Challenging urbanization – time for rational planning in favor of urban poor in India

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Abstract

India is a fast moving economy with urban population escalating each minute. The Indian government is striving towards mainstreaming urban poor.   But Indian urban population is facing problems which are different from their rural poor counterparts. This is because urban poor are invariably migrants who come in search of jobs to urban centers / cities. They live in areas where basic amenities are a dream & the appalling health situation is an additional gigantic challenge. They have no housing hence they live in slums which are causing not only space problems but have been an epicenter of several diseases. Creation of housing to these teeming millions has been a very vital issue for policy makers. This paper focuses on problems of urban poor & analyses the policy implications regarding addressing the problems of urban poor. The paper spotlights on a multi-dimensional approach towards alleviating the urban poor & addresses the need for an integrated policy making.

Key words: urban poor,   poverty , integrated policy making

Introduction

Indian population is escalating as nearly 300 million people live in urban areas / cities. It is expected that by 2026 Indian urban population would be 534 million. But an important point to be noted here is that nearly 100million people live in urban slums & studies have indicated that the slum population would increase to 200 million by 2020. The case of the urban poor is very disgusting as people are away from basic amenities. (UNDP Report 2014)

The problems of urban poor -

urban poor are facing problems such as

1. Housing or lack of shelter
2. Sanitation
3. Drinking water
4. Health support system
5. Job opportunities
6. Educational
7. support through other sustainable livelihood means.

Key indicators

1. poverty has become urbanized with 80 million people live in

urban areas on income below poverty line

2. urbanization in India is projected to reach 50% by 2020 & this would further intricate (Business line report on – The Changing Face of Urban Poverty 2014).

3. Poverty was higher among rural to urban migrants & this was an important indicator as rural people come to urban center in search of livelihood means . While urban to urban migrants do not face this problem as urban migrants to neighboring urban / semi urban areas found reasonably balanced livelihood means quickly. .(Business line report on – The Changing Face Of Urban Poverty 2014)

4. slum population has increased 23.% &50% of the population live in slums (Business line report on – The Changing Face Of Urban Poverty 2014).

5. More appalling problem is 54 %of the urban slums do not have toilets, public facilities are unusable due to lack of maintenance & nearly the entire urban poor lack access to safe drinking water.(Business line report on – The Changing Face Of Urban Poverty 2014)

The widening gaps in income level is due to several factors such as rural to urban migration , industrial sector contracting , growing under skilled work force , manufacturing sector has failed to absorb the migrant labor force, increasing urban unemployment , slum expansion , widening income inequity, inflexible hiring & firing patterns, by 2019 nearly 12 million people would be returning to rural side for want of jobs in urban centers this is called reverse migration , the rate of job creation is declining , India's vast stock of labor force have to be tapped well(Business line report on – The Changing Face Of Urban Poverty 2014). The neighboring countries of Japan & china are facing the problem of aged people while India is young with nearly 2/3 of the population are below 35.(National Institute of Urban Affairs –Research Journal Issue-2 Vol. XXIX) A report prepared by the United Nations development programme reveals that in India's big cities more than 40% of the people live in slums. Even though they have reasonable sources of income they cannot afford housing. The root cause for unplanned & ugly urbanization destruction of rural life are identified as root causes(Business line report on – The Changing Face Of Urban Poverty 2014).

The Impact –The challenge of urban poverty unlike rural poverty imposes considerable negative impact on society it poses the problem of housing shelter water sanitation health education social security livelihood. Besides it poses an important intimidation to vulnerable

sections n such as women children & aged people. Beside the urban poor always suffer from uncertainty of life such as evictions loss of livelihood drags on productivity constraints on economic growth It also fuels social evils such as drugs crime poses another form of threat .(Business line report on – The Changing Face Of Urban Poverty 2014).

An important necessity is generate compile & widely disseminate urban health information to address knowledge gaps & to enhance attention to health of the urban poor an inventory of urban health relation information is being created National family health survey has to be are analyzed research studies case studies IN journal publications have to be augmented. (Business line report on – The Changing Face Of Urban Poverty 2014).Experience sharing case studies capacity building & orientation programs can well. To ensure enhanced attention of policy makers to urban health it was imperative to bring the real conditions of the urban poor to the fore. Advocacy initiatives such as organizing seminars conducting workshops with key stake holders & networking with the media in this direction this helps to generate awareness among key stake holders state center government donor agencies civil society organizations academicians research organizations. With a goal of developing engendered cities the government of India is working on mandating 50%

reservation for women in all urban local bodies to promote their participation in urban policy banking. There is a need for imparting gender perspective to designing urban policies & programs.(Christian Van Laak- Urban Development & Poverty Post 2015 Agenda).

The Strategies

1. A new housing policy will emphasize on eco friendly cost effective disaster resistant technology in buildings for the urban poor. (UNDP 2014)
2. Creating job opportunities through National Livelihood means with skill up gradation entrepreneurship development credit funding will help urban poor
3. Shrinking fund for urban poverty alleviation is another problem. Fund allocation for 11th plan period was3,687 crores
4. reorienting its focus from rural to urban India can be a better answer to address the problems of urban poor.
5. heralding a more benevolent public policy for millions of slum migrants is needed (Christian Van Laak- Urban Development & Poverty Post 2015 Agenda)
6. There is a need for establishment of title registration system up gradation of slum settlement increasing fiscal support for municipalities increasing the importance for security tenure in housing increasing property tax as local

revenue scientific method of urban revenue collection scientific pattern of attending to migrants labor housing etc (National Institute of Urban Affairs – Research Journal   Issue-2 Vol. XXIX).

7. bridging urban rural hinterlands is necessary & using GIS application system need for a flexible planning approach (National Institute of Urban Affairs –Research Journal   Issue-2 Vol. XXIX).

8. using low carbon strategies pedestrian accessibility index sustainable urban growth planning (Christian Van Laak- Urban Development & Poverty Post 2015 Agenda)

Conclusion- Hence there is an urgent need of reorienting the focus from urban people to urban poor people. Shrinking fund for urban poverty alleviation has to be looked into by policy makers. There is a need for imparting gender perspective to designing urban policies & programs. Urban poor & weaker sections problems have been different & hence NGOs & policy makers should focus on all round planning of the urban poor India being focused globally has been a on a threshold of unforeseen urbanization but a meticulous planning towards substantive programming can make a big

difference. The widening gaps between urban rich & urban poor have to be lessened. Building satellite townships can be a remedy. Urban migration can be checked if rural villages can be made self-sufficient with greater support system.

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