



Research Paper

## Integrating Resettled Urban Poor to The Mainstream

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### ABSTRACT

According to the September 2024 update to World Bank's Poverty and Inequality Platform, the global poverty headcount ratio in 2022 at the International Poverty Line (\$2.15 per person per day) is at 9 percent, with 713 million people falling below the poverty line globally. Of these, about 186 million people are in South Asia. As per NITI Ayog's 2023 Multidimensional Poverty Index, about 14.96% of Indian population is multidimensionally poor, which is a 10 percentage point reduction in 5 years. As India is rapidly urbanizing, along with the positives we also see a rise in urban poor and slums in the cities. The resettlement of urban poor from slums to affordable housing tenements is a major task. With a projected urban population of 57.45% by 2031, Tamil Nadu is the most urbanized state in India. Its Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Board (previously The Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board) is responsible for resettlement of urban poor from the slum areas of Tamil Nadu to tenements. For objectionable lands, this resettlement involves relocation into new integrated townships built on vacant Government lands. The integration of these relocated and resettled urban poor into the mainstream of their new neighborhood and reabsorbing them into productive workforce of the country is quintessential for their welfare and the country's economy. This study aims at finding out the factors that are instrumental in driving this integration, and what policy initiatives may accordingly be adopted to further facilitate this integration. A sample of 114 urban poor resettled into a multistoried tenement from the slums of Chennai were studied for this purpose using random convenience sampling, and data was gathered using descriptive research design. Percentage analysis and mean scores were used to quantify the impact of each factor and arrive at conclusions regarding the perceived importance of each factor, to identify policy interventions that take these factors into consideration for successful integration of resettled urban poor to the mainstream of the society and economy.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Over 500 million people in India are classified as urban population, and urbanization has been rapid in India in the past decades. This has provided great growth opportunities as well as challenges, including the rise of slum areas. The Registrar General of India in Census 2011 has defined slum as "1. All specified areas in a town or city notified as 'Slum' by State/Local Government and UT Administration under any Act including a 'Slum Act'; 2. All areas recognized as 'Slum' by State/Local Government and UT Administration which may have been formally notified as slum under any act; 3. A compact area of at least 300 population or about 60-70 households of poorly built congested tenements in unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities." The Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance Act) of 1956 provided "for the improvement and clearance of slum areas in certain Union territories and for the protection of tenants in such areas from eviction". Tamil Nadu, the most urbanised state of India, was the first to establish a Slum Clearance Board, renamed in 2021 as Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Board, and also enacted The Tamil Nadu Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, 1971 (Tamil Nadu Act 11 of 1971) to improve slum areas by providing necessary amenities, ensuring access to urban poor to affordable housing, and also clearing out the slums in objectionable lands and relocating the urban poor to tenements built for their resettlement. In non-objectionable lands, in situ development is done by improving the habitations and providing better amenities to increase the quality of life. In objectionable lands, the occupants are relocated to multistorey tenements built for this purpose, often in the outskirts of the city, on vacant Government land. Most of the slums fall under this category. Till 2025, TNUHDB has constructed 2,25,000 tenements, of which 1,34,434 are in Chennai. Shifting of

the residents to the new locations involves more than the logistics of enumerating, identifying the correct beneficiaries and ensuring a fair allotment in the new tenements, but also the longer term and often complex challenge of ensuring their meaningful reintegration to their new area. This process involves seamless continuation of education, ensuring livelihood and upskilling and also addressing their intangible losses including social and cultural ties. This study aims at identifying the factors which contribute the most towards this integration and quantifying the impact of each factor. Through discussions and open-ended questions with the residents of a tenement in outer Chennai, the following factors emerged as paramount in impacting the integration of urban poor to their new locality – livelihood, participative design, proximity to previous dwelling area, perceived social stigma in new area, and legal rights and tenure in the new housing.

### **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Resettlement of urban poor is a complex problem which involves more than the logistics of enumeration and relocation; but also addressing the many tangible and intangible losses which leave these marginalized people even more vulnerable post resettlement. The resettled urban poor often face challenges in reintegrating to the society and economy after being relocated, especially to the peripheries of the city. The tangible and visible losses such as livelihood loss is coupled with the social losses like loss of rituals, cultural and religious spaces, networks and so on. This leaves the poor further at risk of alienation from the mainstream. This will further lead to them remaining in the vicious cycle of poverty and failing to find economic upliftment and prosperity despite attaining affordable housing. This results in a loss of this huge manpower potential socially and economically. This includes ensuring their continued education, employment as well as giving them a platform and opportunity to integrate into the social fabric of their new locality as well, through meaningful and mutually beneficial exchanges. With millions in India falling under the category of urban poor, giving them a fair and reasonable shot at social equity demands that their reintegration be front and center to the question of resettlement. This requires that the factors that affect the speed and quality of integration be studied systematically, and policy measures be adopted in order to address each factor satisfactorily, to ensure the smoothest possible transition for the relocated urban poor.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The objectives of the study are:

- To identify the factors which impact long term integration of resettled urban poor into the social and economic mainstream of their new locality
- To study the perceived impact of each factor with regards to the successful resettlement of urban poor and thus quantify their perceived importance
- To identify the demographic profile of resettled urban poor
- To offer suitable policy suggestions for addressing the contributory factors that can facilitate meaningful integration of resettled urban poor to ensure their socioeconomic upliftment

### **NEED FOR THE STUDY**

Sustainable development of our cities requires that its urban poor be rehabilitated from slums and resettled into suitable affordable housing with amenities that ensure a dignified living. This is a measure of social equity and is an embodiment of the principles enshrined in our Constitution as well. Tamil Nadu is the most urbanized state in India and a pioneer in institutionalizing resettlement through legislation and the constitution of a board for this purpose. In order to make resettlement meaningful and viable in the long term, it is essential that crucial data be made available for informed policy making. Resettlement is a complex and nuanced process and it involves the large scale shifting of human capital. These relocated urban poor face losses in terms of livelihood, belongings, networks, connections, cultural ties and rituals. To integrate them into their new locality, we need a thorough understanding of the factors that play a role in facilitating their acceptance into the socioeconomic fabric of their resettled area. This will ensure maximizing their assimilation into the mainstream and hastening their economic upliftment and ability to engage in the society as productive members of the society.

### **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted in a large tenement of over 20,000 resettled urban poor in Chennai. A convenience sample of 114 residents was chosen and they were interviewed to gather primary data. The scope was limited to their perceptions regarding factors that affect their integration to their relocated neighborhood, including both tangible and intangible factors. The factors were identified after observation and open-ended discussions with residents. The study aims at identifying such factors and quantifying their perceived impact, that can impact the integration of resettled urban poor, and as such can be a guide for policy making in the field.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

A sample of 114 residents who were resettled into tenements from various slums of Chennai were studied, from a total pool of around 20000 families in the tenement. Responder bias towards questions cannot be ruled out.

## II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

Descriptive research design was used with a questionnaire to identify the factors which contributed towards increasing or decreasing the pace of integration into the new locality for the resettled poor. Open ended questions were used to gather more insight into the reasonings for the choices exerted by the individuals.

### Sampling Techniques

A sampling unit is taken as an individual who is a resident of one of the resettled tenements constructed by Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

### Sampling Size

114 individuals residing in a large multistorey tenement of resettled urban poor were used as the sample for this study.

### Sampling Type

Convenience sampling was adopted for this research. It is a non-probabilistic sampling referring to a sample selected on the basis on convenience.

### Data Collection

Primary data was collected through discussions by gathering the factors impacting the integration of urban poor resettled in the new locality and further interviewing the tenement dwellers with questionnaire schedule regarding the perceived impact of each factor in their ability to meaningfully assimilate into their new environment. Secondary data was collected using Government policy documents, journals, magazines, newspapers, etc.

### Sampling Framework

Tools used for the study	Attributes of the study
Percentage analysis	Demographic profile of the respondents
Mean score value	Livelihood Participative design Proximity to previous dwelling Perceived social stigma Legal rights

### Analysis and Interpretation

**Table 1: Demographic profile of the respondents**

Demographic Variables	Particulars	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Age</b>	18-35	27	23.68
	36-50	52	45.62
	51-70	35	30.70
	Total	114	100
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single / Widowed	22	19.30
	Married	92	80.70
	Total	114	100
<b>Education</b>	Below 8 <sup>th</sup>	42	36.84
	8 <sup>th</sup> to 12 <sup>th</sup> Grade	67	58.78
	College Degree	5	4.38
	Total	114	100
<b>Income Level</b>	0-20000	103	90.35
	20000-40000	11	9.65
	40000 and above	0	0
	Total	114	100

### Interpretation

Most of the interviewed resettled tenement residents were less than 50 years of age and either pursuing their education or in the workforce, with the vast majority of them working. Work ranged from daily labour to petty trading to vocations like plumbing and electrical work. There were several women engaged as household help in the locality. Some of them got work through the skilling program arranged by the Government post resettlement. Most of them lost their original employment when they relocated, and they received a sustenance aid from the Government till they got other work. But they feel that the aid is insufficient especially since most of them provide for their families as well. Education level was mostly school level, although some are enrolled in college and a few have even completed their graduation. All of them have received documentation such as aadhaar

cards, ration cards, etc., through the drives conducted in the tenement. They also said they are enrolled in the voter list and have their voter IDs. The children are all enrolled in school and a few are showing promise academically. All of the respondents indicated hope that their children will study well and be able to do better for themselves in life through their professions. They are generally happy to have better facilities in the tenements than their original houses but they feel like they have been relocated too far off from the heart of the city, where they used to live. They find employment opportunities to be fewer in the new locality which is in the periphery of the city. They have health care access and access to schools. They feel like access to public transportation needs to be improved even though there is a bus route right outside their premises. Their income levels are below 40,000, with most earning 20,000 or less through unskilled labour, and most of them are dependent on daily wages. They are aspirational and wish for a better quality of life, primarily through help from the Government and education of their children.

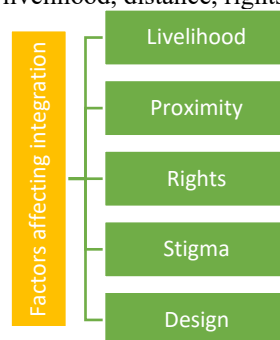
**Table 2: Mean scores related to factors affecting socioeconomic integration of resettled urban poor**

Sl No	Factor	Stigma	Livelihood	Distance	Design	Rights
1	Strongly Disagree	2	0	0	9	0
2	Disagree	22	0	3	29	4
3	Neutral	53	5	17	56	14
4	Agree	33	55	45	18	58
5	Strongly Agree	4	54	49	2	38

WEIGHTED MEAN	3.131578947	4.429824561	4.228070175	2.78070175	4.14035088
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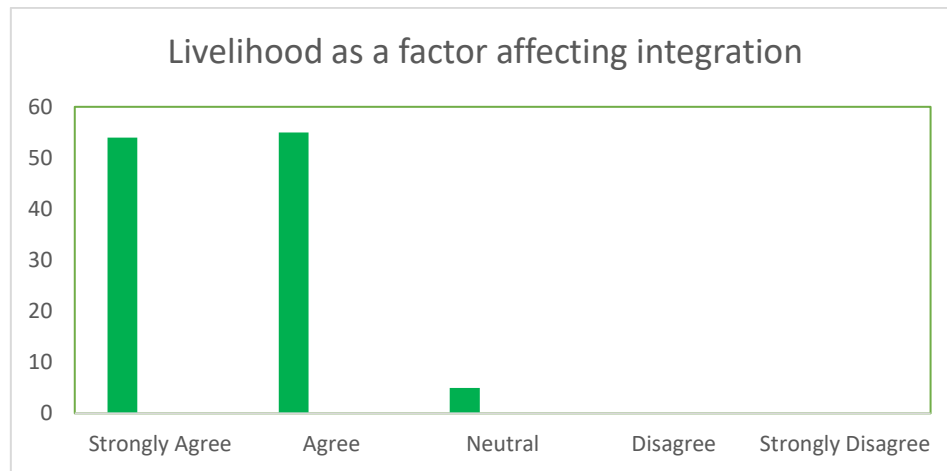
### Interpretation

The following factors emerged as the most important factors affecting the integration of resettled urban poor into the socioeconomic fabric of their new neighborhood – perceived social stigma, livelihood loss, distance from their previous locality, participative design of facilities and legal rights over their new dwellings. The relative impact of the factors were in the following order in descending order of importance, based on the weighted mean of the perception scores of each factor – livelihood, distance, rights, stigma and design.



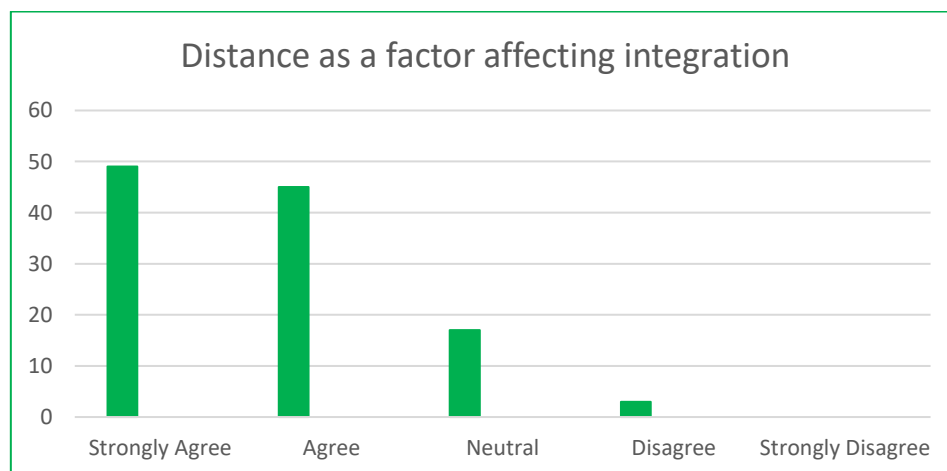
### Livelihood:

With a very high weighted mean of 4.43, almost all respondents felt that livelihood was the primary factor that impacted their integration post resettlement. All of them worked in the heart of the city and were relocated to the periphery. They lost access to their old jobs since it was no longer easy for them to go to the same places to work, and the transport costs took away from their earnings. Several respondents lost their old livelihood and had to find a new one. The support amount given by the Government to sustain them till they found new jobs was seen as less than sufficient. Some of them appreciated the skilling programs implemented in the tenements and cited them as the reason they found new employment. They felt that increased skilling courses with guaranteed placement would significantly benefit them and help them quickly find their feet in the new locality.



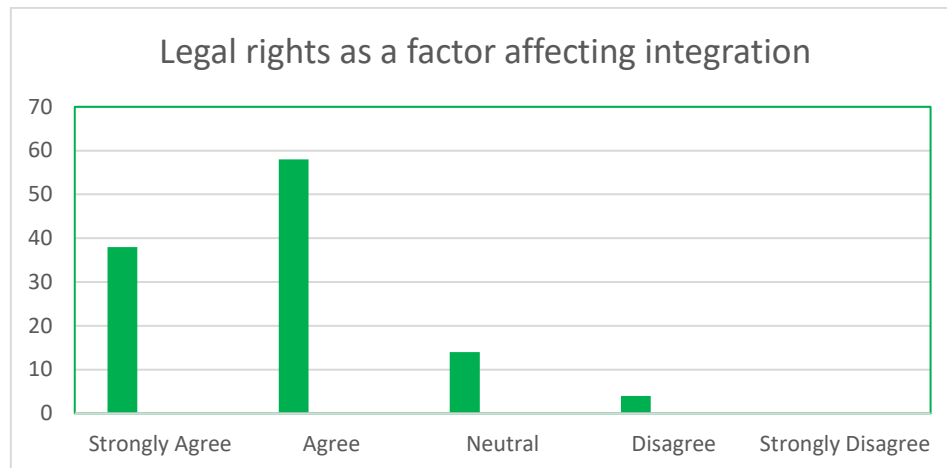
#### Proximity:

With a mean score of 4.23, proximity to the old residence was felt as a factor that would enable them to integrate better. The respondents felt almost like they have moved to a new place completely even though they were within the same district or nearby areas in the outer limits of the city. They felt that they lost access to their old job and also their old connections, networks, religious structures and social set up due to the shift. They said they would have preferred to get new houses in the same area. However, legally in situ development of houses was not practical in their old areas since those areas were classified as objectionable poramboke such as waterbodies, and construction is not allowed in those localities. The residents opined that they could be given housing within the city limits, close to their old homes. However, lack of available vacant land has forced their relocation to the periphery. This made it harder for the resettled urban poor to integrate into the new locality as the economic opportunities are fewer in the new place and the ethos of the new place is unfamiliar to them. Wherever possible, in situ development maybe prioritized.



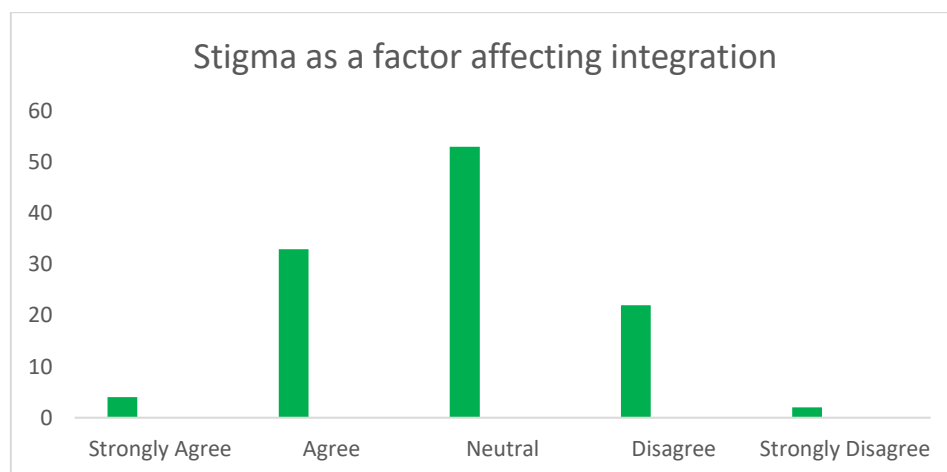
#### Legal rights:

Another factor that emerged as important in integrating to their new areas was availability of full legal rights over their new housing, with a mean of 4.14. In the tenements, there was a clear lack of sense of ownership especially over the public amenities and common areas within the tenements. Residents felt that the maintenance of those areas was the job of the Government. As such, cleanliness and sanitation were lacking. Even though there is a residents' association, it is not particularly strong and it is dependent heavily on handholding by the department in order to function. There is a lack of common identity in the entire complex and mostly people seem segregated into blocks depending on where their actual apartment was situated. They feel like giving permanent legal rights and documentation immediately upon allocation will help them feel more like the tenements belong to them and they have to care for it. Right now the maintenance is solely Government's responsibility and there is no effort seen to be taken by the residents themselves to keep the premises clean or in good repair. However, granting of legal rights including right to sell or lease out the apartments, needs careful consideration as there is a potential for abuse of such rights by elements who usurp them.



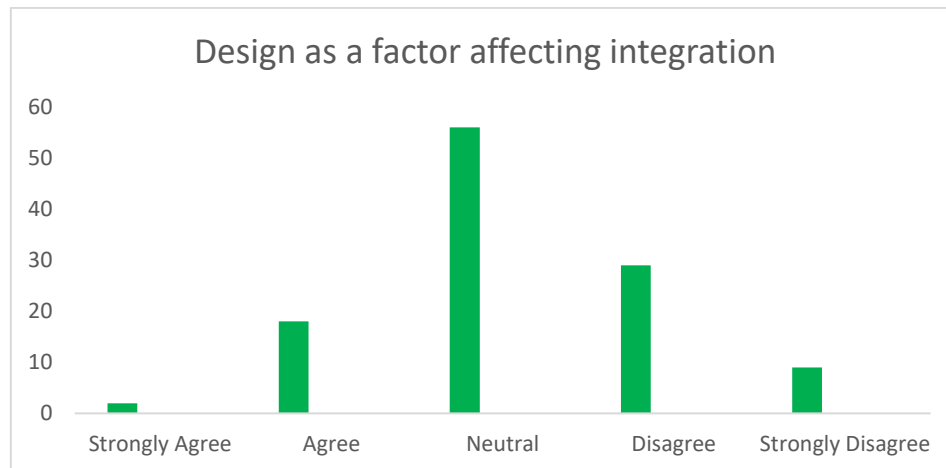
#### Social Stigma:

With a mean value of 3.13, perceived social stigma towards residents of the tenements by local people as well as even local authorities including local law enforcement, brought to light an intangible factor that prevented quick and easy integration of the resettled urban poor. The people opined that they felt like they were looked upon as a threat by some of the locals and there was some resistance to their presence in the area. Some local traders felt that the traders in the new tenements were a competition. There was also a perception against the youth of the tenements and some felt that they were unjustly perceived as antisocial and not given a fair chance. They felt that they didn't receive dignified and fair treatment due to prejudices among the locals. This calls for a long-term drive to build trust among the tenement residents and the locals and also sensitization of the local authorities towards the realities of the tenement dwellers. There is a need for joint community activities which extend beyond the tenement residents and involve participation of the larger locality as well. Continuous engagements and handholding until the new residents are well established, is paramount. Educational and economic upliftment would go a long way in establishing a good social standing for the residents of tenements.



#### Participative Design

The final factor which emerged as having an impact on integration was participative design, with a mean of 2.78. The residents were largely happy with the new spaces but felt that more inclusion in the process of designing of their own homes would be beneficial to them. For example, the tenements had a mix of residents relocated from various slums in the city. The residents seemed to prefer to have familiar neighbors in the new residences as well. Also, for the infrastructure itself, they had a bunch of suggestions to offer. The residents opined that several were interested in sports and some kind of open ground or sporting infrastructure in the tenements would have helped the residents and especially children looking to go to college with sports scholarships. They also felt shops in the tenement premises for marketing their wares would be a good addition. The residents also had opinions about the layout and design of the structure and blocks themselves. Even if all their preferences can't practically be taken on board, it would be a sound idea to include the prospective residents in the design phases of the new construction so that they would feel more of a sense of ownership and belonging in their new residence. It would also help them feel seen and heard, and facilitate integration.



### SCHEMES

The Tamil Nadu Urban Habitat Development Board two kinds of resettlement of urban poor from slums based on land classification - in situ or with relocation. People residing in slums on unobjectionable poramboke are developed in situ, maximizing FSI as per norms. For those living in objectionable poramboke, relocation is done to integrated townships constructed in vacant government lands identified for the purpose. Tailoring, IT, and other such vocational training is provided to residents and there are success stories including women entrepreneurs. Sports training facilities are also provided to the residents. Rs 30,000 per annum is given to residents as subsistence until they can find stable employment after relocation. Maintenance of the tenements as well as reconstruction of old tenements is undertaken, with a one-time grant of Rs. 25,000 for finding accommodation during reconstruction. Housing For All program is implemented in Tamil Nadu under TNUHDB, under which multistoried tenements are built under AHP and individual houses under BLC (Beneficiary Led Construction) mode. 1.4 lakh tenements and 4 lakh individual homes are approved under this scheme currently. In addition, World Bank and Asian Development Bank funded projects are also undertaken for resettlement of urban poor. Land tenurial rights granting for urban poor habitations situated in Government land is also being processed. Skill training for residents in tenements is provided along with TN Skill Development Corporation, Tamil Nadu Urban Livelihood Mission, TAHDCO, NGOs, etc. Youth clubs are established and educational scholarships are given to eligible students in the tenements. Documentation enrollment drives are done in tenements and resident associations are established for the welfare of the tenement residents.

### III. FINDINGS

1. Resettlement of urban poor can be in situ rehabilitation or relocation, based on whether their slum was located in objectionable or unobjectionable lands.
2. Relocation specifically can cause significant challenges to the urban poor and their integration into the mainstream of their new locality is influenced by multiple factors.
3. Often relocation is done from heart of the city to the periphery. This causes them to lose ties with their previous locality and causes tangible and intangible losses which leave them more vulnerable.
4. Loss of livelihood and reduction in income due to relocation are the most important factors that impact sustainable assimilation of the new residents to the relocated area.
5. The fact that the new area is in periphery of the city makes them lose employment opportunities and social networks.
6. A lot of the tenement residents feel there is a stigma attached to being a tenement resident.
7. Land tenurial rights for the residents is an important factor that can impact their integration.
8. There is no sense of ownership over common property and common areas in the tenement and their maintenance is seen as the Government's job.
9. The residents have strong opinions and suggestions regarding design of their homes and they feel that participation in the initial stages of design of the residents can help them integrate better.
10. Integration of relocated urban poor is a long term and complex process which includes tangible and intangible aspects.

#### **IV. SUGGESTIONS**

Integrating of resettled urban poor to their new locality requires a nuanced approach as it is a complex issue. Wherever possible, in situ development of the slums into residential areas can be prioritized, and when shifting the people, closest possible urban vacant land can be identified for relocation. The amenities in the new tenements should be holistically improved with improved connectivity and economic infrastructure to enable the residents to thrive. Holistic development of the new area would also help to reduce the resistance of locals to new tenements in the area. Trust building exercises need to be conducted to improve relations between the new residents, and the local people and authorities. Long term wide engagement and community activities involving the larger local area people and the tenement residents will help with networking and building connections as well as rapport. Sensitization of the people and authorities is important. Legal land tenurial rights for residents needs to be explored and measures taken to ensure a sense of ownership and civic duty towards common infrastructure in the tenement premises. It is important to involve the prospective residents in the actual design of the tenements wherever possible, to further their feeling of belonging and sense of ownership. Considering these factors while designing policy would go a long way towards the integration of resettled urban poor into the mainstream socioeconomic fabric of their new locality in the quickest possible manner.

#### **V. CONCLUSION**

Resettlement of urban poor requires a nuanced and holistic approach with multidimensional interventions in order to help them integrate into the mainstream at the earliest. The resettled urban poor face loss of livelihood or reduction in wages and stiff competition when shifted, and handholding to help them get upskilled and find employment is important to help them stabilize. Moving far from the heart of the city is at the center of a lot of their issues, so their new locality needs to be holistically developed to improve its economic capacity and potential to absorb the thousands of families freshly placed there. Local people and authorities need to be sensitized and communal engagement and trust building are important to avoid stigma. Land tenurial rights for tenement residents is a nuanced issue which requires careful consideration. A sense of belonging can be inculcated in the residents by involving them in the initial stages of the tenement design and consulting them regarding the amenities they would consider useful. Such a holistic approach at a policy level to see resettlement as a long-term process would help integrate the urban poor to their new premises quickly and help them become solid contributors to the society and economy.

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