Paul Hamlyn
Foundation

Independent Assessment
of CLRA's Housing Work
Under a PHF Grant

CLRA

Swastik Harish
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Swastik Harish and Associates

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Executive Summary

The Center for Labor Rights and Action (CLRA), Ahmedabad has been awarded a 3-phase grant over 2015-22 by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF), for continuing their work on enabling housing and other rights for 'circular' migrant labor in Ahmedabad city. CLRA has focused on land and housing rights, linkage to government schemes, developing local (destination) identities, and access to basic and social services, in about 10 bastis through the grant. The work has impacted about 750-1,000 SC, ST, DNT, OBC and minority households, who often have one foot in the source location and one foot in the destination location. Much of the work was done through the Majur Adhikar Manch (MAM), a union of these informal workers, initiated by CLRA. CLRA has built the capacity, and guided and mentored MAM members (whose leadership is increasingly in the hands of women) to leverage their knowledge and build confidence to resist illegal eviction actions. CLRA and MAM's work over the years has resulted in significant tangible and intangible benefits for their constituent communities. This author conducted a 5-day visit to Ahmedabad to see the bastis that CLRA has been working in, inquiring around land and eviction, identities, basic services such as energy and sanitation, and social services such as education linkage, as well as trying to understand the level of agency and independence that basti residents perceived among themselves.

It was evident that while actions to resist eviction are holding up for now, these spaces are going to be under immense pressure to get 'planned' and 'formalized'. Yet, housing conditions in the bastis are quite inadequate. Most of the houses are kutcha, that can be rebuilt in the event of an eviction, but increases the risk of loss due to fire incidents. Since rehabilitation houses are often inadequate in other ways, the current focus on resisting eviction and agitating for services is tactically probably the best way in the short-term, even while leveraging rehabilitation options when available. Recent rental housing schemes may also be leveraged, though they are complex and profit-driven at the moment. State revanchism is increasingly showing its teeth in the way it acquires land. It would be good to gain land-use and planning information and prove that current occupations of land by migrant workers is vanishingly small and that according land rights, through Town Planning schemes, in or around/near current occupation patterns is feasible. Such schemes may be leveraged to provide sites and services to migrant worker households. Slum upgrading, which has a strong history in Ahmedabad may also be worth pursuing in cases where some land rights are extendable. It must be seen that all housing assets acquired (through rehabilitation, upgrading or sites and services) can become a critical leverage to enter formal financial systems, mortgages and insurance instruments.

Several of the bastis now have a mobile toilet van in their vicinity, even if they are not of the best quality and suffer from maintenance issues. Access to basic services is still largely impermanent, due to lack of enabling statutes, resistance by well-off neighbors and lack of state capacity. There is an immediate and continuous task at hand—agitating and mobilizing people to demand basic and social services in and around their current settlements, while creating a more robust 'social demand', especially for education services. It may also be feasible to connect the young with training and skill building agencies by leveraging Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds and government subsidies in emerging sectors such as e-vehicles and e-waste management.

At the core of all the efforts of MAM/CLRA is the work done to build local identities for basti residents—a miraculous outcome of which is that the MAM membership card is accepted in some places as a proof of residence. Due to this, several residents have gained adequate documentation to apply for formal gas cylinder and electricity connections. CLRA/MAM must leverage the identity solution to the maximum extent possible in the future. Further, CLRA/MAM's work at source locations is strategic and has a strong potential to bear fruit in the future. Due to severely pressing constraints, CLRA/MAM's role with respect to the state, appears to be largely reactionary, even while ironically, they continuously render roles that are actually the state's, for example registration of Naka workers under Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, COVID response, generating local identities, and going to source locations to build substantial linkages across jurisdictional boundaries. There is scope to expand their efforts to be more proactive, and approach the state with relevant ideas and suggestions.

It is also recommended to work towards building independent agency of MAM community members to consult and strategize matters within communities, rather than depend only on MAM meetings. Besides generating different ideas, the collection of knowledge and insights that already reside within the communities can be exchanged with other communities and similar organizations. CLRA/MAM should also continue to build its internal capacity, quantitatively and qualitatively. Newer generations bring new perspectives and skills to the work, and CLRA/MAM may consider engaging with architects and planners, public policy practitioners, management experts, behavioral and data scientists, etc., to further deepen their work's impact. Capacity building interventions can enhance CLRA/MAM's collective capacities for collecting and managing data (quantitative, qualitative and spatial), analytical ability for dealing with more complex urban datasets, and spatial thinking. An understanding of the language of urban policy, urban planning, land management, housing schemes and infrastructure programs, would add a layer of useful tools that CLRA/MAM staff can use in their work in the future.

Background and Context

1. **Grant cycles**: The Center for Labor Rights and Action (CLRA), Ahmedabad has been awarded a grant by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) for continuing their work on housing and other rights for migrant labor in Ahmedabad city. The grant has so far spread over three (3) temporal phases, namely 2015-17, 2017-20 and 2020-22. In the last phase PHF also made special grants towards COVID relief. Grant cycles included mid-term and phase-ending assessments, and review workshops. Several events were also organized through the grant funds.

2. **Grant scope**: CLRA has been implementing proposed actions on ground in Ahmedabad with a focus on land and housing rights for migrant workers, linkage to government schemes, developing local (destination) identities, and access to basic and social services. From a land and housing perspective, efforts have centered around developing the capacities of communities to resist eviction, when it is attempted without due process. Legal recourse was taken where required, and rehabilitation packages were sought where they were available. Water, sanitation and energy services were also campaigned for. Work was done to link children to education services through the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and the Right to Education (RTE). CLRA also accessed source locations of migrant labor in order to develop better backward-forward linkages in entitlements. Much of the work was done through the Majur Adhikar Manch (MAM), an informal workers' union formed by the CLRA.

3. **Bastis covered by CLRA/MAM**: CLRA/MAM have been working in ten (10) bastis of migrant labor in Ahmedabad city. The last survey by CLRA/MAM estimates that there are between 750 and 1,000 households in these bastis (since many of these households are circular migrants, it is difficult to conduct an exact count, as at any point of time, several households may not be residing in the basti). These bastis include Sundervan, Amul Garden, Arjun Ashram, Umiya Hall, Nirnay Nagar 1 and 2, Motera, Fatehwadi and Sewage.

4. **Broad profile of households**: A majority of CLRA/MAM's constituent households in these bastis are Scheduled Tribes (ST), De-notified Tribes (DNT) and Scheduled Castes (SC). There is some presence of Other Backward Castes (OBC) and minority (mostly Muslim) families. The households are often circular migrants from Dahod, Gujarat and Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh—both of which are within a few hours by road from Ahmedabad. A vast majority of these constituent households are engaged in daily wage labor in small-scale construction work in Ahmedabad city—work that absorbs men, women and quite often children. Work is obtained through contractors they know or by making themselves available at labor nakas (mostly traffic junctions or other spots where they wait to acquire work through direct negotiation). It appears that the typical earning of a household may be between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 20,000 per month. However, this may vary significantly depending on the number of working people in the household and their 'luck' in obtaining work. Most, if not all families, travel 2-3 times a year for festivals and other occasions to their homes, implying significant 'roots' (even if not land or other assets) at their source locations. In many ways, these households have one foot in the source location and one foot in the destination location (in this case, Ahmedabad).

About this Assessment Report

5. **Aim of the assessment**: The aim of the assessment was three-fold:

   5.1 A broad assessment of CLRA's work on housing under the PHF project

   5.2 Analysis of the lessons learned

   5.3 Suggestions for the way ahead

6. **Methodology**: The methodology consisted of three sets of activities:

   6.1 Data collection by, a) reading and understanding CLRA's documentation, b) site visits to bastis and other locations of CLRA work, and c) interviews and interactions with CLRA and MAM members.

   6.2 Analysis of the data with a focus on CLRA/MAM's relationship with its constituents and with the state; using broad frameworks of land rights, housing entitlement, sustainable development, political economy and equity concerns.

   6.3 Reporting and development of collateral for dissemination of insights.

7. **Limitations**: A few key limitations are indicated below:

   7.1 There is a lot of secondary data, in the form of reports, proposals, reviews, etc., and it is not practical to comprehensively read all of them. Inasmuch, key milestone reports are used for reference more than interim, event or other reports that are very specific to a time period or event.

   7.2 Further, this assessment is largely qualitative, as it is not practically possible to verify the targets and numbers as reported by CLRA in their reports to PHF. This author can not claim to have verified or otherwise validated quantitatively the claims made by CLRA.

   7.3 While this author was able to spend five (5) full days in Ahmedabad, it still cannot be considered adequate time to have a comprehensive view of the work done. As such, maximum effort has been put in to ensure that in-depth discussions were conducted with CLRA and MAM's constituent bastis and their residents. Findings were triangulated with claims in reports to the extent possible.

8. **Structure of the report**: The report is serialized for easy reference, and is structured into five (5) parts:

   8.1 A background and context that summarizes CLRA's PHF project and outlines the scope of work.

   8.2 This section, describing the salient features of this report.

   8.3 An in-depth report on findings on CLRA's work on housing. This section includes a reading of all the reports and data provided by CLRA to this author, a timeline of activities that this author has gleaned from these reports, and a detailed description of the housing and other conditions (and the key changes therein) in the bastis where CLRA/MAM work, based on a primary visit over 5 days.

8.4 Inferences and discussion points based on secondary data and primary visits. This section is divided into two broad sub-sections: CLRA's relationship with its constituents and its relationship with the state (taken to mean all levels and arms of government).

8.5 Conclusions and suggestions for the way ahead. This section focuses on how CLRA/MAM may work toward changing the narrative on land and housing for migrants, with some examples and analyses of what one may expect from various modes of housing provision. Further, this section makes some suggestions on the institutional position and capacity development requirements of CLRA/MAM and its constituents, along with a broad note outlining this author's opinion on the future of such interventions.

Findings from CLRA's Work in the PHF Project

Quick assessment of reports and data

9. **CLRA PHF project reports**: The reports and data are essentially action reports, limiting themselves to statements of factual happenings on ground. These include actions taken by various authorities for eviction, responses of CLRA staff and MAM members (including community members), results of these actions and current status of the basti after said actions. Over time, several of the reports claim that eviction was effectively stopped or stalled through collective action. It may be noted that practically, the numbers as claimed by CLRA's reports cannot actually be verified by the author of this assessment report. This author assumes them to be by and large accurate as they match the narratives from field visits. The reports also contain details on other aspects of CLRA/MAM's work such as access to basic services, developing local identities, linking to social services such as education, COVID response and work at source locations, etc.

10. **Survey data**: A collection of data has also been shared with this author. These are largely lists of families and their children, with a focus on linking children to Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) and admissions through the Right to Education (RTE) Act. Some of the data pertains to rehabilitation of families affected by projects such as the Metro (including the Gandhinagar high-speed link or MEGA project).

11. **Academic reports**: Papers and working papers that map CLRA's activities to broader concerns around migrant workers and report on the conditions of these migrant workers based on empirical evidence gleaned through surveys, interviews and focused groups. These papers are a critical source of information to build the context around CLRA's work in Ahmedabad.

12. **Assessment reports**: The report on the assessment of CLRA's work in the first phase of the PHF project has also been made available. Along with, there is documentation of the 2019 mid-term review workshop conducted by CLRA. These reports are invaluable in understanding the overall trajectory of CLRA's work.

13. **Other documents**: Other documents include communications to various stakeholders, as well as plans and reports from various events that CLRA has organized. The communications are largely aimed at government authorities that CLRA has to engage with in order to make note of and state the demand for housing, basic services and social services, with accompanying information on scope and extent of requirement. The event reports capture the ideas and 'mood' behind several of the struggles and successes that CLRA and MAM have been through over the years. These documents give irreplaceable insights into the day-to-day functioning of the organization and its constituent members and communities.

14. **Proposals to PHF and other organizations**: CLRA has also provided access to proposals for the three phases of work in the PHF project. Each of these proposals is a valuable source of information on CLRA's achievements and challenges in previous phases, as well as their approach to the work with their constituents, in the proposed phase.

Timeline of actions over the PHF project (based on documentation)

15. **Action summary of the documents provided**: The following table illustrates the timeline of all the reports and documentation on project actions shared by CLRA with this author. It may be noted that this list is not exhaustive and there may be other actions that are not documented quite as well. However, this documentation is considered adequate for all practical purposes. The actions have been presented in reverse chronological order from 2022 to 2014.

Table 1: Timeline of CLRA actions from 2014 to 2022 (based on provided documentation)

Year	Type	Topic	Remarks
2022	Report	PCLRA report to PHF (Apr '21 to Mar '22)	Detailed report on PHF format on project achievements, challenges and immediate plans
2021	Proposal	Education relief for COVID-affected basti children	Proposal to PHF ot support additional education activities for about 420 children whose enrollment and attendance have been negatively impacted by COVID and the Lockdown
2020	Proposal	To PHF (Phase 3) on access to basic services, countering threat of evictions, mapping social services and labor rights for about 11 bastis, increasing credit and savings via SHGs, pursuing rental housing, etc. under the aegis of the MAM	Phase of project consists of moving beyond countering threat of evictions (housing plans), further strengthening of MAM, COVID relief, etc. Relevant project indicators are enclosed
2020	Assessment	Assessment of PHF project phase 2 (2017-20)	Detailed report on project indicators, achievements and commentary on individual actions by PCLRA
2019	Assessment	Mid-term review of PCLRA's work	Peer review, community and expert groups convened to assess PCLRA's work
2019	Report	PCLRA report to PHF (Oct '16 to Mar '17)	
2019	Survey	Detailed HH level survey of 30 bastis	Data on school-age children in bastis, seems like an update of survey done July 2017
2019	Report	Report on responses to evictions/threats of evictions	
2019	Event	Public event (Sammelan) in source location	Culmination of 3 weeks of mobilization in origin/source areas of migrants; New executive committee of MAM Dahod unit was elected
2019	Report	PCLRA report to PHF (Oct '18 to Mar '19)	
2019	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Motera Basti near Tapovan circle	A community leader (along with MAM) was able to motivate the community to remain in their spots and not move; Information on which official had

			originally signed the eviction notice was not made available; thereafter there was no further harassment of the residents by the authority
2019	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Sundervan Basti, Amul Garden, and Indralok Bastis	Railways officials were forced to retreat because they were doing demolition without eviction notices; Community members themselves were able to manage the situation
2019	Event	Ambedkar Jayanti celebration	Celebrations organized by the community through contributions
2019	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Amul Garden Basti at GST Rail - crossing and New Ranip	MAM prevented eviction action by approaching the Encroachments Officer of the Railways who assured them that the bastis will not be evicted
2019	Eviction intervention – PIL	1-Arjun Ashram and 2-Umiya Hall	Returnable notice issued by Court | Pending PIL/42/2019
2019	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Umiya Hall and Arjun Ashram	Eviction notice was received and (counter) PIL was filed; Eviction was stalled as matter pending in HC
2019	Event	International Women's Day	Included 4th convention of MAM wherein a new executive council and (for the first time) a woman Secretary was elected
2019	Event	Public event	Demand regarding public utilities and decent housing presented to CM, Gujarat
2019	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Umiya Hall	RPF came but was sent back because they did not have an eviction notice
2018	Event	Public event	Protest against anti-migrant policies; Demand charter presented to DC, Ahmedabad
2018	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Fatehwadi (Nalsarovar) and Juhapura	Oral threat by AMC was thwarted by MAM/PCLRA by demanding a notice; Notice was served and thereafter responded to leading to a stalling of eviction
2018	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Amul Garden & Indralok Basti	Survey conducted by Railways, MAM and PCLRA members; situation was turning violent but was brought under control by threatening Railways officials with a case of assault
2018	Event	Ambedkar Jayanti celebration	
2018	Event	International Women's Day	Plan for 'Awas Haq Abhiyan' initiated; Demand to record 14 bastis placed before AMC

2017	Proposal	To PHF (Phase 2) on access to basic services, social services and labor rights for about 10+5 bastis	In continuation of work done in Phase 1
2017	Survey	Broad survey of 40 bastis in Ahmedabad	Captured data on no. of HH, community and origin, age and land ownership of basti, and estimate of how many households could not be surveyed
2017	Report	PCLRA report to PHF (Oct '16 to Mar '17)	
2017	Survey	Survey of 19/20 + 10 bastis for ICDS	More than 1,200 families surveyed; 1,060 children under 6 identified; about 1,150 families left out of survey
2017	Communication	Letter to Child Development Dept., AMC	Reminder to implement ICDS programs in migrant worker bastis as per instruction of previous officers and state government
2017	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Amul Garden & Indralok Basti	Eviction attempted by Railways without eviction notice; MAM members involved the police and eviction was stopped
2017	Event	May Day celebration	Protest rally and dharna held at DC office, Ahmedabad
2017	Survey	Detailed HH level survey of 5 bastis	Data on family composition and caste, origin and relationship with it, etc., captured
2017	Report	PCLRA report to PHF (Phase 1)	
2017	Event	Ambedkar Jayanti celebration	Discussions on constitutional rights of workers
2017	Event	International Women's Day	About 30 labour Nakas identified for mobilization of participation, morning and evening outreach plans made; Post-event – Demand charter sent to Municipal Commissioner
2017	Event	Distribution of Parchas to some women	
2017	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Amul Garden & Indralok Basti	MAM team was able to stop the eviction and took basti residents to DMRC office
2017	Event	Rehabilitation of certain families in government housing (?)	Attended by Jignesh Mevani, Dalit leader
2017	Communication	Letter to State Education Officer	Request to reissue orders to AMC and DEO Ahmedabad to survey children identified by PCLRA and attach them to various schools under RTE
2017	Communication	Letter to AMC for provision of mobile toilet at Indralok colony basti	As a follow up to assurance given by previous officer
2016	Event	Celebration of allotment of houses to 43 displaced families	Residents of other bastis also invited

2016	Communication	Letter to a group of Panchayat leaders in MP (origin locations of migrants) towards implementation of student hostels under SSA for children of migrant workers	Request to attend a meeting with other Panchayat leaders on the modalities of implementation of SSA in said districts/villages/blocks
2016	Communication	Letter to AMC for provision of mobile toilet at Pragati Nagar extension	As a follow up to assurance given by same officer
2016	Communication	Letter to AMC regarding connecting nearly 2300 children to schools through RTE	As a follow up to a similar demand from previous year, as no action was taken by AMC
2016	Event	Cancer awareness and prevention camp	Organized by the Gujarat Cancer & Research Institute at request of PCLRA
2016	Survey	Survey of school attendance and outreach in Ahmedabad and migrant source location—Jhabua, MP	Surveyed 10 bastis and 6 government schools in Ahmedabad, and 9 villages in Jhabua, along with visit to DC office and DEO (Jhabua) office
2016	Communication	Letter to AMC regarding connecting more than 300 children from 741 HH surveyed in 10 bastis to schools through RTE/ICDS	Survey list appended to the letter
2016	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Sundervan Basti	Eviction attempted by Railways despite High Court stay; MAM team was able to stall it
2016	Event	May Day celebration	Discussion about labor rights, better wages, etc. Memorandum presented to DC, Ahmedabad
2016	Event	Rally and public meeting	Mobilization campaign with nearly 40 bastis; ended with an appeal to AMC on various issues identified, especially around evictions
2016	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Amul Garden and Indralok Basti	MAM team stopped the demolition; NHRC was invoked and they in turn asked DC for a full report that includes the basti residents' perspectives
2015	Survey	HH level survey of ~10 bastis in Ahmedabad	Details of 741 HH captured
2015	Eviction intervention – PIL	Gyaspur	43 got house (two rooms with kitchen with attached toilets); 13 families still await rehabilitation	Pending PIL/243/2015
2015	Communication	Letter to AMC to rehabilitate families liable for eviction for MEGA project	Reminding AMC that there are funds under MEGA project for rehabilitation
2015	Eviction intervention – PIL	Sundervan	Stay obtained on 17/9/2015	Pending LPA/1203/2015

2015	Proposal	To PHF (Phase 1) on access to basic services, social services and labor rights for about 845 families	Including a set of project outcome indicators for identified families, children, workers, women, etc.
2015	Eviction intervention – PIL	Sundervan	Stay obtained	PIL disposed
2014	Eviction intervention – mobilization	Sewage basti	Through a case filed in the High Court, 48 of 56 families were rehabilitated by the project authority (MEGA)
2014	Communication	Letter to MEGA project GM	Requesting that the families that have been given eviction notice be provided alternative accommodation

16. **Changing modes and tools, building capacities**: As can be assessed from Table 1, CLRA has evolved its modes of operation and the tools it uses to represent and appeal for the rights of its constituents. Early on, a lot of the work was through the direct intervention of CLRA and MAM staff; a lot depended on communicating demands to relevant authorities and filing PILs and fighting court battles. While these tools have not lost relevance in more recent times, they have been supplemented rather well by capacity building actions. In the later part of the PHF project, it emerges quite clearly that MAM members (rather than staff, who are largely from CLRA) were able to leverage their knowledge and confidence and resist illegal eviction actions. These community members have learned that eviction actions must be accompanied by legal backing in the form of notices, and must not violate pending court proceedings, such as PILs and stays. This is, indeed, a quantum shift in CLRA's operational modes, and appears to be a direct result of the focus on working with MAM as a guide and mentor, rather than be persistently involved, or solely responsible for direct action or response.

17. **Concluding remark on the assessment**: This author can assert with confidence that CLRA and MAM's work over the years has resulted in significant benefits for their constituent communities. While some of the benefits are quantifiable, and have been reported as such, several of the benefits are intangible and qualitative. What is striking is that a lot of CLRA and MAM's investment has been into people. This approach has led to the creation of several leaders and active community MAM members. As a strategic option, this author considers such a capacity development approach to be ideal for the circumstances. It has enabled not only greater knowledge and confidence among communities, but also given CLRA and MAM new resources to bring into the fold of their work. In this way, this approach has the potential to have a significant multiplier effect in the future, as long as investment into developing capacities is ongoing.

Visit to project locations in Ahmedabad

18. **Primary visit for the assessment**: This author conducted a 5-day visit to Ahmedabad in order to see first hand the bastis that CLRA has been working in as part of the PHF project. Along with visiting nine (9) bastis—Motera, Sundervan, Arjun Ashram, Umiya Hall, Nirnay Nagar 1 and 2, Fatehwadi, Sewage and Naroda (near EWS colony), the author also conducted a brief visit to Naroda Naka. The site visits were mostly conducted in the evenings when basti residents would be back from work and available for discussions/meetings. At the bastis, CLRA/MAM had informed residents of the visit beforehand and semi-formal meetings were organized to discuss what changes communities have seen in their housing conditions through the years. Besides focused discussions on the outcomes of CLRA/MAM work over the years, a broad understanding of the relationship between CLRA, MAM and the communities was also gained through these visits meetings. A map of these locations in presented in Figure 1. More detailed maps of each of these bastis is available in Annex 1.
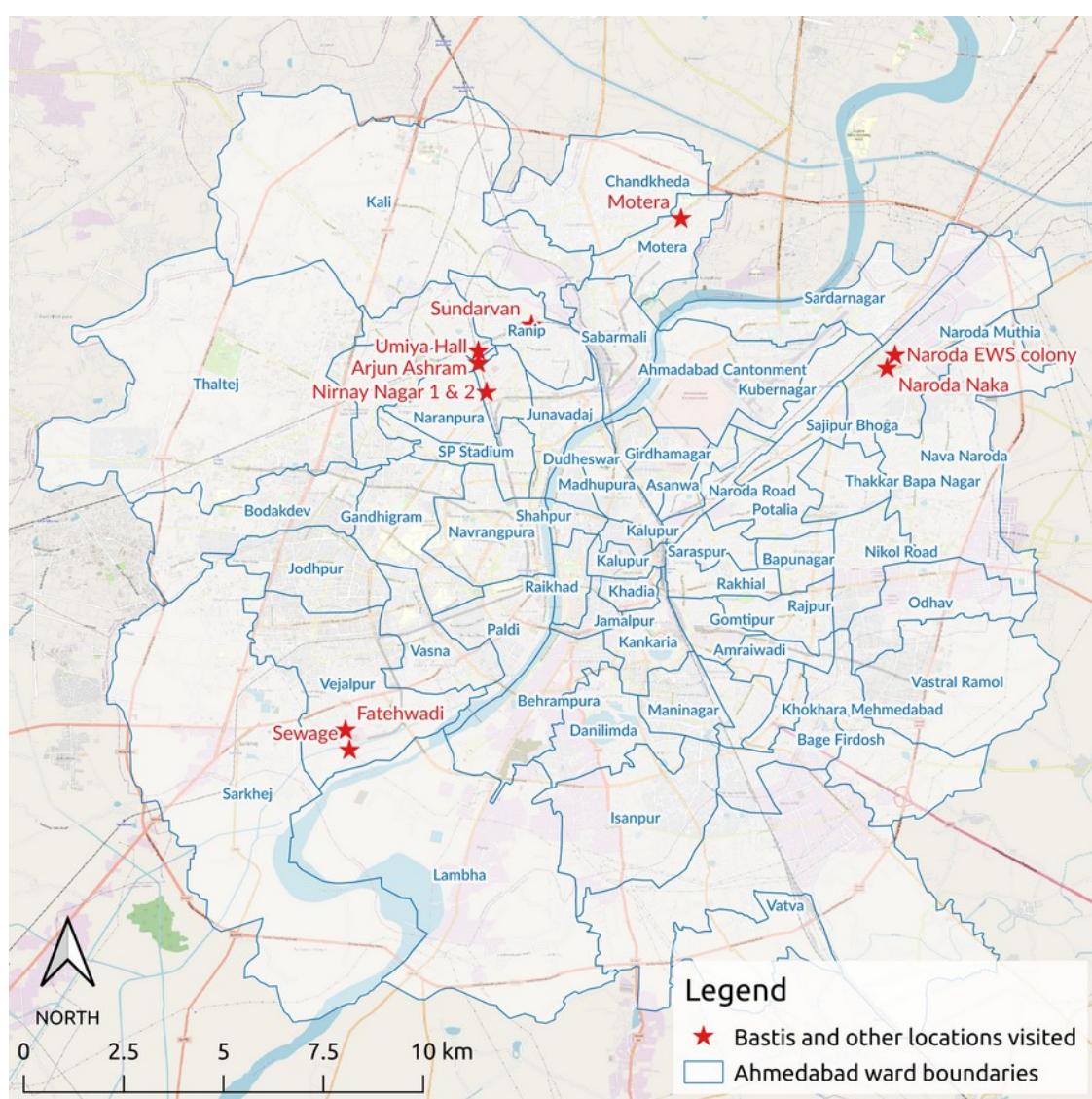

Figure 1: Locations of bastis visited overlaid on Ahmedabad ward map; Source/s: Swastik Harish (point locations), openstreetmap (base map) and datameet (Ahmedabad ward map)

19. **Lines of inquiry**: At each of the basti locations, the author was presented with a run through of all the activities and actions the basti residents have taken up with the support of MAM/CLRA. The lines of inquiry were around land and eviction, identities, basic services such as energy and sanitation, and social services such as education linkage and health services. A general visual assessment of housing conditions was also conducted by walking to the ends of the bastis. Further, this author also inquired about the level of agency and independence that basti residents perceived among themselves after years of direct and indirect support from CLRA/MAM. These aspects are reported in the following sections.

20. **Land and evictions**: One of the most important set of actions was the resistance of basti residents to eviction actions. It emerged very clearly that over the years (see Table 1), the support of MAM has resulted in a much higher level of knowledge and confidence among MAM community members on the process of eviction and the tools and modes to ensure that it is followed. This has resulted in stalling or even complete ceasing of eviction actions in many places, save a few exceptions. It must be noted that almost all the land the bastis occupy belongs to the government—several bastis are on railway land and others on state Irrigation Department and Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) land. At the same time, the exact definition of the land claimed by the government does not appear to be clear, it is only broadly agreed that the land belongs to the government, but there are very few markers on ground to delineate such boundaries. Further, several of these lands are in the process of inter-departmental transfer, such as for the use of the metro project or for the expansion of railway lines. In some cases, there were private parties also claiming some of these lands. In many ways, it is anticipated that these marginal spaces occupied by the bastis are under constant threat of eviction due to the dynamics of land in the city. It may even be said that over time, while actions to resist eviction may be holding up for now, these spaces are going to be under immense pressure to get 'planned' and 'formalized' and integrated into the land markets of Ahmedabad.

Figure 2: Nirnay Nagar 1 basti, located on railway land (the photograph is taken from the railway line and the railway land claim marker is visible near the road junction); Source: Swastik Harish

21. **Housing conditions**: Save for a few exceptions, the housing conditions in the bastis are grossly inadequate. The houses in the vast majority of the bastis visited were kutcha, that is, made of temporary material such as bamboo poles and plastic sheets. A majority of the flooring was compacted mud, while in a few places, residents had applied a coat of cement or loose tiles over it. Most of the houses were too small for the family and much of their day-to-day activities were organized in the yards and spaces between houses. Only in a handful of cases were houses semi-pukka, that is they had brick walls and sheet (asbestos or tin) roofs. It can easily be said that the houses at the moment are only serving as basic shelter. A significant reason for this condition emerged in the discussions: it is the residents' response to threat of eviction and lack of tenure security. Keeping house structures temporary implies that in the event of an eviction, much of the material can be salvaged and the house rebuilt at a later stage or place. However, this condition significantly increases the risk of loss due to fire incidents and other such accidents. This was painfully evident in the days this author was in Ahmedabad, as there was such a fire incident in one of the bastis and about 50-60 houses were burned down. However, it may be noted that CLRA/MAM do not attempt to directly intervene at the house/building level, due to the definition of the scope of their work.

Figure 3: Construction technology of a typical house in most of the bastis visited, illustrating the kutcha nature of building materials; Source: Swastik Harish

Figure 4: The result of a fire incident at Sewage basti; Source: Swastik Harish

22. **Basic services (sanitation and water)**: With the support of CLRA/MAM, there is definite improvement (even in bastis with kutcha houses) on access to sanitation facilities. Due to constant agitation with the AMC, several of the bastis have received a mobile toilet van in their vicinity. This has provided a critical facility to residents, especially women who were earlier forced to defecate and bathe in makeshift enclosures made out of wood and plastic. However, it was also found that these provisions by the AMC were quite fickle, and there would be arbitrary removal of these vans now and then, implying that such efforts and agitation have to be continuous for sustaining outcomes. In any case, there has to be a more permanent solution to this problem as even these mobile toilets are not of the best quality and suffer from maintenance issues. CLRA/MAM has not focused on access to water and a majority of the residents in the bastis depend on public water points and other private sources. A few efforts to have public taps installed in the bastis has not met with success. It must be noted that such provisions are resisted not only by the administration in AMC due to

Figure 5: A mobile toilet van outside Sundervan basti; Source: Swastik Harish

various reasons, but also by better-off residents in the locality as they do not want to accord any kind of permanence to the basti residents.

Figure 6: Makeshift enclosures for toilets/washing areas in Sewage basti; Source: Swastik Harish

23. **Basic services (energy)**: In recent years, there has been tangible improvement in many basti residents' access to energy services. Two aspects are elaborated here. One is that several residents have gained adequate documentation to apply for formal gas cylinder connections under government schemes. This has enabled a shift away from wood fire cooking to gas stove cooking for some residents, and is seen as a significant improvement in quality of life. The other critical improvement has been the extension of electricity connections to some of the residents. While there are not many connections provided even when they are, it is notable that basti residents have privately extended these electricity lines to neighboring houses, and some form of shared billing is evident. Nonetheless, it emerged that this

Figure 7: Electricity meter on a house in Sundervan basti; Source: Swastik Harish

electricity is quite expensive for the average household. It is pertinent to note that electricity connections are only provided (by Torrent Power, the private distributor in Ahmedabad) if a house has all walls made of brick, underlining the relationship between better housing and basic services. Nevertheless, access to electricity is a potential game changer in terms of quality of life, and also in terms of increasing de facto tenure security. These provisions (gas and electricity) have been enabled by CLRA/MAM through identity documentation, which is elaborated in a following section.

24. **Education linkage**: Though not technically within the scope of a housing assessment, a few important notes may be made on the efforts of CLRA/MAM to extend linkages to educational facilities for the children in these bastis. A lot of effort has gone into surveying how many children there are in these bastis and how many of them are eligible for accessing ICDS provisions and can be admitted into local schools through RTE reservations. Slowly but surely, these efforts have yielded results, with several children now being able to access functioning anganwadi centers. At the same time, efforts for older children, who are at the most risk of getting diverted from schooling towards labor, have now started showing results. It appears that an increasing number of children are now pursuing school education (both in Ahmedabad and in migrant source locations). There has also been limited, but growing success in enabling access to education for girls. In this effort, it must be noted that MAM is not only struggling through the sheer amount of paperwork required to access RTE and ICDS provisions, but also constantly needs to overcome social barriers to education, as families are not always keen to get their children (especially girls) educated.

25. **Expanding bases and building local identities**: At the core of all the efforts of MAM/CLRA is the work done to build local identities for basti residents. Local identities have enabled access to a lot of the services described in the previous sections. Government identification documents such as Aadhar card, Permanent Account Number (PAN) and others are now reflecting the basti address in many cases, and are critical enablers of de facto tenure

Figure 8: MAM/CLRA staff encouraging workers to join the union at Naroda Naka; Source: Swastik Harish

security, or at least compensation in the event of an eviction. As mentioned earlier, with some form of 'address proof', residents are also able to access cooking gas and electricity services. However, a challenge remains—many residents still hold ration cards in their source locations due to various reasons—making them more vulnerable to hunger shocks when incomes are not forthcoming. Those who have transferred their ration card to the city report significant gains in terms of access to decent quality and reliably available rations. It must be noted that MAM membership card is now accepted as a proof of identity and address by some government departments; this is an amazing feat and provides evidence that sustained institutional presence, even if non-governmental, can make its way into state procedures.

26. **Special note on COVID response**: A lot of the work done by CLRA/MAM in the 3rd phase of the PHF project centered around the response to the COVID pandemic and the ensuing lockdown. On the one hand, while it appears that the threat of eviction receded during these times, other more basic issues arose at a massive scale. Due to the lockdown, many migrant workers were unable to earn any money. CLRA/MAM swung into action immediately, liaised and worked with several other stakeholders to provide food relief to stranded worker families. At one point when the lockdown seemed interminable and workers wished to return home, CLRA/MAM organized six trains to various parts of the country which were source locations of their constituents. Of special note is CLRA/MAM's response within its constituent communities during the lockdown. CLRA/MAM raised special grants to ensure that children, especially those in the 10-14 age group that get absorbed into labor, faced as little discontinuity as possible in their learning journey. Innovatively, CLRA/MAM recruited young teachers from within the community such that they were able to earn a stipend while helping others maintain continuity in their learning. In this way, years of investment into building agency and learning capacity among the communities bore fruit in the form of cycling back resources into these communities. In doing this, CLRA may have demonstrated a model for developing strategies for addressing the most basic requirements of their communities while simultaneously providing opportunity for much needed diversification of livelihood patterns.

27. **Meetings and consultations with CLRA and MAM**: Last but not the least to report on are aspects that emerged from various meetings and consultations this author had with CLRA and MAM staff. In all there were three meetings: one was a briefing at the beginning of the site visits, another was a debrief to assimilate reflections from the sites, and the third was a monthly staff meeting of MAM that this author volunteered to attend a part of. The briefing and the debrief were aimed at collecting some of the critical experiences of CLRA and MAM over the years. In particular, the debriefing meeting was useful in understanding potential ways ahead, that are articulated in the last chapter of this report. It is important to note that several of the newly recruited staff at CLRA/MAM also attended these meetings, which served as an introduction (or nominally an induction into CLRA/MAM) for them. It must be reported that these meetings had a very positive energy and ended with proactive commitments to the work ahead. The monthly meeting of MAM gave this author a brief look into the day-to-day functioning of the union. Collectively, these meetings led to certain insights regarding the institutional position of CLRA and MAM, the use of all the data that

they have collected over the years, requirements for building internal capacity of the team, and the question of building a new generation of leaders to carry the work on.

Inferences and Discussions

CLRA's relationship with its constituents

28. **Mobilization against eviction**: One of the key outcomes of the project appears to be the receding threat of eviction. The history of eviction is such that many communities are in fact used to cycles of demolition and rebuilding; sometimes on the same site. This is the result of tacit arrangements (not necessarily based on quid pro quo) between squatter communities and local (often sympathetic) officials from land owning authorities. Often, authorities claim as much land as required and simply' push' people further out or in the land. This is not a huge challenge as it only means an adjustment in density which is quite low in any case. With the help, advise and most importantly, active participation of CLRA/MAM, communities are now able and capacitated, by and large, to demand that authorities follow due process in eviction. In practical terms, this means that each and every individual house must get an eviction notice and they must be allowed to appeal it. This practice seems to hold back actual demolition by weeks, if not months. It also gives CLRA/MAM time to approach the courts for a stay order through a PIL. A host of such PILs filed by CLRA/MAM are in courts, albeit without any progress or decision, creating a legal grey area which keeps risks still very high. In other words, CLRA and MAM will have to continue to be on their toes, constantly anticipate and respond to eviction actions.

29. **Special note on risk from physical hazards**: Another source of risk to communities and their bastis is physical hazard. As evident from the fact that between 50-60 huts of one of CLRA's constituent bastis (Sewage basti) were burned to the ground in November '22, accidental (or otherwise) incidents of fire are going to continue. Further, Ahmedabad is an earthquake prone area and many bastis are only safe precisely because they are kutcha. As housing quality improves and bastis consolidate, earthquake risks must be factored in to all development designs. Further, since many bastis are on low lying land, the threat of flooding and water logging, though not high, may never recede until appropriate prevention strategies are implemented. Lastly, in the medium- to long-term, 'creeping' disasters such as increasing heat conditions, air pollution and proliferation of mosquito breeding areas, are going to impact all communities of the city; migrant communities living in sub-standard conditions will be more vulnerable to their negative impacts.

30. **Aiding in getting land rights**: With the effort of CLRA/MAM, a few families have been awarded rehabilitation under the metro/MEGA project. These families were evicted from near the Gyaspur metro shed and were allotted accommodation near Naroda. However, the condition of this housing is quite substandard, which is par for the course in target based rehabilitation work in our country. Thus, while rehabilitation may seem like a good option, it is in fact, unfortunately, usually a mixed bag of results. In this way, the current focus of CLRA/MAM, which is resisting eviction is tactically probably the best way in the short-term, even while leveraging rehabilitation options when available. By resisting eviction actions, people have better chances to build their lives and enable socio-economic mobility for themselves, on even very small parcels of land. They can also adopt and adapt their houses to accommodate mobility, changing needs and family circumstances.

31. **Creating identities and a right to the city**: According identity and (sometimes) address documents to its constituents has been one of CLRA's major strategies, and for good reason. Over time, several individuals in the bastis that CLRA works in, have acquired documents ranging from ration cards, voter ID, PAN card and Aadhar card (besides electricity and gas connections). This is a huge win for CLRA/MAM and its constituents, given that the state and the local polity is typically hostile towards migrant labor. As mentioned earlier, it is nothing short of miraculous that MAM union membership cards have been instrumental in convincing the relevant authorities on the authenticity of the claims of residence put forward by basti residents. This phenomena must be leveraged to the maximum extent possible in the future.

32. **Accessing basic services**: Housing, beyond shelter, has to be bundled with access to basic and social services for it to be adequate leverage for socio-economic development. As such, housing can be seen along a pathway to derisking household growth and establishment of rights within a city. To this effect, CLRA and MAM's work has endeavored, labored even, to link their constituents communities' housing with basic services and social services. These efforts have taken the form of appeals and demands to local authorities. The outcomes however, are largely impermanent, due to various extraneous factors. The problem appears to be three-fold. One is that there are no enabling provisions in current statutes that allow the forwarding/networking of basic services such as water and sanitation to land that is encroached. The second is that extending such services to squatter settlements raises the hackles of somewhat better-off neighbouring communities, as they feel 'threatened' by a more fixed/permanent presence of Dalit, tribal or other such disadvantaged groups. The last, and possibly not the least, is the general lack of resources and administrative capacity to actually extend services to what may be considered 'non-priority' groups. Possibly, one of the most enduring entitlements that CLRA/MAM has helped its communities gain access to better energy services. Through CLRA and MAM's efforts, several constituent households in the targeted communities have acquired both electricity and cooking gas connections. There is no doubt that these services are more expensive to maintain than traditional/older energy sources (such as wood and battery power) but such entitlements also serve to raise de facto tenure security is the medium- to the long-term. If development of housing security and capital is seen as a ladder to be climbed, then these services form a major rung.

33. **Accessing social services**: Somewhat less success has been recorded in linking households to school education. This can be attributed to reasons on both the supply and demand sides. Public/govt. school admission systems are still very convoluted, and actual implementation of the RTE Act leaves a lot to be desired. Many families complain about the daunting amount of paperwork that schools demand in order to admit students under RTE, or for that matter, general admissions. There seems to be a resistance in the system to admit students from backgrounds that may prevent them from continuing their education, for example when work or cyclical migration may make those families shift elsewhere. In this context, CLRA's efforts to link children to hostels (with or without schools) is obviously a great tactic. However, even within families, the demand for better and continued education for their children is uneven at best. Children, across sexes are expected, and sometimes even compelled to contribute to labor requirement in the house or to earn money. This appears to be the result of a combination of two factors. One is simply the need to earn money in order

to run the household, given the precarious nature of daily wage labor. The other stems from a reluctance to acknowledge the value of education, especially for girls. The combination is dense and protracted and generally is capable, quite easily, of crippling a child's opportunity to gain formal education. Health services, on the other hand, seem to be accessible fairly easily. As compared to education, there is greater, more tangible and immediately relevant bridging between demand and supply in health services. As government health systems are usually of an acceptable quality in urban areas, and additionally, are free of cost, even very vulnerable communities are able to access them fairly easily. Demand for health services is also robust, as there appears to be some faith in the clinical systems adopted by public health facilities. However, this author was not able to inquire more deeply into questions around requirements of secondary or tertiary care, or the prevalence of health insurance among households.

34. **Women to the fore**: It is heartening that many, if not most of the community leaders being nurtured by CLRA/MAM are women. It is likely that this is strategically a very effective approach. Women face the brunt of housing inadequacy the most, and therefore it is no surprise that they come forward proactively to resist forces of eviction as well as to fight for rights to basic and social services. Two aspects seem to emerge from this approach. One is that, as with housing and services, women must must be brought to the fore on issues of education and questions of health equity. It is possible that women would be able to build their capacity to recognize the gains in simple lived experience, that can emerge from continuous education, access to institutional health systems, in terms of the future of the young in the family. At the same time, women can enable CLRA/MAM develop the appropriate language for building mutual capacity between communities, based on shared/common experiences.

35. **Work done at source**: While this author was unable to visit source locations of migrant workers, such as Dahod in Gujarat or Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh, it was adequately clear that CLRA/MAM has been actively mobilizing workers in these (and other) locations. This is strategically critical thinking on the part of CLRA. The work done at source seems to be achieving multi-fold advantages. First and foremost, workers can get an identity (in terms of association and a physical MAM membership card) at their source location, even before reaching the city. For migrants starting off on the labor cycle, especially younger workers, entering the city with an identity can be a game changer. Secondly, working at source gives CLRA/MAM the distinct advantage of operating through a complementary framework that can help its constituents access the appropriate entitlements in the appropriate place. Thirdly, over time, CLRA/MAM can develop a comparative (source-destination) framework to look at migration related issues, and how to best communicate that to various stakeholders, including its constituents. Last but not the least, having operational networks at source locations allows CLRA/MAM to access resources required for emergency response, such as during the COVID lockdown.

CLRA's relationship with the state

36. **Limited to being reactionary**: With due respect to the serious constraints that CLRA and MAM work within, their role, with respect to the state, appears to be largely reactionary. CLRA (in the past) and MAM (currently) seem to be restricted to responding to threats of

evictions from a range of state agencies that are sometimes in nexus and at other times, independent. There have been many efforts at increasing the scope of work to be a lot more proactive, but these efforts appear to be hobbled by the sheer amount of work required to simply ensure that there is least damage to their constituents from 'developmental' forces. Due to the peculiar and intense vulnerabilities of basti residents, CLRA/MAM are kept busy hustling and scrambling for basic entitlements such as water, sanitation, energy, identity, food, health, education, and rehabilitation. Yet, CLRA and MAM must continue, and if possible, expand their efforts to be more proactive in approaching the state with relevant ideas and suggestions, based on the state's own laws, policies and schemes.

37. **State replacement**: Yet, ironically, CLRA/MAM are continuously rendering roles that are actually the state's, for example registration of Naka workers under Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) Act, COVID response, generating local identities, etc., even going to source locations to build substantial linkages across jurisdictional boundaries. All of these are the state's responsibilities that are actually rendered by agencies such as CLRA and MAM. In doing so, CLRA/MAM are going to walk on a thin line in the foreseeable future, because on the one hand, the state is increasingly hostile towards questions on its absence, and on the other, has to constantly popularize its development outcomes and achievements.

38. **The question of political mobilization**: Coupling activism with political mobilization is seen as a good strategy in general. Here it seems limited at the moment, perhaps because of the unusual, monopolistic political circumstances of Gujarat. There are also massive risks to ongoing work due to tightening regulations on Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) with respect to funding constraints and monitoring/surveillance of activities. Yet, there may not be a choice but to engage with the political space more closely, even in an environment of power asymmetries.

Conclusions and Suggested Tactical and Strategic Ways Ahead

Shifting narratives of land and land rights in urban areas

39. **Land rights in a revanchist (vengeful) ecosystem**: The state's developmental machinery is powerful and blunt—it is incapable, by design, to acknowledge or address the marginalized. At the middle order of administration, this often reflects in spiteful, clandestine and deliberately hurtful attempts at evicting squatter settlements and dis-empowering communities. While this attitude is at complete odds with stated aims of welfarism and inclusion, in the experience of this author, nowhere does such state revanchism show its teeth in the way it does when acquiring land. In most cities now, state policy on land has left large parts of the urban populations out of the housing market, paradoxically, even when empty lands are not difficult to come by, when development or investment is on the cards. This author thus surmises that land is going to increasingly become a central argument for raising the question of rights. If seen this way, land and all the values it generates (social, economic, political) must be brought to the fore through research and direct evidence. Such evidence can in turn inform development narratives and influence them to be more responsive to the demands of the city at large. One of the most important steps in this exercise would be find out exactly where and what sort of land is available in the city. This has been mapped and recorded in previous slum-free city surveys (such as in the Rajiv Awas Yojana), and a tactical recommendation would therefore be to gain access to this information and prove that, a) the current occupations of land by migrant workers is vanishingly small compared to other occupations, and b) according land rights, even in small portions, in or around/near current occupation patterns is feasible if planning processes respond to this requirement. In this way, through the building of technical capacities, a certain shift in the approach to land rights may be effected, in spite of the state narratives of 'illegal occupation' and eviction.

40. **The prospects of rehabilitation housing**: CLRA/MAM's efforts resulted in the allotment of rehabilitation tenements to 50 families (43 from near Sewage basti and 7 from Motera basti), and applications from another 13 families is still under consideration. This is a significant win for CLRA/MAM and its constituents, for it shows that with due effort and process, rehabilitation is indeed possible. It gives a hope that the state is not necessarily always in contention or belligerent towards squatter working-class familes. This author made a visit to the rehabilitation colony near Naroda/JP Nagar. Unfortunately, the residents were unavailable as they had either gone to their respective villages/source locations or were at work. While there was reliable water supply and presumably some provision for sewage disposal, the quality of construction left some things to be desired. It was apparent that there were leakages and seepage, and maintenance and local cleaning effort was conspicuous by its absence. Fundamentally, by removing people from land and putting them in flats, there is an inevitable decline in the care taken to keep up the 'commons'. Further, the low quality of construction, that is unfortunately extremely endemic in our country, implies that over time, there are some risks to the lives and health of residents in such colonies. It may also be mentioned that these flats are unsuitable for a growing family as there is little to no scope for expansion/modification according to changing needs, an aspect that will only get more

common with new forms of 'full-house concrete casting' technologies becoming the norm for such construction. Thus, while rehabilitation is a win for basti residents with little or no claim to the right to housing, the medium- to long-term outcomes may often be unsatisfactory. As is well documented, many residents in rehabilitation colonies eventually end up selling or renting out their home, implying that the biggest outcome of rehabilitation is not getting a house, but rather a real-estate asset. Acquiring a house under rehabilitation packages is a useful step on the housing ladder, and must be demanded where possible, but may not be an end unto itself. At the same time, CLRA may find appropriate modalities to ensure that such buildings are maintained well in the medium- to long-term.

Figure 9: Rehabilitation tenements provided by metro project at Naroda; Source: Swastik Harish

41. **Land rights through sites and services schemes**: Assuming that urban land is hardly the big roadblock to extending land rights to working-class households in the city, this author highly recommends that CLRA/MAM take up the idea of rehabilitation through sites and services schemes. These schemes can be routed through Town Planning schemes that have a mandatory reservation of land for low-income housing. It may be argued that such schemes would take people further away from their work location, and this would be valid. However, overcoming some short-term difficulties can very likely lead to massive gains in the medium- to long-term. If families are provided even a small plot (often with a room and toilet) they can use it as per their evolving needs, adapt it to the changing nature of work or growth over time. Eventually, such an asset can become a critical leverage to enter formal financial systems, mortgages and insurance instruments. The outcomes of sites and services schemes have been documented to be extremely positive in the long-term, as compared to rehabilitation in mid- to high-rise tenements. It is interesting to point out that such a colony exists right next to the Arjun Ashram basti. The built form of this housing colony clearly reflects how an earlier generation of low-income households have adapted and grown their housing asset.

Figure 10: The original pattern of house design is visible on the ground floors of this old sites and services scheme near Arjun Ashram basti; Source: Swastik Harish

42. **Land rights through slum upgrading and re-blocking**: Actively promoting slum improvement may also be a strategic option. On lands on which some form of rights are realizable, such as land that belongs to AMC or a state department, it may be surmised that an upgrading or reblocking plan, coupled with use rights (such as a lease/patta or a no-eviction guarantee) would go a long way in enabling better housing provision to migrant communities. Upgrading simply refers to the extension of basic services to bastis as and how they are, with minimal intervention in the housing. The Odisha government has recently undertaken a vast program, the Jaaga mission, in all its urban areas, to provide leases in the form of Land Rights Certificates (LRC) to existing basti dwellers based on certain criteria. This was coupled with provision of basic services through state agencies. Along with, the state government was able to extend house building and improvement grants from the central government (Beneficiary Led Execution under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban) and from state schemes targeting particular socio-economic segments of urban populations. This idea may be further enhanced by 're-blocking' or re-configuring the bastis' physical settlement pattern, to allow for the provision of better planned lanes/streets, open spaces, community amenities, etc. This method may be particularly pertinent when the occupied land belongs to other parties and some shifting of houses is possible. Both these approaches require a certain technical expertise in order to generate viable and feasible plans and documentation, that can then be implemented/administered through state procedures. It may be noted that Ahmedabad is the origin of many upgrading programs, such as the Parivartan program of the 1980s and 90s, implemented through the AMC.
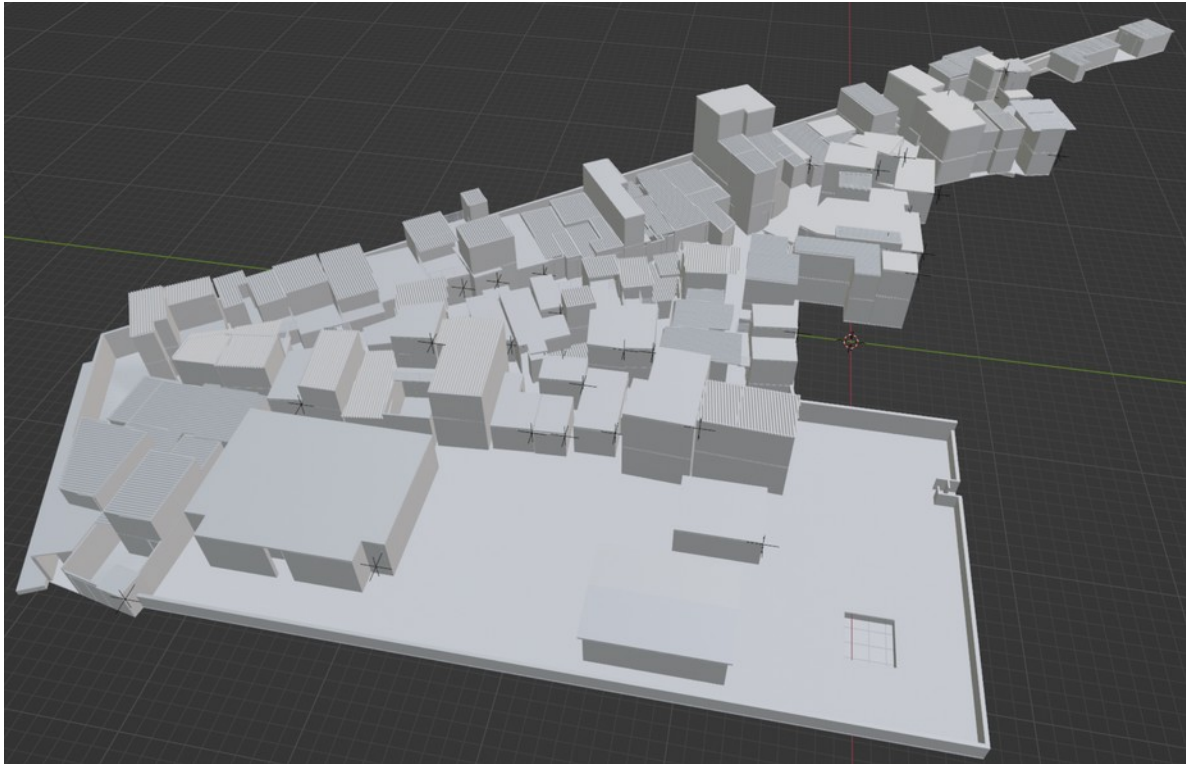
Figure 11: A 3-dimensional Building Information Model (BIM) of a slum in Delhi, that was used to develop project documentation for an upgrade of houses and infrastructure; Source: Swastik Harish

43. **Asking for institutional social rental housing**: One of the few positive outcomes of the lockdown-induced reverse migration was the increasing visibility of rental housing as a viable option for migrant worker households. Rental housing is indeed a feasible and viable choice for migrant workers, as it allows them to stay cheaply and maximize remittance. However, a lot of rental housing in our cities is informal (without any documentation) and not of the best quality. Several landlord-tenant relationships are in fact exploitative. Institutional rental housing has almost never taken off at scale in India due to various reasons, and yet the government has optimistically announced the Affordable Rental Housing Complex Scheme (ARHC) under the PMAY-U. Reports suggest that the scheme seems to be private sector profit-driven and may not be able to achieve its stated aims. At the same time, as the first few ARHC projects are hitting the ground, it is interesting to note that it can be leveraged for better outcomes, if the long-term project planning is thought through well before. This author visited an ARHC site near Thaltej, Ahmedabad and found a fairly well kept and lively colony. The rent is Rs. 5,000 per month, which may not be quite affordable to CLRA/MAM's constituent households, but it can be surmised that this rent can be brought down by coupling the project with some grants, and reducing, if not eliminating the profit motive. A strong set of partnerships will need to be instituted between agencies such as CLRA, MAM, contractors and architects, legal and financial experts, and housing managers, in order to make formal, institutional social rental housing a real option for poor migrant households—a complex but not impossible task, given the in-depth understanding of housing demand that CLRA/MAM already have.

Figure 12: ARHC site with about 1,000 houses implemented and managed by a real-estate company near Thaltej, Ahmedabad; Source: Swastik Harish

44. **Agitating for services, but also through social change**: While the sections above promote the idea of evolving and improving housing conditions of migrant worker households, there is an immediate task at hand—constantly agitating and mobilizing people to demand basic and social services in and around their current settlements. CLRA/MAM has already been effectively doing this for many years, and has recorded several successes. They have developed appropriate modes and modalities of demanding such services, and this effort must continue until better options for housing are found and implemented. One aspect that this author would emphasize on is related to creating a more robust 'social demand' for services such as education. This is because, as described earlier, demand for education within households seems to diminish when girl children are involved or if conditions force the young to work and earn money for the household. CLRA/MAM would do well to push this agenda of education more strongly within the social compact of these communities.

45. **Skilling for future trades**: In order to cater to the (very real) requirement that all family members contribute their labor to earn money, a tactical option would be to connect the young with training and skill building agencies, rather than only formal education systems. This would, possibly in a matter of a few months or a year, enable the young to learn and apply skills in the evolving labor market. For example, some young boys are already pursuing apprenticeship along with (or sometimes in place of) their studies. These developmental ideas could be aligned to up and coming technologies such as e-vehicles repair and operation, e-waste management, etc. It is likely that these upcoming sectors will create new markets that can then absorb the young from these bastis into economically remunerative and future ready professions. This could be achieved, for example, by leveraging Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds and government subsidies in these emerging sectors. Formal education can be conceived of in parallel, or deferred until a state of economic stability is achieved. Even a few successes in pursuing this pathway could have a transformational effect on future generations from these migrant worker households.

46. **Extending fire safety and mitigation measures**: This idea has emerged from a combination of previous work by this author and the fact that fire incidents can wipe out a migrant family's assets in the city. It is interesting to note that when CLRA/MAM conducted a preliminary assessment of damage in financial terms, the average house cost worked out to be Rs. 10,000 or so, and with all the assets, the damage was ascertained in the range of Rs. 25,000. Given this, it would be a fairly economical idea to install fire extinguishers at settlement and cluster level, and train residents in fire drills, on how to fight fires, and to save lives and property. A previous assessment done by this author in another location arrived at a figure of about Rs. 75,000 per 100 houses for such installation and training, or about Rs. 7,500 per house. Both the equipment and the training has to be renewed every year or two. CSR funds may be acquired and leveraged to provide such equipment and training to bastis and their residents, and this simple action may go a long way in safeguarding people's lives, health and assets in the medium- to long-term.

CLRA and MAM's institutional growth and capacity building

47. **Building independence and capacities within and across communities**: One of the things that this author persistently asked while speaking to MAM members from the communities, was whether they independently met to discuss their issues or plan ahead, outside of when called for meetings by CLRA staff. It emerged that this wasn't the case anywhere. It may not be a stretch to imagine that meeting dynamics are somewhat different when CLRA staff are around to guide and lead agendas, as compared to when community members are solely involved. It may therefore be expected that a different set of issues, a different view of issues, and different ways ahead may emerge from self-directed meetings. They may provide certain insights to CLRA/MAM on ways ahead, and help build independent capacity within communities to organize and mobilize. This approach, to deepen independence and agency through smaller scale community meetings and consultations, may be considered by CLRA/MAM. At the same time, the collection of knowledge and insights that already reside within the communities may be encouraged to be expressed and exchanged with other communities in similar conditions. A small collection of collateral may also be developed that can help in this exchange; the suggestion of this author is to enlarge possibilities for inter-community interactions and exchanges, especially with women members. This will become a form of mutual capacity building, and could help align and direct the agenda of CLRA/MAM in the future.

48. **Generational change in CLRA's staff**: It was extremely heartening for this author to see and meet several young people in CLRA/MAM who had recently joined the agencies. The experience that older staff has brought to CLRA/MAM is irreplaceable and unique—and yet, for it to continue to yield the results that it has, it has to be adequately shared and propagated within newer generations of workers and leaders. Newer generations bring new perspectives and skills to the work, and a renewed energy and work ethic. This author understands that over time, as the newer staff get inducted and gain experience, they will take on the direct responsibility of ensuring continued success. In the few days this author was with the team, there seemed to be a very positive energy to the new compact that was developing between staff. While several of the new staff were from social work and legal backgrounds, it may be suggested to involve other skill sets in the work of CLRA. For example, architects and

planners, public policy practitioners, management experts, behavioral and data scientists, etc., that may add another dimension to CLRA and MAM's work and outcomes.

49. **Building internal capacity, focus on 'technical urban language' skills**: Within CLRA/MAM staff, capacity development may be taken up on a stronger footing. One of the areas that CLRA/MAM could do with improvement on is their internal capacity for collecting and managing data (quantitative, qualitative and spatial), analytical ability for dealing with more complex urban datasets, and spatial thinking. Further, if staff are able to acquire the 'language' of the state and its urban administration, they will always stand a better chance of dealing with situations or proactively providing suggestions for the improvement of living conditions of migrant worker households. An understanding of the language of urban policy, urban planning, land management, housing schemes and infrastructure programs, would add a solid layer of useful tools that CLRA/MAM staff can use in their work. CLRA/MAM could include such programs in the next phases of their project with PHF, and find appropriate locations for such capacity building opportunities, that are specifically aimed at the non-profit sector.

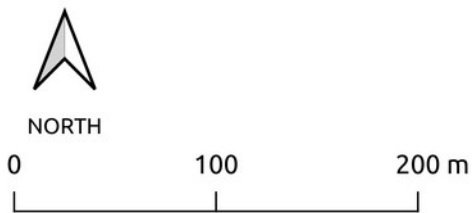### Changing nature of state-migrant-poor relationships

50. **Changing the discourse on development and formalization**: Across, the country, and especially in our cities, there is a strong movement towards 'formalization' of land and peoples. Often, this uses forced and disruptive methods, that are antithetical to the way our cities have organically developed, with blurred land titles and dynamic labor relations. In such a moment, it becomes very important for CLRA/MAM to reflect on the nature of the modes and actions that it has deployed to support its constituent communities. It may well be time to start considering actions that go beyond reactionary, and aim to mold the development discourse itself towards better entitlements for migrant worker communities. To do so, efforts will have to be redirected (or evolved) towards more proactive engagement with the state and its apparatus. In order to do so, the very language of the work will have to adapt, so as to transfer ideas more efficiently and effectively between 'the field' and the state. Frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and Environment, Social and Governance (ESG), for example, would need to be brought in to start aligning actions and strategies in such a way that the state would have to take notice, since these frameworks put the very idea of development and investment at stake. CLRA's network of like-minded and similarly-rooted organizations in Gujarat and Ahmedabad would play a critical role in enabling such a transition, through mutual sharing of experiences, collective bargaining and evolving their capacities.

51. **Decreasing space for left politics**: It has to be admitted that there has been a reduction in the space for left and Ambedkarite politics in the country. What does the future hold for these ideologies? While this is a big question, what is obvious is that the state or the general polity cannot walk away completely from a socialist and welfarist agenda. This needs to be leveraged tactically and strategically. For example, recent efforts to unite migrant databases through technology (e-shram registration) are a positive step towards ensuring continuous support for migrants across source and destination locations. However, implementation, as usual, leaves a lot to be desired. Despite multiple issues with state-led welfare measures, they may be the only large scale leverage available. The question then becomes: how does

one engage meaningfully with state-led measures and leverage them to the maximum extent possible? Again, engagement with the state on their terms, requires a certain capacity to be developed. In this capacity development process, the experiences of the previous years are invaluable data, experiences and insights to draw from. At a strategic level, this means that the position of left politics is fundamentally undergoing a shift, and that agencies such as CLRA and MAM will need to adapt to this new future.

52. **A final thought**: With the support of PHF, CLRA/MAM have successfully managed to build the capacity of residents of the bastis they work in. In terms of shelter, the threat of eviction appears to have come down significantly for a lot of the basti residents. This has given CLRA & MAM the opportunity to pursue further entitlements such as ration and identities, water and sanitation, education and health, etc., efforts that have shown good results as well. The questions that arise are: Has the threat of eviction and alienation from basic entitlements actually receded, or is this an interval, a lull before a storm of 'formalization' and 'planning'? The people here are fighting a combination of political and administrative forces, their own (somewhat better-off) neighbors and even property lobbies. Each of these stakeholders seems to resist the (even peaceful) occupation of lands and urban spaces by CLRA and MAM's constituents, or their claims for urban services. Thus, the central question becomes: who needs or wants these people here, socially, economically and politically; who sees value in according them land and housing rights? A reflexive understanding of the possible answers to this question, and the development of a discursive agenda on this, through consultations and conferences, may further help CLRA and MAM imagine their future trajectories.

Annexes

Annex 1: Maps of select bastis estimating their boundaries

Figure 13: GIS maps of Motera, Fatehwadi, Naroda EWS and Sundervan bastis; Sources: Google Maps (base map), Google datameet (ward boundaries) and Swastik Harish (estimated basti boundaries)

Figure 14: GIS maps of Arjun Ashram, Umiya Hall, Sewage and Nirnay Nagar 1 and 2 bastis; Sources: Google Maps (base map), Google datameet (ward boundaries) and Swastik Harish (estimated basti boundaries)