The Alliance of
Urban and Development Resource
Centre(UDRC)
Society for the Promotion of Area
Resource Centers (SPARC)
Orissa Slum Dwellers
Federation (OSDF)
Orissa Mahila Milan

Urban Governance Programme
COMPILED REPORT
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In This Report

Three hundred and fifty million people live in Indian cities today. The percentage of people living under the poverty line in urban areas is higher than those living in rural areas, and rising. However, national, state and local governments generally have weak urban policies, and haphazard or non-existent slum policies, and there is a critical lack of investment or coordination in addressing the shelter needs of the urban poor. Although slum dwellers provide cities with cheap, informal services, they are treated as non-citizens who have "encroached" in a city that needs their labour, but is unwilling to pay for their housing needs.

Consequently, most poor people – over 50% of the urban population in some Indian cities – live in informal settlements on private or public lands, lacking secure tenure, adequate housing, or access to sanitation, clean water, and basic services. Over 20% of Orissa's urban population live in slums.

The state of Orissa provides a particularly challenging context. Orissa is India's poorest state, with 48% of the population living below the national poverty line [1]. It also has one of the highest populations of marginalized communities, with Scheduled Castes comprising 16% of the population Scheduled Tribes comprising 22% [2]. Orissa is also extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, which became tragically apparent when a "supercyclone" devastated the state in October 1999.

Although Orissa is one of India's least urbanized states, its cities are growing rapidly. Slums have emerged, as former villages were engulfed by urbanization and as new settlements were formed by migrants who moved to urban areas to work to fill cities' labor requirements or as a result of displacement due to natural disasters or commercial exploitation of Orissa's rich natural resources. As Orissa has been until recently been highly agricultural, its cities lack cohesive urban policies, especially ones that address the shelter needs of the poor. Besides having limited urban expertise, the Government of Orissa, India's most indebted state government, has limited financial means to address these issues.

The ability of the urban poor to participate in making decisions about city development and management is determined by a combination of factors, including having the collective financial, informational and organizational strength to have their demands taken seriously and to believe that they have the capacity to solve their own problems.

[1] Census of India (2001)
[2] Census of India (1991) as cited in DFID's State Plan for Orissa,

Village-like slum settlements line a highway in Paradeep, a heavily industrial port city on the coast of Orissa.

THE ORISSA ALLIANCE
Our Roles and Objectives

slum surveys, and manages housing, sanitation and infrastructure projects. **SPARC** provides the administrative, financial, policy, documentation and other support necessary for these processes to be successful on the ground.

The Alliance has supported the federation model in Orissa through the **Orissa Slum Dwellers Federation (OSDF)** and **Orissa Mahila Milan** since early 2000. SPARC's local partner NGO until 2007 was Development Alternatives for Wider Network (DAWN). Due to an internal conflict, the majority of the governing body and all of the staff of DAWN resigned in 2007 to form an Alliance's entity Undre (Urban and Development Resource Center) so that better accommodates the mission and spirit of the federation model. All of the city-level federations and Mahila Milan groups joined the resigning team. SPARC extended their support and accommodated all staff under its fold until an alternate institutional structure can be established. All operations have proceeded during the transitional period primarily because work is rooted in a federation-driven structure that has not been seriously affected by the organizational changes. The new NGO has recently been registered and will begin functioning soon.

Established in 1984, the **Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC)** is one of the largest Indian NGOs working on housing and infrastructure issues for the urban poor. Since 1986, SPARC has worked in partnership with two grassroots organizations of the poor - the **National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF)**, a broad-based organization of the urban poor founded in the mid-1970s, and **Mahila Milan**, a network of women's collectives. The people's organizations are active in over 70 cities.

SPARC, NSDF and Mahila Milan – collectively referred to as the Alliance – work together to produce solutions that meet the shelter, sanitation and development needs of the poor in India's cities. **NSDF** organizes and mobilizes poor urban communities, links them to a national network, supports them to set a development agenda, and negotiates with resource-providing institutions. **Mahila Milan** is a decentralized network of poor women's collectives that manage credit and savings activities, carries out

Collectively, the Orissa Alliance works to produce strategies by which the urban poor can access adequate and secure housing, sanitation and basic services. We aim to mobilize the urban poor, strengthen and support their organisations and create institutional arrangements that enable them to participate in urban decision-making and management.

The Orissa Alliance is active in five cities in Orissa: Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Puri, Paradeep and Rourkela. There are about 10,000 members under the Mahila Milan and OSDF fold, indirectly serving at least five times that many households through their work.

THE FEDERATION MODEL: STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES, ENSURING PARTICIPATION

The SPARC-NSDF-MM Alliance has over the last 25 years developed a set of core activities that comprise what we call the 'federation model'. The core activities that make up the federation model serve to deepen the bond between the organizations and communities, at the same time mobilizing and building the capacity of the poor for managing their own finances, participating in and planning urban development, and strengthening the broad-based networks necessary to generate the momentum and advocacy needed to prompt change at the policy level.

The federation model and its potential for addressing the development aspirations of the urban poor, needs to be seen as a valuable way of ensuring participation of the urban poor in development. Each of the activities that form part of this process were evolved by poor communities in conjunction with SPARC over time, and serve the dual purpose of meeting specific needs that were not being addressed by the administration, and as a foundation for addressing the ultimate issue of legitimate housing and citizenship for the poor.

All of these rituals are geared towards strengthening bonds between poor communities and building their financial, informational, managerial and organizational capacities so that they can take on not only housing and infrastructure projects themselves, but also participate in negotiations issues of city redevelopment and management.

The Federation Model

Setting up community centers called **Area Resource Centers (ARC)**

Encouraging communities to join a **Savings and Credit** programme that simultaneously builds trust within a settlement and strengthens the financial assets of participating families

Supporting communities to collect detailed information about themselves through **Enumerations, Surveys and Mapping**

Facilitating **Peer Exchanges** and meetings through which communities can share ideas and learn from each other's experiences

Organizing **Housing Exhibitions** that showcase affordable housing solutions to government authorities as well as local populations

Demonstrating through **Pilot or Precedent-Setting Projects** the kinds of housing and infrastructure models that work for both poor and the city and can be scaled up

Initiating **Dialogue and Negotiation** on win-win solutions with relevant authorities

Finally, advocating for pro-poor **Policy Changes** on the basis of grassroots experience

Annual Goals

Address issues of shelter, basic services, entrepreneurship and urban poverty through the federation model.

Articulate urban issues and help improve capacity of the urban poor to access government schemes addressing poverty alleviation, shelter and basic facilities.

Promote a model of community-based housing and infrastructure planning and improvement for poor.

Local Context

Urban poverty is largely neglected. There is a bias towards addressing rural poverty among the government, NGOs, private stakeholders.

Government schemes are only applicable in some cities. The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), which demands NGO and CBO participation in City Development Plan (CDP) and Detailed Project Report (DPR) development process, is applicable in Bhubaneswar and Puri. IHSDP is active in Cuttack. All cities do not fall under the same schemes.

Various authorities control land, housing and planning in each city, and these differ among cities.

High levels of poverty and a large population of marginalized communities.

Frequent and extreme natural calamities.

No comprehensive slum policy. State-level resettlement policy is not enforced.

State government has high levels of debt.

Displacement of tribal populations for industrial development.

Slum formation due to absorption of villages and migration for employment opportunities.

Key Objectives for the Period

Enhance capacities of Alliance partners to build and strengthen community federations.

Support local federations to plan, complete precedent-setting projects and build partnerships that produce shelter solutions for slum dwellers in Orissa's cities and towns.

The federation methodology is a process-driven, rather than a project-driven model. Although communities are constantly engaged in core activities and projects, achievements are better seen as part of a long-term process of political change that must be viewed in decadal terms.

Over the project period, the Orissa Alliance has strengthened and expanded the base and capacities of OSDF and Mahila Milan through capacity-building rituals, including savings and credit activities, slum enumerations and mapping, and peer exchanges and meetings. These have developed the leadership and the managerial, technical, financial, informational, organizational and numerical base of the community-based organizations. On the basis of this strong grassroots foundation, the Alliance has taken up ground-breaking community-led shelter and infrastructure projects, including construction of model houses, construction of water and sanitation facilities, and provision of basic services, all of which provide much-needed facilities to communities while setting precedents.

Capacity-building and precedent-setting activities have helped federations to build productive partnerships with local authorities. Throughout Orissa's four main cities, OSDF/Mahila Milan have partnered with government agencies to carry out slum surveys and plan and execute upgrading and resettlement projects. There has been a perceptible change in government agencies' attitudes towards slums, with a shift from frequent demolition to a de facto acceptance of "no demolition without resettlement." The traditionally adversarial relationship between governments and slum dwellers has begun to develop into a mutually beneficial partnership. Over time, the goal is that these partnerships and negotiations are likely to lead to scaled-up programmes, pro-poor policy reform, and participation of CBOs and their supporting NGOs in decision-making, as has occurred in other Indian cities in which the Alliance is active.

Despite challenges associated with community-led action in the urban context in Orissa, including stereotypes about poverty and gender, and notwithstanding institutional changes after the breakup of DAWN, the federations have managed to build their strength, take on increasingly complex projects, and increase the scope for communities of the urban poor, and women in particular, to play a key role in urban development in Orissa. In the process, they have broken down traditional stereotypes that only men, the educated, or the upper classes are capable of or entitled to participate in urban decision-making and management.

By the Numbers: The Orissa Alliance

Orissa Mahila Milan/OSDF are active in **184** settlements

10,846 households deposit savings with Mahila Milan

There are **4** Federation offices, one in each of Orissa's main cities

The Alliance is active in **5** cities in Orissa

The Federation has completed slum profiles for **710** settlements

The Alliance has been active in Orissa since early **2000**.

The Alliance has constructed **57** model houses and repaired **44**.

Federations have participated in **1085** intra-city exchanges, almost **1000** inter-city exchanges, and over **10** state-to-state exchanges.

Our capacity-building activities have included supporting women-led savings and credit groups, slum mapping and surveys, and peer exchanges and meetings. Each of these activities enhances the skills and confidence of community leaders; expands membership and strengthens bonds within and among the Federation, Mahila Milan and local communities; and provides a foundation for precedent-setting activities and building partnerships with local authorities. The federation model is rooted in these capacity-building rituals, as organizations of the urban poor must organize and develop skills in order to collectively pilot solutions and sustain a dialogue with the state.

Savings and Credit

Whenever the Alliance enters a new community, its first step is to form settlement-level, women-led saving and credit groups — the basic building block of the federations' mobilization strategy. The savings and credit system increases the financial assets of the poor, provides much needed credit at affordable rates, and, most importantly, builds managerial capacity of women's groups and strengthens bonds within settlements.

Local Mahila Milan leaders each collect money from 15-20 households in their neighborhoods on a daily basis. All transactions are recorded and managed entirely by the women's collectives, who are trained by the NGO and peers from other cities with established savings groups. The savings are used to make small loans for income generation, emergencies, housing improvements, weddings and other needs.

The system is designed to truly support poor families to slowly come out of debt, build their assets and begin planning for the future. Compared to formal banks or micro-credit agencies, interest rates are low, and there are no high savings requirements, fixed repayment schedules, or punitive measures for those who cannot repay immediately. The only insistence is on a daily repayment, no matter how small the sum. The process is entirely geared towards building trust and supporting community members. After all, Mahila Milan leaders live on the same street as their members and know exactly when a family is able to make repayments. The idea is to maximize people's participation and to ensure that the poor do not have to dip into their slowly growing savings when they face a crisis.

Through this process, women develop managerial capacity and confidence in handling large sums of money. They enter the public sphere and improve their position in the family, community and in the city. Once they are comfortable managing savings, they take on other community issues, such as solving minor disputes; helping community members obtain pensions, rations, and other government benefits; meeting local authorities regarding water, sanitation and other settlement-level issues; and taking on housing and toilet construction projects.

Since 2004, Orissa's Mahila Milan has aggregate savings that are left over from settlement-level lending into a City Fund that is deposited in an interest-earning account. In addition to community-level loans, which rarely exceed Rs. 1000, Mahila Milan uses this fund to provide larger loans that poor women use to improve their houses; build sanitation facilities; pay for medical, wedding or other family expenses; or invest in income-generating enterprises. This fund also provides capital for community-level precedent-setting activities, including electricity connections and water facilities, and may act as a base for leveraging resources from other financial institutions. To date, they have issued 497 loans totaling around Rs. 2,000,000; this does not include community-level or project-based loans. There is a process of inter-city problem resolution, with federation leaders from all cities contributing to a solution when there is a problem associated with a loan.

A Mahila Milan member collects daily savings deposits from her neighbors and update the account register

Summary of Savings and Credit Activities of Orissa Mahila Milan to date						
	Bhubaneswar	Cuttack	Puri/ Konark	Paradeep	Rourkela	Total
No. of households saving	3692	3419	1319	1789	627	10846
Total community-based savings (Rs.)	884899	652398		2741512	204809	4483618
Amt. of loans from Orissa Mahila Milan (Rs.)	1570000	507000	115000	175000		2367000
Amt. of loans from RMK (government fund), through Mahila Milan (Rs.)	486900	195000	79000	83000		843900
Amt. of loans from City Fund (Rs.)	1072788	586919	214472	105370	54662	2034211
...s from City Fund	314	86		34	19	497
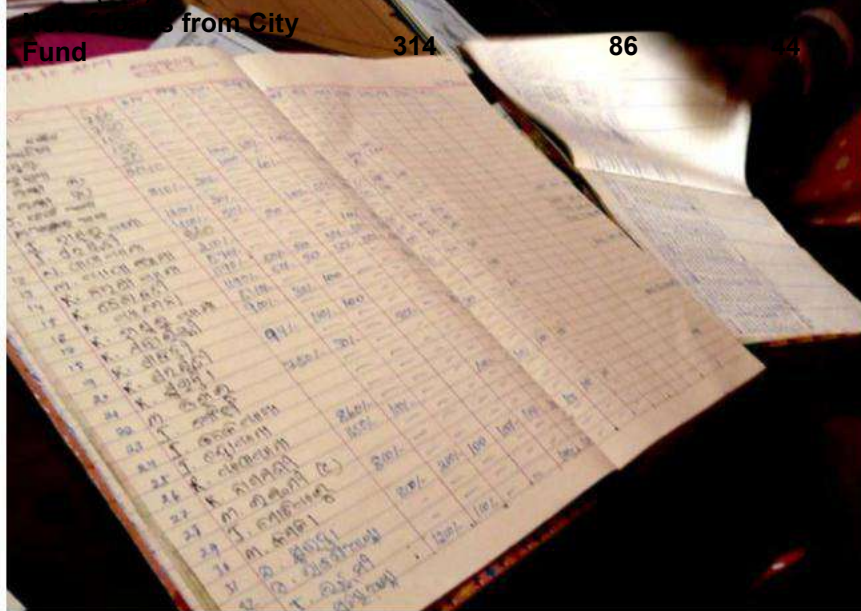
Mahila Milan members record all savings and loan transactions in a central register (above, left). Transactions are also recorded in a booklet kept with each member household (above, right). Loans are often used for income-generation activities. Around 20 women in Bhubaneswar received training in candle-making (right). They took loans from City Fund to start the enterprise and earn supplemental income. Many Mahila Milan loans are used for income-generation.

Slum Surveys and Mapping

Enumerations, mapping and slum surveys are critical tools in the process of community mobilization. The Federation introduces communities to these tools through peer exchange and encourages them to collect details related to socio-economic conditions, housing, sanitation, amenities, demographics, income and education at the individual, household and settlement levels. They also map and number houses in the settlements.

These surveys create detailed and accurate information bases about slums, which governments usually lack. It provides an informational base for communities to understand their situation, to gain legitimacy in the eyes of authorities, to receive allocations to which they are entitled, and to use for exploring solutions and negotiating with relevant state authorities. Moreover, the actual task of collecting and processing data generates an understanding of shared community issues and strengthens bonds within communities.

Each of the city-level federations in Orissa has completed settlement profiles for all slums in their city, which they update every two years. They have also completed detailed maps and household surveys for all slums in which Mahila Milan is active. This has made OSDF/Mahila Milan an authority on slum statistics in Orissa. They use surveys to resist demolitions and support claims for resettlement; as proofs to receive benefits from the government, such as pensions and benefits for households Below the Poverty Line (BPL); and during negotiations for basic facilities or upgrading. They have also used the statistics to challenge inaccurate government figures on slums, which has led to joint city-wide slum surveys in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, and Paradeep and joint household surveys and Detailed Project Reports for upgrading and resettlement projects in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Puri (see "Building Partnerships").
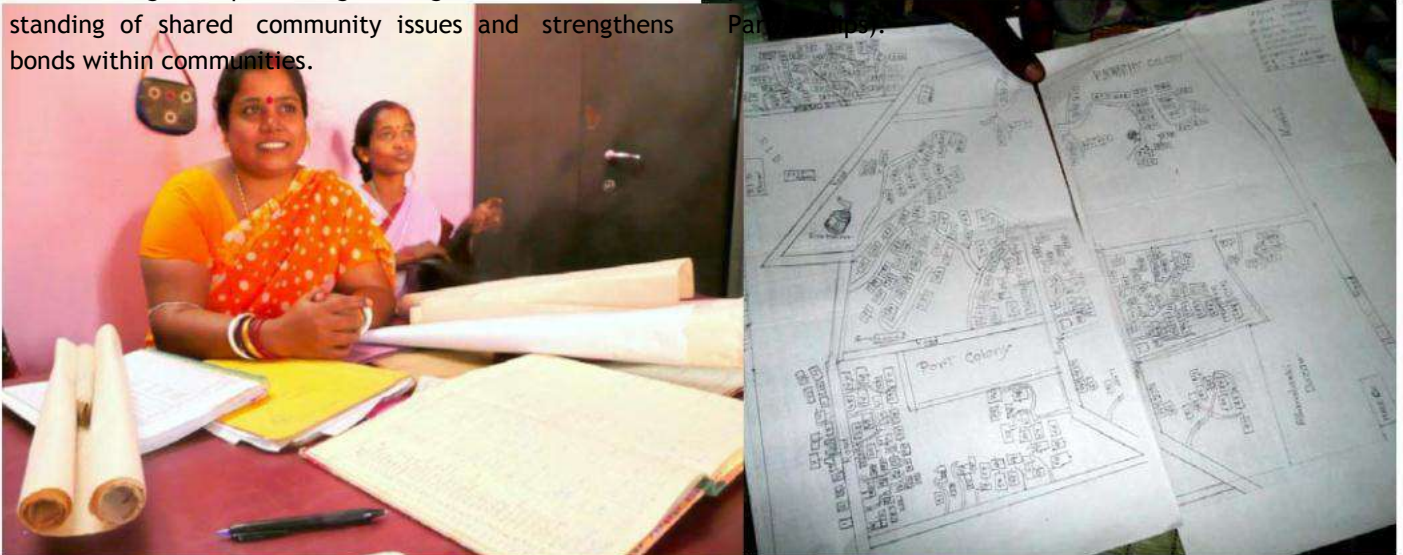
Urmila Sahoo, leader in the Bhubaneswar Federation, with maps and statistics of the city's slums (above, left). **Hand-drawn map of a slum settlement in Paradeep** (above, right). **A Mahila Milan member fills out a household survey in Cuttack** (right).

Peer Exchanges

Community exchanges and meetings are based on the premise that the poor learn best from the poor. Exchanges – which take place within and across cities, regions, and countries – allow federation members to visit each other's settlements, learn about their problems and achievements, and share experiences. This is an important way of breaking feelings of isolation and powerlessness, as poor communities see themselves as part of a larger collective and interdependent process. It allows communities to learn skills and strategies from one another, support each other in negotiations or projects, and collectively together explore solutions to problems they face.

Experiences are also shared, collective objectives and challenges are discussed, and bonds are strengthened at city-, state-, regional-, and national-level federation meetings. These exchanges and meetings are key capacity-building rituals.

NSDF/Mahila Milan leaders from Mumbai teach construction techniques and meet with members from Orissa during an exchange visit in 2003.

Capacity-building activities enable the federations to take on precedent-setting projects. The experience of the Alliance reveals that, although poor communities have many innovative ideas for solving their problems, they are constrained by numerous technical, financial, legal and other obstacles. Thus, they require a lot of support before they can demonstrate the utility and sustainability of their ideas.

However, once these solutions are successfully implemented and relevant stakeholders convinced, they become models for authorities to scale up at city and national levels. Precedent-setting activities in Orissa include construction of model houses, construction of community toilet blocks, electrification of settlements, and provision of water facilities. These activities demonstrate to poor communities themselves, government officials, and other stakeholders that poor people are entitled to basic shelter and facilities and are capable of developing and managing solutions.

People centric demonstration of Model house to building centres to Housing projects

OSDF and Mahila Milan have provided financial, organizational and technical support for construction and repair of houses in slum settlements in each of Orissa's four main cities. Construction and repair are funded through a combination of loans and subsidies, offered on the basis of an individual contribution towards the cost of the house. The family and community develop their own housing designs, and construction and renovation take place with local labor using local materials. Low-cost building techniques and other technical skills for building the houses are shared through exchanges with communities that have experience in construction. Special attention is paid to make houses resistant to natural disasters, in light of Orissa's susceptibility to cyclones and other calamities.

Not only do these houses enable families to access adequate shelter and invest in an important asset, but they also demonstrate to government officials, potential financial partners, and to communities themselves that slum residents are capable of designing and managing good-quality housing for themselves at an affordable price. Compared to houses designed and constructed for the poor by other actors, the community-led process leads to houses that accommodate the specific spatial needs of the household in terms of their family structure, livelihood and traditions, and that are suited to the local context. Once houses are built, the federation invites other communities and government officials to visit them. Showcasing model houses plays a key role in helping the poor gain confidence that they can afford adequate housing and convincing authorities and formal institutions that the poor are important partners in developing and executing low-income housing options.

A model house in Chandrabhaga, Puri-Konark (right). Ceiling construction using pre-cast concrete slabs, a technique learned through exchanges with Mumbai NSDF/Mahila Milan (below). A family opens the door to their house in Udayabatta, Paradeep, built through community-managed finance, design and construction (below, left). A Mahila Milan member in front of her house, under construction in Chandrabhaga, Puri (below, right).

Water and Sanitation

Community Toilets

Sanitation provisions for the urban poor are woefully inadequate. Few funds are allocated for this purpose, and where government facilities are provided, they tend to be ill-maintained and quickly become dysfunctional. Most households have neither the space nor funds to build individual toilets. This leaves slum residents with no choice but to defecate in the open, which threatens their health, dignity and safety, especially for women and children. Lack of sanitation facilities is one of the top concerns raised at community and federation meetings.

In addition to providing loans for individual toilet construction, the Orissa Federations and Mahila Milan have taken up construction of community toilet blocks. Having previously constructed toilets in Mundasahi and Pataswadi in Cuttack and Pentakata in Puri, the federations are in the process of constructing toilet blocks in Satichaura in Cuttack and in Balijara in Paradeep. These will be the first community toilets of their kind in the latter cities.

Site selection takes place on the basis of the local community's interest, willingness to make a financial and labour contribution, and ability to identify land for the project. The communities design and construct the toilets themselves, with technical assistance from federations who have experience in toilet construction and from professionals. Toilets are affordable to use, with member households typically paying Rs.30 per month for unlimited use, and passers-by paying Rs.1 per use. The toilets stay well-maintained despite the low charges because communities have a stake in their upkeep after managing the process and because contributions pay for a caretaker from the community, who is often provided with a space to live above the toilet block. Toilet blocks also serve as community spaces, with a space for meetings and functions on the upper floor.

Demonstration toilet construction projects have provided communities with clean and safe sanitation facilities, improving their health, productivity, safety and quality of life. They have also helped give communities skills and confidence to take up further construction projects, explore other infrastructural needs and sustain negotiations with authorities.

There has been interest in scaling up this model on a city-wide level in Cuttack, and it is expected that these projects will set a precedent for municipal officials, state authorities and communities of the poor to understand, implement and then scale up slum sanitation throughout the region.

The story of the Balijara community toilet is a story of overcoming obstacles. Mahila Milan began constructing the toilet in 2003 at the Balijara resettlement site in Paradeep, but the roof collapsed because rainy season began before construction was finished. This demoralized the federation and gave officials an excuse to condemn the Alliance. Refusing to lose confidence, several Mahila Milan women spent several years convincing officials to give them permission to rebuild the toilet by demonstrating other successes. The toilet (pictured above) will open in early 2009. It has 7 seats for men, 9 for women, a caretaker's room and a meeting space. Sephali Pradhan, a leader from Paradeep, directs the finishing touches (right).

Water

Residents of informal settlements lack adequate access to clean water. The municipality provides some water facilities, but these provisions are not sufficient to meet the size of slum populations. Some settlements lack water facilities altogether. OSDF and Mahila Milan have provided water connections to several slums through a community process.

Residents of Subash Nagar, an unauthorized settlement in Bhubaneswar, approached the local federation to help them secure a water connection in 2005. These leaders approached local government officials, but failed to receive a positive response. They collected Rs.2000 from the community and took out a loan to set up a tube well. The community hired a local contractor to install the well and contributed plaster and bricks collected from the area. The total project cost was Rs. 15000. This success has given the federations the skills and legitimacy to provide water facilities to other slums and has demonstrated their capacities other communities and to officials. When the local Slum Improvement Officer (SIO) saw the well, he offered mechanical support and training to help the federations build tube wells throughout the city. However, he was transferred before the collaboration could materialize.

Drainage

Slums are often prone to water blockage because they tend to be located in flood-prone areas and lack adequate drainage systems. OSDF and Mahila Milan have demonstrated that poor communities are willing and able to invest money, labor, time, and managerial capacities to construct proper drains in their neighborhoods.

This drain is under construction in the unauthorized slum of Jalisahi, in Puri. The community expressed a need for the drain to deal with the area's serious drainage problem. It has an estimated cost of Rs. 40,000, and the community provided a Rs. 1200 deposit and labor. They received permission from the Sewerage Board from the construction. The drain was built under the initiative of federation member G. Kameswari (pictured here), who lives in Jalisahi. She says that she was a housewife who did not interact with the outside world until she joined Mahila Milan. This project is a demonstration of people-managed infrastructure provision and maintenance.
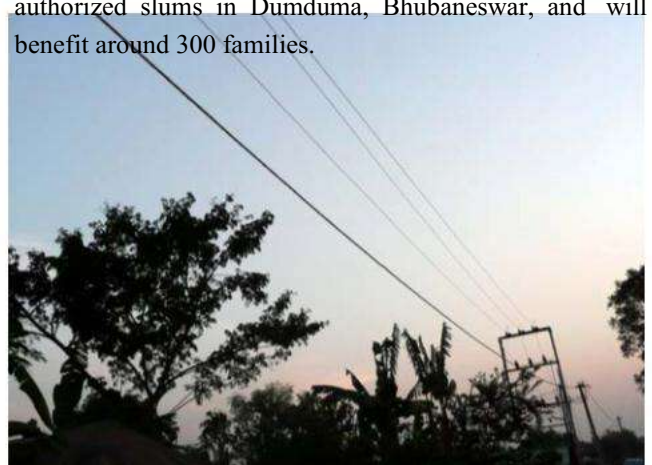
Electricity

Lack of electricity is a major problem that Mahila Milan and federation members bring up at meetings. Although authorities are empowered to provide electrical connections to residents of authorized slums, they are not willing to make this investment. Although there was until recently a process in place for residents of unauthorized slums to obtain electrical connections on the basis of certain documents, individuals within communities were not able to secure the necessary funds or manage the complex process on their own. There is resistance to providing electrical connections because of the perceptions that this will make slums more "permanent." A major precedent-setting achievement has been provision of legal electricity connections to residents of an unauthorized slum – Subash Nagar in Bhubaneswar.

Residents of Subash Nagar approached Mahila Milan for help with obtaining an electricity connection in 2006. Community leaders formed a local Electricity Committee, collected a deposit from interested households and approached government officials, all of whom declined to provide the connection. Finally, the CEO of the Electricity Board agreed to give them permission for the connection, but not to provide it. The community would have to finance the costs of the transformer, electricity poles, wires, labor, etc.

After encountering inflated prices and obstacles at all stages of the process, they finally secured the connections at a total cost of Rs. 750,000 and a 6% deposit (higher than the deposit for connections in the formal city). The contractor provided by the government twice raised his compensation fee; each time, the community pooled the money and paid him, eventually paying him around Rs. 70,000. The total community contribution was Rs. 200,000. Collecting such sums and organizing the process would not have been possible without the organization and community trust built through the federation process, without the federations' developed skills in managing money and negotiating with authorities, and without their building and blending of financial resources.

Having access to electricity has substantially improved the community's productivity, health, safety, and quality of life. Children are able to study. Residents are able to operate shops or engage in other livelihood activities. Doctors can see ailing patients. Residents, especially women and children, can avoid harassment, snakes, and other dangers. Households can operate fans, television sets, refrigerators, and other basic household conveniences. Furthermore, this achievement has increased their skills and confidence to negotiate with government officials and manage the process of obtaining amenities. By obtaining permission for a basic civic amenity, communities also feel that they have increased their level of security against eviction. It has also helped them build relationships with and gain legitimacy in the eyes of the community and government officials.

Many communities approached them for aid with obtaining electrical connections after the successful project. They have formed a 10-member Electricity Committee to share knowledge and manage the process. The Municipal Commissioner of Bhubaneswer was impressed that the community was able to obtain a connection and organize such sums of money, when the municipality itself was unable to provide the connection on an unauthorized plot. This became the basis of a partnership based on mutual respect. Electrification is currently under way for four authorized slums in Dumduma, Bhubaneswar, and will benefit around 300 families.

Tikina Das, a Federation leader from Subash Nagar who was instrumental in securing electricity for the settlement, can now supplement her income by sewing medical uniforms after dark (above, left)**.**

The outcome of the capacity-building and precedent-setting activities of federations and Mahila Milan has been negotiation and partnership with local officials at various levels. Based on their demonstrated credibility and financial, informational and organizational base, the federations have initiated productive dialogues and embarked on joint ventures with government agencies. Shifting from the traditional adversarial relationships between slum dwellers and the government, they have begun to see one another as partners in developing win-win solutions. Members of the Orissa federation who would previously not have been allowed to enter a government office are now patted on the back by senior officials.

Negotiations with officials first began when communities tried to obtain basic facilities, secure government allocations for eligible households, present their survey results or resist demolitions. Gradually, authorities began to see the federations as helpful partners and sought to collaborate with them on surveys and projects. Constant interaction and successful initiatives with authorities has built confidence and credibility on both sides. In some places, the dialogue and collaboration has begun to move to-

wards scaled-up initiatives. Eventually, these partnerships may lead to participation of the Alliance in decision-making processes and to pro-poor policy and institutional changes, as they have in other Indian cities. Unlike reforms initiated from above, these improvements are likely to be sustainable because they arise organically.

A major challenge in the partnership building process is the frequent transfer of government officials, which disrupts negotiations and relationships that have been built up. The Alliance deals with this challenge by basing its work in a grassroots process, meaning work can continue despite bureaucratic and political changes and during lulls in negotiations. They have also sought to establish relationships with lower-level officials, who work closer to the ground and are less likely to be transferred.

Four years ago, negotiations were mainly headed by DAWN and the top leadership of SPARC. Gradually, however, women leaders in the Federation have come to the forefront of negotiations about stopping evictions, building housing and infrastructure projects, obtaining basic services, and planning for upgrading or resettlement.

**Precedent-setting and urban governance:
How community-led projects transform relationships between the city and the poor**

From construction of model houses and toilets to provision of drains, water facilities, and electricity, the precedent-setting activities of the Alliance have brought about a reconfiguration of the relationship between the city government, NGOs and communities.

Community leaders have had to regularly meet with municipal and other department officials to get various permissions, understand standards, submit settlement surveys and collect payments – an empowering process in itself.

As more communities have seen the projects and gotten involved, this meant the city has had to sit up and take notice of thousands of slum dwellers all working on building a people's agenda, for example for "No Open Defecation" in their city.

The city government has recognized the capacity of community organisations to develop their own solutions, supported by NGOs.

Precedent-setting activities have initiated discussions on other issues related to urban poverty and opened space for dialogue on policy change, land tenure and bottom-up housing solutions.

As a result, city authorities change their attitude and role from simply being a "permission-giver" to understanding the issues at close quarters and working as partners with poor communities, and the public at large, to find constructive solutions. This process brings about real change and learning through experience, both for the government and for the people.
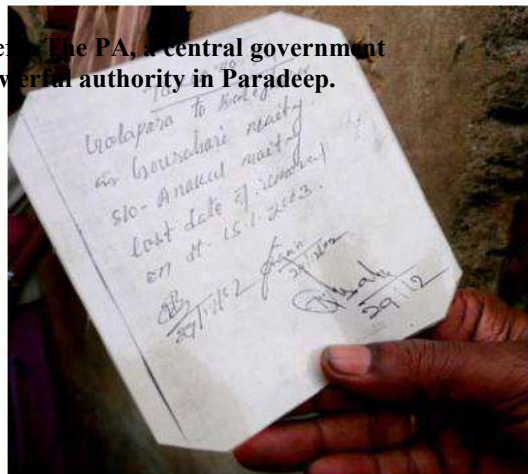
From Demolition to Resettlement

Before the Alliance became active in Orissa, the government's policy towards unauthorized slums was to demolish them with no warning and transport them to vacant land outside of the city, with no planned resettlement, provision of infrastructure, or issuing of tenure documents. Demolitions generally occurred when the land on which slums were located was needed for a construction or infrastructure project, or when they became a nuisance.

The work of the Alliance has helped transform the context into one in which forced evictions almost never occur, with a *de facto* policy of consultation and resettlement if demolitions are needed.

When evictions are planned, the federation approaches the government with the surveys and maps and explains that households will move of their own accord if they are supported to find alternate accommodation. Government officials see this as a win-win solution, as the federations have community credibility and the government can avoid the political and financial inconvenience of demolition by force.

The Case of Balijara, Paradeep

Paradeep was the city with the most hostile relationship between slum dwellers and the Port Authority (PA), a central government agency that controls most of the land. The PA wanted to shift slum dwellers who had settled on their land in central Paradeep. The Alliance approached the PA and presented a win-win resettlement process, in which the federations would help identify land, complete surveys and shift communities, if the Port granted them residency on the land and provide infrastructure. This was an attractive solution for the Port, which desired to displace slums without resistance in order to beautify the city to attract investment and expand its operations. Previously, some shifted families did not receive proofs of residence because of improper records. They played an active part in the resettlement process and ensured that no one was left out as a result of negotiations with the port. Resettlement began in 2003, and the process of shifting families to this land continues.

A sign welcomes visitors to Paradeep (below left). The PA, a central government agency, is the primary landowner and most powerful authority in Paradeep.

Residents received tokens from the PA confirming their legal residency (left). A view of the Balijara resettlement site from Mahila Milan's community toilet (below). The religious structure in the foreground was financed by the PA and constructed through free community labor.

Joint Surveys

Impressed that women's collectives of slum residents were able to collect more robust statistics on slums than official counts, local authorities have embarked on joint city-wide slum profiling exercises with city Federations in Bhubaneswar (2008), Cuttack (2004-05) and Paradeep (2006-07). In Bhubaneswar, the joint survey profiled 377 settlements, whereas the municipal list had previously listed only 206. In Cuttack, the joint survey found 250 slum settlements, whereas official records had the figure at 106. During joint surveys, the government agency and federations together developed a survey format, and a municipal worker accompanied the federation team collecting data in the field. Exercises took about a year and provided the most accurate data available about slums in Orissa's main cities. Because the data is collected by communities and certified by the government, it is seen as a reliable source to be used in benefit allocation, planning, and resettlement. These projects are evidence of going beyond traditional ideas of data collection and information management as mechanical exercise that can only be handled by professionals and of moving towards participatory planning with slum residents and women.

Federation members measure a house as part of a slum survey (right).

Aparajita Sarangi, Commissioner of the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) has collaborated with OSDF/Mahila Milan on joint survey and planning projects (above). **She lauded the work of the Alliance at a state-wide meeting of high-level government officials.**

A joint survey of OSDF/Mahila Milan and the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) under way in Jadisahi (right).

Planning Together

On the basis of their experience of working with OSDF and Mahila Milan, municipal authorities in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack and Puri have invited them to partner in planning slum upgrading and resettlement projects.

In Bhubaneswar, the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) invited federations to identify the thirteen slums that the city would upgrade under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNRUM), a Central Government scheme. The Federation selected the 13 most impoverished slums on authorized land through a community process and completed Detailed Project Reports and maps jointly with the BMC. From the Alliance's point of view, this ensured that money was directed where it was needed most and on the basis of ground realities; for the BMC, they could make the schemes more effective and justify selection of slums for the project.

Federations also surveyed around 300 families in four slums in Puri in collaboration with authorities in preparation for JNNURM projects. In 2005-06 in Cuttack, the Alliance became a nodal agency coordinating many stakeholders, including local communities, the Cuttack Development Authority (CDA), the Sewerage Board, and others to develop a resettlement plan for families living along Cuttack's Ring Road. Located between a riverbed and a busy road, these slums were flooded every year, forcing people to squat on a dangerous road during the monsoon and rebuild their houses every year. Federations prepared joint surveys and measured the settlements jointly with the CDA under the Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP), a national scheme. Although progress stalled because of land conflicts and transfers of government officials, this process was a major achievement in establishing partnerships with the government and negotiating win-win resettlement solutions.
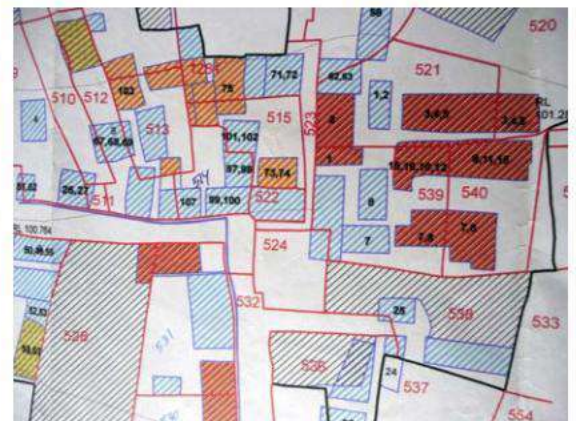
Map created jointly by the BMC and Orissa Alliance showing ownership patterns and construction materials of houses in Sabarsahi, the first settlement to be developed under JNNURM in Bhubaneswar (top right)**. OSDF/ Mahila Milan hold a night-time community meeting about the project in Sabarsahi** (top left). **The Bhubaneswar federation participated in site selection and planning for the 13 slums to be upgraded under the scheme.**

A settlement on a river embankment along Cuttack's Ring Road (left). **The Alliance completed detailed surveys and maps of these settlements and worked with multiple government agencies to plan resettlement of 1025 families. Negotiations have stalled because of bureaucratic issues.**

Mid-day Meals in Udayabatta, Paradeep

The Paradeep Federation recently found an innovative way to get involved in a government program. After a struggle, they secured the contract to provide mid-day meals under a government scheme for students in a school in Udayabatta, a resettlement site in Paradeep in which Mahila Milan is active. Although the municipality was hesitant to give the contract to an un-registered body, leaders were able to convince officials on the basis of earlier collaborations and their body of work. Mahila Milan wanted to be provide the meals to ensure that the nutritional and educational program benefited the community; there is often pilferage or disinterest among NGOs or government staff that typically manage such schemes.

During the course of our activities and achievements over the last three years, we have identified a number of challenges associated with this type of urban work by people-led institutions:

It is a challenge to find a balanced model for collaboration among NGOs and community-based organizations. When they begin partnering with people's organizations, NGOs must find a way to work with communities beyond logic or idealism. They must interrogate their internal structure to accommodate the federation model, take care not to get co-opted by self-serving local leaders and engage in extensive conflict resolution. This is related to the conflict that divided the spirit of DAWN. The logical outcome was to renounce that structure and establish a model in which the NGO and federation have a balanced partnership.

Our work is a decadal process, so it becomes difficult to define outputs according to yearly or short-term requirements of supporting institutions

As we started out as a rural NGO, and there is not much space for urban-focused work in Orissa, we struggled to have a place in urban context. The methodology of the federation model was also new, but we gradually gained credibility.

The Alliance had to negotiate ways in which to accommodate federation-led decision-making process verses NGO management-led decision-making processes.

It is a challenge to cope with the changing urban context, where there is increasing demand for rehabilitation and resettlement, sanitation for current and future needs, land for the poor.

Under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), NGO and CBO participation are taken as technical requirements, so the NGO and federations are sometimes sidelined, e.g. JNNURM brings in a significant role for the Alliance partners, but urban poverty always takes the backseat

As an NGO we are working to establish mechanisms and systems to absorb and build upon available resources (e.g., taking judicious decisions, participating in tendering processes).

In a sustainable, community-led process, it is important for Federations to make mistakes and learn from them in an organic way. However, external actors immediately use any mistakes to justify apprehensions about the capability of people's organizations. For example, the Paradeep federation was able to persevere despite being attacked from all sides after the collapse of the roof of the Balijara toilet. With sustained effort and patience, they have regained confidence and regrouped into a stronger federation and made ground-breaking achievements.

There are extremely frequent shifts of government officials, which makes it challenging to maintain momentum and relationships that come out of negotiations. We are addressing this in part by establishing relationships with lower-level officials and by continuing grassroots work and demonstration projects even if top-level negotiations wane temporarily.

The community organizations face skepticism and hostility because of misconceptions about the abilities and legitimacy of poor people, particularly women.

THE WAY FORWARD

Solutions to addressing deficiencies in shelter for the urban poor and achieving equitable urban growth are not technical, but political. The experimental, community-based methodology of the Alliance is addressed to ultimately changing equations of power in the city. Our process defies notions that only men, educated people, the upper classes, or technocrats are the only actors capable of handling urban matters, from gathering data, to providing sanitation and basic facilities, to providing affordable housing.

Our process suggests a model of urban governance based on community management, collective decision-making, and the leadership of women. In this case, organizations of the poor do not use collective power for defiance, but as a base for demonstrating people-driven solutions and dialoguing with authorities.

The urban context in Orissa is quickly evolving. The federation must cultivate their expertise and strategies to accommodate the growing demands. Because of the nature of our bureaucratic system, a simple change of officials has a direct bearing on the efficacy of pro-poor programs, and negotiations must begin from scratch. However, the scope for partnership is bigger than before. There is a strong demand for constructive partnerships, sharing of responsibility, transparency and accountability.

Even in Orissa, one of the least urbanized states, urban issues are beginning to be taken seriously. Because of the missing link of people's participation, many well-meaning efforts have not brought sustainable change on the ground, such as improving the quality of life of the poor or shifting equations of power. As we look forward, we will continue to work to create a situation where all stakeholders have a meaningful role based on their comparative advantage.

CONTACT US

Urban And Development Resource Centre(UDRC)
A/S-14 Mahabinayak puram,Patia College Road, Kiit
Bhubaneswar-751024
The Society For The Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC)
2nd Floor, Khetwadi Municipal School Building,
Khetwadi Lane No. 1,
Girgaum,
Mumbai 400004

Phone:+91 0674-2726903
E-mail:udrcalliances.gmail.com
monalisa_mohanty@yahoo.com
Website:www.udrcalliances.org

Phone: +91 22 23865053/23858785
Fax: +91 22 23887566
E-mail: sparc@vsnl.in
Website: www.sparcindia.org
Also find us at www.youtube.com/user/sparcindia