

**Resettlement and Rehabilitation of the Urban Poor:
the Mumbai Urban Transport Project**

A Case Study

by

Sundar Burra

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Sundar Burra
Adviser
Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC)
Mailing Address: P.O.Box 9389, Mumbai 400026
Tele: 022-386-5053 and 385-8785
Telefax: 022-388-7566
email: sparc@sparcindia.org

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Introduction

Mumbai, the capital of Maharashtra and the commercial capital of India, has a population of 12 million people. The suburban rail system is the lifeline of the city and it is estimated that 7.4 million passenger trips are made daily at an average distance of 25 kms. per trip. Over 88% of all commuters in the city travel by suburban trains or buses. About 4500 passengers travel in a 9-car rake during peak hours as against a rated carrying capacity of just 1700.

The Railway Settlements

There are three suburban rail lines in Mumbai: Central, Western and Harbour that link the central business districts of Bombay Island with the so-called 'suburban' areas in the North of the city. The Central line from Victoria Terminus (VT) to Thane has about 8,000 families living alongside the track; the Western line from Churchgate to Dahisar has about 3000 slum families and the Harbour line from V.T. to Mankhurd around 13,000.

These families have been living along the tracks for more than two decades. In some cases, their huts are hardly a metre away from the tracks and the passing trains. One consequence of their location is the number of accidents that take place, particularly affecting young children, who cannot be kept on a tight leash throughout the day. But injury and death is not confined to children. Neither is it the only consequence of the location. The constant anxiety of parents and partners for the safety of their families has a severe and demonstrable impact on the railway slum dwellers. Yet, they are forced to continue to live where they do in the absence of any affordable alternative.

The presence of a large number of slums along the tracks also has an effect upon the speed of trains. The Commissioner of Railway Safety has stipulated that trains must not travel at more than 15 kilometers per hour when traveling through these densely inhabited sections of track. This restriction must be viewed in the light of the fact that trains are normally capable of running at more than 40 kilometers per hour. Simple arithmetic tells us that the productivity of the system is severely affected in terms of the frequency of trains. In turn, the number of passengers who can be transported in a day drops sharply. When commuters do not reach their places of work on time, the productivity of all those establishments where people work is affected as is the economy of the city as a whole. According to a Report prepared by the Slum Rehabilitation Authority, because of

slow movement of trains in slum areas, daily trips have been reduced by 40%; the productivity of the city is reduced proportionately.

The motormen, who drive the trains day in and day out, are under severe psychological pressure. When an accident takes place, the train is stopped, the injured person assisted if possible and the journey is then resumed. Bodily harm or death might result but another consequence is more delay. The motormen at the driving seat take home these images and find it difficult to deal with them even when they are not at fault. Their confidence is impaired as they live with the damage they have caused, albeit unwittingly.

For the families living along the tracks, injury or death are the worst things that can happen to them. But daily life is also made difficult in the absence of the basic amenities of water, sanitation and electricity. The women spend long hours fetching water and the entire family faces the repeated indignity of having to relieve themselves in public, in the full view of commuters in passing trains.

The Mumbai Urban Transport Project(MUTP)

The MUTP has been designed to improve the traffic and transportation system in the city and has many partners: the Government of Maharashtra (GOM), the Indian Railways(IR), the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai(MCGM) and the Brihan Mumbai Electric Supply Undertaking(BEST). The project cost is over Rs.7000 crores with loan assistance from the World Bank pegged at Rs.2300 crores. The GOM will share 50% of the rail component cost with IR.

Many new lines are to be laid and slum dwellers along the railway tracks to be resettled. The benefits from the rail projects are expected to be: a) Increase in capacity by about 35% b) Higher frequency of train services during peak hours, c) Reduction in journey time and d) improvements in the flow of passengers and vehicles in and around selected stations. About 15000 families living along the tracks will have to be resettled and some 4000 odd families will be affected by non-rail projects. This case study looks at the resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) of more than 10,000 families along the railway tracks.

The Task Force and administrative arrangements

The R&R policy was formulated by a task Force appointed by the GOM with Mr.D.M.Sukhtankar,IAS, retired Secretary to the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India as the chair. According to the recommendations of the Task force, which were accepted by the GOM, each project affected family was to get a 225 sq. ft. tenement free of cost or, where shifting had to be done urgently, transit accommodation of 120 sq. ft. with basic amenities. The R&R policy was to be implemented with the active involvement of NGOs and the full participation of affected communities. The nodal agency to coordinate the project is the Mumbai Metropolitan Regional Development Authority(MMRDA) and there is a Project Management/Monitoring Unit(PMU) in the MMRDA to oversee the R&R for both

rail and non-rail components. A joint sector company, the Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation(MRVC), has been set up by GOM and IR to implement the rail projects while the Public Works Department of the GOM, along with the MCGM, will implement non-rail projects.

Civil Society Representation

The World Bank required that there be civil society representation on the Task Force to formulate R&R policy. The GOM appointed the Director of the Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres(SPARC), a registered NGO, as a member and put the President of the National Slum Dwellers Federation(NSDF) on its Land sub-committee. SPARC was established in 1984 at a time when the homes of pavement families were being regularly demolished by the MCGM and its founding members - all from different professional and social work backgrounds - felt that traditional urban NGOs were unable to respond to such crises. NSDF, set up in the '70s, had a predominantly male membership and worked towards preventing demolitions in slums and securing basic amenities. When SPARC and NSDF came together in 1985, one product of their union was Mahila Milan (MM) or "Women Together" in English, a network of decentralized savings and credit groups made up of women pavement and slum dwellers. The alliance of SPARC, NSDF and MM is working in more than 40 towns in 5 States of India and is also part of Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI), an international network of people's organizations operating through national federations in 11 countries of Asia and Africa. The basic goal of the alliance and SDI is the provision of housing and infrastructure for the urban poor through building the capacity of people's organizations to negotiate their entitlements with governmental, municipal and other public institutions.

The Railway Slum Dwellers Federation (RSDF)

RSDF is a constituent unit of the National Slum Dwellers Federation and is made up of families living along the railway tracks in Mumbai. One of the organizing principles of the federating units of NSDF is that they are developed according to who owns the land. In this case, the land occupied by the RSDF members belongs to the Indian Railways, a department of the Central Government, and negotiations to secure entitlements of this group would have to be primarily conducted with the Railways. In keeping with this organizing principle, slum-dwellers living on lands belonging to the Airport Authority have formed a federation of their own, pavement-dwellers who live on pavements owned by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai have a separate federation, and so on.

Achievements in R&R

The safety zones (30 feet on either side of the tracks) of the 3 rail corridors in Mumbai have been cleared of all slums. More than 10000 families have been resettled, about 40% in permanent and the rest in transit accommodation, without the use of any municipal or police force. Secure tenure and basic amenities of water, sanitation and electricity are assured. As a consequence, more trains are running on the same tracks and at greater speeds. Traveling time has been reduced and the rail system's performance improved. All of this was done in just over a year by June 2001. What accounted for the speed and success of R&R?

The flexibility of institutions and key individuals

The World Bank and the MMRDA gave the alliance of SPARC/NSDF/MM a sole-source contract to prepare Baseline Socio-Economic Surveys(BSEs), to draw up Resettlement Action Plans (RAPs) and implement them. In addition, a contract was given to the alliance to construct 2500 transit tenements as well.

The policy of the World Bank has been to issue tenders for all such activities but in view of its assessment of the alliance as a group that had a long and sustained presence in the railway slums, a data base of maps of areas encroached, numbers of families affected and so on, the Bank revised its policies after protracted discussions both in New Delhi and Washington. Here, the former Task Manager, presently Operational Adviser at the Bank in New Delhi, played a key role in supporting a community-based, women-centred, participatory approach to R&R. The rule that the Bank could not give more than US\$30,000 to an NGO was also waived in the case of the construction contract. In the latter case, the alliance offered to construct 2500 transit tenements at about 75% of the estimated cost, making the offer attractive both to the Bank and MMRDA, the idea being that the balance would be raised through loans. Key Bank officials had confidence in the alliance and its capabilities.

The MMRDA, particularly the Project Director (MUTP), was willing to give up some of the powers traditionally enjoyed by government agencies in R&R: to determine the eligibility of families for R&R, preparing base-line surveys, mapping the areas and allocating tenements to the affected families. The MMRDA/alliance relationship was based upon trust rather than suspicion. A traditional bureaucratic approach would have been to retain these powers rather than shed them. Here there was no fear that something could go wrong, that there could be enquiries if it did and the bureaucracy then held responsible. Rather, there was faith in the alliance and a strong partnership developed between MMRDA and the communities of the urban poor, represented by NSDF.

Both at the institutional and individual levels, MMRDA and the Project Director underscored their belief in community processes.

Community participation and the alliance

The alliance of SPARC, NSDF and MM has a tried and tested strategy of community mobilization, which was employed in MUTP as well. The box below describes the steps taken to mobilize slum dwellers, particularly women.

Box 1 Community Base-line Surveys

Hut counting

When the community gets visited for the first time, a large number of NSDF and MM men and women hold meetings with the residents, and talk about themselves, their work and what they have come for. In most cases, the communities know of or have heard of the Federation's work, and credibility is generally easily established. To trigger the process of participation, the Federation leader, together with community residents, take pieces of chalk and begin to mark the doors of houses, marking each and every house door and area. Very quickly the community becomes discerning and suggests that criteria should be established to number the houses. All the structures have developed incrementally and there is no clear-cut demarcation of the completion of one house and the starting point of the next. So, often what might be two houses can be marked as one and what are two sections of the same dwelling can be marked as two. By encouraging a dialogue to occur about the numbering, the foundation is laid for communities to participate in the redress of any future grievances or disputes concerning property rights and entitlements.

Rough mapping

Then the group together with involved residents begins a rough mapping of the settlement. This is as much to help the plane-table surveyors later, as it is to help communities understand what surveys represent, and while this is done, much of the community and slum profile is also completed. Toilets, water taps, balwadis, services, amenities, etc. are all accounted for and how people get their goods and services, where they shop, etc, is also observed. This also creates a direct link between the investigators and the active members of the community, and in preparation for the formation of a nucleus of women's collectives, which later can be strengthened as part of the on-going process of community strengthening.

Numbering

Next house numbers are matched with the map and the chalk numbers on each dwelling are re-done in more permanent paint. Communities are informed that government and city officials will be checking on this process, and ensuring accuracy is essential to establish good faith and the credibility of the communities.

Cadastral survey

With numbers in place, the surveyors take over and mark and measure the sites. In most settlements community leaders, especially those individuals who feel threatened by this process or wish to obstruct it for political or other reasons step forward. Normally, surveyors just leave if obstructed and do not attempt tackle the situation or to defuse it. Hence, NSDF/SPARC workers of that area, whose presence brings reassurance, but tends to slow down the surveying process, normally accompany the surveyors.

The household survey

The survey begins using the painted numbers as an interview schedule number, which from this stage onwards is a useful identification number. This information is fed into the computer and rough check registers are prepared for communities to check again and fill in incomplete data.

Settlement profile

Based on the more accurate information emerging from the survey of houses, the settlement information is refined and up-dated.

Group formation

Using the registers, wherever the communities are willing, households are grouped into units of 50 and another round of data checking is undertaken. From this stage the group work begins in earnest and much of the qualitative information collection and capacity building is done in these groups.

The first stage had been hut counting and numbering when people started asking why this was being done, and details of the project were explained to them. Several of the male leaders of the community generally volunteer to take part in this exercise in order to make sure no one is left out. Many female leaders take part in the household and community surveys. During the repeated interaction with the local people, rapport is established and people became more knowledgeable about the issues of community control and management and approach to working with government agencies. The household group size of 50 has been found to be optimal for the sharing and validation of the information collected during surveys and to facilitate easy communication in general. During the meetings, charts and registers displaying comprehensive information about the settlement as a whole, and about the particular group, are prepared and given to the group for study and validation.

Regrouping

Although initially households are grouped together by numbers and numbers are given consecutively to households next to each other, each resident has the freedom to move from one group to another. Ultimately, these groups will be sub-units which, when they are relocated, will live next to each other and their natural gravitation to each other will be strengthened by the things they are assisted to do together.

Women's participation

Special mention needs to be made that women's groups are encouraged. While men are not excluded, the information sharing is encouraged between women and communities are generally encouraged by the NGO alliance to allow women to take the lead. Later these groups will begin saving and credit groups, start developing skills to access municipal and state government services, get involved in house and settlement design and hopefully supervise and manage the transition phase of resettlement.

Family photographs

Once the rechecking is completed, registers are finalised, the communities are encouraged to take family photos, create ID cards for themselves and along with the registers of the households, keep this record for themselves while the NGOs and relevant official agencies will get their identical copies of these records.

Long before MUTP was on the drawing board, the Railway Slum Dwellers Federation (RSDF) had collected data about slums along the tracks, mapped them, set up women's savings and credit groups and formed housing cooperative societies. This was not just a detached data collection exercise but a means of community mobilization. The RSDF had organized a house model exhibition in 1987 in which slum women and men came up with life-size models of houses they would like to live in, reflecting both their aspirations and their affordability. A systematic housing savings movement had been in place for over a decade. In 1999, when MUTP was in the doldrums and the IR wanted a piece of land to be cleared urgently, the GOM, the IR and the alliance worked together to resettle 900 families at a place called Kanjur Marg. This experiment added credibility to the reputation of the alliance.

In February/March 2001, the IR demolished over 2000 huts along the Harbour Line. This was neither in accordance with GOM policy nor the R&R stipulations of MUTP. The English media in Mumbai had for years been vociferous about slums in general and about railway slums in particular. A picture was painted of the urban poor as being "free riders" as compared to "we, the citizens who pay taxes." Never mind that the poor spend more on basic amenities both in absolute terms and as proportions of their incomes than the middle classes; never mind that the Constitution of India does not make citizenship conditional upon payment of direct taxes. If this media campaign put pressure on IR, an ostensibly 'public interest' litigation had been filed in the High Court by a local NGO seeking directions to IR and GOM to evict all the slum dwellers along the railway tracks without any R&R. The High Court appeared to favour the petitioners' argument. However, GOM assured the Court that a time-bound programme of R&R would be implemented and the Court consented. Such were the pressures operating in the city and the railway slum dwellers had to be shifted quickly.

More than 10,000 families were resettled in just over a year without any municipal or police force largely because of this history of community participation and social mobilization detailed above. At one stage, a choice had to be made as to which families would go into transit accommodation of 120 sq.ft. without a time-frame for permanent resettlement and some consequential uncertainty. The alternative was a 225 sq.ft. permanent and self-contained tenement. Yet, there was no greed on display: the community process threw up criteria for decision-making like the size of the family, the number of older persons in it, sickness and vulnerability. Those families who scored high on these criteria would be allotted permanent tenements and the rest would await their turn.

Today, in the 6 or 7 settlements where these families have been resettled, the rehabilitation effort has gone beyond physical relocation. About Rs. 50 lakhs are in circulation as loans for income-generation through Mahila Milan to take care of lost opportunities as a result of shifting. Ration shops are being set up to distribute kerosene and other essential commodities. Names in electoral rolls have to be transferred, addresses on ration cards have to be changed and cooking gas connections shifted. All this is in progress. In all these settlements, committees have been set up - with a majority of women – to look after water, sanitation and garbage, to deal with the municipality, the police and so on. Each building or group of tenements has a committee and there is a central committee for each settlement. This participatory, decentralized and bottom-up approach amounts to a high degree of self-governance, where dependence upon the State or municipality is minimal.

Conclusion

The lessons emerging from this case study for urban good governance have to do with the importance of flexibility both for institutions and individuals, the significance of partnership between a government agency and the NGO/CBO and finally, the importance of community participation and social mobilization with special reference to women. We have seen how the World Bank and its then Task Manager responded with alacrity to the demands and needs of the community, how MMRDA and the Project Director (MUTP) enthusiastically gave up their powers and entered into a relationship with the alliance based upon faith and trust and finally, how organizations of the poor participated in the R&R. These were the key elements of success.

One way of looking at the events in this case study is to see them as steps on the journey towards citizenship for the urban poor where rights are translated into reality because of the favourable confluence of a supportive policy environment and grassroots democracy in action.