

Centre for Humane Habitat (CHH): Advancing Knowledge and Capacity for Inclusive Urban Development

Background

Building upon its long-standing experience in community development, housing, urban poverty alleviation, research, advocacy, and action-oriented development initiatives, MASHAL established the **Centre for Humane Habitat (CHH)** as a dedicated platform for research, documentation, knowledge dissemination, and capacity building.

The Centre was conceived as an institutional mechanism to strengthen evidence-based approaches to addressing issues related to housing, urban poverty, governance, and sustainable human settlements. Drawing upon MASHAL's extensive field experience and its collaborations with academic institutions, government agencies, development practitioners, and civil society organizations, CHH was created to bridge the gap between grassroots experiences and policy-level interventions.

The establishment of CHH reflected MASHAL's commitment to not only implementing development projects but also documenting lessons, generating knowledge, promoting innovation, and building the capacities of stakeholders working in the field of human habitat and poverty alleviation.

Objectives of the Centre for Humane Habitat (CHH)

The Centre was established with the following key objectives:

Documentation and Knowledge Creation

CHH undertook systematic documentation of innovative initiatives, best practices, and community-led efforts related to:

- Social and affordable housing.
- Urban and rural poverty alleviation.
- Community participation and empowerment.
- Housing rights and governance.
- Slum improvement and rehabilitation.
- Sustainable settlement development.

- Livelihood enhancement initiatives.

The Centre documented both MASHAL's own interventions and the experiences of other organizations, institutions, and development programmes working in similar sectors. These efforts created a valuable repository of knowledge that could inform future development planning and implementation.

Research and Policy Support

CHH served as a platform for conducting research on critical issues affecting vulnerable communities. The Centre generated evidence and insights that supported policymakers, practitioners, researchers, and development agencies in designing more effective programmes and policies related to housing, habitat, governance, and poverty reduction.

Capacity Building and Training

A major focus of CHH was strengthening the capacities of stakeholders involved in development programmes. The Centre designed and conducted training programmes for:

- Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- Government Departments and Urban Local Bodies.
- Community-Based Organizations (CBOs).
- Development professionals.
- Academic institutions.
- Community leaders and citizen groups.

These programmes aimed to improve understanding, skills, and implementation capacities related to housing, urban development, project management, community participation, and poverty alleviation initiatives.

Publication and Dissemination

CHH actively promoted the dissemination of knowledge through the publication of:

- Research studies and reports.
- Technical manuals and guidelines.
- Training modules.

- Educational materials.
- Policy briefs and discussion papers.
- Case studies and process documentation.
- Resource materials for practitioners and decision-makers.

These publications helped share field experiences and lessons learned with researchers, policymakers, elected representatives, development professionals, and community organizations.

Professional Capacity Development

The Centre undertook Training Needs Assessments (TNA) to identify knowledge and skill gaps among professionals working in the development sector. Based on these assessments, CHH developed customized capacity-building programmes for multidisciplinary professionals engaged in housing, urban development, governance, and poverty alleviation initiatives.

Scope of Work

The Centre for Humane Habitat implemented a range of activities focused on research, training, documentation, advocacy, and institutional strengthening. Its work covered both urban and rural contexts and addressed issues related to housing, infrastructure, governance, livelihoods, and social development.

Key areas of intervention included:

- Documentation of development processes and best practices.
- Research and policy analysis.
- Knowledge management and dissemination.
- Capacity building of institutions and communities.
- Training and professional development.
- Technical support to development programmes.
- Promotion of participatory approaches in planning and implementation.

JHEEMMA Capacity Building Programme

One of the notable initiatives undertaken under CHH was the **JHEEMMA Capacity Building Programme**.

The programme derived its name from the traditional Maharashtrian folk dance form “Jheemma,” which symbolizes collective participation, cooperation, coordination, and mutual support. In the dance, participants hold hands, exchange partners, and move together in rhythmic patterns. CHH adopted this symbolism to represent its philosophy of partnership, collaboration, learning, and collective action in development work.

The JHEEMMA programme was designed as a participatory capacity-building initiative aimed at bringing together diverse stakeholders from government agencies, non-government organizations, academic institutions, professionals, and community groups.

The programme focused on:

- Promoting collaborative learning.
- Strengthening partnerships among development stakeholders.
- Building technical and managerial capacities.
- Encouraging knowledge exchange and innovation.
- Enhancing community-centered approaches to development.
- Improving implementation effectiveness of poverty alleviation and housing programmes.

Through workshops, training sessions, exposure visits, discussions, and learning exchanges, the programme contributed to creating a network of informed and skilled practitioners committed to inclusive and sustainable development.

Key Contributions and Impact

The Centre for Humane Habitat strengthened MASHAL’s role as a knowledge-based organization by complementing its field interventions with research, documentation, advocacy, and capacity-building initiatives.

The Centre contributed significantly to:

- Enhancing institutional learning and knowledge management.
- Supporting evidence-based policy formulation.
- Strengthening capacities of development practitioners and institutions.

- Promoting innovative and participatory approaches to housing and poverty alleviation.
- Creating platforms for dialogue among communities, practitioners, researchers, and policymakers.
- Disseminating lessons and best practices from the field to a wider audience.

Through CHH, MASHAL expanded its contribution beyond project implementation and emerged as a resource institution supporting inclusive, sustainable, and people-centered development processes across urban and rural contexts.