

Bandhu Rental Housing Project

Pune, Maharashtra (December 2023 – November 2024)

The **Bandhu Rental Housing Project** was an innovative housing initiative implemented by Maharashtra Social Housing and Action League (MASHAL) with support from Dasra. The project aimed to improve access to safe, affordable, and transparent rental housing for migrant workers, low-income households, and urban poor communities in Pune by leveraging digital technology and community-based outreach mechanisms.

The project sought to bridge the gap between landlords and tenants through the development and promotion of the **Bandhu Rental Housing Platform**, a digital application designed to facilitate property listings, tenant profiling, property matching, and rental transactions. Simultaneously, the initiative generated livelihood opportunities for women from low-income communities by engaging them as Community Officers (COs) responsible for outreach, data collection, property onboarding, and community mobilization.

Implemented across several locations in Pune, including Warje, Hadapsar, Gokhalenagar, Yerwada, Ambegaon, Tadiwala Road, and surrounding areas, the project demonstrated how technology-enabled housing solutions can contribute to improving urban housing access while promoting community participation and economic empowerment.

Project Objectives

The project was implemented with the following objectives:

- To improve access to affordable rental housing for migrant workers and low-income households.
- To create a digital ecosystem connecting landlords and tenants.
- To develop a transparent and efficient rental housing marketplace.
- To generate livelihood opportunities for women through community-based employment.
- To strengthen community awareness regarding safe and organized rental housing.

- To create a scalable model for rental housing management in urban areas.

Project Implementation Strategy

The Bandhu Rental Housing Project adopted a multi-dimensional implementation approach involving technology, community mobilization, stakeholder engagement, and livelihood promotion.

Property Identification and Onboarding

MASHAL conducted extensive field outreach to identify rental properties across multiple locations in Pune. Community Officers engaged directly with property owners and landlords to explain the benefits of participating in the Bandhu platform.

Each identified property was documented and uploaded onto the Bandhu application with detailed information, including:

- Property specifications.
- Rental terms and conditions.
- Location details.
- Photographs and property descriptions.
- Ownership and verification information.

Through these efforts, the project successfully onboarded **4,696 rental properties** onto the Bandhu platform.

Landlord and Tenant Profiling

To build trust and transparency within the rental ecosystem, MASHAL developed comprehensive digital profiles for both landlords and tenants.

The project facilitated the creation of:

- **2,094 landlord profiles**, including property ownership and rental information.
- **15,837 tenant profiles**, capturing housing preferences, occupational details, and rental requirements.

The profiling process enhanced transparency and enabled more effective property matching.

Women's Livelihood and Community Leadership

A distinctive feature of the project was its focus on women's economic empowerment.

MASHAL identified women from local communities and provided structured training on:

- Property onboarding processes.
- Digital platform operations.
- Community mobilization techniques.
- Data collection and verification.
- Tenant and landlord engagement.
- Housing facilitation services.

A total of **268 women received training**, and **66 women were subsequently employed** as Community Officers and field facilitators. This intervention contributed significantly to enhancing income opportunities, leadership skills, and community participation among women.

Community Mobilization and Stakeholder Engagement

Community engagement was a central component of project implementation.

MASHAL organized:

- Community awareness campaigns.
- Orientation workshops.
- Information dissemination activities.
- Stakeholder consultations.
- Community meetings and discussions.

A total of **32 community engagement and orientation activities** were conducted to increase awareness about the Bandhu platform and encourage participation from landlords, tenants, and local stakeholders.

Collaboration with Local Leadership

Recognizing the importance of local governance and community support, MASHAL actively engaged with elected representatives and community leaders.

The project team conducted **35 meetings with corporators, community representatives, and local stakeholders** to:

- Build support for the initiative.
- Facilitate community acceptance.
- Address local concerns.
- Strengthen institutional partnerships.

These interactions helped create a supportive environment for project implementation across target communities.

Property Matching and Rental Facilitation

MASHAL developed and operationalized a property matchmaking mechanism that connected prospective tenants with suitable rental properties based on location preferences, affordability, family size, and housing requirements.

The system enabled:

- Tenant screening and verification.
- Property recommendations.
- Landlord-tenant introductions.
- Rental agreement facilitation.
- Support during tenancy initiation.

During the project period, **542 property matching processes** were completed, resulting in successful rental connections between landlords and tenants.

Public Outreach and Awareness Generation

To maximize awareness and reach among target populations, MASHAL implemented a comprehensive public outreach campaign through:

- Pamphlet distribution.
- Community information centres (Bandhu Kendras).
- Shop-based awareness campaigns.

- Social media engagement.
- Labour market outreach activities.
- Community-level information dissemination.

Awareness activities were conducted in locations such as:

- Warje
- Hadapsar
- Yerwada
- Ambegaon
- Bhosari
- Labour Nakas
- Markets and transportation hubs

These efforts significantly increased public visibility and community engagement with the Bandhu platform.

Key Achievements

The Bandhu Rental Housing Project achieved several important milestones:

- Onboarded **4,696 rental properties** on the Bandhu platform.
- Created **2,094 landlord profiles**.
- Created **15,837 tenant profiles**.
- Trained **268 women** from local communities.
- Employed **66 women** as Community Officers and field facilitators.
- Conducted **32 community engagement and orientation programmes**.
- Organized **35 stakeholder and corporator meetings**.
- Completed **542 landlord-tenant matching processes**.
- Successfully facilitated tenancy transactions through the Bandhu platform.

Outcomes and Impact

The project generated significant social and developmental outcomes:

Improved Access to Rental Housing

The platform expanded housing choices for migrant workers and low-income households by making rental information more accessible and transparent.

Increased Transparency in Rental Transactions

Verified landlord and tenant profiles improved trust, reduced information asymmetry, and strengthened landlord-tenant relationships.

Women's Economic Empowerment

The project created livelihood opportunities for women while enhancing their digital literacy, communication skills, and community leadership capabilities.

Strengthened Community Participation

Regular engagement with residents, community leaders, and local representatives fostered greater participation in housing-related decision-making and awareness generation.

Demonstration of a Scalable Rental Housing Model

The Bandhu initiative successfully demonstrated the potential of combining technology, community outreach, and local employment generation to address rental housing challenges in urban areas.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

The project encountered several implementation challenges, including:

- Delays associated with local permissions and stakeholder approvals.
- Disruptions caused by election-related code of conduct restrictions.
- Initial resistance from some landlords and tenants unfamiliar with digital platforms.
- Technical challenges related to application functionality and data management.
- Community-level political sensitivities affecting field operations.

Despite these challenges, MASHAL adapted its implementation strategy through continuous stakeholder engagement, enhanced training, technical improvements, and community outreach.

Project Significance

The Bandhu Rental Housing Project represents an innovative and community-driven approach to addressing urban rental housing challenges. By integrating technology, community participation, and livelihood generation, the project created a practical model for improving access to affordable rental housing while strengthening local capacities and promoting inclusive urban development.

The project has laid the foundation for future expansion of organized rental housing systems and demonstrated the potential of digital platforms in improving housing access for vulnerable urban populations. The lessons learned and systems developed through Bandhu continue to inform MASHAL's work in housing, urban development, migration, and community empowerment.