



CHALLENGES IN MANAGING SLUMS IN INDIA

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Abstract

UN statistical data reports that between the year 2014 and 2018 the urban population living in slums worldwide increased from 23 percent to 24 percent, accounting for over 1 billion slum dwellers (United Nations, 2021). Over the century from 1901 to 2011, India's urban population witnessed a phenomenal 14-fold expansion. The pace of urbanization in India is outpacing that of developed countries. It has increased from 25.85 million in 1901 to 377.11 million in 2011 (World Bank, 2018). 49 percent of the urban population of India lives in slums (World Bank, 2020). Urban population of India contributes 63 percent to the GDP and is expected to be 75 percent in 2030 (Subudhi et al., 2023). The challenges of slums, measures taken by the government and recommendations for better and effective management of slums discussed.

Key words: urban population, slums, challenges

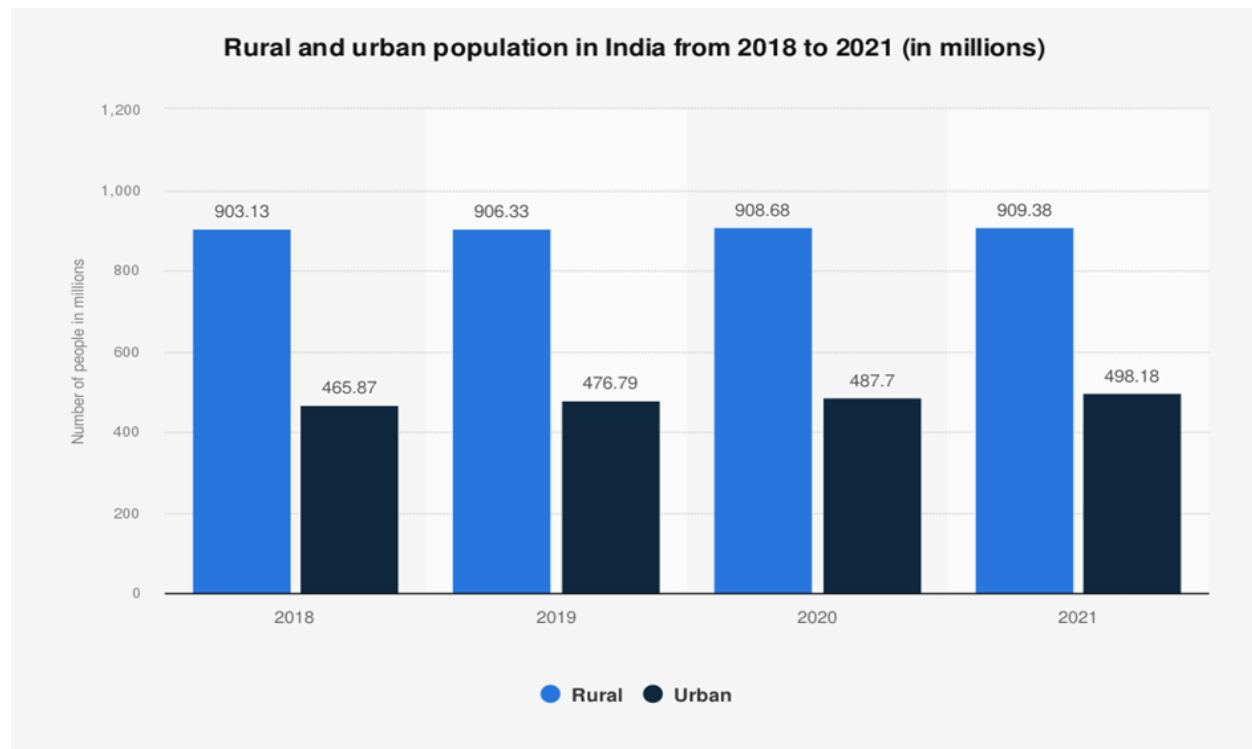
INTRODUCTION

The definition of an 'urban area' varies across different countries, with some relying on administrative boundaries, population size, economic characteristics, or infrastructure development. A study by the United Nations revealed that among 228 countries, 97 employ administrative criteria, 96 use population, 25 consider economic factors, and only 15 utilize functional criteria such as access to paved roads, water supply, sanitation, and electricity. Notably, 22 countries lack a formal definition of 'urban,' and in 8 countries, the entire population is classified as either urban or rural based on situational factors. (Bhagat, 2018)

During the British rule in India urban areas included every municipality, every cantonment and all civil lines, irrespective of its size. Indian urbanization is male biased because the definition considers only the male workforce employed in the non-agricultural sector. But given the very low non agricultural women participants, it is done so (Bhagat, 2008). Any settlement with municipal corporations, municipality, town committee and urban councils are developed as urban (UN Population Division, 2006).

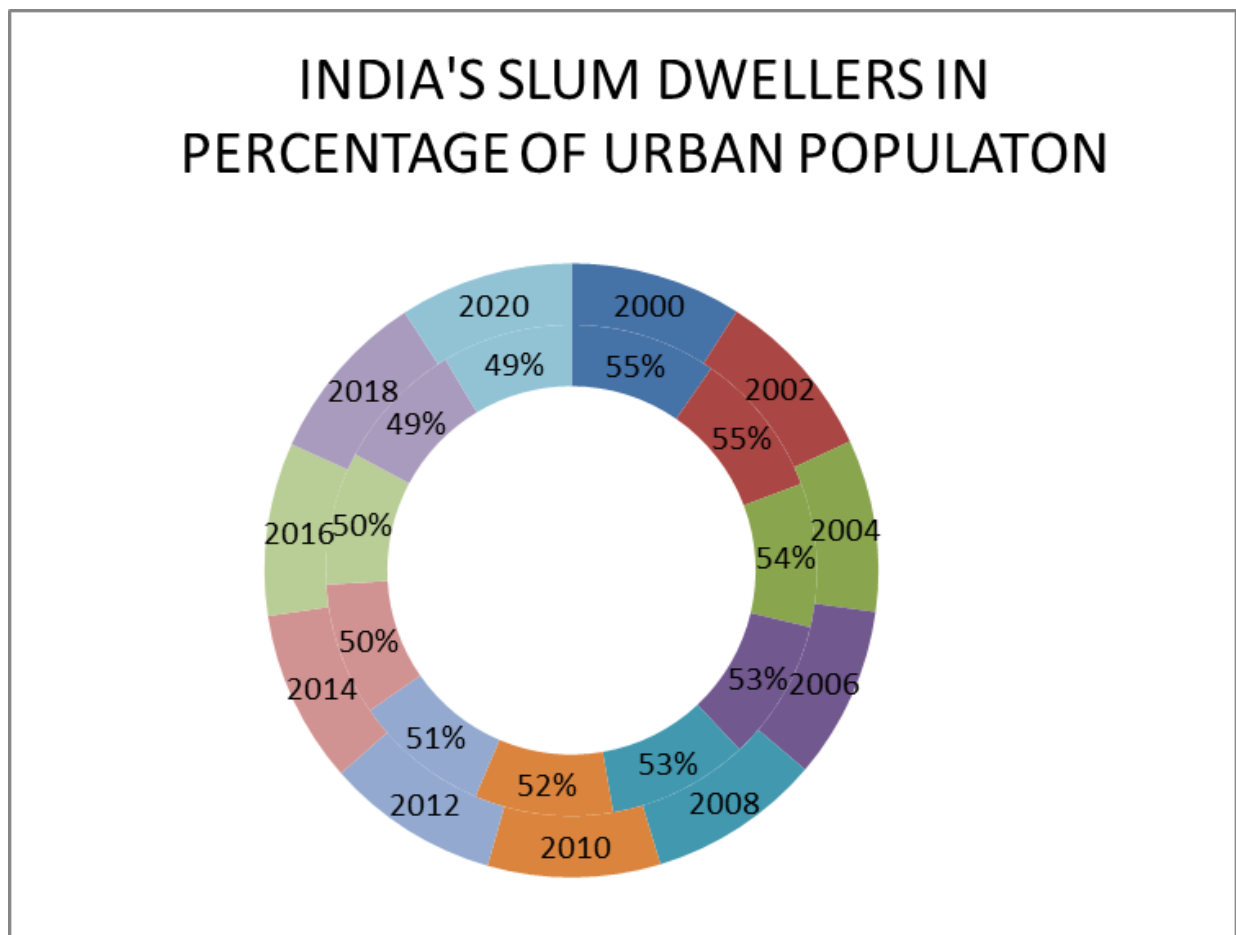
Urbanization in India started after independence. Private sectors got rising after the adoption of mixed economic policy in 1990. According to world bank data, the urban population of India in 1901 was 11.4 percent, in 2001 it rose to 28.53 percent and stood 34 percent in the year 2017 (World Bank, 2018).

Figure 1: Rural and urban population in India from 2018 to 2021 in millions



Source: Statista

India's urbanization is accelerating at an unprecedented pace, as evidenced by the 2011 census data, which revealed a surge in urban agglomerations from 384 to 457 and an exponential increase in towns from 2,774 to 7,935. This rapid expansion, fueled by both rural-urban migration and intrinsic urban population growth, is projected to continue unabated. India's urban population is poised for a significant rise in the foreseeable future, with the urban share of the population expected to exceed 40% by 2023. This represents a substantial increase from the 31% urban share recorded in the 2011 census. While bringing a range of economic benefits, such rapid urbanization has brought with it enormous challenges, most noticeably in the form of demand-supply gaps in housing, infrastructure, and services (United Nations, 2022). Urbanization needs massive expansion in urban infrastructure and services. From the demographic point of view, urbanization is measured in terms of percentage of population living in urban areas (Davis, 1962, #)

Figure 2: India's Slum dwellers in urban population

Source: UN habitat

Mumbai has had large scale urban migration in the 20th century. India's urbanization has witnessed remarkable growth, with the urban population surging by a staggering 1,300% between 1901 and 2011. This rapid transformation is exemplified by Mumbai, which emerged as the country's second-largest metropolitan city, accommodating 22.1 million people in 2011. Delhi, on the other hand, stood out as the fastest-urbanizing city, experiencing a 4.1% population growth rate during the same period. This accelerated urbanization trend is outpacing that of developed nations, as India's urban population skyrocketed from 25.85 million in 1901 to 377.11 million in 2011 (Behera & Barbhuiya, n.d.). Since the initiation of economic reforms in 1991, India has witnessed a surge in economic growth, driven by a shift towards a liberalized and privatized economy. This transformation has propelled India's economic growth to an impressive 8% per annum during the first decade, a significant leap from the 3% growth rate of the early 1980s. Recognizing urbanization as a cornerstone of overall development, the Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-2012) emphasized the need for fostering livable, inclusive, and competitive cities. With the urban sector currently contributing 65% of India's GDP, achieving the ambitious goal of 9-10% GDP growth hinges on transforming Indian cities into vibrant hubs of economic activity and sustainable living. (Planning Commission, Government of India, 2008).

Objective and Methodology

In the Indian economic context, one third of the GDP is contributed by the urban population which implies urbanization is good for the Indian economy. On the other side, the slums are growing in terms of population. Challenges faced in managing the slums in terms of basic facilities, education and credit facilities and the method of management is discussed by taking into account the secondary data. Secondary data was meticulously compiled from a variety of sources, encompassing articles, books, websites, and AI-powered resources.. Expression of numerical data is majorly based on World Bank and UN data.

Discussion

Urbanization tends to be more prevalent in economically developed nations (Roy et al., 2023, #). Economically advanced states show a higher level of urbanization. There are several contributions to urbanization right from the Second World War. After the Second World War the government expanded its services to the citizens which resulted in urbanization. Partition of countries from India made different sectors to migrate to different places resulting in urbanization. Industrial development in urban areas attracts the people to migrate anticipating better job opportunities. The eleventh five year plan (2007-2017) targeted urbanization as a means to accelerate economic development which contributed to urban growth. (Wikipedia, 2023). People migrate to urban areas by the pulling factors like economic opportunities, better education and Infrastructure facilities. Non-profitability of farming, land fragmentation and Lopsided urbanization are some of the pushing factors leading to the growth of urbanization. (Mann, 2012)

Merely 13 percent of the global population lived in urban areas in 1900 which increased to 25 percent in 1950 and crossed the 50 percent mark in 2009 (United Nations, 2018) and stood as 50.1percent. Urbanization patterns diverge between developed and developing nations (Clement & Pino, 2023, #). In developed countries, urban areas house 75% of the population, while in developing countries, urban dwellers account for 45% (Blachier, 2022)..

Most parts of Asia and Africa have very low levels of per capita income and pace of urbanization is modest (Cohen, 2004). Cities across India account for nearly two-thirds of the nation's economic activity.. Cities are the main recipients of FDI (World Bank, 2011). India's agriculture sector employs half of the country's workforce but generates only 18% of the GDP. Driven by high input costs and low agricultural income, farmers across India are abandoning farming. Also the prolonged use of fertilizers, chemicals and hybrid seeds led to a decline in land fertility. (Panagaria, 2011, #)

Although urban development in India exhibits disparities, it does not exhibit an extreme concentration in a single city. India has seen tremendous urban progress. Cities account for a mere 3% of India's total land , yet they drive 60% of the country's economic growth. Growth of cities has been beneficial for overall poverty reduction in India, with urban growth accounting for about 80 percent of the total fall in poverty (United Nations, 2022). Over a quarter of India's urban residents reside in slums. In Mumbai, slum dwellers make up over half of the population, with many of these slums located close to employment hubs and in prime urban areas.

Report on Indian Urban Infrastructure and Services by the High Powered Expert Committee projects an investment requirement of over US \$ 870 billion over the next 20 years period (World Bank, 2011). Mickinsey study on Indian urbanization projects an investment of US \$ 1.2 trillion over a similar period (Campbell, 2010).

Causes of slums

India's escalating population, particularly in urban centers, is driving a migration pattern as individuals seek to escape poverty and elevate their socioeconomic standing. However, this urban migration often outpaces the provision of essential services, leading to a housing crisis and the formation of slums. *Lack of facilities in rural areas* and slow development of villages forces people to migrate to cities. There are villages in India still lacking water and the villagers' have to walk miles together for water. Villagers believe that urban areas will provide all the basic facilities. But in reality the higher cost converts them as slum dwellers. . *Higher rent rates in cities* become unaffordable for the poor migrants. They decide to live in temporary huts. In due course of time more people join them and the slum gets developed. *Refugees* also reason for slums needless to say their economic condition. *Limited access to formal financial sectors* leave them with no option than being slum dwellers. *Government's* planning process often does not incorporate the slum dwellers. *Lack of administration capacity* in coping up with the demand to meet economic and social needs. *Vote politics* support the slums. Slum communities hold considerable electoral influence, which is acknowledged by political parties vying for their support. Politicians often maintain the status quo in marginalized communities to preserve their voter base, even if it means hindering their progress.

Challenges

Slums create problems in every basic amenities like housing, infrastructure, water, sewerage, transportation and health care. Waste disposal becomes hazardous and creates pollution in sound, air and water. Due to the lower Illiteracy level, low skilled or no-skill migrants from rural informal sector to the urban workforce at a very low wage rate, urban informal sector becomes inefficient and unproductive (World Bank, 2011). Land policies become complicated for the administration. Anti social activities and crimes get increased (Mann, 2012).

Managing Methods

To curb the formation of new slums, it is crucial to promote sustainable urbanization practices. Land-use policies should actively integrate existing slum areas, ensuring that slum dwellers gain access to essential amenities like water, electricity, healthcare, and efficient infrastructure.

The laborers of slums can be given skill development for the maximum utilization of the human capital to have better economic contribution from the slum population of India. Since the slums are in the cities and near the economic centers, companies can take the initiative as the Corporate Social Responsibility measure to train the slum population and outsource some of the work to them. This will increase productivity and decrease criminal activities. Those corporate sectors can be specially recognized and encouraged by the government.

More and more micro financing systems should be boosted up for the slum dwellers to alleviate poverty, purchase houses and increase the investment in small business.

Considering that half of India's workforce is employed in agriculture, enhancing agricultural productivity through research should be a top priority. Increase in agricultural output and decrease in cost of production will prevent migration. Other and allied income generating activities should also be increased in rural areas. Proper administration process in corruption checking and implementation of the measures is also needed.

Gone are the days that education is only inside the campus walls. Educational institutions can be assigned in the skill development programmes of slums also the institutions engaged in slum development activities can be given boost up points in ranking to make them contribute more on their skill development.

Conclusion

Slums are not created intentionally but grow due to the negligence and irresponsible attitude (Insights Editor, 2020). Though, Indian government takes lots of initiatives and measures (annexure 1) to tackle the slum expansion, the success rate becomes a matter of concern. There are several role players in the slum upgradation programme. NGOs take their own steps to increase the standards of people living in slums, Government implements its own measures, private parties engage themselves in the same. Successful urbanization may take time but it is not unachievable. The need for the hour is a collective effort of all the role players together instead of isolated ones. There should be a common pool of Government, NGOs, Private players and educational institutions joining their hands together to improve the slums in terms of facilities, education and skills. Above all there should be strong political will to transform the slums and its people.

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Annexure 1: Slum Management Initiatives by Government

The 1956 Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance Act) sought to address the challenges of slum areas in select Union territories by implementing improvements and safeguarding tenants from unjustified evictions.(UN India). Keeping in view of all inclusive solution right from education to welfare measures Indian Government has taken the following measures:

Table 1: Government schemes on slum rehabilitation

| S. No | Name of the Scheme | Year of Launching | Objective |
|-------|---|-------------------|---|
| 1. | National Slum Development Program (NSDP) | 1996 | To provide loans and subsidies to states for slum rehabilitation projects. |
| 2. | Valmiki Ambedkar Malina Basti Awas Yozana (VAMBAY) | 2001 | To provide shelter for urban poor, with 20 percent allocation for community sanitary facilities. |
| 3. | Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP) | 2005 | To empower the urban poor in India's 63 most populous cities by providing them with access to essential services. |
| 4. | Integrated Housing and Slum Development Program (IHSDP) The merging of two schemes; NSDP and VAMBAY. | 2005 | To provide adequate shelter and basic infrastructure to the slum dwellers in urban areas. |

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|----|--|------|---|
| 5. | Interest Subsidy Scheme for Housing the Urban Poor (ISHUP) | 2008 | To provide interest subsidy loans to buy or construct houses. |
| 6. | Rajiv Awas Yojana (Ray) | 2013 | To bring existing slums within the formal system and enable them to avail of the same level of basic amenities as the rest of the town; Redressing the failures of the formal system that lie behind the creation of slums; and to tackle the shortages of urban land and housing that keep shelter out of reach of the urban poor. |
| 7. | Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana | 2015 | To provide housing to all by 2022 through central assistance to implementing agencies through States and UTs by way of In-situ, credit linked subsidy and affordable housing. |

Source:www.insightsonindia.com

