



Land Rights of the Urban Poor in the Context of Forced Evictions and 'Smart City' Development

Theme/Sub Theme: Impacts of Land Tenure Security Interventions

Organiser(s) : Shivani Chaudhry,

Institution(s) Housing and Land Rights Network



HOUSING AND LAND RIGHTS NETWORK

Background

A large majority of the urban poor in India continues to suffer from inadequate living conditions arising largely from insecure housing and the lack of security of tenure. While there is some available data and discussion around the issue of landlessness and land rights in rural areas, the issue of land rights of the urban poor and their resulting marginalization is not accorded the same importance; neither has it been considered a priority. The crisis, however, is becoming more urgent with the rise in forced evictions and homelessness, including under the guise of “city beautification”, urban renewal, disaster management, infrastructure, “smart city projects,” and the systematic relocation of low-income groups to city peripheries.

Though the government’s Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana speaks of providing “Housing for All by 2022,” [Housing and Land Rights Network](#) documented the [demolition of over 53,700 homes by state authorities in 2017, affecting more than 260,000 people](#), over 90 per cent in urban areas.

Residents of low-income settlements continue to be labelled as “encroachers” and “illegal” and are seldom considered “eligible” for resettlement. Those who meet the state’s “eligibility criteria” are relocated to remote areas, without secure housing and land rights. This is leading to a rise in homelessness and impoverishment with adverse impacts on the health, livelihoods, and education of affected persons, especially women, children, and older persons.

Market-driven public-private partnerships are being increasingly relied upon by the state to address housing issues in urban areas. However, these interventions promote a further reduction in the land area occupied by the urban poor, while benefitting wealthier classes and private developers.

Importance of this Panel Discussion

A greater focus on urban land issues and recognition of land rights of the urban poor is needed in order to address poverty and the housing and land crisis; to help improve the realization of human rights; and to meet India’s international obligations, including implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommendations from its third Universal Periodic Review at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

At this panel being organized by **Housing and Land Rights Network**, independent experts, academics, legal scholars, and affected persons will discuss critical questions and dimensions of urban land. Speakers will also assess the urgent need for a human rights-based approach to ensure the recognition of land rights, provision of legal security of tenure, and protection from forced evictions and displacement of the urban poor across India.

For more information, please write to: contact@hlrn.org.in and see: www.hlrn.org.in

