



The Sad Story Of Slum People In Re-settlement Colonies-documentations From Focus Group Discussion.

KEYWORDS

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The Tamilnadu Slum Clearance Board has created re-settlement colonies namely Kannagi Nagar, Semmenchery, Ezhil Nagar, All India Radio Site, Morai and now Perumbakkam as part of re-habitation of the urban slum dwellers. These re-settlement colonies emerged due to beautification of the Chennai city and various development projects such as Metro Rail, Elevated Expressways and so on which resulted in mass eviction of the urban poor and dump them in any one of these sites.

National Alliance for Women (NAWO) which works for the women empowerment along the coastal belt and in slum areas in Chennai city has involved intensively in "Stop Eviction" project for the past 5 years. In this context, a Focus Group discussion was conducted by the Researcher for NAWO with the women in all these re-settlement colonies to identify the gaps in the resettlement process; to assess and analyze the living conditions at the resettlement site, analyze the process of eviction; and to make use of this document to sensitize the slum people who are in threat of eviction about the sad plight of these re-settlement colonies and lobby for the in-situ settlement. FGD was conducted at Kannagi Nagar on 03rd November with the help of Udhavi NGO, 06th November at All India Radio Site with the help of Arunodhaya-NGO and Semmenchery with the help of Manidham-NGO staff and on 07th November at Morai, Avadi with the help of . 10-15 women were selected in each area and the data was collected.

Among these Re-settlement colonies, Kannagi Nagar, Ezhil Nagar, Semmenchery and Perumbakkam are in Kancheepuram District and All India Radio Site and Morai are in Thiruvallur District. These re-settlement colonies have steadily grown, in a phased manner and are still under expansion and construction. The tenements constructed either under the Emergency Tsunami Reconstruction Project (ETRP) or under the Jawaharal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM).

The study revealed the following information's

1. Forced Evictions - They have not been issued any legal notices of the eviction. They have received only unclear verbal information from the officials. The information was given either one day before the eviction or on the day of eviction. Most families thus had very little time to collect their belongings before the state demolished their homes. The people were neither consulted about the process nor were their opinion heard and no details about the proposed resettlement plans. "Neenga readyya irunga nallaiku ungalai enguirunthu thukuvoum" "Ella vasathikulam irukku neenga poolaam" " Ration card iruntha Vanthu photo pudichikoo appa than veedu kodupam"

When they were hesitant or asked for explanation from the officials they have been dealt only by the police officials and

politicians. In most cases the eviction was carried in the mid-academic year and they were given false hope that their children can continue their education in the nearby places. They lost their property and possessions; as they were not provided adequate time to salvage their belongings from their homes before the eviction/demolition. They were made to relocate against their will by getting their signatures under the guise of collecting signatures for determining 'eligibility' for housing, but not for relocation.

2. Loss of Education - Children lost their education after the eviction. In Kannagi Nagar and Semmenchery most of the children were studying in schools in Chennai city. After the re-settlement they have to travel almost 5 hours to go to school and return home. Most of them became school drop outs due to distance and specially the mothers will take the girls to school drop them and in the evening pick them up from the school due to safety reasons.

"Oru naalaiku palli manavargal 5mani neeram bus la poitu vanadha antha kuzhanthaigu velaiyada,padika enga time irukku"

All of them shared that when they were evicted no schools were there but after 2 years only schools were established and in most of the schools lack basic amenities. Girls have no safety in schools functioning within the re-settlement colonies. Teachers use abusive language taking into the fact that they are poor and marginalized.

"Enga pillaiku kalvi kudukora teachera ketta vardhai pusuraru kaeta chari pasanga thana neenga ungaluku athu pothum"

Relocation has been the major reason for children to drop out of school. Children were forced to commute long distances by bus to their schools, which are located close to their original sites of habitation in the city.

3. No Alternative Housing - When they were evicted they were not provided with alternative housing immediately after the eviction but were made to wait for about a week before they were provided housing. In Morai, they were sleeping in the roads after eviction and the officials never cared about the people.

"Engaluku athu karuppu thinam. Kulanthaikalai vachikittu roadla maanla thunginoam. Sappadu seiya mudiyaathu. Pullathachi pombale naan enalla antha kodumai ninachi kuda parka mudiyalae"

4.Loss of employment – They lost their employment immediately after the relocation because of the increased distance of Re-settlement colonies from their places of work. In Kannagi Nagar, Semmenchery they have to travel 2 to 3 kms to

main road if they wanted to travel fast. In Morai they have timing buses and if they miss the bus they have to travel 11 kms to Avadi. In All India Radio site most of them were fishermen and they have to travel 5kms for their work. Relocation of fishing communities far from the coast has completely altered their lifestyle, including their food habits and nutritional intake. In an average they spend Rs.75 to 100 for travel fare alone per day. The site is far from the original places of habitation of the communities (between 15-30 kilometres). Many people thus lost their employment immediately after the relocation.

"Vellai illa,athanala neraya thirdu pakkathil irukura companyil vellaiku poonae vellai thara matranga naanga enna pandrithu"

5. Schools, Hospitals and other Services - Higher education institutions, hospitals, and PDS shops are also located very far from the site. They often encounter clashes within them because of lack of these services.

"Rationuku poona sandai, thanee pudicha sandai,valu paeru irukoum aana 3 ration kadai than" "Government hospitaluku joerum poona anka irunthu varuvukulaku vaithithan irukum"

They were branded when they go for treatment to hospitals and hospital staff use abusive language. They have to access healthcare from private agencies/actors because of the non-availability of government healthcare facilities within the settlement.

6. Lack of Basic Facilities- There is a gross violation of their human rights, including their human right to adequate housing, food, water, education, health, work / livelihood and security of the person and home. The size of the flats that people received ranges from 195 square feet to 310 square feet, which is too small for each family to live comfortably and to store their belongings. In Semmenchery toilet is sharing. In Morai they gave the land and no drainage connection and no place to dump the waste and people have to construct the houses. Very sad part is till now Morai has not been noticed by the officials. The houses do not have piped water connections. Women complained of the burden of collecting water for their households from public taps. The quality of water supplied to the settlement is also a serious issue of concern, as certain areas reported receiving contaminated water. The site lacks adequate sanitation services, and residents complained of stagnation of sewage water and piles of garbage in various places.

7. Denial of Land Ownership - The government has not provided long-term legal security of tenure in the form of sale deeds over housing and land to any of the residents. The sad plight is in all the re-settlement colonies they have been given order in the 'Hire Purchase Scheme' of the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB), which provides residents with an 'allotment order' for which they have to pay Rs 150 to Rs 250 on a monthly basis for a period of 20 years. In some cases in Morai and All India Radio site they have been given a yellow chit without any seal. These allotment orders are subject to cancellation on various conditions, including non-payment of monthly dues. At the end of 20 years, residents have been promised 'sale deeds' over the flats, but these will also not provide complete security of tenure.

"Angayum poromboke nelathula than irundhum engaiyum appadi than eppa vendumanalum engalai galli pannu vaanga"

8. Women and Girls are in danger - All respondents stated that these sites are not safe for women and girl children. Mothers are afraid to leave their young daughters alone and hence take them along with to work. This has resulted in many girl children having to drop out of school and has also triggered the phenomenon of early marriages of girls. There is also no women's police station within the settlement.

Conclusion

What has been promised was not seen in reality. We see the uniformity on these issues in all the re-settlement colonies. A re-settlement colony for the welfare of slum people to provide housing has resulted only in disasters. Housing policies have been violated during the re-settlement process. Tamil Nadu does not have a state resettlement and rehabilitation policy; resettlement is either project-based or department-oriented. The welfare state has treated these urban poor as experimental objects and forced them to the outskirts of the city without understanding the adverse and long term socio-economic impacts. The state have not learnt any lesson from these re-settlement colonies, refused to heed to the people's voice but in busy in constructing more and more houses at Perumbakkam and Ezhil Nagar to evict more people and re-settle them. This is a deliberate act of denial and gross violation of human rights of deprived urban communities. We the social workers called to work towards justice and restoration of human rights for those who were been forcibly evicted and forced to the fringes.

REFERENCE

·National Campaign for Housing Rights, "Housing is a basic right of all", Chennai | ·RTI replies from the Tamilnadu Slum clearance Board to NAWO and Tamilnadu Kudisai Vazhvor Sangam (TNGVS). | ·"Forced to Fringes, Disaster of re-settlement in India", June 2014, Housing and Land rights Network (HLRN), New Delhi