

Slum Redevelopment and Community-Led Housing Improvement Project

Indiranagar, Santacruz, Mumbai (1985)

Maharashtra Social Housing and Action League (MASHAL) implemented a community-based **Slum Redevelopment and Housing Improvement Project** in Indiranagar, Santacruz, Mumbai, in 1985. The project was supported by Terre des Hommes (TdH), Germany, and focused on empowering slum residents to actively participate in the planning, management, and implementation of housing and environmental improvement initiatives within their community.

At a time when most slum development programmes followed a top-down approach, the project adopted a participatory model that placed community members at the centre of decision-making. The initiative recognized that sustainable housing improvement could only be achieved when residents themselves were involved in identifying problems, prioritizing needs, and managing local development activities.

Project Background

Indiranagar was a densely populated informal settlement facing multiple challenges related to inadequate housing, poor sanitation, environmental degradation, and limited access to basic civic services. The settlement lacked organized community structures capable of collectively addressing these issues and engaging with government agencies or development organizations.

To address these challenges, MASHAL facilitated a process of community mobilization and institutional development aimed at strengthening local participation and promoting collective action for housing and environmental improvement.

Project Objectives

The project was implemented with the following objectives:

- To encourage active participation of slum residents in housing redevelopment initiatives.
- To strengthen community ownership of development activities.
- To improve sanitation and environmental conditions within the settlement.

- To establish community institutions capable of representing residents' interests.
- To build the capacity of community members to plan and manage local development interventions.
- To create a model for participatory slum redevelopment and community-led housing improvement.

Community Mobilization and Institution Building

A major component of the project involved organizing residents and creating a representative community structure. MASHAL facilitated the formation of a community committee comprising local residents, community leaders, women, and other stakeholders.

The committee served as a platform for:

- Identifying priority issues affecting the community.
- Coordinating housing and environmental improvement activities.
- Facilitating communication between residents and external agencies.
- Encouraging collective decision-making and community participation.
- Monitoring implementation of development initiatives.

The formation of the committee significantly enhanced community cohesion and created a mechanism through which residents could actively participate in the redevelopment process.

Housing and Environmental Improvement Activities

Through community consultations and participatory planning exercises, residents identified sanitation and environmental health as critical concerns affecting their quality of life.

With technical guidance from MASHAL, the community committee planned and organized several sanitation-related initiatives, including:

- Improving cleanliness within the settlement.
- Promoting better waste management practices.
- Organizing community-led sanitation campaigns.

- Creating awareness regarding hygiene and public health.
- Encouraging household participation in environmental improvement activities.

These interventions contributed to creating a cleaner and healthier living environment for residents and demonstrated the effectiveness of community-led action in addressing local challenges.

Capacity Building and Community Empowerment

MASHAL conducted awareness and capacity-building activities to strengthen the ability of residents to participate in development processes. Community members were encouraged to take ownership of local initiatives and develop leadership skills necessary for managing collective activities.

The project emphasized:

- Participatory planning and decision-making.
- Community leadership development.
- Collective responsibility for settlement improvement.
- Long-term sustainability of development efforts.

As a result, residents became more confident in engaging with development programmes and advocating for their needs.

Outcomes and Impact

The project achieved several important outcomes:

- Formation of an active community committee representing slum residents.
- Increased participation of community members in housing and environmental improvement initiatives.
- Improved sanitation and hygiene conditions within the settlement.
- Strengthened community ownership of development activities.
- Enhanced awareness regarding public health and environmental management.
- Development of local leadership and community management capacities.

The sanitation programmes implemented through the community committee generated significant benefits for residents by improving living conditions and fostering a sense of collective responsibility for maintaining the settlement environment.

Project Significance

The Indiranagar Slum Redevelopment Project represented one of MASHAL's early initiatives in participatory housing and community development. The project demonstrated that sustainable improvements in housing and living conditions are most effective when residents themselves are actively involved in planning and implementation.

The experience gained through this initiative laid the foundation for MASHAL's subsequent work in slum upgrading, housing rights, community participation, urban governance, and inclusive urban development across Maharashtra.

The project remains an important example of community-driven development, illustrating how organized citizen participation can contribute to improved living conditions and more sustainable urban development outcomes.