COMMUNITY-LED BASELINE SURVEYS AS A TOOL FOR THE RESETTLEMENT & REHABILITATION (R&R) COMPONENT FOR THE MUMBAI URBAN TRANSPORT PROJECT 2 (MUTP2)

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Abstract

This paper describes how community-managed data collection can produce secure tenure for slum dwellers while ensuring the effective resettlement of thousands of households to make way for implementation of large-scale redevelopment programs. In the example cited here, involving a large-scale, World Bank-funded transport infrastructure project in Mumbai, federations of the urban poor collected large amounts of data, and subsequently used this information for their collective negotiations with land authorities, producing solutions that work for both the city and the affected communities. Data collection began in the year 2000, and by 2008, about 18,000 families being relocated voluntarily, ensuring that the World Bank-supported infrastructure project could begin as planned. The paper concludes by describing key lessons for relocations related to major urban infrastructure development. In particular, it highlights how large relocations in development projects can be made more effective and efficient if they are managed through grassroots organisations formed through community-based data collection. This suggests a much greater need for investment in building capacity in affected community through such organisations and processes well before implementation of the project.

Key Words:
Resettlement and relocation, baseline survey, resettlement implementation plan, community organization, data collection

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HISTORY and BACKGROUND:

The National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF) was founded in the 1970s, as a grassroots social movement of leaders of informal settlement communities in Mumbai and subsequently nearly 100 cities throughout India. The Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) was established in 1984. SPARC initially worked with pavement dwellers, the poorest residents of the city who literally lived on the city’s sidewalks.

SPARC and NSDF supported the creation of an association of women pavement dwellers called Mahila Milan (MM) in 1986. While sharing the linear nature of houses lining the tracks and roads, the households along the railway tracks, unlike pavement dwellers, the poorest residents of the city who live on the city’s footpaths (sidewalks), had more stable living conditions, and were not as prone to constant demolitions although they faced the possibility of such evictions all the time. They had more stable jobs and better regular incomes, were better educated, and their children attended local schools. This stability created more discipline in their organization, as reflected in the way they and their leadership managed their activities and their ability to manage the details of the large-scale resettlement e.g. they kept very thorough and systematic records, their book keeping was impeccable and every meeting documented.

Although pavement dwellers were more vulnerable than railway slums and had worked very creatively at exploring relocation options and planned ways to build the capacity of their members to explore these possibilities, they knew that their process to find land in the city would take much longer. They demonstrated solidarity and generosity when they supported the efforts of the RSDF to build the capacity of the railway slum dwellers to organise and create a voice and identity for themselves.

In 1987-89, the Indian railways asked the Department of Housing of the Government of Maharashtra (GOM) to undertake a census of slum dwellers along the railway tracks in Mumbai. The GOM appointed SPARC and NSDF to map the informal settlements along the western, central and harbour railway lines in the city. The 1987-89 survey of the railway slums was the first point of engagement between the state government and SPARC/NSDF. As a result of that first survey, the Railway Slum Dwellers Federation (RSDF) was formed. The mapping of the railway settlements was done jointly by NSDF, RSDF and MM. Settlements were identified according to electric poles along the railway tracks, which resulted in all households receiving a unique address that allowed them, for the first time, to receive mail delivery. The experience also increased the organizational capacity and effectiveness of the slum dweller organizations; regular meetings were held close to the tracks to address issues that motivated the residents to organise and find long-term alternative housing options beyond or away from the railway tracks. Through its contacts with the railway communities, Mahila Milan also began creating community savings groups among the residents.

NSDF/RSDF made the most of the data collection process. When the final report was issued for the government, the federations organised a model house exhibition, presenting affordable housing models designed by the federations. This was the first public event for the railway slum dwellers and their leadership to showcase their work and
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Mumbai Urban Transport Project 2 (MUTP2):

The MUTP project was conceptualized during the period 1994-2002 with a vision to meet the increasing transport demands of Mumbai. The Project consisted of two components:

1. A component for transport infrastructure, encompassing engineering and technical aspects of road, rail and bus development (Transport Component) and

2. A resettlement and rehabilitation component (“R & R Component”) for residents and businesses affected and displaced by rail and road expansions. At its inception, MUTP was the largest urban resettlement project the Bank had ever undertaken in the world, with the exception of China. At the time of project appraisal, it was estimated that at least 80,000 people and 13,000 households would need to be resettled.

3. The Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA), the agency responsible for "planning and coordination of development activities" in Mumbai, was authorized to implement the R & R Component with the support of the land authority which was the Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation (MRVC) and other agencies.

As a result of their past experience, in 1995 the Government of Maharashtra again invited SPARC and NSDF to participate in the discussions involving the resettlement of slum dwellers along the railway tracks and proposed link roads for MUTP 2, a large-scale, multi-year project supported by the World Bank to improve the traffic and transportation infrastructure in Mumbai.

It is significant to note that, as a result of long and intense negotiations with the organizations representing the slum dwellers, the WB agreed to modify its procurement requirements to accommodate the aspirations of the affected slum dwellers to undertake the entire relocation planning and execution without compromising the outcomes planned for the infrastructure works.

The participation of the affected communities did not slow down the resettlement process, but played an important part in managing the foreseeable risks. Affected households supported the process, there was no political interference, and the local authorities did not resort to using eviction squads to move families, a first in the history of large-scale resettlements in a city like Mumbai.

The most famous cartoonist in India, R K Lakshman even included the plight of the railways in their inability to remove slums. There was a decadal deadlock between the railways the state governments and the communities residing in slums along the railway track. Although they constantly faces evictions and threats for evictions, they remained doggedly located on the sites. This was simply because they had no where else to go. As a result their homes were always makeshift, they had no water sanitation amenities, and contently faced the probable death of family members crossing tracks.

After the formation of the RSDF (Railway Slum Dwellers federation) NSDF and Mahila Milan tried hard to get the state government to consider relocation, but it was the possibility of a world bank loan for upgrading public transport that first led to the possibility of relocation.

Paradoxically, it was the inability of the railways to consider relocation and other procurement issues that had delayed MUTP II for over 14 years. Clearly the organization of the poor and their readiness to relocate that produced the project!
Here are a list of issues for which a consensus was reached, and which did not fall under usual World Bank R&R practice:

1. The Government of Maharashtra (GOM) invited SPARC/NSDF to be on the committee created to work on the **resettlement policy**. For the first time an NGO representing slum dwellers’ interests was invited to participate in such a committee.

2. The **baseline socio economic survey** of the affected families was implemented by SPARC/NSDF/MM. For the World Bank it was unusual to have urban poor federations carry out their own base line survey. Normally, the World Bank contracted such tasks to research organisations or market research companies. This change involved extended negotiations with the World Bank’s procurement team, who were eventually convinced mostly because of the trust and confidence displayed by the GOM in SPARC and the slum dwellers federations, trust that had been created in the government’s earlier work with the organizations.

3. The questionnaire was designed according to the requirements of the local communities and the World Bank both. SPARC/NSDF had to redo the initial surveys for the first three settlements several times before they were acceptable to the World Bank and the local authorities. This instilled a discipline and a rigour within the slum dwellers federation, which came to understand and value the importance of collecting accurate, high-quality data, not only for its own sake, but also because accurate data created trust in the eyes of the World Bank and the Indian authorities. The stakes for the federation leadership with respect to its own constituents were high as well, as it sought to ensure that no family was neglected when new houses were allocated to the resettled slum dwellers.

4. Usually, the World Bank procurement prefers activities within a particular area (in this case the resettlement aspect of the project to be undertaken by different agencies. So one organisation undertakes the baseline socio economic surveys, another plans relocation and the third executes it. It was agreed that SPARC on behalf of the RSDF would undertake all activities for railway slums to be relocated.

The challenges of getting community managed data collection to accommodate demands of the World Bank and the Government agencies.

While the details of the steps in the survey are presented after this, the huge learning on the side of the community networks and the alliance on one hand and the bank staff reviewing the surveys on the other were huge. Ordinarily this process would have ended in a breaking of the process.

1. In the past alliance surveys were undertaken to build federations, negotiate with cities and develop strategies to serve priorities of the communities. There were no external demands or expectations. In this survey the World Bank staff had very alien demands from the federations perspective.

2. It took very sensitive dialogue between the state officials, bank staff and the alliance leadership to produce a process that worked for all. (see article David and 3 Goliaths).

3. The alliance had to withstand pressure to deliver surveys and formal agencies of the state and the World Bank had to be made to understand that there were processes to get a community sign off after data was scrutinised.

4. Once it became known that the survey was the basis of alternative housing, many challenged the list and a grievance redressal process had to be instituted, (see box later).

5. The ritual of getting state agencies land owners and federation to sign off was delayed in some instances but the lists were acceptable to all which also proved valuable at the time of relocation.

**Yet the most valuable aspect of this process was that:**

A. **The alliance has now standardized its data collection even for itself on this basis.**

B. **The data collected by communities is now official in many instances, and alliance occasionally gets contracted to do surveys.**
Making a difference through the data collection process:

Steps in the baseline survey:

House counting and numbering for every settlement:

Every door of every house was marked in chalk and then in paint. This created the space and time to manage and settle any controversies between families and their community and the NSDF leadership with respect to who was the rightful owner of a structure. Marking each structure invariably created anxiety within community members as every family wanted to ensure that they were included and not excluded. Some also saw this as an opportunity to get more than their fair share. Bringing this information in the open and making it transparent opened the room for clarification, verification and managing household concerns that normally get lost in mundane surveys. It also forced the community to take responsibility for some of the choices they made to resolve cases with complexities.

This was a big leap in the trust generated inside the community as they felt that their grievances were heard, and that there was a transparent system to address grievances without resorting to bribery. This initial engagement with the community supported the organizational voice of the slum dweller communities.

Cadastral maps for each settlement were produced and marked with every structure number. By marking the 30ft line from the railway tracks the leaders were able to immediately identify which families were affected and would have to move. This map used colour codes to identify, which households would move to which location. The phases of resettlement and who would move when were also marked. Later, the cadastral map was consulted by the grievance redressal committee for resolving new claims filed after resettlement.

Settlement-wise registers were produced with information of every household based on WB stipulated norms and standards. These registers became the basis for allocations and for grievance redressal and were used the most during the resettlement process.

Alignment of all numbers on all documents:

The final product ensured that the number on the door of the house matched the number on the cadastral map and the number of the household on the settlement register and the family ID card. These were the four types of information that ensured smooth and speedy responses to deal with the sheer scale and complexity of managing large numbers of households and different vested interests during the process of relocation.
A new protocol was added to this base line survey, which included verification of the data. The data was scrutinised and verified by the railway authorities, the state government and the slum dwellers federation. This involved random checks of the household questionnaire by all these three parties. Once verified, the three parties signed each register.

The federation introduced the family ID card, a document bearing a photograph of every household in front of their uniquely numbered structure. This ID card served as evidence that all the members of the family lived in the structure. Each project-affected family (PAP), the implementation authority (MMRDA) and the NSDF all received an ID card of each household. All three parties verified and signed all three of the ID cards.

Ensuring participation of NSDF/RSDF throughout the entire resettlement process until after people moved into their homes: SPARC/NSDF made the case for their participation to continue beyond base line survey and to be included in the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) and Resettlement Implementation Plan (RIP)

Since SPARC was on the committee set up for the resettlement policy and made the case for the importance of the local federations to be involved ensuring their participation through all the phases. Keeping the local organisations at the centre of the process was an essential part of maintaining their confidence and trust in the process. This was new to the WB as its procurement rules generally only allow for separate contractors and consultants for the different resettlement steps.

Given the demonstrated ability of the alliance to facilitate relocation, these changes seems essential for the success of the process. After all, just data collection does not ensure that the communities would be ready to move.

The knowledge and experience in the base line survey gave the alliance a better understanding of the aspirations of the local people and their situation. Since NSDF was involved with working with many of these communities and their leadership long before MUTP, they were the best positioned to carry out the subsequent steps and weigh the pros and cons of the different options and their implications with the community and with the implementing authorities. This also ensured that NSDF/RSDF shared and managed a larger share of the risks in this project.

The state government, the Indian Railways and the World Bank staff also began to review their strategy in lieu of the insights from the surveys and the power of participation it produced.
Executing relocation:

The federation along with the government authorities worked out a phased implementation plan based on the available options. Land is a scarce commodity in the city of Mumbai and since there was not enough permanent housing available to immediately resettle all the affected households, the RAP included two options for shifting. However, the policy recommendation made by the alliance that all relocations should be 4 stations either way from their location was included. And 90% of households were provided that in their relocation.

Clearly while plots were available the tenements were not constructed. So households were shifted to permanent buildings (which were already available) where the location worked for them, others were moved to transit housing designed and managed by federations where households moved with an understanding they would get accommodated at locations that were acceptable the,

Transit options are always very risky. The World Bank due to past experience, was not confident that households relocated to transit housing would ultimately find permanent housing. However, because NSDF/RSDF/MM were involved, the families understood the implications of the available options. They jointly carried this risk of moving to transit structures so that the project could begin in a timely manner.

NSDF/RSDF along with the relocation authorities developed a set of transparent criteria to work out which settlements moved to transit, and each settlement worked out who would live where within the transit locations. RSDF and NSDF Mahila Milan would only enter this discussions if there were conflicts.

The process produced amazing precedents. No police were involved. Households chose when to move, the federation arrange transport for them, they all knew which house was allocated to them and moved there. NSDF and Mahila Milan along with MMRDA staff helped with necessary documentation and often the giving of the key to the house was done with fan fare and by some dignitary to acknowledge the amazing process.

It was not as if there were no challenges. Households had to deal with transport challenges to go to work; children had to move to new schools; ration cards voting registration had to be changed and the state machinery always took its own time; water and electivity were always problematic in many ways.

All this created stress, but in the end everyone who was entitled to relocation got a home.
Once the buildings were ready the households once again moved their household effects to new locations. Every household got funds to hire vehicle and move.

As households moved it was in an atmosphere of joy and celebration. Everyone got the meal from the federation on that first day while they moved.

Each resident knew which house they were mobbing to as this was decided before they arrived, and a team from RSDF NSDF and Mahila Milan were present on site to assist them along with staff from MMRDA.

Some transit camps were demolished, others had newer people move in.

Reflections on the process.

1. All strategies and processes have their basis on the rigor and transparency of the surveys.

2. Data about the household in their original location now got linked to where they lived in their new location in the buildings.

3. Every 50 households in the older registers of households formed a Mahila Milan group that saved, lent money to each other and had leaders who helped the households with their documentation. These processes continued in the new locations.

4. As cooperative societies got registered, their register of members derived from the survey formed the basis for the state governments registration process.

5. Similarly voters registration and ration cards were also similarly transferred. Of course everything took time, but what is important that the same data set helped all the post relocation.

Yet the most valuable aspect of this entire process has been that community provided data got accepted as baseline for relocation and secure tenure.

In cities where the infrastructure deficit is huge and where presently evictions occur because of need of the city to remove households to put in infrastructure there is now a precedent to demonstrate how provision of secure housing actually facilitates timely and efficient project execution as well as fulfills the state commitment to house the most vulnerable.

Many cities in India, and equal numbers of government internationally have come to see the work of the alliance to explore this model of relocation based on community enumeration of households to be affected by the Project.
After the relocation, there were huge challenges of garbage. Households used to throwing waste from homes continued to do that, Mahila Milan formed before people moved took charge and started helping people floor by floor to change their habits. In many places it took upto 3-5 years to make change work.

NSDF and Mahila Milan continue to visit all location after relocation to address the challenges and issues residents face and work with them to approach necessary officials and agencies to change the situation. Very slow and difficult issues to push institutions to work for the poor.

Every household gets documentation in which their share of the cooperative which is registered is their tenement. It is in the joint name of wife (first name and husband second name).

Mt Sukhtankar, the retired chief secretary of Maharashtra, who was the Chair of the RR policy formulation is invited regularly to see how the process has moved after the recommendation and remains one of the champions of the process.

These events are held on the main streets of various relocation locations.
Lessons learned in the MUTP 2 process:

1. The base-line survey became the basis of creating a long-term relationship with the settlement that continued through the post-resettlement phase. Building this initial relationship with the communities and their leadership became the basis for future engagements with the affected community, e.g. SPARC/NSDF proved that they had the capacity to carry out such a baseline survey for large numbers according to World Bank norms and standards.

2. NSDF/MM helped create a voice for the Railway slum dwellers federation who participated closely in the R&R process. They were able to include the affected communities and their leadership (RSDF) from the start to the end of the resettlement process.

3. Engagement of SPARC/NSDF with government built the trust and working relationship much needed to implement the project jointly in a timely manner. This relationship created the readiness from the side of community, the government, the land authorities and the bank.

4. By its sheer practice and organisational capacity the NSDF/RSDF were able to convince some members in government and the Task team leader (TTL) to witness and support a community driven process. Openness and flexibility from the side of the leadership of GOM, Railway authorities, NSDF and the World Bank team helped create the environment conducive for the participation of the communities. For both the World Bank and the GOM the urban poor federations were not usual partners.

5. The MUTP 2 resettlement made the case for the kind of early investment needed in such large-scale projects. Building the capacity of the affected communities and their organisations long before the project (implementation) should be seen as a positive investment and should be included in all future Project Appraisals.

6. NSDF’s experience and capacity put them in a positive position. They had concrete solutions each step of the way. These solutions were to the benefit of the project and the affected communities. This built trust with GOM and MMRDA (Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority) who relied heavily on SPARC/NSDF for problem solving on the ground and who also looked to them to manage the more complex issues of shifting, e.g. it was the NSDF leadership that suggested a two phased shifting of families - first to transit and then to permanent houses so that the project could start as scheduled.

7. The long-term perspective of SPARC/NSDF/MM helped manage the R&R process more holistically and addressed more than what was required by the project. By becoming part of the process from the stage of the baseline survey till the post resettlement phase, NSDF/RSDF/MM made the process of R&R much smoother and hassle free for the affected communities, the government, the railway authorities and the Bank.

8. By changing some of the usual practices followed in World Bank R&R processes, MUTP 2 became a good example of the goodwill that can be gained by including affected communities from the beginning to the end of the R&R process. e.g. SPARC/NSDF was assigned as the sole source agency to create and manage the transit camp until people moved to their permanent structures.

9. There was a grievance redressal committee in place. Having proper and clear information and records made the entire process of grievance redressal transparent, clear and open to scrutiny.
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