



Need for Adequate Housing for All- Recovery and Development in Maharashtra's Cities Post COVID-19

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Mumbai, August 25: Praja launched its Working Paper on ‘The Need for Affordable Housing for All: Recovery and Development in Maharashtra’s Cities Post COVID-19’ on Tuesday, 25th August, highlighting four strategies to be adopted for Mumbai’s metropolitan regions to achieve the goal of adequate housing for all.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the linkages between housing, density and health in our cities”, said Nitai Mehta, Founder and Managing Trustee, Praja Foundation. While various government policies have focussed on providing housing that is ‘affordable’ we need to recognise that the current dominant approach adopted in housing policy such as the slum rehabilitation schemes, has not addressed aspects of habitability, sustainability, access to basic services and livelihood.

“Housing is therefore not just four walls and a roof but must include the key element to enable good quality living. If India has to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, housing will need to be looked at holistically, through the vision for ‘Adequate Housing for All’ which encompasses affordability, location, availability of amenities and habitability”, added Mehta.

With this vision for ‘Adequate Housing for All’, Praja has, through multiple consultations and discussions with experts including Shirish Patel, Urban Planner and Civil Engineer, Founder, Shirish Patel and Associates; KG Krishnamurthy, Managing Director and CEO, HDFC Property Ventures Ltd; Anuj Bhagwati, Director, A.T.E. Enterprises, Trustee, Praja Foundation, and Trustee, Urban Design Research Institute; and Aditya Somani, Director, Centre for Advancement of Philanthropy, Founder, Inner Courtyard, prepared four major strategies that can be adopted by the government.

“We aim to share this working paper with various stakeholders, garner their views and suggestions to advocate for adequate housing for all”, said Milind Mhaske, Director, Praja Foundation.

“The four strategies are:

1. Government-led rehousing in existing unsold ready stock to reduce slum density
2. Relocation of labour-intensive businesses to reduce slum density
3. New adequate housing on government owned land through community land reserves
4. New adequate housing in peripheral areas around the city starting with improved connectivity through strengthened public transport network”, explained Anuj Bhagwati.

“In the short term, to tackle the issue of density in big slum clusters, the government can provide existing unsold and ready affordable housing stock for purchase and lease in the metropolitan region at construction cost to beneficiaries in lieu of their current dwelling (but with a larger area) and compensate developers accordingly”, added Mhaske.

“Since many such slum clusters like Dharavi are business hubs and security of livelihood is an important criterion for relocation, the scheme also includes a provision for shifting of businesses. Businesses that relocate have the opportunity for institutionalisation, better access to finances, better work environment and improved facilities”, said Mehta.

Business owners can be offered a commercial space in a nearby MIDC at a concessional rate along with a scheme of unsold ready stock. Employees who are casual workers or labourers and cannot afford buying or leasing, are provided dormitories/hostels built near the MIDC.

“These short term measures can lay off the burden of existing unsold stock from real estate and financial institutions to revive the economy. While to better address issues of habitability and ensure collective management of housing, a medium term strategy for new construction of affordable housing within the city for purchase and lease on government land at cost of construction through the Community Land Reserve (CLR) needs to be adopted. This scheme can be applicable for redevelopment of existing slum areas, or on sites of abandoned, under construction and unoccupied old buildings, and/or by utilisation of unused spaces in the city such as the eastern waterfront”, said Mhaske.

A CLR is a non-profit (proposed to be a company under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013), vested with ownership and management of a property. The Company is proposed to be run by a Board consisting of one-third directors elected by resident members; one-third, elected by neighbouring Societies or CLRs; and one-third, consisting of government and outside experts.

“Under this mechanism, on land that is initially owned by the government a CLR is created which oversees the design and construction/redevelopment through design agencies or construction companies supervising a contractor; and the building complex before, during and after construction is managed through the CLR. In case of sale or management of lease, the flat is returned to the CLR which further sells/leases it to those beneficiaries

who are currently living in inadequate housing such as slums. This ensures that the property is continued to be used for affordable housing”, explained Shirish Patel.

“While the medium term strategy looks at utilising unused space within the main city, a long term strategy for development of the metropolitan region also needs to be adopted. This would involve new construction in the metropolitan region for purchase and lease on government land at cost of construction through the CLR”, stated Mhaske.

“Along with housing, strengthening and extension of transport networks such as Bus Rapid Transit Systems for last mile connectivity will need to be developed. Transportation networks will attract real estate and businesses offering livelihood opportunities for people and revenue for the government”, added Mehta.

Link:- <https://mtinews.in/need-for-adequate-housing-for-all-recovery-and-development-in-maharashtras-cities-post-covid-19/>