

**MISSION REPORT
MUMBAI – INDIA
26 AUGUST – 2 SEPTEMBER 2005
Aye Aye Win**

I. INTRODUCTION

Mumbai – a city that never sleeps - is the vibrant and pulsating capital of Maharashtra state. It is India's principal financial, commercial, communication and transportation centre including the largest and busiest port in India. Mumbai alone handles more than 46% of India's total foreign trade. It has also been the first choice of the private entrepreneur and over the decades the primary destination of people from the rural areas in search of their dreams in the big city.

The rapid and unplanned urbanisation over the past decades has caused major problems of congestion, pollution and the growth of city slums. Mumbai has a population of approximately 15 Million inhabitants 60% of whom live in the slums.

To transform Mumbai into a world-class city, the state government has embarked on the "Vision Mumbai" project that will turn Mumbai into a gleaming financial capital, like that of Shanghai in China by the year 2013. Vision Mumbai is a plan of the government based on the Mckinsey Report^[1], a blue print for the city prepared by a private consulting firm and one driven primarily by corporate interests.

The ambitious "shanghaisation" of Mumbai went underway in December 2004 when the Chief Minister Deshmukh kicked off the project with announcement of large funds that arrived from the Central Government of India and from international financial institutions like the World Bank who approved a loan of 463 million USD for the Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP).

The Chief Minister also began a massive clean up drive to demolish the slums that had encroached on Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) and State Government land after 1995. The initial impact is hardest on the city's poor and voiceless with an estimated 90,000 homes having been razed to the ground and approximately 180,000 children homeless with exposure to extreme climatic conditions of the winter months.

There are a number of key organisations active in Mumbai to protect the interests of the poor. Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action, YUVA is a voluntary development organisation established in 1984 working on a number of interventions that empowers the poor to participate in a process of meaningful change. YUVA has been extremely active to challenge the demolitions and to protect the interests of the poor. Tata Institute for Social Sciences is again a long-established and well-respected institute working for the promotion of sustainable, equitable and participatory development, social welfare and social justice.

Dignity International's relationship with YUVA developed over the past 3 years. In November 2002, a YUVA staff member participated in the first Learning Programme on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ("ESC rights") organised by Dignity International in partnership with Forum Asia and the International Human Rights Internship Program. Dignity participated as a member of the Human Rights Caucus of the World Social Forum in Mumbai in January 2004. Former CEO of YUVA, Minar Pimple and Director of the People's Movement for Human Rights Education PDHRE, is an Advisory Council Member of Dignity International. Dr. Neela Dabir from TISS participated in the Learning Programme on Budget Analysis and ESC Rights in March 2005. Working relations with the Tata Institute are more recent and will hopefully intensify in the course of the coming years.

Following initial discussions via e-mail among the project partners on "Communities in Action: Budget tracking/analysis and Right to Housing and Basic Services for the Poor in Mumbai", it was felt that a face-to-face meeting would be desirable to take the project discussions to the next stage.

II. MISSION OBJECTIVES

- ✚ To discuss with project partners (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action, People's Movement for Human Rights Education and Dignity International) on how to concretely move ahead with the "Communities in Action – Research, Capacity Building, and Advocacy on Budgets and Rights to Adequate Housing and Basic Services for the Poor in Mumbai" project.
- ✚ To visit some of the slum communities in Mumbai and try to arrive at a sense of what can be done and what linkages might be possible with similar communities in other countries.
- ✚ To learn from the experiences and exchanges with the affected communities how a *global family for human dignity and solidarity* might be realised and what next steps need to be taken.

III. MEETINGS

1. Meeting of the Project Partners (Tuesday 30 August and follow-up meeting on Thursday 1 September)

Amita Bhide (Tata Institute of Social Sciences – TISS), Neela Dabir (Tata Institute of Social Sciences), Lysa John, (Executive Director of YUVA-Urban), Raju Bhide (Director of Programmes of YUVA Urban), Minar Pimple (Executive Director of People's Movement for Human Rights Education), Aye Aye Win (Executive Director of Dignity International).

2. Other related meetings:

Dr. Parasuraman, Director of TISS and the members of the Family and Child Welfare Department at TISS (Wednesday 31 August)

Various staff members at YUVA including Reshma Lude, YUVA Urban responsible for the informal sector, Avanti, working on the single women project at YUVA, Phoebe Simon, YUVA consulting; Aruna Pandey and Lavanya students from TISS posted at YUVA and the field conveners at YUVA including Mohan Chavan. (Monday 29 August – Thursday 1 September)

Visit to the YUVA centre, New Mumbai (Thursday 1 September)

3. Visit to the communities. (Monday 29 August – Thursday 1 September)

Ambujwadi, Malad
New Bhabhrekar Ngr – Kndivali in Malad
Mandala Community in Mankhurd
Meeting with the Women Rag pickers, Gatkopar
Meeting with Single Women in the slums, Gatkopar

Azad Mohalla, Wadala – meetings with Mr. Shakil (lawyer, and Shabana community activist) arranged by TISS

IV. CONCLUSIONS & FOLLOW-UP

1. Meeting with Project Partners on Capacity Building/Advocacy and Action Research on Budget, Right to Housing and Basic Services for the Poor in Mumbai

Human rights - the project should be holistic in manner and clearly rest on existing human rights standards relating to housing, water, sanitation and access to basic services. How do we apply human rights standards to the Mumbai situation and how can we build the capacity of various stake holders for budget analysis and encourage participatory budget analysis to be guided by human rights standards. In this respect project partners can draw on the inspiration and experience of gender budgeting where issues related to women are reflected in government and municipal budgets. In this particular case, as a part of the municipal budget or as a sector of the state budget where can we find provisions for social housing and are international standards being met?



Project Entry point – It was felt that the project needs a strong and a strategic entry point to start to tackle the issues which can subsequently be used as a launching pad to tackle other larger issues. It was felt that the project should first start with the Mumbai Urban Transport Plan (MUTP) as an entry point to tackle the issue of housing, water and sanitation. This entry point will allow the project to specifically touch on the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme (SRS) and also to allow the project partners to use MUTP as a launching pad to look more broadly at the large scale infrastructural projects such as the Mumbai Urban Infrastructural Plans (MUIP) which do not yet have a resettlement component and also even look at the Mumbai First (Mumbai Vision), a larger scale project that is resulting in large scale slum demolitions throughout Mumbai violating the rights to adequate housing of its residents.

The project partners felt that MUTP contains reasonably good conditions for the resettlement of slum and pavement dwellers - a document and a process to which the project partners have previously contributed - and that such resettlement provisions are lacking in other plans and projects.

The project will firstly examine the present and future people to be affected by MUTP and secondly and more importantly to push for a reasonable concrete and sound rehabilitation plan of MUTP to be used as a model for the rest of Mumbai.

Project areas

The project will cover three areas:

-  Action Research - Research and analysis that will answer: Where are the affected areas? Who are the affected people as a result of MUTP? What has happened to them? Have they been rehabilitated? And if so have they been rehabilitated in accordance with international standards? How much funding has been allocated for the rehabilitation component of MUTP? How many people are affected and are these funds adequate for the scale of the affected communities? How are these funds spent? Are affected communities participating in the decision making of fund usage that directly affects them? What is the comparison over the years since the first year of MUTP? Are the funds properly spent (transparency issue)? What do the conclusions mean for the future of MUTP? Is the implementation of the rehabilitation plan satisfactory? If not what improvements are needed? How does MUTP relate to other plans and how can the MUTP rehabilitation model be used for other major projects including MUIP and the Vision Mumbai?
-  Capacity Building – to build the capacity of the affected persons from the MUTP to realise their rehabilitation in accordance with international human rights standards. This could involve awareness raising and training activities and solidarity actions with

the affected persons to realise their rights. Subsequent to the meeting, YUVA has agreed to commit Mohan Chavan, one of their experienced field convenors, to lead the capacity building efforts related to the programme.

- 🚩 **Advocacy** – To use the results of the research to: improve on the implementation of the MUTP rehabilitation process; and to push for other projects to include a strong rehabilitation component in line with international human rights standards (e.g., Policy Statements relating to the rehabilitation component in other projects including MUIP at the state level and Vision Mumbai, or even to the extent of a National Rehabilitation Act at the national level. At the international level for institutions like the World Bank to adopt resettlement plans in accordance with HR standards clearly in their lending policies.)

Project partners - The four core project partners will be: at the national level Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS); Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA); and at the international level will be: People's Decade for Human Rights Education (PDHRE) and Dignity International.

The national partners are expected to undertake the action research, build capacity of affected communities and mobilise these communities and other national actors for advocacy based on the human rights vision and using the results of the action research. The international partners are expected to contribute the following: transfer of the Mumbai experience to other countries; bring to the project international human rights standards related to housing, water and sanitation issues; and lobby and work at the global level.

To make the project manageable, these four partners will be core partners and other organisations will be consulted and brought into the process as appropriate.

Time span – the first phase of the project will run for 18 – 24 months, and the follow-up and second phase will be developed in line with the conclusions from the first phase.

Staff capacity – core project staff to take responsibility for the three components (action research, capacity building and advocacy) will need to be hired. Exactly how many core staff and their responsibilities will be discussed between project partners. Other additional assistance (e.g., for data collection etc) can be brought in at a later stage as appropriate. The project team will also be developed.

FOLLOW-UP

- ✓ To make a first draft of the project proposal that can be shared among partners for discussion. (TISS)
- ✓ To develop a project team (YUVA and TISS).
- ✓ To develop a reading list of essential background material and documents related to the project including international standards, the contents of MUTP, any other existing surveys conducted on the rehabilitation schemes etc.
- ✓ To finalise the project proposal including budget by the end of September after which fundraising will begin. Action Aid, Oxfam were considered as potential funders for an initiative of this type and others will also be explored.
- ✓ To try to secure seed funds from Board of Research Studies of TISS.
- ✓ To send related international standards, successful cases of rehabilitation. Where can we learn? (PDHRE/Dignity)

2. Other related meetings

Dr. Parasuraman, Director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences – He had been fully briefed about the project and was very supportive. He outlined some possible linkages with other initiatives that are on going within TISS and he encouraged Dr. Neela Dabir to apply for seed funding from the Board of Research Studies to get the project started as we wait for further

funds. Dr. Parasuraman also gave an overview of the reform that he is trying to implement within TISS for human rights to be more visible in the programmes offered at TISS. This is great to hear.

Visit to the YUVA Centre, New Mumbai – This is a wonderful facility, conceptually very strong as every part, every room, every available space, every name had been well thought through to be in line with human rights principles and it is something that should be clearly promoted. There are 13 twin rooms and 2 triple rooms that can be used. We can consider organising one of the global or regional learning programmes at the YUVA Centre.

3. Meeting with the Affected Communities

The depth and the scale of poverty and challenges for urban housing are visible almost everywhere in Mumbai. One only needs to open the eyes to see and listen to one beat of the heart to feel the level and the extent of deprivation endured by a majority of the citizens. Within the eye's reach one can see sprawling slums, pavement dwellers living on the road edges breathing in lethal exhaust fumes. Approximately 8 million human beings in Mumbai are living in inhuman conditions.

In the slums one can easily find all kinds of professions from rag-pickers to lawyers, plumbers, electricians, vendors, musicians, entertainers etc all working hard to survive. The slum communities provide the labour force to the city that is thriving on their labour and yet they are not recognised as proper citizens.

Slums are among the most densely occupied areas of Mumbai in some cases 1000 families living on only 10,000 M² which means occupying a space of only 10M² per family. Within this small space, family members organise according to their needs. So for example, the space of 10M² may start with one family of four. If other branches of family arrive, then that space would be divided into two with another door knocked out and if there are yet other relatives arriving, a second floor may be put. People organise to make most of the space they have.

The quality of the structures vary from plastic coverings typical of many pavement dwellers all over the city to houses constructed with corrugated iron to more permanent structures built with brick and cement the latter of which can be found in communities like Gatkoper which has undergone a slum upgrading scheme.

Water and sanitation are big problem areas. Inequalities remain stark. Whilst wealthier parts of the city receive 24 hour water supply direct from at least one tap in every house, the slum areas have to do with one supply point per street that will be available for only a few hours a day, resulting in quarrels, long queues and further hardships for already deprived communities. Instead of the running water from the tap, slum dwellers have to work hard with the hand pumps to retrieve drops of water that might emerge from the tap. To add to this bad maintenance, wastage, water contamination are commonly reported.

In some slums like in Gatkoper, where slum upgrading has taken place, one can see evidence of more secure structures, and relatively good drainage and sewer systems. However in other areas – like Wadala - the drainage/sewage system is abysmal. The drains are blocked and filled to the brim not allowing any water or waste to pass through. To make matters worse, during the monsoon season open pipes overflow and sewage enters people's houses exposing the families to additional health hazards. Toilets are short in supply. It is common for a community of 10,000 families to share only two toilets. Whilst adults queue for the use of the toilets, children defecate on the rubbish heaps. Slums and the conditions in which they live are the sources of ill health and high mortality. The mortality rates of slum dwellers are more than double those of their counterparts in non slum households.

As if all the suffering is not enough, these communities who set up homes prior to 1995 have been forcibly removed. The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai and the Maharashtra state government have carried out widespread forced evictions of people dwelling in settlements which were erected after 1995 in Mumbai. This action was carried out with the help of the Mumbai Police Force. To this date and according to YUVA estimates over 90,000 homes have been bulldozed. No notice was given to the communities residing in these settlements and neither was the relocation option given to them.

Hundreds of thousands of people are thrown out of their homes in the winter season. I saw two examples of this - one of the Mandala community in Mankud and the other in Malad. The bulldozers accompanied by the police arrived without warning leaving no time for the slum dwellers to save their papers including their ration card, leaving them no proof of their residence. They are living around the demolished sites under open roof without shelter, food, livelihood and basic amenities. There are no medical facilities and water services have been stopped. Children are out of school, women exposed to unsafe conditions and people living in a state of insecurity. Some have tried to rebuild their homes on the same land. Recent large scale floods in Mumbai have added to the plight of the slum communities.

At our visit to the Mandala community, the members recounted on how they were forcibly evicted from their homes with police using bludgeons, destroying all their household possessions. There were many stories of personal tragedies. There was a story of an eight year-old girl that was squashed by a bull dozer. It was heartbreaking to hear her story and to see her injuries. She spent months in the hospital for several operations to remove various organs from inside her body to try and save for her what is physically possible to save. The shock was too much and since that day she who has been described as a gregarious girl now does not speak a word. These are clear cases where there are multiple and large scale violations of human rights - civil, political as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

At the international level, the well known human rights movements have debated and are debating still about the difficulty in using traditional campaign strategies of "name, blame and shame" for economic, social and cultural rights violations. After seeing the demolitions and after listening to the experiences of the communities, it is crystal clear that "name, blame and shame" methods for human rights campaigning can indeed work.

All is not without hope. At Mandala, I was inspired to see the determination of the community to protect their land and their property. Citizens have rebuilt shelter on the same land from where they have been forcibly evicted. Personalities like Medha Patkar from the Namada Movement, and organisations like YUVA are actively siding with the poor to protect their interest. International support also has to be mobilised.

There are countless heroes and heroines on the ground that are daily fighting for their dignity – faces that are normally invisible and voices that are not often heard. This is again similar to our previous experiences in Europe and to what Dignity has witnessed in places like the Kibera informal settlement in Nairobi. It is our hope that with their leadership – Dignity International - a global family for human dignity and solidarity can be established.

Follow-up

- ✓ To keep close contact with the national NGOs (e.g., YUVA), active and respected by the communities on the situation regarding the demolitions.
- ✓ To check what has been done by the international community, and the international response to date regarding the demolitions in Mumbai. In this respect to liaise with COHRE, HIC to see what international response might be appropriate after discussions with organisations like YUVA. In this respect to see if any alerts might be appropriate should there be any immediate threats for more demolitions as is

rumoured to be the case in Mandala, Mankud and other responses such as a presentation of the case to the UN Committee on ESCR during its meeting in November.

- ✓ To begin to develop an international campaign capacity within Dignity working closely and through strategic alliance with other international actors.
- ✓ To prepare a few stories of "Voices from the Ground" of people met during the visit including those from the Women Rag-pickers cooperative facilitated by YUVA.
- ✓ To develop and send photos back to the communities.

CONCLUSION

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Neola Dabir from TISS for the very warm hospitality, care and help she provided for this mission and to her colleague Dr. Amite Bide at TISS for sharing her insight and experience relating to the slum rehabilitation scheme.

Sincere thanks also go to YUVA staff. I feel that YUVA is one of those rare organisations who have really integrated human rights in their development work and from whom we have a great deal to learn. I would like to thank in particular Lysa John who with Reshma Ludbe helped organise the visit to the communities where I had the chance to interact with some of the community members. I was very impressed with the work of the field convenors who are on the front line of YUVA work and dealing in an admirable way with somewhat complicated on the ground situations. Thanks also to Minar who is always oozing with positive energy and ready to bring people and organisations together to work for common goals as has been the case with this one. I thank all members from the communities who took time to meet with me and to share their experiences. I have learnt a lot from them and have been inspired by their courage, determination and humanity. No one else has more interest to improve the situation than the affected community members themselves. Social change can come only with their determination and strong will for change. We can only assist them in this process.

On many occasions, I felt very angry at the level of human rights violations and helpless at the scale and complexity of it all. Interactions with the communities – the stories of resistance and their determination to protect and improve their livelihoods gave me hope. Following very constructive discussions with project partners, I believe that the project "Communities in Action: Budget Analysis, Housing Rights and Basic Services for the Poor in Mumbai" is sufficiently focussed enough (rehabilitation component of the MUTP) for the project to be manageable and at the same time act as a launching pad to deal with some of the larger issues of right to housing and basic services. I hope that through action research, capacity building of the affected communities and national/international advocacy envisaged in the project (that) we can make a contribution to the process of social change.

FURTHER READING MATERIALS

Utilisation of Slum Rehabilitation Scheme, A study conducted for the Slum Rehabilitation Authority, Dr. Amite Bide, Mr. P. K: Harahan, Ms. Swati Shinde, published by the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Deonar, Mumbai, December 2003.

Vision Mumbai – Transforming Mumbai into a world-class city, a summary of Recommendations by A Bombay First McKinsey Report, September 2003

Transforming Mumbai into a World Class City, First report of the Chief Minister’s Task Force, February 2004, Government of Maharashtra

The Mumbai Evictions (December 2004-March 2005): An Analysis of Impact in Twenty Eight Communities, YUVA, 2005-09-07

The Sum of All Actions: Dynamic Responses to the Housing Challenges of the Poor, paper by YUVA presented to the Regional Dialogue on Housing Rights, Bangkok 27-29 July 2004

Update on the Mumbai Evictions Response,

Security of Tenure: Mumbai’s Experience by Minar Pimple and Lysa John

Mumbai Urban Transport Project, http://www.mmrdamumbai.org/projects_mutp.htm

^[1] This is a report produced by the global consulting firm “McKinsey” and the report was commissioned by a corporate “NGO” by the name of “Mumbai First” group of corporate leaders.