

Strengthening community-based organizations for slum Development

¹Kuldeep Singh, PhD Scholar, Dept. of Sociology, School of SS & Humanities Gautam Buddha University
²Dr Syed Nadeem Fatmi, Assistant Professor, Dept. of sociology, Gautam Buddha University

Abstract

Efforts aimed at urban poverty reduction and service delivery improvement depend critically on slum dwellers' collective agency. This study aims to examine key challenges of CBOs in bringing and performing collective action and factors which promote CBOs to contribute for social change. Through extensive reviews of literature in urban slum upgrading studies, this study has found two broad sets of factors influencing CBOs performance. The first set is identified as internal factor is key challenges of CBOs being lack of effective leadership and communication. The second set is identified as enabling factors which enhance CBO to achieve their collective actions. This study concludes that in the implementation of community development project CBOs are indispensable actors as they are at the forefront in their community and are best positioned to engage with all community development interventions. The urban practitioners and NGOs need evaluate their approach to empowering urban residents in partnership with CBOs. In order to sustain CBOs the NGOs should recognise and limit their role beyond the facilitator to avoid ongoing dependence.



Key words: Slum, practice, participatory slum upgrading, community based organization, Community based development pro poor policy, decentralization, civil society.

SECTION I

1. Introduction and problem situation : The urban population of the world is increasing hugely. The estimates are that more than 60% of the increase in the world's urban population over the next three decades will be in Asia, mostly in China and India. It seems that one billion people or one third of the world's population is estimated to be living in slums (Ooi & Phua, p.2). Due to increased poverty as a result of urbanization the people are migrating from rural areas to urban areas in search of livelihood opportunities.

1.1 The nature of development issues to be addressed in the slums

Most of these people are either living in places which are unauthorized or encroached places of living called slums which primarily lack basic amenities. Those living over there don't have legal rights over the land even if they live there for a long period of time. The slum target of the goal of MDGs is to significantly improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers around the world by 2020. The increase in the Indian population over a period of time has also resulted in slum population growth. India is a part of the global trends where an increasing number of people live in urban areas. The number of towns and the absolute urban



population in India has increased steadily over the last sixty years (Planning Commission of India, (2011), p.2) Despite government efforts to build new houses and other basic infrastructure, most of the people living in slum areas do not have electricity, water supply or cooking gas. Generally the majority of people have problems related to basic amenities and are unable to access basic entitlements (Sahyog project, annual report, 2012-13). The slums dwellers who are considered to belong to the cheap work force are actually “city makers” and are often neglected for the cost of infrastructure development. Over the years the governments are implementing inclusive policies to narrow the inequities for the welfare of urban poor slum dwellers. Initiatives for slum improvement such as bringing a welfare program into the slums depend heavily on intermediaries at the slum level. Efforts aimed at urban poverty reduction and service delivery improvement depend critically on the slum dwellers collective agency.

A way forward – building CBOs means building locally for local

Adding to a long history of community participation approaches, there is now a growing incidence of so-called ‘partnerships’ between the government and CBOs. Such approaches require a fair representation of a majority of the poor by local CBOs. In growing patterns of engaging CBOs as a means of social change, it is matter of fact that CBOs are real vehicles for social change (Wit & Berner (2009), p. 1). In the context of slums there is a strong interrelationship between CBOs and social change. It is imperative to understand the implications of CBOs and social change as empowerment means inclusiveness and equity at large. For slum dwellers empowerment definitely means that exercising their fundamental rights and getting their basic entitlements. . I have noticed that the grassroots NGOs working in slums heavily rely on the CBOs for the implementation of their activities as the CBOs are based in slums. CBOs represent the slums in their locality and participation of slum dwellers is often challenged due to various factors like gender, illiteracy, ethnicity, caste, occupation, age and religion.

In India CBOs in slums are considered a bridge to collaborate between NGOs and slum dwellers, as the CBOs have good relationships and rapport with the communities of their section. Hence CBOs find them in good position to acquire support from NGOs or government to implement or educate for inclusive development. Another key factor for bringing social change through CBOs is that they have first-hand information as a result of residing within the slum. Hence they are considered a catalyst of social change as they are expected to reach the slum dwellers in their location.

In a nutshell, CBOs are community groups which have first-hand knowledge of the problems they live with, and a personal stake in the success of their solutions. CBOs are indispensable elements for the slums development as they readily available and closest to the people.

Purpose of study

The overall purpose of my research study is to explore the dynamics of Community Based Organizations (CBOs) and social change within Indian slums. To do so, I will analyze the literature on key challenges of CBOs in bringing and performing collective action and factors which promote CBOs to contribute for social change. The learning from this study will

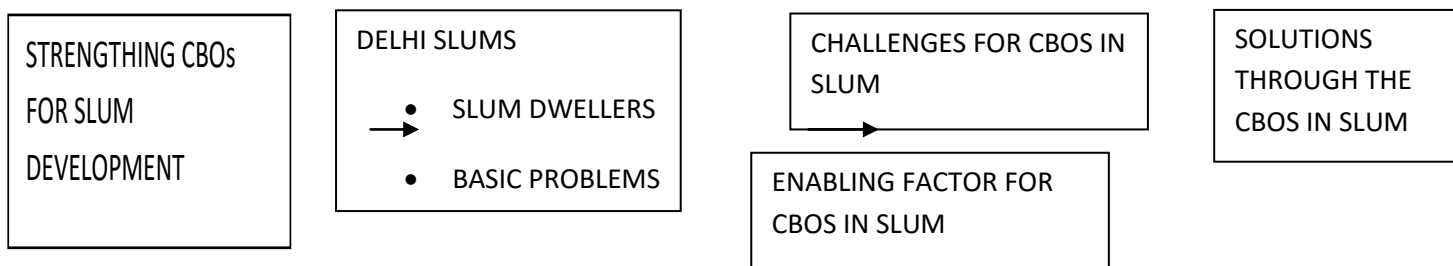


contribute to building broad knowledge to my core area of work as I have been engaged with CBOs directly for the last ten years in east Delhi slums.

Research Objectives

- 1) What are key challenges of CBOs in performing collective action?
- 2) What promotes CBOs in contributing social change in slum?

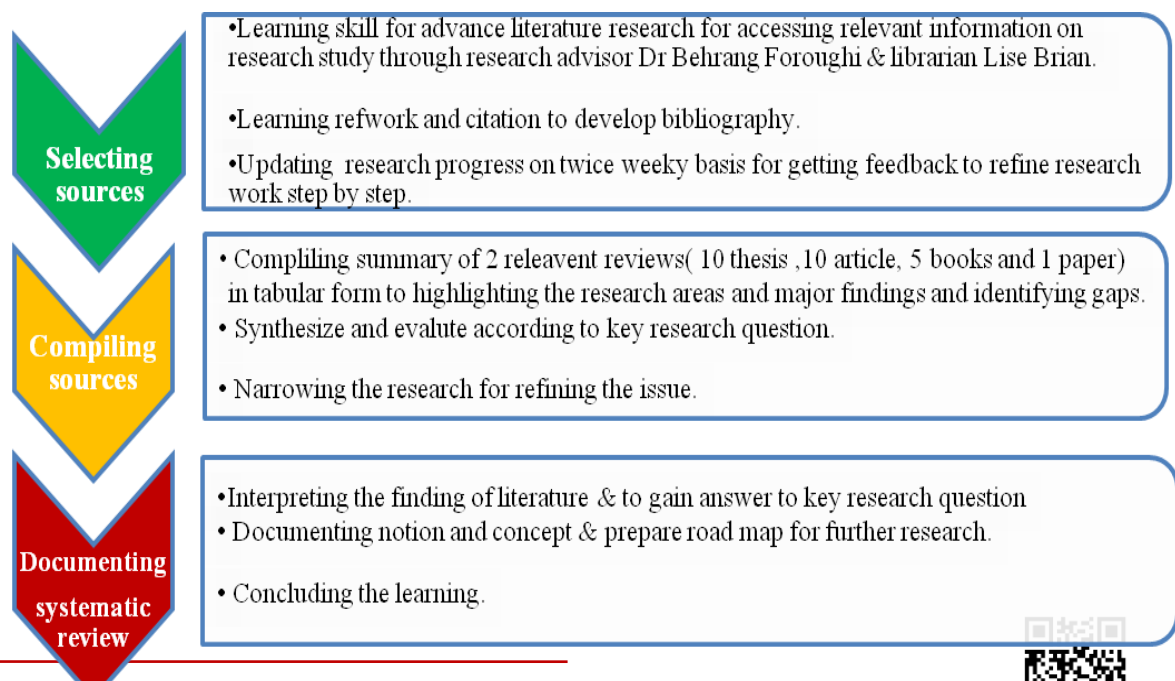
Frame work for research study



Methodology

- Meta analysis of research studies pertaining to slum upgrading for analysing key challenges CBOs faced and factors which promote CBOs to contribute for social change
- Reviewing report of 2 NGOs working in forming and capacitating CBOs in east Delhi slums to analyse practical implication in CBOs functioning.

Literature review process To embark my knowledge on issue of CBOs and social change in slums, the under mentioned three steps will navigate me to answer key research questions



SECTION II SOURCE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction:

Slum dwellers are significantly as important as anyone else. They are often considered as objects rather than subjects. These city makers who are indispensable human resources for day to day life are unfortunately neglected by state authority to access basic entitlement. There is a long tradition of resolving issues through CBOs by collective action. Many studies have been conducted in the past to explain the issues related to slum dwellers and approaches to address the associated problems. This source review will focus on four aspects which emerged repeatedly throughout the literature review. These aspects are: key challenges of CBOs in bringing and performing collective action and factors which promote CBOs to contribute to social change. Although the literature presents these aspects of CBOs in slums in variety of contexts, this study will primarily focus on the significance of CBOs in relation to slum upgrading.

3.1 Key challenges of CBOs in bringing in performing collective action

Agarwal (2008) pointed out that most common challenges of CBOs are coordination, monitoring and reporting of activities implemented through government and NGOs. The authors finds that in most cases CBOs do not have capacity to address prevailing health issues in order bring raise awareness among slum dwellers. Another challenge identified is community-based action effort in extremely vulnerable slums was very limited. I agree with the author in his view as I understand that in slums, CBOs is constituted with members who are heterogenous in knowledge, background, skill and occupation etc. Often NGOs rely on them to implement their activities but there is minimal effort taken to build their management skills and increase their group capability. Generally the CBOs have poor capacity to address or bring awareness to health-related issues pertaining to their communities. The CBOs often do not consider health as a priority and failed to recognised good practices which could lead to sustainable behaviour change.

Jha (2007) pointed out that the community leadership in slums is not strong due to informal structure of associations or groups. Hence due to lack of strong leadership the contact point to engage with politicians to influence or bring basic services is affected. I completely agree with the author's finding of the key challenge for CBOs in slums is leadership. The CBO's leader is not selected on the basis of experience or good quality but often it is based on his linkages with a major political party. Hence in absence of leadership quality the CBOs are unable to bring social impact in the slum. In my experience I recognized that there is minimal effort or no emphasis by the development agencies to build grass root level leadership to bring social change. Another challenge for CBOs is leadership is due to diversity due to religion, caste, occupation, age etc. which due to which there are many slums leaders which represent their own community group. Therefore there are many formal and informal leaders in every slum. In many instances the issue of identity crisis in leadership will be more



significant in heterogeneous slum communities. In some slums there are more tenants who consistently migrate hence are unable to support the advocacy lead by CBOs.

Agarwal & Sangar (2006) in *Need for Dedicated Focus on Urban Health* within pointed out that there is weak coordination among the various stakeholders and as a result the basic amenities are unavailable. He argues that there is a requirement to build capacity of and to visualise outcomes of collective action. I also identify that coordination is a major issue among various CBOs working in the same slum which impede them to be productive. The main reason for weak coordination is due to competency and the inability to communicate and understand each other. It is the role of NGOs working in areas to bring all CBOs under one umbrella to coordinate and work together for collective action.

Baud (2000) *Collective Action, Enablement, And Partnerships* identifies that there are key issues of trust, accountability and cooperation which hinders the empowerment of CBOs. The author recommends further research on power relations and change as partners work together, as then only the assessment of partnership or collective action could be more practical and realistic. I also confirm that the issues identified by the author are relevant and crucial. Generally CBOs are not considered as trustworthy by the residents as they have either no mechanism of reporting back to the community for whom they work. CBOs are deficient in accountability and transparency.

3.2 Factors which promotes CBOs to contribute for social change

Srivastava (2005) stressed that if a comprehensive strength, weakness, opportunity and threat (SWOT) analysis is done then it's particularly helpful to CBOs and stakeholders as they engage in slum upgrading. This paper encourages me to do further drilling on the subject favourable for the CBOs. Through my experience I too recognised that there is paucity of specific tools to enhance the CBO's level of participation. I strongly believe there is immense opportunity and benefit working through CBOs hence an exhaustive SWOT analysis as a tool would be radiant to list the factors which enable them to function effectively. Beside SWOT analysis I recognized that some of the tools of the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) course like mapping individual skills, mapping the asset of local institutions and illustrating the link between the association and institution will certainly contribute to bringing success. Using the leaky bucket through the CBOs for identifying economic opportunities will certainly capacitate CBOs to critically analyse their economic condition and then plan collective action to mobilize social capital.

Parivartan (1999) *WSP- South Asia*, the author identified two key areas for improvement in CBOs: leadership and capacity building, and information flow and coordination. Based on my experience I agree with the author on his view and I understand there is a requirement to impart focus training on planning and monitoring tools for CBOs and develop training material which is simple to understand in local language. The training methodology used for building capacity of CBOs should be purely based on adult education principles. The study stresses that CBOs should be comprised of youth too. I agree and affirm that in every slum community youth are an integral part hence I acknowledge an ideal CBO will be a good convergence of youth, women and men and representatives from vulnerable groups or



disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities (PWDs), elderly, low caste and widows etc.

Mengers (2000) in making urban sector lending work pointed out that merely using the term capacity building is not enough but instead it should be spelled in broader terms. The sharing of good practices and experiences of collective action of stakeholders who are in action is imperative bringing social change in slums. I am fully convinced by the author that there is a gap and variations in understanding the term capacity building of CBOs for collective action. The term capacity building is merely understood as involving CBOs in consultation. Generally the training design is in line with implementing an organization agenda which differs from the CBO's priority and background. I noticed through my experience that in training workshops only common topics are explained rather than the specific topics pertaining to CBOs in slums. I strongly recommend that topics to be discussed in the training should be relevant to current context to slum dwellers. The notion of building trainer of trainer (TOT) programs is often ignored. I affirm that learning happens in various ways hence I had experienced that orientation or exposure to program of CBOs to another community is not only instrumental in learning good practices but it also encourages them to continue their effort with commitment and sincerity.

Brinkerhoff (2003,) Donor-funded government—NGO partnership for public service improvement focus that partnership of any kind not only adds value to work but also builds identity of the grass root organizations. The author shared that the development agencies should have direct relationships with grass root organizations to provide technical support in designing and implementation of their program. It should not just be limited to funds for operating. I support the author's point of view as the broad mandate of development agencies is to increase quality of life in slums by empowering them. I had observed that generally all NGOs engage with CBOs in order to empower them. As empowerment is process, it certainly facilitates participation and develops opportunities to live life in full potential. The goal of empowering slum dwellers through CBOs could be only achieved if NGOs have strong and transparent relationships with CBOs. In my experience of ten years with CBOs I acknowledge the relationship with CBOs is one of the key elements in facilitating empowerment. If relationships between CBOs and NGOs are not strong then process of problem solving through CBOs is often misunderstood. I strongly feel that NGOs personnel should invest quality and quantity time in active listening to CBOs and slum dwellers as it is a key in building relationships with them and it builds rapport.

Aggarwal & Bhano (2005) Improving age appropriate immunization among urban poor infants, Possible Options and Approaches describes that NGO—CBO partnership approach was successful in bringing behaviour change among women for the immunization of their under-three year old children. The author emphasized the importance of orientation and training which systematically builds the capacity of CBOs. This study reveals that through the successful partnership of NGO-CBOs in targeted slums, the CBOs were able to achieve sustainable behaviour change. I am convinced by the success of the partnership approach mentioned by the author. I had noticed that in slum areas children and women are vulnerable to infections primarily due to poor living environment and unhygienic practices. It is essential



that CBOs should partner in all activities as I acknowledge that once CBOs are convinced about crucial benefits of behaviour change then they themselves act as change agents to supply awareness. In the process of bringing sustainable change in attitude and behaviour of slum dwellers, partnership with CBOs is critical because for making a sustainable future of communities change in attitude and behaviour is required.

3.3 Critical lesson learned from source review

In light of this source review, the critical lessons learned about CBOs can be summarised as: The **role CBOs** can play include doing advocacy for the issue pertaining to their communities and networking to access services and resources. They could be crucial in information sharing together, partnership and facilitating in community mobilizing and organizing together with NGOs.

Key challenges of CBOs: Some common challenges identified are as follows: poor communication, lack of group management skills, lack of resources and effective leadership skills, low revenues, lack of support from, lack of accountability and transparency and lack of strategy for capacity building. Particularly in the slums areas CBOs' implementation is jeopardized due to diversity and uncertainty of land status.

Enabling factors for CBOs: The critical factors which enhance CBOs are summarised as:

- Facilitating and developing asset mapping of slum communities in a simple language and including youth and women in this process.
- Application of adult education methodology, initiating experience learning.
- Leadership training of the community at large.

Adopting an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach which builds assets and skills that people do have.

SECTION III

CONCLUSIONS

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter I shall outline and highlight lessons learnt from the previous section of the study. I will discuss the crucial role of CBOs in slum upgrading, some slum upgrading models in which CBOs were engaged, key challenges of CBOs in performing collective action and factors which promote CBOs to contribute to social change. Finally I will suggest key recommendations for CBOs with regard to the welfare approach in slums particularly related to my organization.

Conclusions

The exponential growth of slums is no accident as today more people are living in urban areas than rural areas and city populations are growing day by day. The rapidity and enormous volume of this rural-to-urban migration intensifies slum formation. City planning and management systems are unable to adequately cope with the massive population influx. NGOs depend on CBOs in bridging the gaps. The CBOs have increasingly important roles in urban slums. The source review was a profound inquiry into arenas of CBO interventions in the slums and I obtained an overview of factors which contribute to and challenge the function of CBOs in slums.



As mentioned in chapter two, the development approach of my organization working in the slums is very much focused and based on CBOs. Therefore the source review was very significant to reflect upon NGOs present and future interventions for CBOs. The key lessons of the source review will significantly contribute to the shape of NGOs present and future interventions in empowering poor slum dwellers through CBOs. The research questions were crucial to investigating the key aspects of CBOs in slum areas. These include the CBOs challenges and the success factors. I have summarized the major learning of the source review in the following conclusion.

○ **Key challenges of CBOs:**

The general challenges faced by CBOs are particularly in their formation stage. Challenges include the need to respond to critical local gaps and to attract membership on that basis. In my experience of the last ten years directly engaged with CBOs, I observed that the CBOs in slum areas find themselves in a resource-constricted situation hence the lack of opportunity to tap available financial resources and appropriate strategies that strengthen local ownership, community commitment and shared responsibility. Some common challenges identified are: poor representation of women, poor governance and management which leads to poor communication, lack of group management skills, lack of resources and effective leadership skills, low revenues, lack of support from, lack of accountability and transparency and lack of strategy for capacity building. Particularly in the slums areas the implementation of CBOs is jeopardized due to diversity and uncertainty of land status. In brief the CBOs lack a clear vision and mission based on genuine local needs because of the poor capacity to design appropriate strategies that strengthen local ownership, community commitment and shared responsibility.

○ **Enabling factors for CBOs:**

The successful operation of CBOs heavily depends on good governance of each organization. One goal of good governance is to enable an organization to do its work effectively. However, good governance entails more than "getting the job done". The "process" is as important as the product, particularly in the context of CBOs, where values typically play an important role in determining both organizational purpose and style of operation. Good governance is therefore about both achieving the desired results and achieving them in the right way. The critical factors which enhance CBOs are summarised as follows:

1. Facilitating and developing asset mapping of slum communities in a simple language, including youth and women in this process.
2. Application of adult education methodology, initiating experiential learning.
3. Leadership training of the community at large.
4. Adopting an asset-based community development (ABCD) approach which builds the assets and skills of the people.

SECTION VI

References list

1. Agarwal S. (2008). *Strengthening functional community-provider linkages: Lessons from the Indore urban health programme.*



2. Agarwal, S., & Sangar, K. (2005). *Need for dedicated focus on urban health within national rural health mission. Indian Journal of Public Health*, 49(3) http://www.uhrc.in/downloads/Publications/Articles/Article_IJPH.pdf
3. Ali, A. O. & Baas, S. (2008). *Community-based organizations as partners in poverty alleviation: Lessons learnt and good practice examples from Yemen.*
4. Alcock G. A. (2009). *Community-based health programmes: Role perceptions and experiences of female peer facilitators in Mumbai's urban slums. Health Education Research*, 24(6).
5. Andreassen, C. E. (2011). *Women and environmental issues in a Delhi slum: The role of NGOs and self help groups in coping with environmental problems.* Asia, S. (2009), Ahmadabad parivartan, UNDP.
6. Baas, S. & Ali, A. A. (n.d.). *Community-based organizations in Yemen: Good practices and lessons learned.* Retrieved November 26, 2013, from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/008/y7218t/y7218t07.htm>
7. Bandyopadhyay, A. & Agrawal, V. (2013). Slums in India: From past to present. *International Refereed Journal of Engineering and Science*, 2(4), 55-59. Retrieved November 26, 2013, from <http://www.irjes.com/Papers/vol2-issue4/Version%20%201/I245559.pdf>
8. Baruah. B. (2007). Assessment of public-private-NGO partnerships: Water and sanitation services in slums. *Natural Resources Forum*, 31(3). Retrieved from /z-wcorg/ database.
9. Batliwala S. (2002). Grassroots movements as transnational actors: Implications for global civil society. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 13(4). Retrieved from /z-wcorg/ database.
10. Batliwala, S. (2002). Grassroots movements as transnational actors: Implications for global civil society. *Voluntas*, 13(4), 393-409. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1022014127214>
11. Baud, I. (2000). Collective action, enablement and partnerships: Issues in urban development. *Inaugural Lecture, Free University*, 27. Retrieved November 26, 2013, from <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-Page> 35 projects/drivers_urb_change/urb_governance/pdf_partic_proc/IHS_Baud_collective_action.pdf
12. Bhanot, A., Agarwal, S., & Srivastava, K. (2004). *Improving age-appropriate immunization among urban poor infants: possible options and approaches.* New Delhi: United States Agency for International Development. Retrieved November 26, 2013, from http://www.uhrc.in/downloads/Reports/Immunisation_Report_2005.pdf
13. Botes L. (2000). Community participation in development: Nine plagues and twelve commandments. *Community Development Journal*, 35(1) Retrieved from /z-wcorg/ database.
14. Bradbury-Huang, H. (2013). Editorial. *Action Research*, 11(2), 111-112. doi:10.1177/1476750313493162
15. Brinkerhoff, J. M. (2003). Donor-funded government-NGO partnership for public service improvement: Cases from India and Pakistan. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 14(1). Retrieved from /z-wcorg/ database.
16. Burra, S. (2005) . Towards a pro-poor framework for slum upgrading in Mumbai, India. *Environment and Urbanization*, 17(1). Retrieved from /z-wcorg/ database.



17. Chambers, R. (1997). *Whose reality counts?: Putting the first last*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
18. Chandrasekhar, S. (2005). Growth of slums, availability of infrastructure and demographic outcomes in slums: Evidence from India. Retrieved November 24, 2013, from <http://iussp2005.princeton.edu/papers/52133>
19. Clinard, M.(1966) . *Slums and community development experiments in self-help*. Retrieved from /z-wcorg/ database.
20. Cronin, V., & Guthrie, P. (2011). Alternative approaches to slum upgrading in kibera, nairobi. *Proceedings of the ICE-Urban Design and Planning*, 164(2), 129-139.
21. Das, A. K. (2009). Evolving institutional arrangements, scaling up, and sustainability emerging issues in participatory slum upgrading in Ahmedabad, India. *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, 29(2).
22. D'Cruz, C., & Satterthwaite, D. (2006). The role of urban grassroots organizations and their national federations in reducing poverty and achieving the millennium development goals. *Global Urban Development*, 2(1), 1-17.
23. De Wit, J., & Berner, E. (2009). Progressive patronage? Municipalities, NGOs, CBOs and the limits to slum dwellers' empowerment. *Development and Change*, 40(5), 927-947.
24. Dimri, A. & Sharma, A. (2006). Living on the edge and paying for it: A study in Sanjay Colony, Okhla phase II,
25. Delhi. (CCS working paper no. 148). New Delhi: Centre for Civil Society.

