

Shrinking space: Slumdweller's crammed in shelters

No place to stretch for the City's poor

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BANGALORE: A house of hardly 270 sq ft in Deshiyanagar in Frazer Town offers shelter for three families. Three couples, with their 10 children struggle hard to find space enough to stretch their legs to sleep. Three of them sleep in the bathroom spreading a plastic sheet on the toilet floor.

This reflects the plight of the families entitled to the Basic Services for Urban Poor (BSUP) programme under the Centrally-sponsored JnNURM, in Bangalore. A visit to the housing colony reveals the construction work to be sub-standard. Even basic infrastructure facilities like sufficient water and power supply are lacking. Floors are uneven and walls have cement coating, not paint.

But the occupants, who are often called by the patronising term - 'beneficiaries', have no choice but to continue to live here as they have no better choice in a City like Bangalore where the land is for rich.

The Karnataka Slum Clearance Board (KSCB) and Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) have taken up the task of providing shelter for 2,17,257 families living in slums of Bangalore. As per JnNURM guidelines, each family should get a house, in four-storey (1+3) apartment complexes, measuring about 270 sq ft of plinth area. Approximate cost of each house is around Rs 1.75 lakh. Beneficiaries contribute about 12 pc (10 pc in case of SC & ST) of the cost.

Although both the implementing agencies - BBMP and KSCB - have the target of constructing 2.17 lakh dwelling units, the detailed project reports have been prepared for only 19,984 houses. Of them, 3,381 are completed, 9,335 are under construction and construction of 7,270 is yet to begin.

Deshiyanagar is a slum with its inhabitants belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes. The KSCB chose this slum under the JnNURM to provide pucca houses for the slum-dwellers.

As per the deadline, KSCB should have completed the construction of 112 dwelling units for the beneficiaries of the slum by June 2010. But going by the tardy construction work, the work is unlikely to be completed even in the months to come. The detail project report of the housing work did not include provision for providing transit housing for the beneficiaries till the construction is completed.

The poor have lost the hovels they had occupied as the land is being used for the construction of the housing quarters. Without an alternative shelter, as many as 112 families have been forced to live on the pavements of Frazer Town, drawing the ire of the locals.

Yielding to pressure from the public in the area, the board completed construction of a block of 32 houses in January this year and asked all the families to move into the houses. As a result the members of 90 families have occupied 32 houses. And, the rest are still on the pavements.

Worse, for reasons best known to the officials, the construction of the other three blocks has been stopped for the last two months.

"Earlier, we had small



CLAUSTROPHOBIA: As many as 16 people live in one house of 270 sqft. Three people sleep in bathroom. PHOTOS BY AUTHOR



NO OPTIONS: Delay in completion of houses has forced a few families to live on pavements in Deshiyanagar (Frazer Town).

dwelling places, but leading a contended life. Then there were no issues like sharing a kitchen or a bedroom with other families. Now it is a hell to live here," Rajani Bai, a resident said.

Even the houses occupied have not yet been provided with power and water supply. They have to fetch drinking water from far off places.

"Most of the people residing here are daily wage workers. We get food in the evening only if we get work that day. In a house where three to four families live, one family may not get wages on a certain day. Then comes the question of sharing. If we share the food, none gets sufficient food. The slum board should complete the construction of houses immediately so that we can move to our individual houses," said Murthy.

Bereft of livelihood

The KSCB is constructing 1,700 houses at Kudlu on Hosur road. These are meant for people living in various slums dotted across the city. Construction of about 1,000 houses has been completed. Only 30 houses have been allotted to the entitled.

Thirty families who were residing in Lakshmanapuri slum, behind Khoday's factory in Gandhi Nagar, have occupied houses in Kudlu housing colony.

"Earlier we were in the centre of the city. We have been shifted to a place which is 37 km away from where we lived. When we were in the City, we used to get job easily but not any more," says Krishnamurthy, a resident. When he was a slum-dweller in the City, he used to take up painting jobs. Now, he

has no work.

The construction of 512 houses at the village, that began in June 2009 should have been completed by June 2010, but is still not completed.

Kalyani residents happy

The BBMP has provided houses for 32 families in Kalyani Slum in Sampangirama Nagar, about two years ago. The families are happy with the quality of construction of houses.

The Palike had provided transit housing for the beneficiaries till the construction of houses was completed. The makeshift shelters were located along the stormwater drain in the locality. Rodents made life miserable for the families in the transit shelters. A youth, Srinivas died of illness following a rodent bite.

The beneficiaries have constituted their own welfare association for maintaining their housing complex. The Association collects Rs 100 each from family and spend it on maintenance.

Families in the dark

Vertical structures are inevitable in urban areas. But many families covered by JnNURM housing are finding it difficult to get used to living in vertical housing buildings. Many aged people complained

Bitter truth

- Many projects are behind their deadlines
- Entitled families and people's representatives had no say in DPRs
- Requirements other than housing, such as school, health centres etc., are ignored
- Houses are too small for bigger families
- Many families find the 1+3 floor structures inconvenient, especially for the aged

that they find it difficult to reach their houses on the third floor Varalakshmi, at Deshiyanagar said it was a problem to carry water from ground floor to the top floor whenever there was no water supply from the overhead tank.

The implementing agencies never involved the beneficiaries in designing the projects. As per the city development plan the beneficiaries would get absolute sale deed of their houses only 20 years after the allotment. The families are not aware of the terms under which they have been provided the housing, such as that they have no right over the land on which the houses are constructed.

The implementing agencies have made it clear that they would look after maintenance including power charges of motor installed to pump water. Five years later, the families are responsible for the maintenance of the houses. When this reporter asked the beneficiaries in Deshiyanagar and Kudlu none knew about the rider, a few argued that it is not possible for them to bear the maintenance cost.

(This is the second part of a series on the condition of JnNURM housing for the urban poor. The first part appeared in DH dated August 29)
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Factsheet

	KSCB	BBMP
Total houses	18,180*	1,804*
Completed	3227	154
Under progress	9131	204
Yet to begin	7270	-
Total cost approved	450.23 cr	606.08 cr
Total cost spent	112.93 cr	21.83 cr

* BBMP & KSCB have the task of providing houses for 2.17 lakh families. As of now, DPR has been prepared only for over 19,000 dwelling units.