

# India : Urbanization and its Challenges

## Abstract

The unprecedented populatino growth in the cities and towns within recent decades has created pressure on urban amenities and infrastructure. This paper attempts to draw attention towards the effects of increasing urban areas and city dwellers in the developing countries of the world, especially in India. The urban population in India has grown from 17.30 percent in 1951 to 27.80 percent in the beginning of the twenty first century (2001). In2011,it was 31.16 percent of the total population of Indid.This paper examines the growing gap between the demand and supply of basic services like housing, sanitation, safe drinking water, drainage,availability of clean fuel LPG, electricity and toilet facility. Increasing population are migrating to urban areas and due to paucity of basic amenities in urban areas they are living in slums. The increasing slums, called 'dirty islands', within cities have negative impacts on urban environments which consequently affect the quality of life. Maintaining a balance between increasing urban population and infrastructural facilities is a great challenge. This study review the pace of urban growth and challenges related with it.



**Rajender Kumar**  
Lecturer,  
Dr. B.R.Ambedkar  
Govt. College,  
Sri Ganga Nagar, Rajasthan,  
India

## Introduction

Urbanization has a great bearing on population growth and socio-economic development of a country. Today, there is a fast trend towards urbanization, particularly in developing countries like India. The World Commission on Environment and Development reports that today almost half of the world population is living in urban area. The number of urban dwellers has tripld from 1950 to 1985. In the developed countries, the urban population rose from 447 million to 838 million, but in developing nations the urban population increased four-folds from 286 million to 1.14 billion in the same period. In fact, the urban population increased ten-fold from 100 million to 1000 million during 1920 to 1980, but the rural population only doubled. The world intered a historic transition in 2008, for the first time in the population history, the world's urban population exceeded the rural population. Globally, the slum population is set to growat the rate of 27 million per year in the period 2000-2020 (UN-HABITAT-2006). It is projected that the urban population of the world may go up from about 2862 million in 2000 to nearly 4981 million in 2030. (Table-1) So, therefore, in the coming years more challenges and problems will crop up from urban areas particularly from developing countries like India.

**TABLE - 1**  
**World Urban Population and percent of Total Population**  
(Numbers in Millions)

S. N.	Region	Urban Population (2000)	Percentage (2000)	Urban Population (2030)	Percentage (2030)
1.	Africa	295	37.2	787	52.9
2.	Asia	1376	37.5	2679	54.1
3.	Latin America and Caribbean	391	75.4	608	84.0
4.	Oceania	23	74.1	32	77.3
5.	Europe	534	73.4	540	80.5
6.	North America	243	77.4	335	84.5
7	Global	2862	47.2	4981	60.2

Source : India, Urban Poverty Report 2009, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty & UNDP, OUP, New Delhi..

## Global Population Challenges :

If the population growth occurs with the present momentum, by the middle of twenty first century, the world population is likely to exceed 9 billion, which is really a sign of gloom and despair. All the projected growth

will take place in today's developing countries, which by dwellers are facing and will face more problems like paucity of power, lack of drinking water and toilet facility, need of more living space, drainage facility etc.

Developing countries have been experiencing a phenomenal expansion of urban population. Among the demographic forces that have shaped the process of urbanization in these countries, the process of migration is the most crucial. The challenges in urban areas are further aggravated by "rural push" and "urban pull" As a result, rural people have been migrating to the urban areas. This is turn puts a severe strain on the civic facilities, thereby pushing the new arrivals to the slums and squatter settlements. Thus, the essential urban services, such as electricity, supply of safe drinking water, drainage of solid and hazardous wastes and providing affordable housing for burgeoning poor and slum urban population become extremely difficult.

**Data and Methodology**

The paper attempts to analyse the basic amenities like access to electricity, supply of adequate and safe drinking water, toilet and drainage facilities and availability of clean fuel like LPG in big cities of India. It also attempts to show to what extent these problems are serious in the urban areas. The 2001 census provides data on basic amenities at the household level by rural and urban areas at state level, and at the town and city level as well. The paper also intends to present the picture of slum population in big cities and urban population in India. Data is analysed by using simple ratio and percentage method to interpret result.

**India : Urbanisation**

The process of urbanization in India recorded a steady growth after 1921 but it got a quantum jump after Independence. During the last sixty five years, not only the old cities and towns expanded in terms of size, population density and area, several hundred new cities and towns have emerged and developed.

Total urban population of India increased from 25.8 million in 1901 to 377.1 million in 2011. India's urban population is the second largest in the world despite the fact that a little less than three-quarters (68.8%) of the total population lives in rural area. At the census (2011)31.2 percent of the country's total population lived in 7935 towns. The trend of urban population indicates that nearly 68.7% of the total urban population lived in 393 class I towns (towns with a population of one lack or more) in 2001. Increasing population (35.76% in 2001) are migrating to urban areas in search of livelihood and employment opportunities and compel to live in slums due to paucity of basic amenities in urban areas.The ever increasing number of slum dwellers causes tremendous pressure on urban basic services and infrastructure. The supply of land for housing has failed to keep pace with increase in urban population resulting in large number of households without access to basic services ,poor housing and

2050 will account for over 85 percent of the world population (UN 2001). As a result, urban

proliferation of slums and widespread poverty Thus, this process is adding to slums and slum dwellers. The increasing slums, called "dirty islands" within cities have negative impacts on urban environments which consequently affect the quality of life. On the other hand, rapid urban growth of todays scale strains the capacity of local and national governments to provide even the most basic services as water,

Census Year	No. of Towns	Percentage of Urban Population	No. of Class I Towns	Percentage of Total Urban Population
1951	2843	17.29	76	44.63
1961	2365	17.97	102	51.42
1971	2590	19.91	148	57.24
1981	3378	23.34	218	60.37
1991	3768	25.72	300	65.20
2001	4368	27.78	393	68.67

electricity and drainage.

**TABLE-2**

**India : Number of Towns, Percentage of Urban Population**

Source : India, Urban Poverty Report 2009, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty & UNDP, OUP, New Delhi.

**India : Slum Population**

In over 600 cities and towns with a population of 50,000 and above in 1991 that reported having any slum population, in the 2001 census, approximately 23 percent of the population lived in slums. The smaller towns, not covered in the census 2001, do in fact, have populations that lived in slum like conditions even though there are no slums of the size and scale of the bigger cities. Taking into account the special slum survey carried out by the Registrar General of India of the small and medium towns with population of 20,000-50,000, the slum population can be taken as approximately 24 percent of the total urban population in the country. The figure was 17.5 percent in 1981 and 21.1 percent in 1991.

Greater Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi and Chennai constitute nearly 25% of the total slum population of the country. Greater Mumbai alone accounts for 15.2% of the total slum population of the country and 36.6% of the total slum population of the million plus cities.

**TABLE-3**  
**India : Proportion of Slum Population in Million Plus cities (2001)**

S. No.	Name of Million Plus city	State	Percentage of slum population to total population
1.	Greater Mumbai	Maharastra	54.1
2.	Faridabad	Haryana	46.5
3.	Meerut	Uttar Pradesh	44.1
4.	Nagpur	Maharastra	35.9
5.	Kolkata	West Bangal	32.5
6.	Thane	Maharastra	27.8
7.	Ludhiana	Punjab	22.5
8.	Surat	Gujrat	20.9
9.	Pune	Maharastra	19.4
10.	Chennai	Tamil Nadu	18.9
11.	Delhi	Delhi*	18.7
12.	Indore	Madhya Pradesh	17.7
13.	Hyderabad	Andhra Pradesh	17.2
14.	Jaipur	Rajasthan	15.9
15.	Kanpur	Uttar Pradesh	14.4
16.	Vadodara	Gurarat	14.2
17.	Ahmadabad	Gujrat	13.5
18.	Nashik	Maharastra	12.9
19.	Varanasi	Uttar Pradesh	12.6
20.	Pimpri Chinchwar	Maharastra	12.2
21.	Haora	West Bengal	11.7
22.	Banglore	Karnataka	10.0
23.	Agra	Uttar Pradesh	9.5
24.	Bhopal	Madhya Pradesh	8.7
25.	Lucknow	Uttar Pradesh	8.2
26.	Kalyan-Dombivli	Maharastra	2.9
27.	Patna	Bihar	0.3
	Total		24.1

Source - Censuses of India (2001), Slum Population, Series 1, Registrar General and Censuses Commissioner, India.\* Union Territory

Andhra Pradesh has the largest number of cities and towns (77) reporting slum population followed by Uttar Pradesh (69), Tamil Nadu (63), Maharastra (61), West Bengal (59), Madhya Pradesh (43) and Gujrat (41). Slums in the 61 towns and cities of Maharastra accounts for 11.2 million people which is more than one-fourth of the total slum population in the country.

According to table-3 Greater Mumbai has the highest (54.1%) proportion of slum dwellers, followed by Faridabad (45.5%), Meerut (44.1%), Nagpur (35.9%), Kolkata (32.5%), Thane (27.8%), Ludhiana (22.5%) and Surat (20.9%). In these cities every fifth person is a slum dweller.

#### **India : Access to Basic Amenities in Urban Areas**

As evident from table-4 that 73.72% households have access to toilet facilities in Urban areas.

About one-fourth (26.28%) house holds resort to open defecation even in urban areas. The 58th Round (2008) of The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSC) Survey data reveal that only 33% of the people in urban slums had access to latrin facilities of any kind. Absence of toilets in the household adversely affects the dignity, health, safety and sense of privacy of the people, particularly of women, and this indirectly affects their productivity.

The waste water drainage and solid waste management are another problem facing urban population. In urban areas more than one-fifth (22.13%) population has no access to the waste water outlet through drainage. As per NSSO 58th Round (2002) 29% of the slums had no drainage facilities. In the absences of any drainage system, the waste from the household is allowed to accumulate near their dwellings. Such practices are fraught

**TABLE-4**  
**India : Percentage of House holds with selected Basic Amenities in Rural and Urban Areas (2001).**

S.N.	Amenity	Total	Rural	Urban
1.	Electricity	55.85	43.52	87.59
2.	Toilet facility	36.41	21.92	73.72
3.	DrinkingWater	72.36	67.49	84.90
4.	Drainage	46.40	34.18	77.87
5.	L.P.G.	16.19	5.10	44.74

Census of India (2001), Tables on House, Household Amenities and Assets-H Series Table

with significant health hazards, not only for the slum communities but the entire population of city. Decomposition of organic materials lead to release of toxic gases and a foul smell. Plastic and other inorganic materials block drainage channels, causing inundation, water stagnancy, and result in the spread of water-borne diseases and even epidemics in cities.

Rapid population growth of the cities in recent decades has placed an increasing demand on the water supply. In urban areas nearly 15% household members have no access to adequate and safe drinking water supply 78% of the people living in slums have tap water and 16% of them are using tube wells or hand pumps as the primary source of water, to meet their drinking water needs.

Many low income, particularly slum swellers, lack access to safe drinking water. If the local supply of water is inadequate, women and girls spend a considerable amount of time in fetching water. This affects the prospects of the girl child to go to school and also reduces the likelihood of women participating in other economic activities.

Table-4 also presents the situation on the use of clean fuel like LPG and electricity. In urban areas, more than half (55.26%) house hold members have no access to LPG and 12% to electricity. Many slum dwellers do not have a power supply in their houses.

As per the NSSO 58th Round (2002), 92 percent of slums have some form of access to electricity. But, legal electricity connection for household within the slums was found only in 18 percent cases. This is a big challenge for several state electricity boards (SEBs) to stop illegal electricity use and revenue loss. Secondly, the use of traditional

fuels have several negative impacts on the health of slum dwellers and their environment.

Table-5 presents percentage of households with access to different basic services in mega cities namely, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Hyderabad and Bangalore. The toilet facility is not available to 54.43% households in Mumbai and only 4.41% in Kolkata. Nearly half of Mumbai's population (54.1%) lives in slums which are mostly served by community toilets. Community toilets are often not well maintained and a large proportion of population resorts to open defecation. Providing toilet facility is a great challenge in Mumbai. The problem is also serious in Delhi, where one-fourth of the household numbers do not have access to any type of toilet.

**TABLE-5**

**India : Percentage of Households with selected Basic Amenities in Mega Cities (2001)**

S. No.	Name of City Municipal corp.	Electricity facility	Toilet facility	Drinking Water	Fuel LPG	Drainage System
1.	Delhi	96.13	79.82	95.25	23.62	94.18
2.	Mumbai	97.89	43.57	98.98	39.80	96.11
3.	Chennai	94.03	89.78	78.10	33.88	88.67
4.	Hyderabad	NA	NA	95.68	45.55	95.63
5.	Bangalore	96.03	92.70	88.01	38.78	95.20
6.	Kolkata	94.01	95.59	83.36	38.72	89.22

Source : Tables on Houses, Household Amenities and Assets, H Series Table, Census of India, 2001.

**Policy Concerns and Conclusion**

The Urban areas particularly bigger cities and towns are facing a great challenge in providing basic facilities and amenities to burgeoning urban population. Rapidly ever increasing urban population raises some questions that require serious consideration and attention of the urban planners and policy makers.

Most of the mega cities are industrial hubs of their region and pulling center of migrants. Most of the slum dwellers are rural migrants whose migration is poverty driven. Indeed, it is a movement of rural poverty to urban poverty, particularly in slums. Are we able to meet the challenges of this growing population in slums and squatter settlements of the urban areas ? Will these cities ever cope up with the increasing demand for various amenities and facilities ? Would the slums appear as 'islands of poverty' in the urban areas in coming days on the city maps ? Most of the slum dwellings are illegal encroachments on government land. Will these illegal encroachments not pose threat to land owning agency when it tries to retrieve the land ? Would it be possible to make such cities sustainable ?

Cities are hubs for manufacturing, trade, finance, culture, and information, and are incubators of innovation and new ideas. They have been described as engines for development and progress. In order to make them play this role, they must be well planned and more importantly, well governed. They should also exist in harmony with the natural environment and provide healthy living and congenial working environments for their inhabitants, particularly for the poorer section of society.

It is a well known fact that people in slum areas live under the most deplorable socio-economic and health condition, with little access to effective social and health care services, potable water, sanitation facilities and are more vulnerable to epidemics and diseases like diarrhoea, dysentery, hepatitis, typhoid and HIV/AIDS. Their low socio-economic status, low level of education and high fertility and mortality rates indicate that they need special attention in terms of public health, family planning and reproductive health programmes.

To improve quality of life in the urban areas we need a long term strategy, where the planner and policy makers should take measures to retain the rural population in rural area. As a result, rural migration to the urban areas should be reduced. Urban challenges can not be solved in isolation. It must be seen in the background of rural development. This can be achieved through generating more rural employment through agro-based industries.

**References**

1. Mukherji, Shekar (2006), *Migration and Urban Decay : Asian Experiences*, Rawat Publication, Jaipur p27-50
2. UN, 2001, *World Population Prospects : The 2000 Revision*, UN Population Division/DESIPA,p31-55
3. UN-HABITAT (United Nations Human Settlements Programme) 2006, *State of the World's cities 2006-07*, London Earthscan.p35
4. *Census of India (2001), Tables on House, Household Amenities and Assets-H Series Table.*
5. *Census of India (2001), Slum Population, Series 1, Registrar General and Censuses Commissioner, India.*
6. *India, Urban Poverty Report 2009, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty & UNDP, OUP, New Delhi. p7-31*
7. *NSSO (2002), 58th Round Report-conditions of Urban slums, report No.486., New Delhi, Ministry of statistics and programme Implementation, Government of India.at <http://mospi.nic.in/stat-act>*