containers, Construction materials, Upcycling, Mass-housing, Affordability, Sustainability.