FLAWED COMMUNICATION AND A TOP-DOWN APPROACH HAVE HAMPERED THE DEVELOPMENT MODEL IN LUCKNOW

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ABSTRACT

The total absence of two-way communication, a top-down approach and sheer tokenism indulged in by policy makers and implementers for over one-and-a-half decades have stymied the development of Lucknow slums. Startling claims, sweeping assumptions and lip service by both the political class and implementing authorities have come in the way of changing the urban development matrix of the capital city. Based on these terms of reference, a qualitative and exploratory study was conducted in the year 2014 to assess the lack of a participatory development model in improving the lot of slum-dwellers. In an effort to understand the situation at ground Zero, the researchers contacted two prominent Non-governmental organizations Oxfam India & Vigyan Foundation. According to one of them, a 2006 three-city survey revealed there were 787 slums in Lucknow at that point in time. They also revealed that more than 10 lakh people lived in slums across Lucknow. This gave the lie to the startling claim made by the Lucknow Mukhya Nagar Adhikari (Chief Municipality Officer) in 2001, that Lucknow had become a slum-free zone (Business Standard newspaper dated November 26, 2001) The NGOs had based their findings on the parameters spelled out by the Census Bureau which laid out that 50 families living in tenements by encroaching public land constituted a slum. Consequently, 10 prominent slum areas were identified and an elaborate interview schedule was designed to elicit information regarding the reasons for their abysmal living conditions. Over 100 slum dwellers were interviewed during the course of visits, spread over a period of six months. We also conducted three focus-group discussions to get to the heart of the matter. The three-fold

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objective was to collect and analyze secondary and primary information about the absence of a participatory approach; the poor feedback system, and the lack of political will among policy-framers in mitigating the sufferings of those living on the bottom rungs of the development ladder of Lucknow. As a result of flawed communication, another key area studied was the trust deficit that existed between the policy makers and the slum inhabitants. The research also took into account the token economic opportunities spelt out by political class, namely, the mayor, former urban development minister as also former bureaucrats. The interviews conducted with slum dwellers tried to understand the gap between policy framework, implementation and actual needs. Information was also gathered to identify the level of participation and empowerment in shaping the slum-dwellers' destiny. What came to light was the lack of transparency, and proper information about policy provisions to the actual beneficiaries regarding rehabilitation and resettlement. The finest example of this ham-handedness was evident in the role played by the District Urban Development Authority (DUDA) in constructing and allotting houses in resettlement colonies. Further, the appalling state of Shelter homes and the politics behind no-vending zones were also a result of the communication quagmire that had turned the development process into a faceless entity.

Keywords: *top-down approach, slum-dwellers, living conditions, poor communication, urban settlements, trust deficit*

Introduction & Literature Review

According to urban development experts, slums are indicators to comprehend the organized growth of modern planned cities. Looking at how cities across the world have grown exponentially, it is a matter of grave concern that In India, there is no clarity on core development issues. While undertaking a literature review on the concept of what constitutes a slum in India, The UN's 2003 report, [1]'The Challenges of Slums,' states that slums are "too complex to define according to one single parameter" and "local variations among slums are too wide to define universally applicable criteria," while "slums change too fast to render any

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[1] The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements 2003 Revised and updated version (April 2010) The original version of this chapter and the full version of the Global Report on Human (Retrieved on December 29, 2015)

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criterion valid for a reasonably long period of time." Still, the report offers an operational definition of a slum: "An area that combines, to various extents, the following characteristics (restricted to the physical and legal characteristics of the settlement, and excluding the more difficult social dimensions): inadequate access to safe water; inadequate access to sanitation and other infrastructure; poor structural quality of housing; overcrowding; insecure residential status."

Labelling areas as 'slums' can also create a gap between residents' understanding of their community and the perspective of outsiders who try to 'help' them. Anthropologist Rahul Srivastava and urban developer Matias Echanove discuss Dharavi, a district of Mumbai that has gained notoriety as one of Asia's largest slums. They recall that they were "searching for slums" and found that "in every neighborhood residents said, 'there is no slum here!' They don't think their house is situated in a slum."[2] However, they write that the media's dominant portrayal of the district remains "as a wasteland with barely standing temporary structures; an immense junkyard crowded with undernourished people hopelessly disconnected from the rest of the world, surviving on charity and pulling the whole city's economy backward."

For Srivastava and Echanove, the portrayal as a 'slum' encourages top-down urban planning projects that ignore residents' opinions. The stigma-heavy word obscures the area's assets, such as how local residents' construction of their own buildings leads to the development of neighborhoods that respond directly to local needs.

Taking the development communication paradigm forward, it was believed that dialogic communication was held in stark contrast to information transmission models emerging from Lasswell's (1964) 5-point question of who says what in what channel to whom with what effect. This required development researchers and practitioners to seek out the experiences, understandings, and aspirations of Robert H Uesca and others to jointly construct reality and formulate actions (Beltran, 1980). Freire (1970, 1973a) provided concrete exercises for initiating

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[2] What's in a Name? Slum Stigma Worldwide, Community Reporting on Rio, Roonwatch (Retrieved on January 14, 2016)

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critical dialogues to, in effect, deconstruct social contexts, separate out their constituent parts, and reconstruct a thematic universe for pursuing social transformation. Such a process resulted in a "cultural synthesis" between development collaborators to arrive at mutually identified problems, needs, and guidelines for action.

It may be pertinent to also mention that Freire (1973a) went as far as to label the various top-down, modernization projects as "assistentialism," or social and financial activities that attack symptoms, not causes, of social ills that function as disguised forms of colonial domination. These early suspicions have been confirmed by a more recent analysis of health and nutrition programs in Latin America, which concluded that development projects functioned as an extension of the geopolitical struggle between the capitalist West and the communist East (Escobar, 1995).

Toward Dialogic Praxis

However, further studies revealed that embracing the notion of praxis—self-reflexive, theoretically guided practice—was an immediate and obvious outcome of the Latin American critique of the dominant paradigm. The modernization project and its concomitant theories of development themselves had been shown to illustrate the inextricable connection between theory and practice (Beltran, 1975, 1980; Escobar, 1995). Through its assumptions regarding the locus of social problems, models of communication as information transfer, methods that placed human objects under the antiseptic gaze of scientists, and findings that confirmed micro explanations of persistent underdevelopment, the modernization approach unconsciously demonstrated the reciprocal and self-confirming relationship between theory and practice. One of the earliest recommendations of the Latin American critics was to acknowledge consciously this relationship, to turn away from scientific positions of objectivity, and to embrace an orientation toward research as praxis.

Further, available literature on the development debate revealed that the term 'slum' itself emanated from the top-down approach to developing unauthorised urban settlements.

A closer look at global statistical data reveals the other side to the development debate. It is also becoming apparent that the prevalent vehicle-centric, consumer-oriented development model is a dubious approach to urban expansion. Another 2.5 billion more people on this planet cannot live

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and work in the same manner as urbanites in developed countries, let alone the 400 million India will contribute to this urban migration.

These dramatic statistics, and the potential repercussions, are not lost on world leaders, especially India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Only recently, Modi launched a "Smart Cities Campaign" with the aim of meeting the challenges that arise from "a small European country" being born every year in cities across India. In its most basic sense, a smart city is one that is driven by improvements in communication and information technologies that can enhance quality of life, reduce municipal costs, and better allocate natural resources by effectively engaging and responding to needs of constituents.

3"It should be bottom up," stressed Mr. Modi. "A smart city means a city which is two steps ahead of the basic necessities of a resident." Throughout India, however, cities rarely are able to provide basic sanitation, clean water, and consistent energy to residents.

In this maze of hyperboles what further compounded problems for the researchers was the varied understanding of what exactly is a squatter settlement. The definition of a squatter settlement varies widely from country to country and state to state and depends on a variety of defining parameters. In general, it is considered as a residential area in an urban locality inhabited by the very poor who have no access to tenured land of their own, and hence "squat" on vacant land, either private or public.

The Lucknow

Taking stock of the situation at Ground Zero, it would be pertinent to mention that Lucknow, (being the capital of India's most populous state, it has traditionally been a centre of administration, education and tourism. Urban growth currently is largely on par with other cities of similar size, and is anticipated to be slightly faster in the immediate future. Although the city has potential positive economic comparators, such as its heritage and educational institutions, lack of infrastructure and business concerns have limited the economic base, which has meant inadequate employment opportunities and limits on the local government and service agency revenue bases.

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3 Mumbai's Smart Slum, Matthew Niederhauser (Retrieved on January 14, 2016)

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The percentage of people engaged in the tertiary sector is higher than the other sectors. Although literacy levels among the workforce are high, qualifications in technical areas is limited. Opinions are divided on the number of slum dwellers in the city. According to the Oxfam India survey on Lucknow carried out in 2005, 787 slums were identified which constituted a population of 10.18 lakh. Since Oxfam India, followed the Census Registrar of India model, it took into account those settlements which had 50 or more tenements for the survey. However, their report pointed out that they did not take into account many of the informal slums that had less than fifty tenements and are spread across the city.

What became evident was the callousness and a whimsical top-down approach resorted to, by policy-planners and executors. One key revelation made by Oxfam India was the startling disclosure that the Lucknow Chief Municipal Officer made in a prominent daily Business Standard, in its issue dated November 26, 2001. We quote verbatim from the report: Surprisingly, the Lucknow Municipal Corporation (MC), the constituency of the Prime Minister, has reported no slum population, a claim being scrutinised by the Census authorities. "The Mahanagar Adhikari, the highest executive authority of the corporation has stated that there are no slums in the area," say officials.

In an effort to understand the dynamics of Lucknow slum settlements and their role in shaping the urban landscape of the capital city, the researchers conducted this study to verify the conditions of slum-dwellers and the state of affairs in resettlement colonies.

Objectives

The two-fold objective was to collect and analyze secondary as well as primary information on the absence of a participatory communication model in improving the lives of the slum dwellers. Another key area studied was the trust deficit that existed between the policy makers and the slum inhabitants. The research took into account the token economic opportunities spelt out by political class, namely, the mayor, former urban development minister as also former bureaucrats. The interviews and focus groups conducted with slum dwellers tried to study the communication and perception gaps that existed. It also elicited information to comprehend the level of participation and empowerment in shaping the slum-dwellers' destiny. Another area that was explored in detail was the ham-handed role of the District Urban Development Authority (DUDA) in constructing and allotting houses in resettlement colonies to slum-dwellers.

Research Methodology

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A qualitative and quantitative exploratory study was conducted in the year 2014 to assess the current conditions, trends and Issues. Consequently, 10 prominent slum areas were identified and an elaborate interview schedule was designed to get information regarding their role in the planning and decision-making process. Focus group discussions in four of the ten locations to assess the implications of a top-down communication model and the ensuing trust deficit that existed. Based on a non-probability convenient sampling, over 100 slum dwellers were interviewed during the course of visits spread over a period of six months. The researchers were simultaneously filming the slum areas for a proposed documentary. The raw footage content was also used for content analysis. The dominant themes that emerged from focus group discussions and during interview schedules with the concerned stakeholders (both residents and policy-makers) made for a shocking study. The Uttar Pradesh government authorities were still living in the passive media theory model (of the hypodermic needle approach to communication) and were convinced that the slum-dwellers would passively consume whatever sporadic bouts of communication they disseminated down the line. The residents in these shanties, however, were acutely aware of their rights and were keen on a more participatory approach to problem solving. They wanted to be active media users and echoed the active mass communication theory like the uses and gratification theory. They wanted that the authorities should be able to disseminate information in a more structured and periodic manner so that they remain in the know, when it comes to decision regarding their basic needs. They also expressed the view that as active media users they would get a better sense of ownership and responsibility if the municipal authorities took a bottom-up communication approach.

Research Findings

The slum areas visited over a six month time span included Badshahnagar slum, the area under Nishatganj flyover, Pipraghat, Kakori, Ring Road at Jankipuram, Sitapur Road, Kukrail, Matiyari, the resettlement colony in Para, Chinhat and Hanskheda—10 areas in all. Based on responses to the 27 questions that were asked of the research population, some of the key findings were best summarized by a slum-dweller living under the Nishatganj flyover:

'The first problem is that there are no roads,

The second is no water,

The third problem is that there is no electricity...

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Everything is a problem here; there are no toilet facilities

But the poor man is the sufferer.'

Respondents across the 10 identified slum areas said they had been living in the shanties from between 6-15 years. When asked as to why they chose to stay in these backwaters, over 90 percent of the respondents unequivocally answered they had migrated from the rural hinterland of Uttar Pradesh, for better job opportunities. Other studied responses were that they had no choice but to move into slums since they were conscious about the absence of a roof over their heads.

When quizzed about what how they came to live here, a slum dweller in Matiyari puts it succinctly: 'they demolish our hutments twice a year at least & for us there is no permanent place to stay. Earlier when they destroyed our hutments in the village in Burbank district, we had no choice but to move to this city'.

Another resident living in the slum area of Kukrail when asked as to what brought him there, he bemoans: 'I have completed my BA. I wanted to get a good job and look after my family. But after coming here my dreams are shattered. Lately, my father has gone missing...see what I thought and what has become of me?'

Another slum dweller from Kukrail said: 'nobody listens to the poor. Everybody listens only to the rich'

Communication channels choked

There was not a single kind word for the civic authorities responsible for providing basic amenities.

Sample what some of the research populace had to say:

Do they get subsidized food?

Respondent from Pipraghat: 'I have a voter I-card. I also have a yellow ration card but I get nothing on it. We are busy doing labour on a daily basis. Whatever we earn from our labour, we use it to feed our children.'

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Do they have potable water to drink?

Respondent from Hanskheda: 'when we came to reside here there was hardly a soul living here. At best there were 4-5 people who stayed here. There is no electricity here even now. Earlier, we used to cart water from faraway Hardasikheda but two years ago, a pipe with running water was installed for us.' The following points emerged during the course of the Focus Group Discussions held with the residents.

And this is what a respondent from Matiyari had to say: 'No authority worth the name has bothered to visit us. Even if somebody were to come and kill us, no one would bother. No one cares if we have a tap (for running water). We get water from as far as Takrohi.'

Housing Needs Papered Over

Raising the issue of housing for the urban poor, former IAS officer and secretary of the District Urban Development Authority made this startling revelation: 'When the Jawaharlal Nehru Urban Renewal Mission (JNURM) came into being, some thought was given to the issue of housing for the poor but not with the seriousness it deserved. Given the huge numbers or poor staying illegally on plots, the way they put up polythene roofs over their heads, the way they defecated on railway tracks... In 20015, during a Planning Commission meeting attended by top officers of big cities and metros, I raised this issue and remarked your housing targets will never be achieved. The Planning Commission Advisor retorted why you are saying this. Why can't it be achieved? I replied land rates have escalated manifold once urban land ceiling was abolished. Moreover, you have put the onus on local bodies to arrange for land.'

When asked whether they are allotted houses and whether they would shift if given a firm allotment, a resident from Kukrail observed: 'If the government allots us free accommodation in a faraway place, we are bound to die of hunger, so we run away from there. What do we do otherwise? We filled up the free allotment forms many times but met with no luck, nor did we go anywhere.

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DUDA Refuses to Listen

Slum-dwellers in Jankipuram slum zone on the Sitapur Road spat fire and brimstone when they recounted their horrors, resentment writ large on their face:

'Nobody listens to the poor. The problem is that it has been over 1 year since 200 people paid money to the District Urban Development Authority (DUDA) for government accommodation. While Harijans were asked to deposit Rs 16, 200, General category people were asked to pay Rs 19,440. You will never understand the great difficulty we underwent to deposit this money. Today, there is nobody to listen to our woes. Believe me, whenever we go the DUDA office, they disinterestedly tell us to move the courts, file a case & fight for your rights. They showed us a colony on Indian Institute of Management (IIM) Road, told us to deposit the money saying we would get possession in 15 days. Whenever we go to their office, they make an ass of us. We deposited Rs 19,440. So many of us paid, but nobody got a possession letter. But I have decided to lay down my life but will not leave this place. Even if they come armed to the teeth to remove us, I will murder that man since my blood boils. My body is rendered useless and my kidneys have almost stopped functioning. I am now disabled & am nothing more than a walking corpse. But if I don't get my house I will not run away. Either I will take his (the authority's) life or take my own. If my Didi (Behen Mayawati) were in power, we would have got it. We may be Muslims, but together with other caste members we made this dream possible. '

Another slum-dweller holding aloft an allotment letter that has remained a piece of paper said: 'after paying Rs 19,440 this is the allotment letter we got from DUDA. It has been almost 1 year but there has been no progress as of now. Whatever small house I had in the village, I sold it off and deposited the money in DUDA office. They make us go around in circles. Since we are illiterate where else do we go?'

Plight of the Homeless and state of shelter homes

Putting things in perspective, Sandeep Khare, who heads Vigyan Foundation in Lucknow shares: 'As many as 19,000 homeless people sleep on the roads in Lucknow on any given day. There are 500 identified spots in the city in which they spend their nights. In any weather, be it winter, summer or monsoons, in terms of convenience and security, there are no well-planned provisions

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for them. Following the Supreme Court ruling in 2011-2012, night shelters were set up for 24x7 accommodations.

'Since the Supreme Court had specified that there should be one night shelter per population of one lakh citizens 23 centres were established. This is because according to the 2001 census figures there were 23 lakh urban dwellers in Lucknow and as a result of which 23 centres were put in place. However, even if all the centres worked efficiently, they cannot accommodate more than 1500 persons

Mr Khare further adds: 'however, as of date, only 5-6 such shelters are functional for the homeless labour brethren. Vigyan Foundation has been working for their cause since 2004. The foundation has been working on the premise that the homeless labourer brethren contribute actively to the development of this city even while staying on the streets. They provide crucial services like driving rickshaws, driving auto-rickshaws and ferrying our children to school. Or else, they work as ayahs or as maids in our homes. They are the all-important service-providers of the city.'

A Badshahnagar slum-dweller when asked as to what do the local political activists promise and what they deliver once the poll process is over, he retorted: When they come to ask for our votes, they show as if they are willing to clean our toilets too. But once they get our votes & win the elections, they disappear & nothing happens on their tall promises.'

And angry woman slum-dweller from Bandariya Bagh whose house was demolished had this to say: 'We used to stay in Bandariya Bagh near Mulayam Singh's residence in Pipra Ghat. We had constructed our hutments on Nazul land but Behen Mayawati got it demolished & got a park constructed in its place. With great difficulty some 80-90 oustees got alternate accommodation. In all, there were 500 jhuggis in that area.'

Top-down Approach

When policy-makers and administrators were contacted to elicit responses regarding the woes of slum-dwellers who complained of no one addressing their concerns, the general refrain was one of dogged indifference. When we contacted the Lucknow Mayor for his response on the plight of the slum-dwellers, he struck a bright note when he said: 'for those staying in illegal colonies, the

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jhuggi-jhopri colonies...The point is not whether they are staying legally or illegally. It is our duty to provide them water & electricity

We installed electric poles & gave them electricity. As for water, we installed hand-pumps & submersible pumps, we also laid pipelines. But this is not a permanent solution to their problems.'

Talking about the need for a participatory approach to address this grave problem, he added: 'By providing them immediate relief, we can give them respite for some time but to work out a lasting solution we need to provide free education to the wards of slum-dwellers.

Even if they don't get temporary or permanent government jobs, one option would be for entrepreneurs to reserve 5-10% jobs for those residing in slums. Also, under the refurbished Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) they could be employed to carry out agriculture-related work.

Former Union minister and local MP observes that while the old city was developed along established developmental parameters, the new city that largely includes the trans-Gomti area of Gomti Nagar, it is the land sharks and realty developers who are to blame for the lop-sided growth of the city. The former minister on his part talks of the lack of inclusiveness that is to blame for this urban mess. When told that most slum-dwellers complained of how they were cajoled into casting their votes and were conveniently forgotten once the results were announced, he evaded the query. When pressed and told that they were mere numbers in the hands of self-serving politicians, there was once again no response.

The former DUDA secretary   gives his own perspective on why things have reached such a sorry pass when it comes to housing and care for the poor slum dweller. He says: 'Every bungalow calls for four or five appendages. There is need for a driver, a gardener, a sentinel, kitchen help & a maid. These people come from villages & make their huts in public places & reside there. The problem is getting compounded with each passing day. There are no jobs back home, and come to cities instead. Whatever jobs they get here, they spend the entire day in making ends meet. No wonder then, housing problem in the city is turning grave.'

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The Communication Gap Widens

Similar is the case with providing alternate housing to the urban poor. With no thought given to transport and employment avenues, most allot tees are forced to live more than 20 to 30 kms outside city limits, in far-flung settlements. With no facilities coming their way, as many as 30-35% of them have been put up on rent while more than half of them have already been sold. Nobody bothers to communicate anything, laments a stressed resident: 'there are absolutely no medical facilities here. The local doctor asks us take serious patients by ambulance to the medical college for treatment. By which time the patient is likely to die. Now, where do we bury him or her? In the 2x2 tenements allotted to us?'

Says another dweller: 'I used to earlier stay in Thakurganj and was a supervisor in the construction business. After coming here, I lost my job in Gomti Nagar since there is no proper conveyance facility available here.'

 While urban planner s dovetail their schemes to bring slum-dwellers into the mainstream of the city, in Lucknow everything seems to be mired in opaqueness and apathy. The slum-dweller who did not have a home to begin with, now has no hope, given the lack of communication and unplanned existence that he or she is condemned to lead in the backwaters of Lucknow.

A young educated slum-dweller in Jankipuram put it beautifully when she observed: 'Some blame should be apportioned to us since we don't go and communicate with the concerned authorities while some fault lies with the Municipal Corporation.

'What can we do? The rich & powerful have forcibly occupied this place. The poor people have been forced to flee and live on the sidelines. Till date, there is no sewer line. See for yourself, how the poor are compelled to live in filth & squalor.

'There is just a solitary toilet for all of us – be it ladies or gents. There is no janitor or sweeper to clean the place. What do we do but live in these squalid conditions? Once you see for yourself, you too will be outraged.' This searing indictment on the state of affairs in Lucknow's quest to become an urban metro is lost in the yawning gap between word and deed. The lack of communication and the absence of a participatory development model make development a pipe-dream for those living in Lucknow's urban settlements, better known as slums.

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*During the **focus group discussions** with the inhabitants of the selected slums, the following issues emerged:*

There are no roads, no water, no electricity, no proper drainage, no toilet facilities...

Despite paying substantial amount to urban development authorities, they have not been provided housing in the resettlement colonies. Those who were lucky enough to get the housing facility are not willing to move as the colonies are at the periphery and there in no way to commute to their workplace from those far flung areas. There is no public transport facility available and if any, the transportation cost is too high….

They have voter I-card. They also have a yellow ration card but they get nothing on it...

"No authority worth the name has bothered to visit us. Even if somebody were to come and kill us, no one would bother. No one cares if we have a tap (for running water).

For the politicians, we only exist during the elections. Once the elections are over we no more exist…

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Recommendations:

- The residents of the marginalised urban settlers should not be identified as slums since the very idea of a slum entails looking at the people as have-nots. Any policy or plan will give the implementers the feeling that they are doling out charity and this in turn would mean lack of commitment and political will

- Lucknow slum-dwellers need to be allowed to decide and name the area according to their perceived and actual needs.

- Policy-makers must engage with Lucknow slum-dwellers on a continuous basis so that they themselves decide on their actual needs and also executed it themselves in the form a of self-help groups and by appointing Citizen Leaders from among slum dwellers.

- The Lucknow urban planners need to evolve a communication policy to disseminate information on developmental activities by using traditional media like puppet shows and nukkad nataks. They also need to make PSAs and use mobile video vans to broadcast films that outline development initiatives on a regular basis.

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