

Urban Poverty Alleviation and Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM): A Study of Basic Services to Urban Poor (BSUP) Sub-Mission in Karnataka, India

CG Padma Kumari¹

Abstract

Majority of the urban population live in the nations of the Global South and Urban Poverty is growing as a global challenge; but little attention is being paid by the national governments to reduce it. In an effort to address the growing urban challenges, Indian Government came up with a mega project called Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). JNNURM's Second Sub-mission completely focuses on providing Basic Services to Urban Poor (BSUP). The present article intends to analyze the implementation of JNNURM's Basic services to Urban Poor Mission in Karnataka, its success and failures. The article analyses the projects with the help of both primary and secondary sources including that of field survey. The article presents a detailed analysis of findings and conclusions on the BSUP Projects and also suggests some recommendations to reduce Urban Poverty and to Improve Urban Governance.

Keywords: Basic services, Global South, JNNURM, Urban poverty, Urban governance

Introduction

Prime Minister's speech on JNNURM while launching the mission in 2005 elaborated the conditions of the urban poor in cities. "A major failure of city governance has been our inability to address the needs of the poor; Basic services like drinking water supply, sanitation, affordable housing and social services are not available to an increasing share of urban population. Consequently, large cities in countries like Latin America that are home to more than 50 percent of its population base have been able to address these problems through an effective system of property rights. Options like giving the urban poor land rights at affordable rates may see an increase in private investment. This in itself will improve the quality of living in our cities. We have to make the poor increasingly bankable. Property rights can be used as collateral for financing new investment in support of social development. Cities need people to provide services and our people need a decent place to live in". With these ideas JNNURM was launched to support infrastructure facilities and to better the lives of the urban poor.

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Government First Grade College, Chickballapur, Karnataka-562101, India.

E-mail Id: sspadmakumari@gmail.com

Orcid Id: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0503-0458>

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Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission has been one of the significant initiatives of Government of India, aiming at Urban Renewal; through meeting the infrastructure needs of the cities and improving the quality of life of the Urban Poor through a collection of projects and governance reforms. The JNNURM Mission Statement clearly states the objectives that include “The aim to encourage reforms and fast track planned development of identified cities. Focus is to be on efficiency in urban infrastructure and service delivery mechanisms, community participation, and accountability of ULNs/Parastatal agencies towards the cities”. The Mission has 13 optional and 10 mandatory reforms to be implemented by the state governments. The JNNURM mission started in selected 65 cities, the selection of the cities and towns appears very simple and no special criterion was fixed to assess the potential needs of the cities. The list includes 7 mega cities/UAs (Urban Agglomerations), 28 million-plus cities/UAs and 30 cities/UAs with less than one million population.

The JNNURM has four components covered under its two sub-missions. These include:

Sub-Mission for Urban Infrastructure and Governance (UIG)

Which was administered by the Ministry of Urban Development through the sub-Mission Directorate for Urban Infrastructure and Governance. This included another component that went by the name, Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns (UIDSSMT).

Sub-Mission for Basic Services to Urban Poor (BSUP)

Administered by Ministry of Housing and Poverty Alleviation. The thrust of the sub-mission was on integrated development of slums and providing basic services to Urban Poor. Another component of this sub-mission was Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP).

The duration of the mission was initially seven years; later on it was extended for further two years. The BSUP Mission began in 2006 and the term was over by 2013. Initially, it was extended for two years and in 2015 to facilitate the completion of the ongoing projects it was extended till 31st March 2017. On completion of the Mission period, it was expected that ULBs and parastatal agencies will have to achieve some expected outcomes. The article research focuses on the study of the success of BSUP Projects in Karnataka and the impact of BSUP Sub-Mission on Urban Poverty Alleviation.

In Karnataka, the State Government has designated the Karnataka Urban Infrastructure Development and Finance Corporation (KUIDFC) as the nodal agency for the implementation of the JNNURM. The key functions of the nodal agency are managing grants for the Mission, placing proposals before the State-Level Steering Committee (SLSC) for approval, maintaining the revolving fund, monitoring physical and financial progress of the projects and overseeing the reform process as agreed in the Memorandum of Agreement with the Government of India. In Karnataka, under JNNURM two cities have been selected Bengaluru and Mysuru; so the present research completely focuses on the study of 2nd Sub-Mission for Basic Services to Urban Poor in Bengaluru and Mysuru. Two agencies were responsible for the implementation of BSUP Projects in these two cities.

In Karnataka KUIDFC was identified as the nodal agency for the JNNURM Projects. The Second Sub-Mission, Basic Services to Urban Poor was assigned to BBMP and KSDB in Bengaluru. In Mysuru, Mysuru City Corporation and KSCDB, Mysuru have implemented BSUP Projects. The total number of slums, dwelling units’ constructed and the different implementing agencies involved in Karnataka are as follows:

Table 1

S. No.	Implementing Agency	Different Phases	No. of DUs’	No. of Slums
1	BBMP and KSPHC	In all the three phases	1804	27
2.	KSDB, Bengaluru	Ist Phase	11,317	26
		IIInd Phase	2,913	12
		IIIrd Phase	3,233	12
3.	KSDB, Mysuru	Ist Phase	2,788	17
		IIInd Phase	2,500	18
		IIIrd Phase	1,040	01
4.	MCC, Mysuru	In three phases	1,806	45 wards
5.	Grand Total		27,925	158

Computed from primary data

Findings Regarding the JNNURM and BSUP Projects

1. The main objective of the BSUP Sub-Mission of JNNURM was achieving “slum free” cities and the basic policy documents and guidelines/toolkits that signal a new approach to slum development that includes housing, infrastructure and land titling (security of tenure). The research focused on many inconsistencies, even distortions in the ground practice.
2. In the overall allocations small towns and cities have been neglected, metros have been given maximum importance.
3. The policy documents of the JNNURM lay stress on creating slum free cities, inclusive participation and active participation of the civil society organizations. However, this isn't replicated in reality.
4. The mission has completely neglected the factor of capacity building of the local bodies. In practice this has led to the ULBs to contract tasks out to private consultants, who lack accountability and co-ordination.
5. The JNNURM mission focuses much on security of tenure and assumes security of tenure is associated exclusively with issuing property titles. The option of providing security of tenure has been left to the discretion of state government. The authorities have decided to give only possession rights rather than a legal title.

Findings Regarding Implementing Agencies, CDP and DPR Related Issues

1. The implementing agencies confirm that all the guidelines have been followed strictly. Delays in the beginning of the projects were because of the non-availability of the land. In some areas the slum dwellers refused to vacate their jopdis. Initially, without addressing these problems, people were consulted and their consent was taken in order to prepare the CDPs and DPRs.
2. In the beginning stage of the projects the implementing agencies have assured that they will finish the construction work within six months; but they took two years to finish the construction and further two additional years to allot the houses. This allotment was without any basic services in the beginning, such as that of water. After occupying the houses the implementing agencies are providing water connections and power connections.
3. The CDP is silent with regard to funds for transit arrangements. Except in a few slums under BBMP, the authorities have provided no such transitory stay arrangements. Under such circumstances the households have made their own arrangements.
4. The implementing agencies suffered from dearth of the staff to implement the projects. Frequent transfer of commissioner and clerical staff further worsened the problem. Consequently, frequent transfer of officials in the BSUP further burdened the implementing agencies.
5. Implementing agencies feel that JNNURM was launched without any preparation from their side. Proper training and guidelines were not given to them; As a result, they had to take help from various NGOs and consultants.
6. Corporators and MLAs have no formal role according the CDP. Even the role of the Civil Society Organizations have been not mentioned anywhere in the CDP.
7. The policy measures project; State is a facilitator but the people look forward to the local bodies as the actors responsible for the provision of services. This contract model of housing and fragmented role of different agencies has sidelined the role of urban local bodies.
8. Biometric system of identification failed to freeze the slums. As the projects were delayed many people negotiated with their leaders and implementing agencies on their eligibility; because there were a lot of differences in numbers actually shown in DPRs and implementation agencies lists. In many cases original beneficiaries have been excluded.
9. The costs of providing legal title to beneficiaries have been not clearly mentioned in both CDP and DPRs. Even both the documents are silent regarding the property tax; which are high for multistory constructions.
10. Implementations of reforms were delayed because several reforms were beyond the mandate and purview of the ULB or state Urban Development Department and entailed coordination with multiple agencies, departments and legislations. Moreover, since no funds have been earmarked for implementation of the reforms many ULBs have struggled hard to implement reforms like accounting reforms and GIS based property taxation, which require massive investment in technology and training of the human resources (Thornton 2011).
11. There is a large gap between the policies and

practices in the construction of the dwelling units. The JNNURM documents lay emphasis on participatory democratic approach; but the ground realities clearly narrates the ways in which the projects were arbitrarily imposed on the slum dwellers. Slum residents were not at all interested in BSUP Projects. They were not interested in relocation and denied the flat model houses.

12. Local leaders, corporators and government officials have convinced the residents; assuring quality and well constructed houses with basic amenities. In the beginning all the five pilot slums, where BBMP was to start BSUP houses, the projects were delayed because of the protests from the slum dwellers.
13. Only a few residents in Medar's Block, Mysuru and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Slum in Bengaluru said they are happy with the flat model. They feel secure in close neighborhoods and it has improved co-operation among them. Because of non-availability of the land they are ready to adjust with other residents.
14. Surveys and interviews are not at all essential to assess the quality of the BSUP houses. A cursory glance at the overall structure is enough. The low quality construction material used is visible everywhere. Poor plumber work has led to the leakages of all pipes from the upper stories of apartments, leaking floors and roofs, damp and cracked walls, low quality plastic doors, dirty and unhygienic courtyard behind every dwelling units, overflowing manholes and unbearable smell around the dwelling unit all provide a picture of the status of BSUP Projects. In many dwelling units, the units had no glasses in their windows. Many houses have been completed with only framed windows without fitting glass.

Conclusions

1. JNNURM's Basic Services to the Urban Poor Mission has failed to address Urban Poverty, due to shortcomings in design, such as insufficient attention to security of tenure, lack of adequate and qualitative basic services and lack of community participation.
2. Planning and designing of the programme is very poor and they have been prepared without understanding the ground realities of the slum life and urban poverty. This has led to the dissatisfaction among the beneficiaries.
3. The BSUP sub-mission lacks inclusive strategy and does not have a pro-poor approach. The expected outcomes are not achieved, as there is no scope for reallocation of resources or increased access of resources to the urban poor.
4. Rather helping the urban poor, the scheme has benefitted real estate mafia, civil contractors and immediate profit making ventures. The mission links reform based agenda to the funds for financing infrastructure projects and service delivery.
5. The mission has failed to achieve almost all the reforms because they aimed at improving urban governance and making ULB's financially sound with sustained capacities for undertaking new programmes which has been completely neglected.
6. The urban planning has long been centralized in India. The JNNURM is not an exception. Like the previous urban reform strategies it is also a top-down strategy, almost denying any significant role to the states and ULB's.
7. Different actors, different agencies, different amenities, different costs and different style of constructions have made BSUP Projects a big confusion to understand and assess. In Karnataka, the BBMP was ill prepared for implementing BSUP Sub-Mission (L. Kamath 2010). It was not equipped with adequate technical staff to maintain a programme of this magnitude.
8. Not learning from examples from the past the Government still preferred housing as the remedy to reduce the Urban Poverty. The projects laid more emphasis on quantitative outputs rather than qualitative out comes.
9. Notwithstanding the basic purpose of 74th Constitutional Amendment Act the JNNURM policy pronouncements equated ULB's with parastatal agencies. In preparing CDP's and DPR's also parastatals took the lead.
10. Mission has suffered from lack of integrated approach; related issues like land, health, education and employment are being handled by separate Ministries at the central level and no strategy towards convergence of the same has been formulated.
11. JNNURM has failed completely in respect to 'community participation'. Overnight slums were removed and people were left on the roads without any accommodation. In some cases of re-location they were shifted to other houses that were already constructed.
12. Cities have also chosen not to invest in BSUP extensively; thrust of JNNURM has been on infrastructure and buses; options of micro financing, community funds, and community organizations have not been explored yet.
13. The alarming conclusion is that instead of enabling

financially healthier cities to access the capital market, JNNURM support is supporting the market by giving resources to them directly and disproportionately, leaving out financially weaker cities. Not just the market, JNNURM is replacing inter-state and intra-state fiscal devolutions too.

14. It is hard to believe why both the ministries have paid tokenistic and half-hearted attention to the critical task of on-ground monitoring and evaluation of the JNNURM and its sub-missions. The ministries have relied on SLNAs; which was also responsible for implementing the projects.
15. A critical reason for poor performance with regards to reforms is that the rationale for JNNURM reforms and what they are expected to achieve has never been adequately debated with States, ULBs and the citizens at large. For instance, it is not known whether the repeal or addition of a particular law will benefit or reduce utility.
16. The rigid funding structure of the JNNURM with its focus on competitive, first come-first serve resource allocations and consultant driven process also served to increase costs since projects were prepared hurriedly in order to secure approval instead of focusing on the content. In its approach to reforms, the JNNURM has followed the same path of the earlier urban programmes that mandate reforms but don't clarify the outcomes or learn from cities' performance.
17. Dr. Sivaramakrishnan argues that the need to control urban land is a major reason why urban planning functions continued to be controlled by the state government rather than municipalities. The JNNURM has not done anything to change this trend. The shift of emphasis from the provision of basic amenities for the poor to integrated multi-storied housing projects inevitably brought in real estate developers and enabled them to corner a large part of the slum land that was then used for commercial purposes. In a rush to give entry to private developers all the pro-poor reforms were neglected despite repeated arguments by citizens' groups and associations of urban poor that land is the major issue in urban areas rather than housing (Mahadevia, 2006; Hazards Centre, 2007, 2008; Kamath, 2012).

Recommendations Regarding the JNNURM

1. The first and foremost need of the reform agenda should be to strengthen the municipal domain with town planning; that too with transparent and accountable frameworks as ULBs' are closer to the people than the Governments. The argument that

ULBs' are inefficient and dishonest and they cannot be entrusted with town planning has no rational basis.

2. Steps should be taken to come out of the 'real estate' approach to urban management. It is because of this, despite clear cut constitutional provision that urban planning and town planning form part of the ULBs domain; central and state governments have retained this power. The relation between the functional and financial domain has to be understood and the ULBs' have to be allowed to mobilize these resources.
3. The well-planned development of small cities can help disperse rural migration and prevent overcrowding of the metropolitan centers. JNNURM funds can make a difference in these smaller towns. However, the bulk of the allocation has gone to metros.
4. While addressing the urban poverty authentic data and definitions have to be given importance. Collecting authentic data based on urban poor should be done first; as Urban Poverty not only in India but all over the third world is underestimated and misrepresented. A good Poverty Alleviation Programme is one that covers all the facets of deprivation.
5. JNNURM in its vision is laudable, it has attempted to focus on issues that are crucial for Indian cities, but it has failed in its approach. One size fits all approach doesn't work in a country like India wherein the level of urbanization and its dynamics differ exponentially across the nation. There is a need far for greater bottom up planning, for greater capacity building and far greater land holding in small and medium towns, than what is at present being offered. Such a proper approach should take care of all the sections of society and work towards building an inclusive society.

Conclusion

Urban Poverty can only be reduced significantly; when urban poor groups and their organizations can influence the government agencies they are motivated to support them. When the poor have the space to design and implement their own initiatives they can scale up with government support. The experiments of the Asian coalition for Housing Rights(ACHR), on community led Urban Poverty Reduction Strategies clearly prove the present system of formal commercial and development finance is too top-down and unmoving, further unable to reach the people in need. Flexible, bottom-up approaches are essential to the needs of the poor that need to be sustained. Low-income groups need to act

collectively to challenge the formal processes. They need to organize themselves financially by the creation of community development funds in order to maximize the benefits these funds need to be properly scaled. These types of funds increase local flexibility and address the specific needs of the community; consequently, this process reduces the burden of the discontinued funding of the government agencies. The low-income groups should organize themselves to challenge the process of exploitation, deprivation, dispossession, discrimination and disadvantages. Networking between peoples groups, organized communities and professional agencies, NGO's and governments at various levels including officials and politicians will be an alternative way to reduce urban poverty. The poor have to become strong; they need to answer their basic needs themselves. They need to realize that solutions to their problems have to come from within the community not from outside. Good local Governance, inclusion of urban poor groups and organizations, can considerably reduce poverty.

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