



03
Webinars
03
Experts



11th, 18th & 25th
August 2020

Documentation

Foreword

Raphael Karutz, zora – the transformation lab

The on-going COVID-19 pandemic impacts people around the world in different ways. Urban dwellers, in particular people living in informal settlements, face particularly severe challenges during this crisis:

- I. High population density and inadequate infrastructure for sanitation and potable water (e.g. community toilets, water stand pipes)
- II. Low coping capacity in case of infection, i.e. limited access to healthcare, particularly testing and, when needed, to stationary treatment and aided respiration
- III. Loss of livelihoods during lockdown and often no savings or social security schemes

These points illustrate the threefold vulnerability challenge faced by slum dwellers in the COVID-19 crisis: High exposure and infection risk, low treatment and healthcare capacity in case of infection, high impact of lockdown on livelihoods.

At the end of September, India's COVID-19 infection count has surpassed six million, making it the second-most affected country behind the US. Almost 100,000 people have died. In July 2020, a study received great attention, showing that more than half of Mumbai's slum residents had been infected by COVID-19, compared to 16% of non-slum population in the city (based on antibody blood tests on 6,936 randomly selected people conducted by Mumbai's city authorities).

Especially for the 40 million migrant workers in India, the COVID-19 crisis and the full lockdown implemented without prior announcement in March had dramatic effects: while "millions of impoverished, hungry, thirsty people, young and old, men, women, children, sick people, blind people, disabled people, with nowhere else to go, with no public transport in sight, began a long march home to their villages." [A. Roy, 2020] Many were denied even the return to their homes.

We invited Indian experts to give a series of three webinars. In each session the current situation of urban vulnerable population groups will be discussed from another angle: First, Elsa-Marie D'Silva (Red Dot Foundation, Safecity) discussed how in the wake of COVID-19, domestic violence against children and women has surged. Then, Pratima Joshi (Shelter Associates) introduced us to her organization's mapping work in several Indian cities, explaining how meaningful infrastructure interventions in slums are dependent on accurate spatial data. In the third webinar, Sharad Mahajan (MASHAL) talked about community organizations and their emergency response to counter the disastrous effects of the sudden lockdown in Pune's slums.




With this series of presentations, we would like to strengthen the discourse on urban informality and vulnerability in the Global South by focusing on Indian cities. We want to shine light on the dramatic situation the COVID-19 pandemic has brought to many urban poor and the impressive relief work by local organizations. The webinar series builds on a previous workshop implemented in Pune in January 2020, which explored deprived, informal urban areas as focal points for SDG implementation. Insights derived from the workshop, as well as the network of practitioners and researches formed by it, led to this new initiative. The online format of this series allows us to open the discussion to a wider community of urban researchers, practitioners and enthusiasts from all over the world within and beyond the Bosch Alumni Network. We are convinced that this exchange can yield valuable insights for practice and research and should be pursued further

Consequences Of The COVID Crisis for Vulnerable Women in Mumbai, India



Elsa Marie D'Silva, Regional coordinator, Bosch Alumni Network, India
Red Dot Foundation, Safecity

Sexual violence can be considered a global pandemic: Worldwide, 1 in 3 women experiences sexual violence at least once in their lifetime according to UN Women. Three types of sexual violence can be distinguished:

		
Non verbal	Verbal	Physical
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staring / Ogling• Taking pictures• Indecent gestures• Showing pornography	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commenting• Catcalls• Sexual Invites• Online Harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Touching/Groping• Stalking• Sexual Assault• Rape• Domestic Violence

In India, according to the National Crime Report Bureau, every 20 minutes a woman is raped. Still, 80% of the victims choose not to report it the crime officially due to socio-cultural factors, the fear of stigmatization and police insensitivity. This creates a data gap between the daily reality of many girls and women and the official statistics.

In times of COVID-19, (sexualized) violence not only against women, but also against children has become a “hidden crisis” as the WHO states in their Joint Leaders' statement titled “Violence against children: A hidden crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic”, elaborating:

“Movement restrictions, loss of income, isolation, overcrowding and high levels of stress and anxiety are increasing the likelihood that children experience and observe physical, psychological and sexual abuse at home – particularly those children already living in violent or dysfunctional family situations. And while online communities have become central to

maintain many children’s learning, support and play, it is also increasing their exposure to cyberbullying, risky online behaviour and sexual exploitation.”

In that light, the NCW’s report of a 94% increase in distress calls and messages in the first 3 weeks of the lockdown is not surprising. The Red Dot Foundation identified five critical realities during COVID-19 in Mumbai:

1. Inadequate helplines - A confusing variety of numbers exists and is not easily available
2. Shelter homes not accessible - In Mumbai, a One Stop Crisis centers is stigmatized as a ‘Female Beggars Home’
3. No access to alternate accommodation - Apartment complexes are not allowing new intakes without testing
4. Lack of transport leading to reduced mobility
5. Access to internet and mobile phones - Earlier surveys indicate that only 43% of women all over India have access to a phone and only 31% percent of rural women have access to the internet.
6. Spouses are often renegeing on alimony and support

Red Dot Foundation has initiated several programmes to address these challenges, e.g. the Safe Circle, a weekly support event for victims of sexual and gender-based violence and the Online Knowledge Café, a weekly information format featuring topics such as domestic violence laws and rights, sex education and sensitivity programs.

COVID Response in Slums: The Need for Accurate Data



Pratima Joshi, Shelter Associates

Informal settlements must be understood as potential hotspots for COVID-19: High population densities, low disease immunity and inadequate healthcare facilities make the approximate one billion slum dwellers worldwide particularly vulnerable.

A particular focus of the Pune-based NGO Shelter Associates is the provision of individual toilets in slums: 20,500 toilets have already been facilitated, impacting over 100,000 persons directly. The pandemic, where the often unhygienic conditions of community toilets and the impossibility to keep required distances while queuing, exacerbates the need to move forward “one home one toilet” initiatives.

Shelter Associates also provided emergency aid by distributing hygiene kits to slum households in Pune and five other cities in Maharashtra. Not only profited more than 11 thousand individuals from these kits, Shelter Associates flanked the distribution by a large awareness campaign reaching over 20 thousand people. For these initiatives, the previously developed, openly available GIS maps of the slums were of critical importance. As of today, informal settlements in seven

cities in Maharashtra have been mapped by the organization and several of them are fully mapped already. Using Google maps as base layer, open source GIS software is combines with smartphone-based surveying tools to not only map the slums spatially, but to add socio-economic household data as well as information on water and sanitation infrastructure.

The unique quality and comprehensiveness of the data has been recognized by the local authorities, who have linked Shelter Associates’ website to their web data portals. Based on the organization’s data, major infrastructure investments were leveraged in the cities, as the example of Navi Mumbai (figure below) shows.

Given their informal nature, slum households in India do not have unique addresses. This becomes problematic in times of health emergencies, where the tracking of infection rates and the efficient provision of essential services is required. A new initiative of the organization attempts to solve the problem of missing individual addresses by providing each house with a unique digital Google Plus Code.



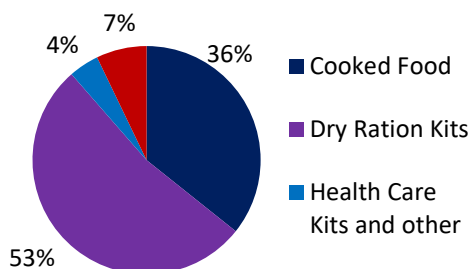
Ad-hoc Response to Address Livelihood Insecurity due to COVID-19 in Pune, India



Sharad Mahajan, Maharashtra Social Housing and Action League (MASHAL)

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pune-based NGO MASHAL focused their efforts on alleviating distress of cyclical migrants, informal sector workers and vulnerable slum dwellers affected by the COVID 19 pandemic. To do so, almost 10 million INR (including 2.5 million in-kind donations) were raised within the three months of April, May and June. More than half of the money was given by small private donors.

Reacting to the ever-changing situation in Pune’s slums, MASHAL developed and implemented different relief mechanisms in response to the rapidly unfolding situation. In the first days and weeks of India’s unannounced lockdown, many people lost their income from one day to the other, were stranded in the city without access to food or even cooking facilities. To address this immediate crisis, over 22,000 ready-to-eat meals were distributed through a network of community organizations, friends and former beneficiaries. Once the situation had become less critical, MASHAL and their partners changed to distributing dry ration kits, noting that many people, who did not have buffer resources to cope with the sudden loss of income, were starving.



Over 7,000 dry ration kits were distributed over the months as well as a number of health care kits.

To address the problem of many stranded urban poor at the root, MASHAL and their partners initiated the “Suraskshit Safar Sewa” scheme, organizing the return of migrant workers to their home villages and towns.



2300 migrants travelled back to

Bihar & Jharkhand



100 migrants travelled back to

Rajasthan & Jharkhand



160 migrants travelled back to

Orissa

Here again, the dense network and willingness to cooperate between different formal and informal community organizations proved vital for the success of the initiative.

In order to elucidate the COVID-19 related challenges of unorganized informal migrant and construction workers and to create awareness, a rapid assessment was performed. It highlighted their needs at the places of work and the required assistance for those who wished to return to their villages. Recommendations of the rapid assessment comprised: A universal Public Distribution System (PDS) for essential goods, direct cash relief instead of money transfer (e.g. through doorstep delivery), employers to be held responsible for the provision of basic supplies, workers’ protection from eviction and NGO support coupled with public help lines for migrant laborers.

Video Recordings of Webinars

The webinar series on COVID-19 and urban vulnerability in India was partly recorded. Videos of the presentations can be accessed here: <https://www.zora-lab.de/en/ban-webinar-2020>

Funding

We would like to thank the Bosch Alumni Network (BAN) for the support of this project. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material or in the webinar recordings do not necessarily reflect the views of BAN or the iac.

Team

Host: Raphael Karutz

Moderation and facilitation: Heinrich Zozmann

Layout and logo design: Subhashree Nath

This webinar series was a collaborative process and we would like to thank our speakers, Lucie Menz and the iac team, as well as Mandar Athavale (MASHAL) and Tania Echaporía (Red Dot Foundation) for their technical support.



Contact

karutz@zora-lab.de

zora – the transformation lab

Ahlfeldstr. 9, 04177 Leipzig, Germany

www.zora-lab.de