

Poverty, inequality, and violence in urban India: Toward more inclusive urban planning

Research focus

As more people move to cities in search of better lives, India's poor are competing for scarcer resources. As a result, they often face poverty, violence, and inequality. Researchers will assess whether inclusive urban planning and governance can reduce vulnerabilities in four Indian cities.

The challenge

Economic growth in India is enticing more and more people to move to cities where their choices are limited. They are forced to compete for limited resources such as land, water, and financing. Many turn to the informal sector for shelter, jobs, and services, including protection. The growing number of people living in illegal slums risk being evicted from their homes and losing their jobs as the market value of the land they inhabit increases.

The number of Indians negatively affected by rapid, unplanned urbanization is staggering. According to recent data, 377 million Indians live in cities and 93 million live in slums. As state institutions stop delivering services and providing security to informal settlements, India's urban poor face more violence, inequality, and poverty than before the economic boom began.

The research

This research will investigate if — and how — urban planning interventions and governance can help reduce urban tensions, conflicts, inequalities, and violence in the Indian cities of Delhi, Patna, Ahmedabad, and Guwahati. The project will study the urban poor's survival strategies and their efforts to push for more appropriate urban planning solutions. In this way, the research team will assess how urban planning could lead to more inclusive and safer cities in India.

The project seeks to:

- assess the extent of inequality and deprivation in the cities under study through an urban planning lens
- analyze the different triggers of violence, including economic, social, and behavioural factors
- assess the relationship between urban planning mechanisms and inequality and deprivation in Indian cities
- assess how different social groups perceive violence, and how men and women experience it differently.

Expected outcomes

Expected project outputs include:

- detailed city profiles and background papers for the four cities under study
- peer-reviewed journal articles and a series of policy briefs
- a published book detailing the main findings from the case studies
- a two-week course on participatory research methods in urban planning and governance.

A number of workshops, training sessions, and conferences are planned for stakeholders, and masters and doctoral students. In addition, the project will produce a documentary film, publish features in local and national newspapers, and create a website.

LEAD RESEARCHERS

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Funding: CA\$498,400
Duration: April 2013 to April 2016



Safe and Inclusive Cities (SAIC) is a global research program that aims to document the links between urban violence, poverty, and inequality. Jointly funded by Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), SAIC is working with experts from around the world to identify what works — and what doesn't — to reduce violence in urban centres.

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