



Indo-Global  
Social Service Society

A photograph of two men walking past a building under construction. The man in the foreground is wearing a purple knitted vest over a light-colored shirt and a dark turban, carrying a large teal bowl on his head. The man in the background is wearing a light-colored shirt and a blue turban, also carrying a teal bowl on his head. The background shows a complex network of metal scaffolding.

# URBAN POVERTY

## IGSSS Journey

# Introduction

Poverty can be defined as the absence of basic needs such food, clothes, housing, sanitation etc. This, however, is a very simplistic understanding of an extremely complex and multidimensional phenomenon. It is also true that while economically India is growing, so are the numbers of the poor. According to the 2012 data of the Government, almost 22% of the total population of India are living under the poverty line. According to the World Bank figures, India is home to 179.6 million people living below the poverty line. According to this data, India houses nearly 20% of the world's poor.

Earlier the concentration was largely on the rural poor, though over the past few years the number of urban poor is increasing quite rapidly. Migration from rural to urban areas is also increasing. People migrate to cities in search of work opportunities, education and better facilities. According to the draft data of the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) 2015, around 35% urban families are poor. This is almost 20 million families out of 63 million living in 640 districts of India.

Urban poverty is extremely dynamic and complex and is rooted in the increasing urbanization and rural-urban migration. While cities are often considered as places of opportunity, they also create and feed conditions in which poverty spreads. Many migrants are unable to access benefits available in cities. Issues relate to access to housing, humane working conditions, access to basic amenities such as safe drinking water, affordable quality education and health care. City administrations are unable or unwilling to address these issues.

## Genesis

As has been mentioned above, poverty alleviation efforts in India have been mostly rural centric. The Government of India has numerous poverty reduction programmes which primarily benefit the rural poor. The efforts of Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) have been no different. Rural poor dominated the development landscape of IGSSS till 2007. It was only in 2007 that there was introspection within IGSSS that there are poor who also live in the cities and their numbers are increasing. From there rose discussions that IGSSS should also work for the urban poor. However, in 2007, urban poor for IGSSS referred to the homeless people or people living on the streets as they were the most visible urban poor populace.

Mr Rajesh Upadhyaya, the then Regional Manager of Northern Region, IGSSS, was the force behind bringing the issue of urban poor into IGSSS. He made a presentation on the same in one of the internal meetings of IGSSS. This was, in fact, the first orientation for the organization on the issues of urban poor. It was from this point that the journey of urban poverty started in IGSSS.

## Study on Homeless in Delhi

The urban poverty journey started with a survey of the urban homeless in Delhi in 2008 when IGSSS decided to do a headcount of the homeless people in Delhi. There was a reason behind initiating this survey. The Census of India 2001 had counted 24,966 as homeless in Delhi. But a study by Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan (AAA) had found 52,765 as homeless in the city. Another study by Institute of Human Development Institutes (IHD) found 46,788 homeless persons. It was evident that there were discrepancies and disparity in the data that was available.

IGSSS, therefore, decided to not only do a headcount of the homeless, but also tried to understand the problems they faced. The IGSSS study carried out in Delhi found out 88,410 homeless people. The study also provided an insight into the conditions of the homeless. Through the study, IGSSS learned about the issues of eviction and harassment faced by these people from the police department. The insight was also that the homeless people do not prefer to stay in the night shelters put up by the government as the living conditions in these shelters was not adequate. They would rather prefer to sleep on the pavement though by doing this, it was also true that their vulnerabilities would increase.

IGSSS also learnt that the homeless people were not aware about their rights and entitlements. Identity was a major issue as most of them did not have any address proof and were, hence unable to access any benefits. Issues of health and education of their children were major as the study showed that their children would rather spend their time begging and/or rag picking instead of attending schools. The study also indicated that the homeless often do multiple jobs and their work is seasonal. Their work is not regular and many of them go back to their place of origin though they more often than not, again return to Delhi.

This study provided many new insights to IGSSS on issues faced by the homeless poor living in Delhi. This was the start of IGSSS' work with the homeless population.

In 2008 IGSSS also changed its approach to programme implementation and adopted the Rights Based perspective. A national livelihood programme, People Empowerment for Access to Right to Livelihood (PEARL) was developed. As part of the PEARL program IGSSS decided to work with sections of the urban poor in Lucknow and Kanpur. Occupational groups such rickshaw pullers and construction workers were identified to and NGOs were selected from the 2 identified cities to work with the target group and ensure their access to their rights and entitlements. Facilitation and formation of collectives was part of the program strategy. The programme began in April 2009 – this was the first time that IGSSS had initiated structured work on urban poverty.

**National Caravan of CityMakers:** The National Caravan of CityMakers (NCCM) was another significant event in the urban poverty programme of IGSSS. The study on the homeless population carried out in 2008 highlighted the deplorable condition of the homeless poor in Delhi and it was the genesis of NCCM. IGSSS wanted to understand the condition of urban poor in other cities of India through the Caravan.

NCCM was also a campaign advocating the rights and entitlements of the urban poor. The five-month long campaign was initiated in partnership with Caritas India and Oxfam. The campaign, which was kick-started from Rajghat in Delhi, on August 17, 2010, covered 155<sup>1</sup> cities in 22 states of India. During the Campaign, 41 memorandums were submitted to different government authorities on the issues of the urban poor. NCCM enabled IGSSS to reach out to a large number of civil society organizations and individuals working on issues of urban development.

**CityMakers Programme (July 2011-July 2012):** NCCM heralded a structured approach to the issues of urban poor and IGSSS moved into a guided intervention after this event.

In 2011-12 IGSSS developed a project dealing with issues of the urban poor with the support of MISEREOR. Under the CityMakers programme, IGSSS decided to implement the project itself directly in Delhi and Benagaluru while relying on Partners in Delhi, Lucknow, Kanpur, Agra, Muzzafarpur and Sasaram. At the same time, IGSSS continued to manage the homeless shelters with a focus on assisting homeless citizens in accessing social security benefits. The Partners' projects also included other categories of urban poor such as construction workers, slums dwellers', rickshaw pullers etc. And it aimed at assisting these target groups to access various social security benefits.

This programme saw IGSSS developing a close relationship with other Networks working on the urban issues such as the Shahari Adhikar Manch – Begharon Ke Saath (SAM-BKS). The programme once again laid stress on the formation/strengthening of collectives of urban poor in the target cities.

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<sup>1</sup> Annexure 1 for list of states and cities

## List of City and Partners under CityMakers Programme

SI No	City	Organization
1	New Delhi	Indo-Global Social Service Society
2	New Delhi	St. Joseph's Service Society (SJSS)
3	Bangalore	Indo-Global Social Service Society
4	Lucknow	Asian Institute of Management (AIM), Diocesan Social Work Society (DSWS), and Participatory Action for Community Empowerment (PACE)
5	Kanpur	Warsi Sewa Sadan (WSS)
6	Muzzafarpur	NIDAN
7	Ara	NIDAN
8	Sasaram	NIDAN

SHELTER (August 2012 – March 2015) This was the phase when urban poverty program was not just consolidated but it was also a time when there was a churning of thoughts within IGSSS. During the implementation of SHELTER or Sustaining Housing, Health, Education and Livelihood Through Empowerment and Rights, the programme was extended to 12 cities. The principles developed during the CityMaker programme continued in SHELTER and IGSSS continued to manage homeless shelters in Delhi with support from Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB). There was a focus on strengthening the Network in the city and on good management of shelters.

The partners continued to work with different groups of urban poor. IGSSS also adopted different approaches to deal with issues of urban poverty such as the usage of comics to sensitise the community. IGSSS collaborated with World Comics India to train the CityMakers to depict their issues and lives. IGSSS also organised a Consultation on the theme of "Caring City" to bring out issues of urban homelessness.

This phase also saw the initiation of the One Hot Meal Programme as part of the IGSSS winter campaign. The basis of this campaign was the realization that a number of homeless people had died during the winter of 2010 and the main reason for these deaths was the lack of a hot and nutritious meal, which help in keeping the body warm. As a response to this learning, IGSSS started a community kitchen to provide one hot meal to the homeless people living in the Shelters. This was carried forward in 2012 when IGSSS partnered with MCKS – Food for Hungry Foundation to provide hot meals to the people. Under this

campaign nearly 250-300 people were covered in the Yamuna Pushta area of Delhi every evening.

SHELTER saw the following Partnerships.

SI No	City	Organization
1	New Delhi	IGSSS and St. Joseph's Service Society
2	Bangalore	IGSSS and Paraspara Trust
3	Lucknow	Participatory Action for Community Empowerment (PACE)
4	Guwahati	Society for Social Transformation & Environment Protection (sSTEP) and North East Diocesan Social Service Society (NEDSSS)
5	Kolkata	Sabuj Sangh
6	Mumbai	Bombay Urban Industrial League for Development (BUILD)
7	Vijaywada	Guide Foundation for Development
8	Agra	Manav Sewa Sanstha (MSS)
9	Ghaziabad	Laxmi Mahila Evam Bal Kalyan Sanstha
10	Allahabad	Abul Kalam Azad Jan Sewa Sansthan (AKAJSS)
11	Ahmadabad	St. Xavier's Non Formal Education Society
12	Vishakhapatnam	Association for Regional and Tribal Development (ARTD)
13	Muzzafarpur	Avidya Vimukti Sansthan

Samaveshi Sheher: The SHELTER phase of programming ended in March 2015 bringing in the concept of Samaveshi Sheher or Inclusive Cities. This phase is a huge departure from IGSSS' previous interventions. Till the SHELTER programme, IGSSS' urban poverty programme focussed upon homeless citizens and issues of shelter in the target cities. While the partners' programme was more inclusive in that it catered to different categories, IGSSS' own direct programming was centred around issues of homelessness.

This led to an internal churning within IGSSS with a realization that the scope of the programme should be widened to cover other vulnerabilities of the urban poor. IGSSS

cannot and should not limit the programme to just managing shelters and advocate the cause of only the homeless people while talking of urban poverty. What are the other vulnerabilities that affect the urban poor? This internal churning led to the development of the Samaveshi Sheher concept or the concept of empowering for inclusiveness.

Through a process of consultation, IGSSS identified three main vulnerabilities which also became issues that it decided to focus upon in its future Urban programming. These included: occupational, social and residential vulnerability. They became the three main pillars for urban poor programmatic intervention.

**Residential Vulnerability:** This was seen as a gradual progression from shelter to affordable housing for the urban poor. Thus, it was felt that the issue of housing for urban poor needed to be looked in terms of a continuum, where on one end there are shelters (temporary & permanent), while at the other end of the spectrum there is affordable housing, and working men/women/family hostels, public rental accommodations fall in between. This recognizes the fact that the urban poor are not a monolithic group; there are sub-populations with specific needs. For example, a short term migrant in the city would seek a different type of tenurial arrangement (and claims to public service during residency, and citizenship rights & participation in political processes) as compared to long term poor city residents who seek affordable housing or tenurial security of land.

**Occupational Vulnerabilities:** There are numerous issues associated with occupation. Jobs are not stable. Wages vary and payments are not often done on time. It is difficult for a person to cater need of his/her family when their income is irregular; jobs are insecure. Often there are not enough safety and protection mechanisms at the workplace. Though the country has Acts, legislations and social protection mechanism, the poor still finds it difficult to access these. Urban poor engaged in different occupations such as construction work, street vending, rag picking, rickshaw pullers are not in a bargaining position to exercise their rights and access their entitlements. The programme plans to address these issues through strengthening the target groups.

**Social Vulnerabilities:** Urban poor face challenges in the form of exclusion, abuse and accessing basic public infrastructure. They often face difficulty in accessing information and gaining knowledge; limited access to political power and representations; social networks and connections. The quality of their settlements and environment are not often conducive.

Samaveshi Sheher stands on these three pillars. There was, thus, a huge shift in the programming approach. With this programme, IGSSS also decided to withdraw from Shelter issues. Management of the existing 10 shelters in Delhi that IGSSS was taking care of was handed over to DUSIB. The programme also included different occupational groups, some of which IGSSS has never worked with before such as domestic workers, commercial sex workers, refugees etc. Samaveshi Sheher is being implemented in 26 cities covering 28

NGO partners. The programme has tried to be inclusive both in terms of categories being worked with and issues being focused upon.

**Characteristics:** The urban poor programme has certain characteristics, which are not written but are evident when we look at the implementing process. These are the principal ingredients of the urban poverty programme.

The urban intervention focuses on a range of target groups. The approach is focused on assisting households and individuals to thrive within the economic, political and social systems of society. It also allies with other organizations and attempts to change economic, political and social systems of the society. It attempts to shift the way a system works.

**Rights based approach:** Rights have always been the most important pillar of the urban poverty programme. The programme has since its inception, focussed on rights of the urban poor and has used national Acts, international Covenants, judgement of courts to ensure the realization of rights and entitlements.

**Uses of judiciary and media:** Judiciary and media are the two important stakeholders in the urban poverty programme of IGSSS. The programme used the ruling of the Supreme Court of India to forward the rights of shelterless people. These issues have been highlighted in media regularly. IGSSS collaborated with networks such as SAM-BKS, National Forum for Housing Rights (NFHR) etc while working with the judiciary.

**Networking:** IGSSS associated with other organizations, networks, media personnel, individuals as the programme started to grow. IGSSS become an active member of SAM-BKS, NFHR etc. Partners have been encouraged to develop or associate with similar networks in their states.

Community led groups: Formation of collectives and groups among the targeted beneficiaries has always been stressed upon from the very beginning of the programme.

### **Future: Components to strengthen:**

Samaveshi Sheher has developed an inclusive approach on issues of urban poverty. However, there is yet scope of refining the intervention at the normative level. While this does not require changing the programme design it looks at strengthening the analysis of the relationship between poverty and the different vulnerabilities. It is important to strengthen this analysis looking at it from the perspective of the conditions and positions of the poor; Realizing that poverty and vulnerability are not static issues; both are extremely dynamic.

**Define the poor:** At present the programme understands the poor mostly from their occupation. The program does not differentiate the categories of urban poor. We need to,



however, analyse how the programme is reducing social, occupational and residential vulnerabilities among the poor. Hence, we need to categorise the poor, which will help in identifying and selecting beneficiaries to improve their conditions and positions.

- **Improving Poor:** These are groups of people who have a range of assets and who often live in recognised slums, have access to some basic facilities and skills to widen economic opportunity. They are in a position to improve their conditions
- **Coping Poor:** This category also possesses assets to meet the basic needs for the present. They are vulnerable because they have limited resources to improve their conditions
- **Declining Poor:** This category faces multiple vulnerabilities at the same time – poor health, loss of earning, eviction, breakdown of family etc. This category includes the aged, orphaned or abandoned children, physically challenged, persons affected with disease such as AIDS and single women or widows etc.

The programme needs to understand these three types of poor in the target group that they are working with. Greater analysis is needed regarding how and what percentage of the poor the current Samaveshi Sheher programme is catering to and the contribution of the programme in improving their lives.

**Strengthen elements of livelihood:** Livelihood development has been a part of the urban poverty programme since the very beginning. The poor develop diverse and changing livelihood portfolios, which address their perceptions of their own poverty, but they do so within a context of pervasive vulnerability. We need to understand this not simply from the point of view of income or economic activity. Adopting a sustainable livelihood approach will help in not just designing the programme but also in adopting strategies which will be relevant in the whole country. For example

- Identifying groups of poor people according to their main livelihood sources;
- Identifying the main sources of vulnerability associated with these livelihoods, which are not normally considered systematically in the planning processes;
- Identifying the main assets relating to these livelihoods, which would include the normally considered physical assets such as land, water and forest, but also economic assets such as employment opportunities, and social assets such as informal safety nets;
- Identifying the qualitative aspects of the above, which tend to be neglected for the quantitative

**Focus on Financial Inclusion:** Samaveshi Sheher also refers to financial inclusion of the urban poor. While the programme vocalises the need to link families with financial institutions, this concept is a little weak at present and we need to strengthen it for future programming. This could be an integrated component of the urban poverty programmes at IGSSS.

**Level of Engagement:** Samaveshi Sheher is based on a rights based approach (RBA). While this is the principle of the project, it also requires engagement at different levels with different stakeholders. The programme is very heavy, at present, on engagement with target groups or rights holders. All objectives and key strategies of the programme are geared towards this.

**Micro level:** Collectives or groups are the key component. Strong collectives ensure sustainability. The programme should focus on strengthening the process. Some key elements that can be considered:

- Functional collectives with identified roles and responsibilities
- Leaders identified to take the group forward
- Leaders to have sufficient knowledge and skill to lead the groups
- Sharing of information about rights, entitlements related to work, residence and social issues of the target groups.

**Messo Level:** At the district and state level, the programme should engage with the duty bearers. Accessing rights and entitlements will be difficult without the support and collaboration of duty bearers, mainly government departments and officials. It is, therefore, crucial that:

- Rights and entitlements of the target group are identified as also the duty bearers responsible.
- It is important to sensitise the duty bearers.
- It is important to select parameters at the partners' level based on vulnerabilities and categories of poor while assisting the target groups in accessing benefits.
- Participation of target groups in municipal governance.

**Focus on Excluded and Vulnerable Groups:** There are vulnerable and disadvantaged groups among urban poor. Women and children are equally engaged in the running their households as well as undertaking hazardous work. They face discrimination and abuse. For example, a women construction worker often gets lesser wages than her male counterpart for the same work. They are also harassed by their employers/contractors. This is similar to the situation experienced by the children. The programme can adopt some niche approaches and strengthen the existing practices.

**Improvement in Quality of Life:** The present focus is on strengthening of collectives and realization of rights for the urban poor. In the long-term the programme should analyse the contribution that it has made to the lives of the urban poor. We have identified different rights and entitlements in the programme. We need to analyse how the target groups exercise these and how it improves their lives. In doing so, we can analyse the qualitative improvements in the lives of people. The programme should categorise benefits in terms of:

- **Meeting Survival Needs:** This is the bottom line of the needs. It springs from fear and destitution. Poverty is very dynamic and improving poor of today can become declining poor in future. The programme needs to analyse this and incorporate measures to protect the coping mechanisms and improving the poor.
- **Increasing Security:** This is another concern for the poor. This is related to not just protection from eviction or violence. It is more holistic and includes protection of employment, protection of quality of life etc. It is related to their income, their consumption pattern, financial inclusion and education for children, social networking etc.
- **Quality of Life:** Survival and security need lay the foundation upon which the lives of the poor can be improved. This can lead to greater participation of the poor in development of their area, urban governance, seeking better employment and learning new skills etc.

These elements are present in the framework but we need to use and analyse them when we review the programme.

## Conclusion:

When we analyse issues of rights and entitlements through lenses of vulnerability, the urban poverty programme only then puts the urban poor at the centre stage. The programme then focuses on the multidimensional nature of poverty itself, the diverse and dynamic nature of their 'portfolios', the complex nature of vulnerability, and the complexities of accessing both capital assets and entitlements provided by the state and others. It is this focus that needs to be strengthened in the present programme.