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## Avinash Kumar



*Avinash Kumar has completed his Ph.D. in International Investment Law from the Dept. of Law & Governance, Central University of South Bihar. His research work is on "International Investment Agreement and State's right to regulate Foreign Investment." He qualified UGC-NET and has been selected for the prestigious ICSSR Doctoral Fellowship. He is an alumnus of the Faculty of Law, University of Delhi. Formerly he has been elected as Students Union President of Law Centre-1, University of Delhi. Moreover, he completed his LL.M. from the University of Delhi (2014-16), dissertation on "Cross-border Merger & Acquisition"; LL.B. from the University of Delhi (2011-14), and B.A. (Hons.) from Maharaja Agrasen College, University of Delhi. He has also obtained P.G. Diploma in IPR from the Indian Society of International Law, New Delhi. He has qualified UGC – NET examination and has been awarded ICSSR – Doctoral Fellowship. He has published six-plus articles and presented 9 plus papers in national and international seminars/conferences. He participated in several workshops on research methodology and teaching and learning.*

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# **INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AND DEVELOPMENTAL GOVERNANCE: INDIA'S POLICY RESPONSE TO GRASSROOTS CHALLENGES**

AUTHORED BY - MR. SACHIN NEMA & MS. PURVIKA TYAGI

Research Scholar

National Law Institute University, Bhopal (M.P) India

## **Abstract**

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) stands as the central tenet within India's overarching developmental aspirations. Issues like urban slums epitomize multifaceted challenges towards achieving the SDGs. Slums are ecosystem of extreme population density, vicious cycle of poverty, socio-economic marginalisation, poor health and sanitation, high incidence of crimes and many more. This makes the slums as the crucial area of focus for the implementation of SDGs. Global south faces pronounced challenges with urban slums. As per recent World bank data, 49 percent of the Indian urban population lives in slums. This figure is considerably high in developing and under developed countries. This paper aims to present an-in depth depiction of urban slums in the context of SDGs targets and policy responses from government. The Union government has classified slums into tenable and untenable categories. Untenable slums are usually characterised by environmentally sensitive sites and marked on land owned by public utility services. For these slums, in-situ redevelopment projects are not feasible due to numerous legal complexities. The primary policy response from both the Union and state governments entails the provision of essential amenities such as water, sanitation, and primary healthcare to these slums. Nonetheless, the execution and implementation of these policies often fall short, characterized by inadequacy or temporary measures. This research has documented the significant water crisis faced by inhabitants of Delhi's slums, where access to potable water remains elusive, perpetuating a persistent challenge. Thus, this paper offers an in-depth examination of untenable slums involving the socio-economic conditions of these slums and government response. For tenable slums, the in-situ redevelopment model has been a central component of the government's strategy. This study presents the evolution of the government's strategy from demolition to redevelopment over the years. The demolition strategy entailed slum clearance, demolition, and relocation. However, this approach encountered significant challenges, including disruption of the livelihoods of slum inhabitants,

substantial resistance from the affected communities, judicial interventions, and various other obstacles. To address these issues, the in-situ redevelopment approach has become a crucial component of the PM Awas Yojana. In-situ slum rehabilitation projects utilize land as a resource, providing formal housing to slum dwellers constructed at the same location. This approach not only promotes sustainable development but also encourages private sector participation, thereby unlocking the true potential of the land. This study provides a comprehensive analysis of in situ redevelopment projects, with detailed case studies from Delhi, Mumbai, and Gujarat. The analysis encompasses the identification of these projects and a comparative evaluation of the models employed in Delhi and Gujarat. These redevelopment projects have encountered significant delays, judicial interventions, and various other challenges. Consequently, this research investigates the causes of these challenges through case studies of Mumbai and Delhi. In light of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target to ensure access to adequate, safe, and affordable housing and basic services for all, and to upgrade slums by 2030, this paper will analyse policy responses and assess the progress made towards achieving this objective.

## 1. Introduction

Over the last twenty years, the global economy has undergone a significant transformation due to the remarkable economic advancements of developing nations such as China, India, Brazil, and South Africa. The economic focal point is steadily shifting towards the developing South (Singh Puri, 2010). Among the developing countries, India is one of the fastest growing major economies of the World. The economic growth of the country is backed by strong investment and market opportunities supported by stable political system. When the growth of a country increases, it should also be accompanied by development. In this regard sustainable development goals comes into the role. “The United Nations approved the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), sometimes referred to as the Global Goals, in 2015 as a global call to action to end poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee that by 2030 all people live in peace and prosperity. The 17 SDGs are interconnected; they acknowledge that decisions made in one area will have an impact on other areas and that development must strike a balance between environmental, social, and economic sustainability. Nations have pledged to give the least developed nations' development the highest priority. The SDGs aim to eradicate discrimination against women and girls, hunger, AIDS, and poverty. The attainment of the SDGs in each given setting requires the ingenuity, expertise, technology, and financial resources of the entire population” (UNDP, n.d.). Jeffrey D. Sachs in his book *The Age of*

Sustainable development he envisaged the need of sustainable development given the growing urbanisation as phenomenon. The characteristics that make a city sustainable, green, and resilient have become not only a crucial research topic but also vital for those migrating from rural areas to urban centres. Key issues include the development of smart infrastructure, as well as efficient water supply and waste management systems (Sachs, 2015). Developing countries like India are striving hard for the implementation of sustainable development goals. One of the biggest challenges to the implementation process is slums.

Issue of slums has been one of the complex and growing issue that countries like India are facing. Growth of slums are directly attached to the rapid urbanization. Urbanisation is the consequence of country's growth and development. When the country start moving towards development, more and more people attracted to the urban areas. The migration due to pull factors increases from rural to urban. Since the rapid and huge migration, the limited capacity of the cities started losing out and issues like slums, water crisis, pollution and many more started challenging the basic tenets. Issues of slums are not just about lack of sufficient housing facilities. Slums are the whole ecosystem and epi-centre that are lacking sustainable development. Poverty, hunger, poor health and sanitation, high incidence of crimes are some of the characteristics of the slums described by UN habitat. "Katherine Boo's "Behind the Beautiful Forevers" reveals the harsh realities of life in an urban slum, highlighting the squalor and deprivations its residents endure"(Vishal Sethi, 2016). Thus this makes the slums as the key area of focus for the implementation of sustainable development goals in India. This paper seeks to present the contextual analysis of characteristics of slums and need of the implementation of sustainable development goals. This paper deals with the analysis of slums as major issue in the drive towards sustainable development. It also presents a critical analysis of the government's policy responses, encompassing the spectrum from demolition to development in India, through case studies of Delhi, Gujarat, and Mumbai. To begin with it is important to understand the slums first.

## 2. Understanding slums

There's lack of common universal definition to the slums. There many parameters and different measures which can be used to define the slums. For instance Slums are neglected areas of cities with horribly subpar housing and living conditions, according to the Cities Alliance Action Plan. Slums vary from impoverished, high-density tenements in the heart of cities to haphazard, unrecognised squatter colonies that swarm the outskirts of towns with no legal

status or rights. Favelas, kampungs, bidonvilles, and other terms for slums all refer to the same deplorable living circumstances (Cities Alliance, 2016). UN-HABITAT has been working on the concept of sustainable cities and have published many reports related to slums. UN-HABITAT has given its own definition of slums. Slum households are characterized by residents experiencing different conditions: a) Inadequate water sources, b) Insufficient sanitation services c) Inadequate living space, d) Poor housing, and 5) Lack of secure tenure (UN-Habitat, 2006). UN-HABITAT also elucidates the challenges of slums, thereby reinforcing the definition in more substantive manner.

### 2.1 Challenges and characteristics of slums in context of SDGs

UN habitat (UN-Habitat, 2006) identified the characteristics as poverty, social exclusion, overcrowding, unhealthy living conditions and etc. Given the sensitivity of characteristics of the slums, they directly urge the need of implementation of sustainable development goals. Slums basically characterised as the socially economically and environmentally degraded ecosystem. The slums population of urban areas were counted in India, in 2011. There's not an official data collected and published by the government regarding the status of health education, living conditions attributed to the slums. As the Centre for Policy Research in its survey report reported the infrastructural violence and lack of clean and safe environment in these slums. The state's failure to provide or properly maintain adequate sanitation facilities results in passive infrastructural violence. This neglect exposes women and girls to physical and emotional violence based on gender, caste, and class, causing lifelong harm and suffering (Chaplin & Kalita, n.d.). In a cluster approach, slum areas are identified by their deteriorating and inadequate housing, substandard ventilation, high population density, poor city planning, insufficient lighting, lack of access to drinking water, absence of proper sanitation facilities for a group of adjacent households in specific urban or peri-urban locations. Many of these areas have already been designated by the state government or local administration in India, especially in metropolitan and larger towns (UN-Habitat, 2006). These challenges posed by slums underscore the necessity for an appropriate policy response.

### 3. Policy responses

Policy responses to the issue of slums started with the approach of demolition and clearance. This approach was followed in the early decades after independence. Slums areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act 1956 was passed to demarcated the appropriate authority to proceed the eviction and clearance process. It granted the authority to designate slum areas,

empowered competent officials to impose restrictions on construction within these areas. It also provided for the compensation to slum dwellers. However this was the traditional approach to deal with the issue of slums. Direct clearance and eviction were causing violation of rights of slums dwellers. There was huge scope of arbitrariness. Various legal questions also emerged in reaction to this approach. Various supreme court and high court judgements were passed in relation to slum and rights of slums dwellers. The major turned in the policy response emerged after the classification of slums into tenable and untenable slums by the government.

### **3.1 Tenable slums**

Tenable slums refer to informal settlements that, despite their substandard conditions, possess the potential for improvement and integration into formal city frameworks. These slums can be upgraded through targeted interventions such as infrastructure enhancement, access to basic services, and community-driven initiatives. The process transforms these areas into habitable, sustainable environments while preserving the social fabric of the communities. Since the land is not designated for any significant public facilities, it can remain in its current location. Addressing policy responses to tenable slums is relatively straightforward, as it does not involve dealing with hazardous locations.

### **3.2 Untenable slums**

The Union government defines untenable slums as those slums that are located on the area of public utility services and on the area of hazardous locations including near drains, rivers, railway lines and other public areas. Tenable slums, on the other hand, ought to be examined for “technical” and “financial” viability (Nikita Jain, 2023). Untenable slums are informal settlements with living conditions so poor they are uninhabitable, lacking basic amenities like clean water, sanitation, and proper housing. Overcrowding, health hazards, poor infrastructure, and economic hardship are rampant, making daily life extremely challenging. In contrast, tenable slums, while still substandard, offer some basic services and infrastructure. Residents in tenable slums may have limited but more stable access to clean water, sanitation, and employment opportunities, making these areas somewhat livable compared to untenable slums. The primary difference lies in the degree of habitability and access to essential services and opportunities.

#### 4. Policy responses to untenable slums

Addressing the challenges of untenable slums, which are often located in environmentally sensitive areas or on land reserved for public utilities, requires targeted policy responses. It includes planned relocation, which encompasses the development and implementation of relocation strategies that ensure residents are moved to safe and sustainable housing. This includes providing adequate compensation and support for transitioning to new homes. Additionally, policy responses include the provision of temporary amenities. While relocation plans are being developed, these responses ensure that basic services are provided in the slums to temporarily improve living conditions.

Other responses include the provision of mobile health and education services. This involves deploying mobile units to deliver healthcare and educational services to slum residents. Valmiki Ambedkar Malina Basti Awas Yojana (VAMBAY) was launched in 2001, it mainly followed basic shelters for the urban poor (PIB, 2004). Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP) was crucial pillar in the objectives of Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, n.d.). The Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP) initiative aimed to deliver essential services to the urban poor in India's 63 most populous cities. This program focused on improving the living conditions of disadvantaged communities by ensuring access to fundamental amenities and infrastructure in these major urban areas.

The Integrated Housing & Slum Development Programme (IHSDP) focuses on improving living conditions in urban slums across India by providing basic amenities such as water, sanitation, and electricity. Launched by merging NSDP and VAMBAY to upgrade infrastructure and enhance quality of life for slum dwellers, IHSDP aims to create sustainable urban habitats through community participation and involvement. By promoting integrated development that includes housing improvements, livelihood support, and social infrastructure, the programme aims to uplift marginalized urban communities and empower them with access to essential services and better living standards, thereby fostering inclusive urban growth and development (PIB, 2011). The Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY), launched in 2013 by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, aimed to integrate existing slums into the formal urban system, ensuring that slum dwellers had access to the same basic amenities as other residents. The scheme sought to address the shortcomings of the system that led to the formation of slums and to combat the urban land and housing shortages that prevent the urban poor from securing

adequate shelter.

#### **4.1 Challenges to policy responses (untenable slums)**

To understand the challenges to policy responses for the untenable slums, case study of slums near railway track in New Delhi railway station has been used. These slums have been cause of concern for the both central and state government. Even judiciary has been actively involved in this cause. Supreme court in the *M.C Mehta v Union of India* case 2020(*M.C. Mehta v. Union of India*, 2021) has passed judgement to remove slum dwellers living along the railway tracks. Supreme court has observed the challenges of multiplicity of authorities in Delhi causing legal challenges. Additionally, political factors are involved in this issue, a concern that the Supreme Court has cautioned about in its judgment. Y.K. Sabharwal, CJI in *M.C. Mehta vs Union Of India & Others* said “In respect of large number of immovable properties throughout Delhi, flagrant violations of various laws including Municipal Laws, Master Plan and other plans besides Environmental Laws have been engaging the attention of this Court for number of years. With a view to secure the implementation of laws and protect fundamental rights of the citizens, various orders were passed from time to time. This Court has a constitutional duty to protect the fundamental rights of Indian citizens.”(*M.C. Mehta v. Union of India*, 2006) Due to its status as the national capital, Delhi has a unique governance structure as a Union Territory with its own legislature. Governance responsibilities are divided between the Union Government and the state of Delhi (GNCTD) under the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, along with various municipal bodies. The situation has been further complicated by a 2018 Supreme Court judgment(*State (NCT of Delhi) v. Union of India*, 2018), and a 2021 Amendment to the GNCTD Act, which governs the division of power between these agencies(Indian Express, 2023).

Other challenges to the policy response include the lack of legal documentation and formal connectivity with the government, which cause major issues. These challenges are also identified in the case study published by Shweta Sharma and Akhil Chhibber. They have used the case study of Delhi, here they found the vulnerability based on five components. Economic security, education security, health security, food and social security. They identified issues such as inadequate access to quality and sufficient water supply, absence of toilet facilities leading to reliance on open spaces for sanitation, and the absence of a proper drainage network for residents of the slum(Sharma & Chhibber, 2017). Media reports have repeatedly shown such miseries due to the lack of formal services provided by local government institutions. Due

to the lack of permanent public infrastructure support, slum dwellers often face issues such as poor maintenance and various irregularities. Temporary services provided by Municipalities (local government institution) includes the water tankers, public toilets and temporary drainage system. Such temporary measures inevitably create difficulties for slum dwellers, encapsulating the policy challenges associated with untenable slums.

## 5. Policy responses to Tenable slums

Over the years, policy responses for tenable slums have evolved from demolition to redevelopment. Earlier, major policies focused on the clearance or demolition of these slums. However, this strategy encountered significant challenges, such as unnecessary legal stays in the demolition process. Supreme Court acknowledged the violation of slum dwellers' rights due to unreasonable force used during evictions (*Olga Tellis v. Bombay Municipal Corpn.*, 1985). Additionally, relocation policies and processes often result in social and economic exclusion for slum dwellers. These residents typically live in areas close to their sources of livelihood or job locations. Relocating them outside the city disrupts their economic well-being by severing their access to employment opportunities. Thus strategy have revolved around the redevelopment approach. Currently central government program for the implementation of policy for slums development is Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) Urban is a initiative by the Government of India aimed at providing affordable housing to urban poor households by the year 2022. It focuses on constructing pucca houses with basic amenities like water supply, sanitation, and electricity connections. PMAY Urban seeks to address the housing shortage in urban areas, particularly for economically weaker sections, low-income groups, and marginalized communities. The program also emphasizes promoting sustainable and inclusive urban development through infrastructure improvement and slum rehabilitation, thereby ensuring dignified living conditions and fostering socio-economic empowerment among urban poor residents. In this scheme there are four basic components. Main component is IN-SITU slum redevelopment.

### 5.1 In-Situ slum redevelopment

This approach or strategy uses land as a potential resource with the private partnership. Tenable slums are mainly located in the middle of the city or locations which are important from the economic point of view. The in-situ slum redevelopment approach involves upgrading existing slums while keeping residents in their current location. This method focuses on improving living conditions by replacing dilapidated housing with structurally sound and sustainable

buildings. It involves the private sector with the advantage of free sale component in the approach (Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs-ISSR, n.d.). Case study of New Delhi is used to understand the project implementation under this component of (PMAY-U).

### **5.2 Case Study of Kalkaji Project of New Delhi**

The Delhi Master Plan 2021 introduced the "In-situ rehabilitation" approach for slum redevelopment. Once the redevelopment is complete, the residents are relocated back to their original plots into upgraded housing. The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has initiated three significant projects at Kalkaji Extension, Jailorwala Bagh, and Kathputli Colony. These projects are well designed with public amenities including public parks, sewage treatment plants, water pipelines, and underground reservoirs for a hygienic water supply. The allotment of these flats will provide residents with ownership titles and a sense of security (PMINDIA, 2022). The significance of this project lies in creating a holistic, positive ecosystem for slum dwellers.

The government is not only providing formal housing but also fostering an environment conducive to improving their quality of life. This initiative aims to empower residents socially, economically, and environmentally, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being. However as per report of Centre for Policy Research on Delhi slums there are sharp irregularities and opaqueness in bureaucratic and data collection processes. The opacity of the DDA is primarily due to intra-agency confusion, resulting in delays, miscommunication, or a complete lack of communication, rather than a deliberate refusal to communicate.

“The major problem from the policy perspective is thus the disconnect between intention and implementation” (Banda et al., n.d.). The Kathputli case study also helps us to understand the role which private sector can play in slum redevelopment. These models are comparatively similar to other models developing in other states. To understand these models in a more comprehensive way, comparative analysis of Delhi and Gujarat is used using government reports.

### **5.3 Comparison of Delhi and Gujarat models of slum redevelopment**

Delhi Development Authority has studied the successful models of Surat and Ahmedabad in Gujarat (Delhi Development Authority, 2021). In Surat and Ahmedabad, the in-situ slums redevelopment projects are undertaken as per Gujarat slum rehabilitation policy 2013. In both

Surat and Ahmedabad, local government institutions are responsible for the development of in-situ rehabilitation. This has been the positive of the Gujarat model, as there are multiple authorities in the project causing unnecessary delays and complexities. Eligibility criteria for all these models is the government documents like voter id card, electricity bills, slum surveys and many more. Transparent two bids system are followed in Gujarat and Delhi under with there two components of the projects. The two component includes the slum development and free sale component. In Delhi model, there is a ratio of 60:40 for the slum rehabilitation and free sale of flats. On the other hand, in Gujarat it has been as per the bid system. Delhi model of slum redevelopment is more comprehensive in nature with regard to sustainable development goals in comparison to Gujarat model. Delhi model includes the provision of social infrastructure like community hall, police post, health centre, religious site and primary school. Delhi Development Authority in its report discussed the need of social, cultural and economic fabric for the slum dwellers. Thus there are only minor differences in both Gujarat and Delhi models. Delhi model of slum redevelopment looks more forward looking which could be play the role successful case study for other cities of India and other countries. With the understanding of policy responses to tenable slums in a comparative and comprehensive way, now its important measure the impact of slum redevelopment models on the sustainable development goals.

## **6. Slum redevelopment and SDGs**

Slum redevelopment is a critical initiative aimed at transforming informal settlements into more habitable, safe, and sustainable communities. It involves upgrading housing, improving infrastructure, and providing essential services such as clean water, sanitation, healthcare, and education. This process is vital for achieving SDGs, particularly those related to poverty, health, education, gender equality, and sustainable cities. The impact of slum redevelopment on the SDGs is multifaceted. Firstly, it directly contributes to SDG 1 of no poverty by improving living conditions and providing better economic opportunities for slum dwellers. Upgraded housing and infrastructure enhance residents' quality of life and open up pathways to stable employment and entrepreneurship. Secondly, slum redevelopment plays a crucial role in SDG 3 of good health and well-being. Improved sanitation, clean water, and better housing significantly reduce health risks, lowering the prevalence of diseases and improving overall public health outcomes. In the context of SDG 4 of quality education, redevelopment initiatives often include building and enhancing schools and educational facilities, which are essential for providing children and adults in slums with access to quality education and lifelong learning

opportunities. Furthermore, redevelopment efforts support SDG 5 of Gender Equality by ensuring that women and girls have safe and equal access to housing, sanitation, and education, thus empowering them to participate more fully in economic and social activities. Also this provides the implementation of SDG 8 of decent work and economic growth, as construction and maintenance work can create jobs, and improved infrastructure can support local businesses and economic activities. Finally, slum redevelopment is directly aligned with SDG 11 of sustainable cities and communities. By transforming informal settlements into sustainable urban environments, redevelopment projects promote inclusive and resilient cities where all residents have access to basic services, housing, and opportunities. Thus the approach of in-situ slum redevelopment have shown the positive correlation with multiple sustainable development goals. The Indian model of redevelopment of slums is in line with the global consensus on the positive impact of synergies between different sustainable development goals. This paper seeks to mentioned the A Systematic Study of SDGs interaction where authors have presented the synergies between different sustainable development goals. According to this report, all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) must function as interdependent components that collectively steer the global system towards a safe and equitable operational framework. No single SDG can achieve this alone, and viewing the SDGs merely as an additive structure undermines their interconnected nature. Instead, they should be seen as a system where each goal reinforces the others synergistically. Therefore, achieving the SDGs hinges significantly on leveraging these synergies effectively and addressing trade-offs comprehensively. This integrated approach is crucial for advancing sustainable development on a global scale(Pradhan et al., 2017). Indian model of slum redevelopment has been working on such principles of interaction of sustainable development goals.

As the case study of Kalkaji project have shown, the focus of government is mainly to provide comprehensive ecosystem which includes the formal housing, better sanitation infrastructure, better social system and better environment. This approach not only impacts the slum issue but also interacts with other sustainable development goals. This integrational approach towards slum is progressive in nature.

## 7. Conclusion

Addressing the challenges of Urban slums is crucial for the achievement of sustainable development goals in India. Slums should be viewed as fundamental to the process of implementation of sustainable development goals. Majority of the developmental (human and

environment) challenges are located and concentrated in the slum areas. Slum areas are not only short of housing but lacks the overall developmental challenges. Slums in India lacks the universal and coherent definition. Also there is a huge scope to collect and maintain data related to slums in India. This paper falls short of providing comprehensive picture related to slums in India due to the lack of official data published by the government. This research paper discussed the approach of government from demolition to development for the tenable slums. For the untenable slums, the strategy still needs to be evolved from demolition and temporary amenities. From the case study of slums near railway track in New Delhi, paper have shown the difficulties faced by slum dwellers and challenges of policy responses. On the other hand in-situ redevelopment projects are the way forward to address the issue of tenable slums. Case studies from Delhi and Gujarat have revealed the variety of in-situ redevelopment models, each with its unique challenges and successes. The comparative difference rises with the private partner component. Some model provides more weightage to private partners while some provides preference to slum dwellers. The comparative analysis of these models provides valuable insights into best practices and areas for improvement. As shown using the case study of Kalkaji extension project New Delhi, government aims to develop whole positive ecosystem for the slum dwellers. Facilities like formal housing, piped water supply, proper drainage, public parks, and better society empowers them socially, economically and environmentally. Indian model of in-situ slum redevelopment promotes the integrational strategy for the sustainable development goals targets. Provision of improvement of whole ecosystem provides synergy from sustainable development goals of housing to poverty, hunger, gender equality and many more. However despite the efforts and strategies in place, significant challenges remain in the journey towards upgrading slums and ensuring adequate, safe, and affordable housing for all by 2030, as targeted by the SDGs. As shown from the case study of Dharavi project Mumbai, common issues include extraordinary delays (political and legal), judicial interventions, and community resistance and many more highlights the need for more effective planning and implementation strategies. There is a need of proper guidelines with timelines. This paper underscores the importance of robust policy frameworks, community engagement, legal clarity, and sustainable funding mechanisms to overcome these challenges.

In the end it can be concluded that addressing the issues of urban slums is essential for India's sustainable development. By refining policy responses, enhancing implementation, and fostering innovative redevelopment models, India can make substantial progress towards the SDG targets, improving the lives of millions of slum dwellers and fostering inclusive urban

growth.

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