

Promoting Resilient Housing and Secure Tenure using Participatory Approach

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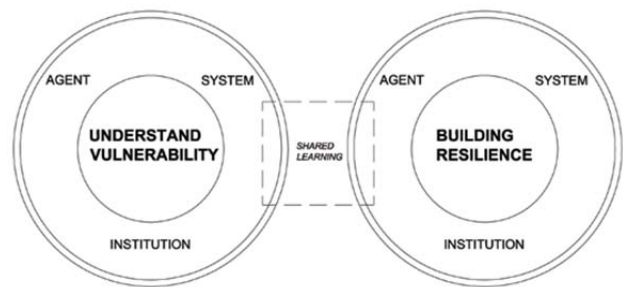
Abstract—Land management is the first step to being taken before any housing construction. Exclusion of low-income groups from land management and planning usually leads to informal housing development, which is often the most vulnerable to climate related risks, particularly when occupying hazardous areas such as hillsides, riverbanks, and flood plains, for example on low elevation coastal zones. Tenure security is an essential element in building community resilience and addressing urban inequalities. If both women and menheaded households enjoy secure land and housing, they are more likely to plan ahead and invest in resilience measures. Adapting existing housing to current and future climate threats is usually simpler and more effective than relocating communities. Participatory upgrading and capacity development strengthens resilience while allowing residents to remain in place without disruption. This paper focuses on showing that a collaborative effort can ensure sustainable resettlement in a disaster resilient housing complex through a participatory approach to respond to the habitat needs of the urban poor following their eviction, an event that affected the lives of almost 43 families in Koyerdara Christianpara Settlement of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. This paper has shown that when given the right tools and knowledge, local governments, in partnership with the affected communities, can successfully address urban housing issues when they arise. More importantly, the Koyerdara Christianpara eviction and their resettlement process have shown that when mobilized, represented and empowered, slum communities can influence the decisions that affect them, and in doing so, sustainably improve their own lives and livelihoods.

Keywords: Tenure Security, Urban Poor, Participatory Approach, Disaster Resilient Housing, Sustainable Resettlement.

Introduction

Bangladesh is a low-income country with substantial poverty, inequality and deprivation where the increasing rate of migration, in concurrence with natural population growth has added a new challenge to accommodate and manage the growing demands on essential urban services and amenities. Significant portions of the urban population continue to live below poverty line with little access to the city's economic, social and physical services. In most of the major cities urban informal settlements have become the main location of extensive poverty. Informal settlements and urban poverty are not just a manifestation of a population explosion and demographic change, but an expression of failure of housing

policies, laws and delivery systems, as well as of national development plans and urban policies (UN-HABITAT, 2003). Moreover, these informal settlements are more prone to damage due to climatic disaster as the building materials & methods lack both strength & efficiency. Therefore, the key challenge is how to offer land tenure security to the slum dwellers while ensuring climate resilience.



Building resilient framework.

Source: Based on ISET (2012) and Tyler and Moench (2012).

Aside from physical improvements made by reconstruction, people's basic needs also need to be met in both the short- and long-term. In addition, housing reconstruction is considered as one part of a continuous process that shapes people's lives, occurring both before and after disasters. In this sense, housing can be seen as a process rather than product. The discussions highlight the importance of housing reconstruction with tenure security for building resilience, which was the driving factor behind this research.

Tenure Security

Security of tenure, which is defined as the right of individuals and groups to effective protection by the government against forced evictions, plays a crucial role in urban poverty reduction. As per the secure tenure campaign of UN-HABITAT, 'security of tenure is a fundamental requirement for the progressive integration of the urban poor in the city and one of the basic components of the right to housing.'

Tenure security can help the affected families escape from poverty by taking away their fear of eviction and helping them increase their income through investment and business opportunities, for example through using land titles as collateral for loans. In addition, tenure security for the poor serves as a foundation to pursue other rights – such as rights to services for health and education, and rights to occupy or sell a house or land – for social well-being and for improving housing conditions. Secure tenure for the urban poor is an important dynamic in poverty reduction. Secure tenure is necessary for:

- Requirement for progressive life.
- Legal protection.
- Improved shelter, social inclusion, improved services.
- Source of identity, status and political power.
- Basis for human rights – land, housing, vote, education, sanitation.....etc.
- Reduce poverty and vulnerability to shocks – disaster and climate change impacts.

Right to land and property ensures the right to city as well as security of both livelihoods and shelter.

Types of Tenure

People in urban areas survive under various tenure systems (as many as 20 types of tenure arrangements) based on their right over the lands & pattern of using. The types of land using include:

- a) Land over which occupants claim “ownership
- b) Land on which occupants have a lease for varying lengths of time
- c) Permission to stay and use the land
- d) Rental agreements
- e) Informally occupied land

Some are formal whereas most of the urban poor and extreme poor (sometimes nearly 90%) are living in tenure systems arranged in the land market informally. Majority of the poor possess informal tenure and they are often squatter tenants, tenants on private land with verbal agreements and squatters on government land. So basically, the tenure system can be categorized into two main divisions:

- Formal tenure
- Informal tenure.

Formal tenure includes Legal tenant with contract, Tied Tenant, Lease holder, Co-operative member, Communal owner, Individual owner. Informal tenure includes Street

dwellers, bed rental (Mess housing), Tenant room rental, Squatter tenant, Squatter, Tenant – on unregistered and subdivided land, Owner – on unregistered and subdivided land, Legal tenant no contract. Most of the informal tenure dwellers live in constant uncertainty because they are under some form of fear that they would be evicted sooner or later due to the large city development projects planned and being implemented; speculation of land by real estate developers; and ineffective laws. Secure tenure reduces households' vulnerability and enables easy access to basic infrastructure, employment and financial institutions. Secure title to land and property is also a capital asset that gives significant social and financial security and returns.

Why Urban poor?

Bangladesh is predominantly rural, yet it is one of the most rapidly urbanizing regions in the world. Parallel to rapid urbanization, an equally momentous challenge is the growing inequality in urban areas that is reflected in the growth of an already sizeable proportion of the population living in slums. The urban poor face significant difficulties in both access and affordability, with their financial constraints compounded by institutional exclusion. Exclusion of low-income groups from land management and planning usually leads to informal housing development, which is often the most vulnerable to climate related risks, particularly when occupying hazardous areas such as hillsides, riverbanks and flood plains, for example on low elevation coastal zones. The inaccessibility to decent housing, insecurity of tenure and unaffordable land are major contributing factors to the prevalence of slums and urban poverty. Access to land is an inseparable ingredient in a poor household's ability to survive, earn, thrive and lift itself out of poverty. A number of intersecting issues should be taken care of for better housing facilities for urban poor such as: limited affordability, non-existent land right, slum evictions, negative impacts from urban development policies, environmental issues, weak land planning. Aside from being a basis for shelter and access to services, secure land rights can act as a safety net in times of hardship and provide financial security for the urban poor.

Securing Tenure by Participatory approach

Communities should always be actively involved in housing and resilience development. Given the many challenges and constraints they face, the urban poor often lack the time or resources to plan and invest in long-term strategies. Zoning plans and controls, as well as gender-responsive and innovative forms of land tenure, can be used to formalize slum settlements as a first step to improving their resilience. In addition, governments should provide the necessary services, such as water and sanitation infrastructure, to help build the

capacity of the poor. Community members themselves have an important role to play in service delivery and may also enhance capability in other ways. For instance, organizing women in communities as first responders can help boost long-term recovery and sustainability. One example is the use of skilled female masons in reconstruction.

Natural hazards intensified by climate change have placed huge demands on disrupted and affected communities all over the world, in terms of the need to provide long-term resilient housing particularly in developing countries. Secured tenure housing reconstruction is seen as one of the key interventions to building disaster and climate resilience for vulnerable communities though people have very limited response and recovery capabilities and current housing strategies from government and aid agencies. Climate change resilient housing for local communities combines technical, economic, social and environmental considerations. Land and housing development therefore requires a complex range of prescriptions if the urban poor are to enjoy safe and secure shelter, now and in the future.

Building Community Resilience

Urban poor is insecure due to the insecurity of tenure of land where they live currently and also, they are exposed to hazards. Urban poor communities are vulnerable living under the threats of evictions and natural as well as manmade hazards. Building the capacity of people within themselves is a sustainable mean to overcome the consequences of tenure insecurity and impacts of hazards mostly emerging as a result of climate change. The UPPR (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction) project by UNDP and UN-HABITAT has already conducted vulnerability assessment using SLM data at town and ward levels. This has formed the basis to motivate organized community and local authorities and develop plans containing measures for adaptation to climate change enhancing the resilience of poor communities. The UPPR project team did initial assessment of the area in terms risk and vulnerability to environmental pollution, epidemics and natural calamities with local stakeholders. Detail framework for building resiliency among communities was developed through several consultations carried out in vulnerable communities identified by local stakeholders based on SLM. Special feature of the framework is that it has developed based on the ten steps already developed to ensure secure tenure and incremental housing process.

Case Study Pilot Community Housing at Koyerdara Christianpara

Under the citywide urban upgrading process UNDP & UN-HABITAT has implemented following as possible models to improve the security of tenure of the poor. The UPPR (Urban Partnerships for Poverty Reduction) project would advocate and promote an incremental approach for tenure security by

recognizing existing tenure and move towards formal and legally protected tenure.

For example, the Community housing in Koyerdara Christianpara Settlement, Rajshahi, Bangladesh has implemented the idea of climate resilient tenure security in the housing process for 34 existing families with extreme vulnerable housing condition through participatory approach.

Insecure Tenure:

Koyerdara Christianpara Settlement is located in the urban area of Rajshahi City Corporation in Bangladesh and actually it is one of the Church's land in Rajshahi city. Those families were living with verbal agreement (illegally) inside church's land and another 9 houses were located inside Church's Cemetery and suffered in fear of serious eviction problem. Church was willing to give its some land to the Very poor Christian community of Koyerdara as lease for secure tenure in a planned way inside the housing area after conducting several meetings in 2014, what was a successful step by the CHDF (Community Housing Development Fund) and UN-HABITAT technical team.

Condition of Housing:

The existing condition of housing of the tenants were extremely poor:

- Kutcha with low plinth.
- Smaller to accommodate minimum space for sleeping, cooking, storage & livelihoods.
- Haphazardly located over the area
- Vulnerable to calamities
- Water logging prone, no proper drainage, water floods houses & latrines for long time& lack of proper access road.
- No source of water in settlement
- No proper sanitation & solid waste disposal service.

Ensuring Tenure Security

In Koyerdara Christian Para settlement, tenure is secured for 99 years through several negotiation and motivation with the private owner (Father of the Church). It has set an outstanding example of ensuring tenure security on private land. Socio-economic and environmental changes are taking place within the settlement after securing tenure. In case of occupant's own land, it is found that, tenure security is ensured at extended family level where conflict of land inheritance was prevalent within multiple owners of extended family members. Within the extended family the tenure security is ensured legally which may not happen if the process of housing upgrading was not in place.

**COMMUNITY MAP OF
KOYERDARA CHRISTIANPARA BASHATI**



Fig: Community Map of Koyerdara settlement, Rajshahi.

Resilient Housing Process by Participatory Approach:

A community map was prepared by the Technical team in a workshop, where the Koyerdara Christianpara Community members conducted land survey to demarcate housing units and existing infrastructures. And then with each and every family, community architect sited and help them to design their own Dream Houses.

LAND READJUSTMENT SCHEME

on property of
KOYERDARA CHRISTIANPARA CHURCH AUTHORITY

PLAN NO: 02/2014/UPPR MOUZA: J.L. NO: NO. OF PLOTS: 33
DATE: 26th NOVEMBER, 2014 WAED NO-26, RAJSHAHI CITY CORPORATION

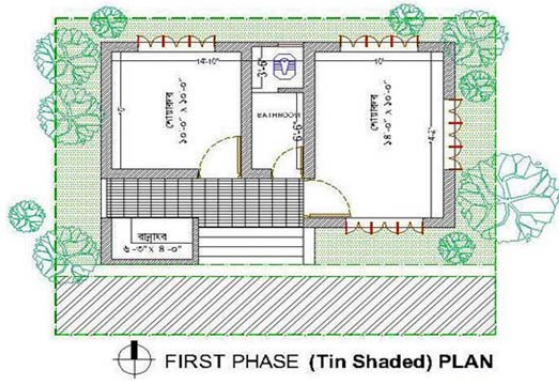


Fig: Land Readjustment plan for Secure Tenure in Koyerdara settlement.

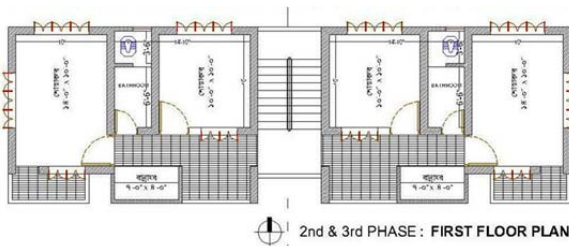
Problems were identified based on a survey and community consultation in groups. Intense mapping of present and future developments with the community members drove the household development program, which resulted in a comprehensive, community- led Settlement Improvement Plan (SIP). The long-term plan also includes income generation strategies, for the development of a better life-standard in the future.

The following example shows the inclusive individual house design of two Households of the Rajshahi Koyerdara Christianpara community:

- 650 square feet land for each Household/ family.
- Two bed room, 1 toilet & bathroom, 1 kitchen for each Beneficiary.
- Two Household will share a single stair-case when they're going for upper floor.
- **1st phase:** Brick foundation for two storied building. Complete single storey and will shade with Tin.



- **2nd phase:** Will replace the Tin shade with concrete roof, construct 1st floor and shade with existing tins.



- **3rd phase:** Remove the tin and complete 1st floor concrete roof. Then they can build temporary shade on roof for further need.



Figure: Proposed Modular Dwelling (incremental housing process) for Koyerdara community

This project has shown that when given the right tools and knowledge, local governments, in partnership with the affected communities, can successfully address urban housing issues when they arise. More importantly, the Koyerdara Christianpara’s insecure tenure – and the resettlement project that followed - has shown that when mobilized, represented and empowered, slum communities can influence the decisions that affect them, and in doing so, sustainably improve their own lives and livelihoods.

Concluding Remarks

Establishing landowner’s consent is one of the most crucial phenomena in securing tenure security in case of both public and private land. Successful application of this tool needs substantial foundation of ‘mutual trust’ and ‘confidence’ between the owner and households. Gaining trust and building confidence require intensive process of motivation, advocacy, and even reinterpretation of conventional power-relation towards mutual benefits. As found in case of Koyerdara Christian Para, Rajshahi, it involved a long and intensive process of motivation and negotiation through series of community consultation to convince the father of the Church about the mutual benefit. The outcome is brilliant – a 99-year lease agreement, which reflects power of participation both from the landowner and the community’s end.

Recommendations for secure tenure

Under the citywide urban upgrading process the authorities, Government, NGOs, stakeholders should follow this possible model to improve the security of tenure of the poor. A

technical team collaborated with Architects, Urban Planners and Engineers should promote an incremental approach for tenure security and of course with the community itself by recognizing existing tenure and move towards formal and legally protected tenure. Following are some tenure options should be promoted:

- Recognition of existing tenure by proper mapping;
- User permits (ownership entitlement certificates);
- Promote rental tenure security (short term and long term leases);
- Delayed freehold right (rent purchase arrangement);
- Legally protected tenure (freehold right);
- Cooperative / conditional tenure / co-ownership;

Following are planning and land development methods should be applied by the collaborated team that would improve the access to land and tenure security for the poor:

- Onsite development or upgrading;
- Land readjustment scheme;
- Land pooling (most used in inner city slum areas);
- Land sharing within the neighbors of the community;
- Resettlement scheme;
- Temporary upgrading;
- Sites and services schemes.

References

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