



Does Gender Sensitivity Permeate Slum Rehabilitation Approach? The Need for Policy Innovation Promoting Urban Inclusivity

K.C Smitha¹ & Barun Dev Pal²

Background

The city of Bengaluru is the capital of Karnataka state, India. The city is spread across an area of 1306 km² (Bengaluru Metropolitan Region) referred to as the Silicon Valley of India, and is one of the fastest-growing cities in India. Since 1949, the city has grown spatially by more than ten times (Sudhira 2008: 119). The city is the fifth-largest urban agglomeration in the country (Narayana 2008: 5) and the city's urban agglomeration is spread over an area of about 151 km² (between the North and South taluks of Bengaluru), with an average population density of 16,399 individuals per square kilometre. As per the latest revision of the UN World Urbanization Prospects, the city of Bengaluru is now (2024) estimated at 14 million (14,008,300) from an estimated population of 12.34 million in its urban area in 2017. Based on the Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) report, population projections for BMA range from 11.8 million to 24.7 million for 2031 (BMRCL 2019). The city registers an economic growth rate of 8.50% and is a destination for world-class infrastructure like housing, education & research, and transportation. Accounting for 98% of the software exports, the economy of Bengaluru registered a contribution of over 36% to the economy of the State of Karnataka.

According to the 2001 Census, the city has become a hub of migrants, with numbering two million (Sudhira 2008: 124). As per the unofficial figures, almost half of Bengaluru's population (44.3 lakh) – a whopping 50% constitutes migrants (Times of India, 2019). The areas of Peenya, Whitefield, Electronic City, and parts of Bommasandra and Jigani are identified as major industrial locations in the city. For better employment and livelihood opportunities, the influx of migrant population to the city has

increased from 6,24,215 in 1971 to 40,27,633 in 2011, wherein 47.7% of the city's population are in-migrants. All the decades except 1981-1991, indicate a high growth of migrants (BMRCL, 2019). The urban poor in Bengaluru approximately account for 20% of the city's residents (Schenk, 2001); however, in two decades, some experts peg the figure between 35% and 45%. Recent studies reveal that nearly one million poor live in the slums of Bengaluru and one-third of the slum dwellers fall below the poverty line (with a monthly income of less than Rs. 2500) (Roy Chowdhary n.d.). The majority of the slum dwellers are employed in the unorganized or informal sector like construction coolies, resulting in illegal encroachments and creation of new slums.

The IT industry was initially concentrated in the south of Bengaluru - Electronic City area and the east - Whitefield area. With these areas getting saturated, the new stretch of Outer Ring Road (ORR) - between Central Silk Board and KR Puram - referred to as the economic growth corridor has been a major attraction for the IT and BT industries. Meanwhile, the city has witnessed a phenomenal growth in vehicular population, leading to congestion and overload in many of its arterial roads and intersections. Over the past three decades, the vehicular population has grown at an average rate of 25% annually. By 2018, a total registered vehicular count of approximately 74 lakh vehicles plied in the Bengaluru Metropolitan Region (BMR), with two-wheelers constituting the highest percentage of vehicular composition. Recently, Bengaluru's total vehicular population reached 1.1 cr in September 2023 (Kidiyoor, 2023). To meet the growing demand for efficient transport services and to ease traffic congestion, the Government of Karnataka constituted the Bengaluru Mass Rapid Transit Limited (BMRTL) in 1994 (see Figure 1).

¹ Assistant Professor, Centre for Political Institutions, Governance and Development (CPIGD), Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru. Email: smitha@isec.ac.in/smithakc.bangalore@gmail.com. (corresponding author).

² Coordinator, Department of Foresight and Policy Modelling, International Food Policy Research Institute, New Delhi. Email: b.debpal@cgiar.org

Objective of the Study

The main objective of the study is to assess and examine the impact on two relocated slums, namely Basaveswaranagar and Jai Bheemanagar affected by the implementation of BMRL metro project in Bengaluru. The purpose is to capture the effect of rehabilitation on women in terms of their socio-economic conditions, livelihood status, and mobility (employment, income mobility, and access to basic amenities) in the city of Bengaluru. The study captures the difference in terms of the 'before and after relocation ' framework by exploring their socio-economic characteristics, livelihood status, and mobility factors.

Data Set and Methodology

Based on the issue raised in the above context, the study explores how gender insensitivity permeates the 'rehabilitation package' mediated through the urban planning process via policies and programmes. The study focused on two slums in Bengaluru city namely, (i) Basaveswaranagar and (ii) Jai Bheemanagar, affected by BMRCL's rehabilitation package. Both the slums were relocated to different geographical locations, i.e., while Jai Bheemanagar was relocated from Sampige Road, Malleswaram to Peenya II Stage in 2010, and Basaveswaranagar slum was relocated from City-Railway station-Magadi Road

to Srigandadakavalu, Magadi Road, in 2009. A total of 102 relocated households were interviewed. The interviews were restricted to only those households with proper eligibility proof such as those who have occupied the dwelling and possess the ownership/registered document. We were able to analyse the impact of the rehabilitation on a particular group of individuals, such as women, with reliability by comparing the two groups of relocated homes. Additionally, a qualitative discussion was held to comprehend the project's origins, overall profile, and effects of relocation.

Key Findings

Socio-Economic Profile

A majority of households in both slums— Magadi Road and Peenya II Stage—share a common geographical origin with Karnataka. However, Tamil Nadu is the origin of more than 32% (Peenya II stage) and 22% (Magadi Road) respectively, of these households. The mother tongue of the majority of households in both slums is Tamil. The data indicates that Hindus make up the majority of households in both slums. In other words, Hindus make up over 90% of the households in both slums. A majority of households in both slums belong to Scheduled Caste (78% in Magadi Road and 90% in Peenya II stage). Following them, are the Scheduled Tribe both in Magadi Road and in Peenya II Stage. From our pool of respondents, 46% are female and 36% are male, in the households from Magadi Road. Approximately 54% at Peenya II stage were male, while 46% were female.

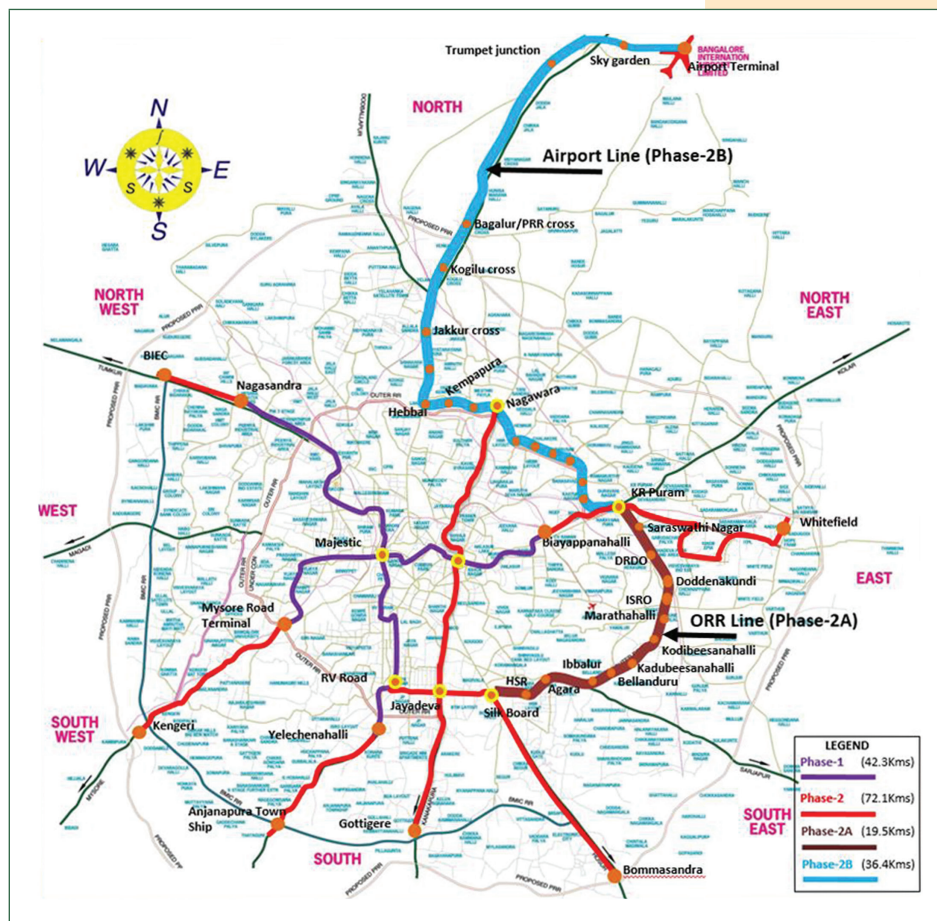
Distribution of Households by Age and Gender

Employment status and population in each of age groups are directly correlated, with the female population. It can be deduced that the majority of employed household members may fall into the age group of 19-45 years.

Education

One of the factors influencing job prospects and income mobility is education, which helps to enhance households living standards, especially in the slums. Education is an enabling factor or catalyst for women's agency. In Srigandadakavalu, Magadi Road, the majority of female members are illiterate (almost 23%) compared to male members (only 11%). In the same way, somewhat fewer women than men (37%

Figure 1: Comprehensive Metro Rail Network in Bengaluru



Source: BMRCL (2019)

of men and almost 34% of women) have completed high school education. However, the percentage of women with diplomas is higher (almost 16%) as compared to male (only 10%). Similarly, it can be noted that at Peenya II stage, females who are illiterate (38%) are more as compared to males (22%). However, women are more likely than men (11% and 5%, respectively) to hold higher-level degrees such as a diploma and graduate.

Employment and Occupational Mobility

Employment can be characterised as a manifestation of women's agency- and the benefits accrued as a result of income and expenditure. At Srigandadakavalu, Magadi Road, the percentage of Women employed after resettlement reduced (from 51% to 49%) as against the percentage of employed men, which has increased slightly (from 48% to 52%) after resettlement. While at Peenya II stage, women employed after resettlement are more (54%) as compared to those employed during pre-settlement (46%).

During Post-resettlement, at Magadi Road, the majority of employed women (42%) belong to the younger age group of 31-45 years, which is followed by nearly 29% from the age group of 20-30 years. After resettlement, there has been a significant increase in employed women aged 20-30 years (from 13% to 29%). However, as the age progresses, the percentage of women who are employed has drastically reduced from nearly 32% to a mere 24% in the age group of 46-60 years.

A similar effect can be observed among those women aged 61 years and above (reduced from nearly 11% to 5%). At the Peenya II stage, after relocation, there is a slight increase in employed women aged between 20-30 years (nearly 30% to 33%) and 31-45 years (36% and 37%). However, there has been a drastic reduction in the percentage of employed women belonging to the upper age group of 46-60 years (from nearly 26% to a mere 16%).

Our findings demonstrate that the occupational mobility of women has certainly been impacted by "rehabilitation" to a newer region. Following the move, the percentage of men who work mostly in the informal sector, especially in unskilled jobs, has drastically decreased (from around 62% to 55%). Conversely, there has been a rise in the number of men working in "semi skilled and skilled" jobs (from 8.77 to almost 11% and 9.65 to nearly 17%, respectively). Conversely, after resettlement, the percentage of women working in unskilled employment decreased (from 84% to 76%). Similar, after relocation, the percentage of those working in "skilled" jobs increased significantly (from 2% to nearly 8%).

In both the relocated slums, though the majority of women are employed in casual jobs or the unorganised sector, which is

often referred to as urban informal sector, there is a differential response to dealing with relocation. On close observation one may find that at Srigandadakavalu, Magadi Road, the percentage of women employed in unskilled jobs has drastically reduced (from 68% to 53%) as against at Peenya II stage, where the percentage of women in unskilled jobs has slightly changed (from 96% to 93%), but has not significantly reduced. This demonstrates that despite spatial relocation impacting families, in general, women have made adjustments and have demonstrated a willingness to continue in the same jobs.

Women have relatively increased (24% to 29%) engaging in semi-skilled jobs at Magadi Road as against those women who have reduced (from 4% to 1.85%) at Peenya II Stage. However, women in vocational jobs have increased at both Magadi Road and Peenya II Stage (2.63% and 3.70%, respectively). Similarly, women employed in skilled jobs have significantly increased (from 5% to nearly 16%) at Magadi Road, and their presence has been felt (nearly 2%) at the Peenya II Stage.

Income Mobility by Gender

There is a noticeable decline in the proportion of men and women earning below Rs. 2500 after-rehabilitation. The findings suggest that the changes rendered by the rehabilitation process have less impact on a few women (especially those educated and the second generation) who earn more, implying they can assert themselves, and thereby have agency.

Firstly, as many members are less educated or illiterate and work in casual or daily wage occupations, the rehabilitation process has undoubtedly disrupted their employment opportunities, and thereby stunned their income mobility and control over the resources. Secondly, the "resettlement/rehabilitation" process has a less disruptive effect on job status as an individual's income increases due to education and skill, which helps support upward income mobility and thereby has a positive impact on women's agency. This demonstrates that those with better incomes and steady employment tend to move into more permanent forms and long-term types of housing.

Access to Basic Amenities

Following rehabilitation, residents of both slums have enjoyed the security of tenancy and access to basic amenities like electricity, water, and sanitary facilities (like individual toilets, drainage, and sewerage), but at the expense of losing their jobs and being economically unstable. The rapid decline in access to social services like health, education, and transportation is another concerning issue. The primary issue is the location of the resettlement complex, as well as the distance individuals must travel to the workplace, market, education, and receive emergency services and public services, such as health care.

Women in Bengaluru Metropolis after Rehabilitation

1. Women suffer from 'dual vulnerability' in the form of illiteracy and being unskilled. Dislocation to newer and outer areas can lead to a loss of income, exacerbating the financial difficulties faced by women. As a result, listing the economic activities of women in the development and implementation of resettlement plans is crucial.
2. Within the informal economy, women are trapped in the 'hierarchy of informal jobs and income', which is disproportionately represented in the lowest segments of the labour force with low-paid and insecure jobs. The situation is further accentuated by gender segmentation of informal employment, further leading to the gender gap in average income, inevitably trapping them in perpetual poverty.
3. The Resettlement and Relocation (R&R) packages essentially imply geographical or physical/spatial relocation from one place to another. Such packages conveniently ignore the aftermath of resettlement, like discontinuities and multiple disabilities faced by the slum dwellers in general, and the women in particular, who engage in multiple jobs at their previous core city location. Women, therefore, face the vulnerability of spatial location in terms of distance to travel, time spent, and cost incurred to travel long distances for work. As distance and expenditure of travel increases, older women invariably discontinue their jobs, further negating their contribution to the household income and limiting their agency.

Policy Recommendations

- a. Attention must be paid to ensure women's legal land rights against forced evictions, thereby strengthening their agency. The need for gender analysis to determine site selection, location, suitability of area, and access and control over the resources needs to be prioritised.
- b. Attention must be paid to the implementation of gender-sensitive planning and consistent policies addressing livelihood issues, and socio-economic concerns of displaced and rehabilitated households in general and women in particular. Promoting employment and skill development opportunities in the vicinity of rehabilitated slums through effective governance policy intervention is needed.
- c. Besides, gender-responsive urban infrastructure facilitating effective and affordable public transport facilities for far-

flung settlements like Magadi Road (Srigandadakavalu) would certainly enable the households and women, in particular, to access varied employment opportunities outside their locality, contributing to their upward income mobility and improve the quality of living.

- d. Though the city has undergone rapid urban transformation induced by the implementation of huge infrastructure projects like metro-rail, an inescapable truth is that the process of rehabilitation lacks effective gender analysis, impacting urban development, governance, and planning. A gender perspective embedded into urban governance and development is imperative for an inclusive city.

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