

A Better Place to Live In: A Case Study in Bangalore



HUMARA BACHPAN CAMPAIGN

On 1st April 2013, 24 families were displaced by Karnataka Slum Development Board for in-situ development of Vijaya College slum, Ward no. 180, to Yarab Nagar. As per the scheme, the houses had to be constructed within six months. But it was noticed that not even a single house was constructed even after completion of six months. As a result of displacement, these families are living in extremely pitiable conditions. They are residing in temporary sheds, mostly tents, lacking basic amenities like drinking water, toilet, better housing and electricity. Each family has at least seven members. The women and children living in this neighbourhood are most at risk due to the unhealthy living condition. During the rainy season water seeps into the tent houses further worsening the living condition. They do not have access to toilets and bathrooms causing trouble for the young girls and women of the locality as they are compelled to bath in the open. This is also affecting the education of children in that area. Due to the lack of a conducive environment the children tend to drop out of school as they do not have places to study.



Now adding more to the woes of the inhabitants, a mini stadium is being constructed at the place where these families are currently residing. This project has been sanctioned by the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). The construction work has commenced from 31st October, 2014 with pits being dug up as deep as 10 feet. Steel bars have been placed at the area where the children used to play.



Not only do the children have no spaces to play but also it has become difficult for them to even move around. There has been an instance where an eight year old child named Muthu has been subject to accident while playing.



On questioning BBMP and Karnataka Slum Development Board (KSDB) authorities for the houses not being constructed it was stated that due to insufficient budget the construction could not take place. This slum development project was sanctioned in 2006 which was delayed and later

transferred to KSDB in the year of 2013-14. This cycle gap caused a cost escalation of 24 lakhs.

Muthu lives in the Yarab Nagar Slum with his family of seven members. He is the fourth child in the family. His mother Jyoti works as a domestic help and father Palani is a painter. On 4th November, 2015 Muthu fell into one of the pits while playing. He was injured badly in the accident with bruises all over his body and hurt his head. Due to this accident, he was ridden to his bed and had to miss school for many days. After this incident, he has stopped going out to play.

HBC Intervention:

The child club members of Humara Bachpan in Yarab Nagar identified this problem and had discussion on this particular issue in their child club meeting. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, the children decided to raise the issue with BBMP and Karnataka Slum Development Board (KSDB). Humara Bachpan Campaign's child club members in collaboration with **Bridge Network** raised this issue in the month of November with the BBMP regarding sanctioning the escalated cost for completing the project which has been stalled since years. They also demanded for construction of barricades across the site to prevent such accidents in future.



After immense advocacy efforts by the children and the community with Mr Basvaraj, Councilor of Yarab Nagar, Ward No. 180, The Councilor stated that the 24 lakhs has been diverted on 14th May 2015. This was communicated to the Community, as elections were approaching and this assurance, from the Councilor could result in him being re-elected back to power. He saw this as a medium of winning the trust of the people in the community.

But after further enquiry with Karnataka Slum Development Board by HBC team it came to notice that unfortunately the sanctioned amount of Rs. 24 Lakh has been cancelled on 11th June 2015. Instead these families had been asked to pay around 1.37 lakh per household as beneficiary contribution.

The challenges were high as the political climate was not very conducive, with the elections approaching. The people were losing their patience, and there was not much concrete information that the Slum Development Board was giving.

On 13th June 2015, seven Child leaders from Yarab Nagar (Bhavani Nagara as per government records) called for a press meet, to highlight the impact lack of housing and the delay in construction was having on the children of that area. This press meet was held at the Press Club, Bengaluru which was covered by seven print media and six electronic media. One exclusive interview was published in the Times of India and Nss Tv did an interview of the children in this regard.

HBC initiated advocacy with the Commissioner Mr Chikamuniyappa on 15th June 2015, the major lines of discussions were:

- Delay in construction of houses had resulted in escalation of the price, and the community and the children were nowhere responsible for this.
- The 'beneficiary contribution' is not a possibility for those households as none of them are in a stable job, or have access to regular income.
- Approaching monsoons will again create 'havoc' and will worsen their living conditions and make it difficult for families and children to survive.
- The temporary existence in the stadium was also challenging as the construction work would start soon leading to again displacement of the families.
- Children's health is getting affected in these situations and many of them are even dropping out of the educational system.

The Commissioner showed interest, and ensured that as additional funds were not a possibility from the Government they would try and arrange funds, from other projects of the Municipality which have been left unspent. He further suggested that the team should meet Mr Kumar Pushkar Additional Commissioner of Finance, BBMP.

On a discussion with Mr. Pushkar on Monday 29th June 2015 he committed that, the Yarab Nagar has been an eye-opening instance; they have identified a total of 15 slums inclusive of Yarab Nagar-Bhavani Nagar (where, on a priority basis they would start the pending housing projects immediately).

HBC's advocacy in Yarab Nagar directly leveraged 18 Crore 53 Lakhs and 39 thousand (escalated amount) which will benefit 15 slums and 1413 houses.

