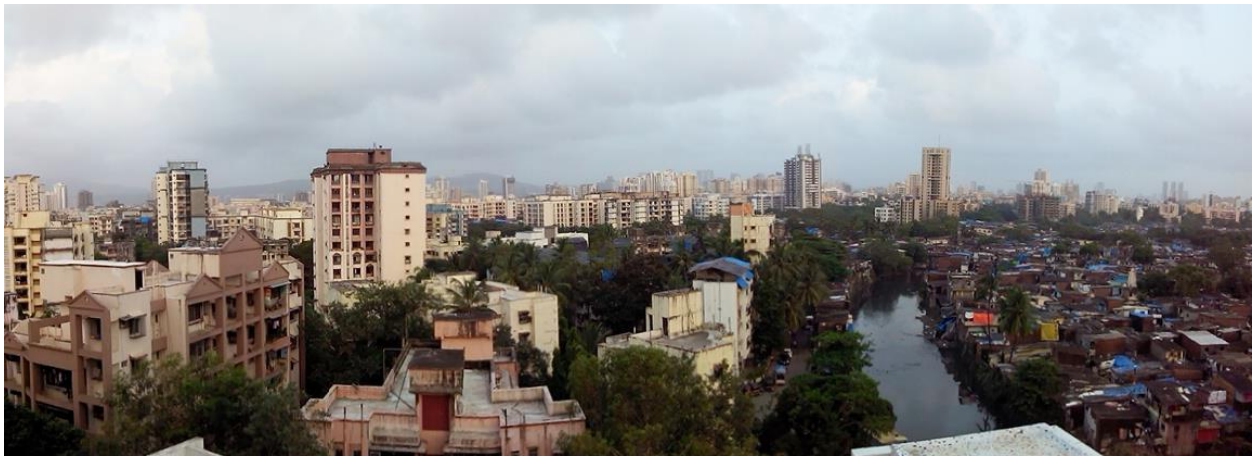


THE IMPACTS OF URBAN RESETTLEMENT ON CHILDREN

**A Case Study on the Mumbai Urban Transport Project,
funded in part by the International Development Association**



Mumbai skyline

“With the resettlement of about 10,000 households encroaching along railway tracks, the project already enabled important improvements in the rail system, resulting in major benefits for the city by reducing the travel time of hundreds of thousands of rail passengers by more than 5 minutes in average and by increasing the number of trains during the peak hours by about 7 per cent.” –Taken from a description of MUTP on the World Bank’s website.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP) was purportedly designed to “improve the quality of life” for the people of Mumbai by “fostering the development of an efficient and sustainable urban transport system.”¹ Unfortunately, the project has had disastrous effects for many of the people—and specifically the children—in surrounding communities. Rather than improving their quality of life, many were further impoverished when they were forced to leave their homes to make way for the construction of the project. For the children in these communities, this meant years deprived of basic services that are key to their healthy development, including education, adequate nutrition, and safe spaces to play.

The devastating impacts in this case were in large part caused by a lack of attention to the needs and concerns of displaced children in the design and implementation of the resettlement component of the project. Although the World Bank ultimately suspended funding for this project and later revised its Involuntary Resettlement Policy, many of the negative impacts of the project on children—missed time in school, increased rates of disease, etc.—are irreversible and will ultimately undermine the Bank’s efforts to facilitate development in Mumbai.

Through its unprecedented safeguards review, the World Bank has an opportunity to finally address critical gaps in O.P. 4.12, as well as other relevant safeguard policies, to make their projects more responsive to the needs of children—thereby making their development efforts more effective. As long as children are overlooked by the Bank in the design and implementation of so many of its investment lending projects, its goal to end extreme poverty by 2030 will very likely never be realized.

¹ World Bank, Project Information Document: Mumbai Urban Transport Project, p. 4 (January 16, 2002).

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BACKGROUND

The Government of Maharashtra (GOM) appointed a task force in 1995 to prepare a policy framework for the resettlement and rehabilitation of persons affected by MUTP. Based on the recommendations of the committee, GOM issued a resolution adopting the policy in 1997, which was later amended to incorporate changes suggested by the World Bank to bring the policy in line with its safeguard policy on involuntary resettlement (then known as O.D. 4.30). The modified version of the resettlement and rehabilitation (R&R) policy for MUTP was reviewed and endorsed by the Bank in February, 2000. The policy included objectives such as minimizing resettlement by exploring viable alternatives, according formal housing rights to project affected households (PAHs), and improving environmental health and hygiene of PAHs. In 2002, the Bank agreed to provide US\$ 463 million as an IBRD loan to finance about 49% of the project cost and an IDA credit of approximately US\$ 79 million to finance the R&R component of the Project.²

In 2004, an Inspection Panel complaint was filed alleging violations of the R&R policy. The Panel found that the policy and its implementation failed to meet the requirements of O.D. 4.30, and that little attention had been paid to the provision of social services on the resettlement sites, including schools, medical facilities, and religious sites.

The World Bank subsequently suspended funding to the roads and resettlement components of the project in 2006, and an Action Plan was prepared by World Bank Management to address the concerns and issues raised by the Panel. The Third Progress Report on Implementation of the Action Plan, completed in 2009, indicates that a number of steps have been taken including building schools at the resettlement sites, and improving the water supply. Nevertheless, resettled children went years without schools and other basic services, and the situation remains dire for many of them. Thus, modest improvements made since the 2006 Action Plan provide little consolation to the children that missed out on educational opportunities or suffered other devastating and irreversible effects of deprivation during their formative years.

This study was undertaken to assess the impacts of MUTP on children. A survey was used to gauge the impacts on children from the PAHs residing at 8 R&R Sites. In total, 107 children were interviewed, and while this does not form a representative sample of all of the children affected by MUTP, the study expresses the views of many of the children that were resettled. It also corroborates much of the earlier research on the detrimental effects of the project.

² The 2002 MUTP Resettlement Action Plan, available on the Bank's website, mentions children only with respect to demographic information, it does not reference the specific needs of children, create policy on how to prevent adverse impacts on children, or contain measures to ensure that the resettlement sites are child friendly.

IMPACTS

According to the World Bank’s own research, “children and adolescents are uniquely vulnerable to even short periods of deprivation, which can have lifelong and intergenerational effects.”³ Nevertheless many children among the thousands resettled by MUTP were forced to move to transit camps and resettlement sites where they have been deprived of adequate nutrition and educational opportunities, and exposed to disease and violence. Their parents—uprooted from their homes and livelihoods—continue to face higher school fees and longer commutes to obtain employment. More than half of the parents surveyed (57%) feel unable to provide the same quality of care for their children as prior to resettlement.

As a result of this project, many children never had the opportunity to realize their fundamental rights of access to education and healthcare—key services that have been repeatedly identified as necessary for ending the cycle of poverty. Thus, rather than “fostering development,” this project has instead further entrenched the devastating cycle of poverty in Mumbai.

Access to Education

The link between poverty and lack of access to education is well accepted. According to UNICEF, “exclusion from education tends to be transmitted from one generation to another and contributes to the perpetuation of poverty.”⁴ The World Bank has also documented consequences of lost opportunities for education and healthy development that make children likely to grow into poor and deprived adults that pass poverty onto their own children.⁵ The problems associated with a loss of access to education can be compounded for girl children and children with disabilities. When girls face “poverty, the denial of the right to education and gender discrimination,” together they can be trapped in “a downward spiral of denied rights and poverty.”⁶

As a result of the resettlement component of MUTP, access to education for many children was seriously threatened. Many PAHs were resettled in Mumbai’s eastern suburbs, following a disturbing trend of shifting slums from high value land to low value land in the east. Because no schools existed on the R&R sites at the time of resettlement, children were forced to attend the closest school to the new settlement or to make the long commute to their original school. The vast majority (66%) of the children surveyed were forced to change schools after relocation, even though many families felt that those available were worse compared to their previous schools.⁷ Almost all parents (90%) complained of increased expenditures on children’s education, and private schools—established between 4 and 5 years after relocation—were too expensive for most families.

Because of the lack of affordable, quality options for schooling at the R&R sites, many children were forced to travel long distances to their former schools. The increased distance led to corresponding

³ World Bank and UNICEF, *Integrating a Child Focus into Poverty and Social Impact Analysis*, p. 6 (2011).

⁴ Katarina Tomasevski, *Manual on Rights-Based Education*, p. 28 (UNESCO 2004).

⁵ World Bank and UNICEF, p. 6

⁶ *Id.* at 51.

⁷ The percentages stated here apply only to the 107 children interviewed in 2013 for this study. While this does not represent all children resettled by MUTP, it nevertheless indicates the project resulted in significant, negative impacts for—at the very least—dozens of children.

increases in transportation costs, missed time in school and some children dropping out of school. To travel such long distances from home to school most families must spend about 10% of their monthly income on just one child. An increase in distance also leads to increased danger for children commuting to school. Many children have to cross highways or railway tracks. Some have missed significant time in school due to these hardships. When they do make it to school, many arrive late, such as Rajan Aiyer's two sons who failed their annual examinations last year because they had trouble being on time to school, which was more than a kilometer away from their R&R site. Others experience fatigue during the day due to travelling.

Although schools were later built at some of the sites, and a new directive in 2007 requires schools to be built in settlements with over 5,000 families, many families have already made the difficult choice to discontinue the education of their children. Children have been pushed into the labor force or forced to increase their working hours to provide for their education.⁸ Others dropped out of school to join the labor force in order to assist in contributing to the family income and to avoid having to spend time alone at home.⁹

These impacts have perhaps been hardest on girl children and children with disabilities. Some girls have been forced to marry at a young age, so that their families had one less mouth to feed. Similarly, there were reported cases of children with disabilities that had to stop going to school as the R&R sites had no schooling facilities for children with special needs in the near vicinity. For children with physical disabilities, even if a school is only 1 km away, the distance can be too far to walk and many of them cannot afford to travel any other way.

Physical and Emotional Health

In addition to quality, accessible education, children must have access to health services, good nutrition, and recreational time in order to promote their physical, emotional and intellectual development. Inadequate nutrition or malnutrition can cause irreparable damage to a child's developing brain and body, leading to physical and intellectual disabilities as well as difficulties in becoming a productive member of society.¹⁰ According to the World Bank's own research, children and adolescents are uniquely vulnerable to even short periods of deprivation, which can have lifelong and intergenerational effects.¹¹

In its 2005 report, the Inspection Panel noted the absence of health facilities at the R&R sites. In 2013, 67% of the people surveyed still complained of the absence of health facilities. For the people of Majas, the closest hospital is over 3km away. In both Lallubhai Compound and Anik, a study by TISS in 2008 noted that there was not a single government dispensary or medical shop in the compound. Residents had to go to Shatabdi hospital by auto-rickshaw which costs \$US .50 each way. For families living on only a few dollars a day, this is a major expense, causing them to be less likely to seek treatment in the event of an emergency.

⁸ J. Gupta, *Security Provision in Slum Re-Settlement Schemes in Mumbai: A Case Study of the Lallubhai Compound Settlement, Mankhurd* (2011).

⁹ Marina Joseph, *Women's Struggles for Livelihood in the Context of Urban Poverty & Displacement*. MA Dissertation (2011).

¹⁰ UNICEF, *Realising Children's Rights to Adequate Nutrition through National Legislative Reform*, p. 1 (2008).

¹¹ World Bank and UNICEF, *supra* note 3, p. 6.

Even where health facilities are available, most people feel that the facilities have either worsened or were the same as those available to them before resettlement. Despite the existence of some Integrated Child Development Service (ICDS) centers at resettlement sites, meant to improve the health of children, children continue to fall ill from malnutrition and other ailments caused by the deplorable conditions of the resettlement sites. A Doctors For You (DFY) report from 2011 indicated that 56 children at the Natwar Parikh Compound were malnourished and many were in Grade II & III (moderate to severe) malnutrition.

Perhaps as a result of scarce health facilities, preventive health care is also lacking at the R&R sites. According to the above cited DFY survey there were 118 pregnant women in the compound, but only 53 had registered their name with any government hospital for prenatal care. Many children at the Natwar Parikh Compound were also found to be unimmunized.

The lack of access to other basic services such as water and sanitation has also caused harm to the health of many children. Residents of Lallubhai Compound, Indian Oil Nagar & Vashi Naka have reported large numbers of children falling ill due to the poor quality of water. Similarly, 73% of children surveyed responded that the cleanliness of the water was worse than before. Sewage and garbage disposal has also been cited as one of the biggest problems in all of the colonies. There is no regular pick up or clean up from these colonies, and spaces between buildings continue to be dirty and sewage lines lay open where mosquitoes breed. Many of the common ailments that residents suffer from—including malaria and dengue—can be attributed to pollution, proximity to dumping grounds, poor waste management and sanitation, and poor water quality.¹²

The general design and basic planning of the sites has also had impacts on the physical health and safety of children, as well as their emotional and social well-being.¹³ The R&R sites were designed in such a way that large numbers of buildings are placed very close together, and many do not have any direct access to either sun light or air. Large numbers of families are concentrated in very small areas. Similar designs have been rejected in other places, and research has shown that overcrowding can lead to serious consequences for children including increased stress, behavioral difficulties in school, poor academic achievement, elevated blood pressure and impaired relationships with parents.¹⁴

The overall development of the children at the R&R sites has also suffered because of the lack of playgrounds or other recreational facilities. “Play” has been identified as “fundamental to children’s development” and important for developing social behavior and the capacity for learning—particularly early in life.¹⁵ Almost three quarters of the children surveyed discussed the absence of playgrounds in the R&R sites. The remaining children that did have a playground nearby, stated they were often unable to play there because of the lack of cleanliness, and the use of playgrounds for other purposes. A 2008 report

¹² See Tata Institute of Social Sciences *Impact Assessment of Resettlement Implementations Under Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP)* (2008); Marina Joseph, *supra* note 9.

¹³ S. Bartlett, *Children's experience of the physical environment in poor urban settlements and the implications for policy, planning and practice* (1999).

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ *Id.*

on the Mankurd site notes that the only playground was used for defecation because there were no public toilets.

Many of the children were also traumatized by the resettlement process itself. Over three quarters of the children surveyed had watched their homes being demolished, and most of them said this gave them bad memories.

Vulnerability to Violence

The relocation process itself can be protracted and extremely violent. In addition, the relocation sites often become “sites of concentrated violence, vulnerability and crime.”¹⁶ Men and women experience involuntary resettlement differently, particularly where discrimination against women is common, yet those responsible for the resettlement process often implement policies that are gender-blind. Thus, similar to the consequences associated with the lack of access to education, violence associated with involuntary resettlement can lead to the intergenerational transfer of vulnerability and poverty—particularly for women and girl children.

In this case, many PAPs expressed concerns for their physical safety and security because of the design and layout of the sites and the associated non-cognizable and petty crime. Youth gangs who engage in theft and drug abuse are ubiquitous.

Women in particular experience insecurity. They often face sexual harassment, molestation, and even rape on unlit or poorly lit roads. Some women also reported cases of teasing, gang fights, rampant robbery and alcohol induced brawls. Due to such instances of violence, women find it difficult to leave their children alone at home and opted instead to put their daughters to work. However, even those young girls, forced to withdraw from school, often can only access low paying jobs where they face similar security risks to their mothers.¹⁷

WORLD BANK’S RESPONSE

Although the World Bank suspended funding to this project in 2006, the Bank’s current view of the project, and the R&R component generally, is surprisingly positive. On its website, the Bank indicates the MUTP resettlement process has set the standard for projects everywhere, stating that: “[t]he project has become a worldwide example of urban resettlement on a mega scale.”¹⁸ In its response to this study the Bank expounds upon the benefits provided to the former “slum dwellers” as a result of the R&R process stating that, “MUTP...provided people with secure tenure in safer communities, contributing to financial security, social confidence, and a cultural network, away from the informal systems of regulation and control in the slums” and that “[e]vidence from resettlement impact assessments carried out (TISS, 2008) points toward an overall improvement in the living conditions of resettled people as a result of several

¹⁶ J Gupte, *supra* note 8.

¹⁷ Marina Joseph, *supra* note 9.

¹⁸ World Bank, *Urban Resettlement: Mumbai Urban Transport Project*, <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/SOUTHASIAEXT/0,,contentMDK:23246786~menuPK:158844~pagePK:2865106~piPK:2865128~theSitePK:223547,00.html>.

measures taken during project implementation.” Yet, the “measures” cited by the Bank include school buses that were provided in 2005-06—four or five years after some people were resettled; day care centers run by NGOs at some R&R sites—largely absent or inadequate at many of the sites; the commitment that future sites would have schools of their own if the population exceeded 5,000—a largely empty promise as few resettlement sites reach this size; and the provision of ICDS centers to improve child nutrition levels—of which there are far too few, leaving many children dangerously malnourished.

In addition to the “measures” the Bank cites as evidence of improvement in the lives of former “slum-dwellers,” the Bank provides several excuses for the poor conditions at the R&R sites which can be summed up in their own statement: “Overall, resettlement sites offer a better environment than the slums.” To support this statement, the Bank offers examples including the improved access to water and sanitation as compared to slum conditions, expanded passage space and secure housing. Yet, slight improvements in slum life cannot possibly be expected to provide PAPs—particularly children—with a clear path out of poverty; neither can these improvements compensate for the other adverse impacts of the project on children, such as reduced access to education and increased rates of violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Despite the Bank’s stated goal of eradicating extreme poverty, it continues to engage in projects with major resettlement components without assessing the potential impacts on children. In this case the Bank caused devastatingly long periods of deprivation in order to achieve “major benefits” for the city such as “reduc[ing] the travel time of hundreds of thousands of rail passengers by more than 5 minutes.” Prioritizing such miniscule benefits to commuters over the needs of thousands of children clearly contradicts its mission, and instead perpetuates the cycle of poverty in Mumbai.

To avoid deprivations similar to those that took place at the R&R sites associated with MUTP, the World Bank should adopt safeguard policies that not only properly assess and mitigate potential impacts on children, but also ensure that displaced children do not lose access to vital services. Specifically, the Bank should include in the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment safeguard policy a requirement to specifically assess the unique impacts of the project on children. Such an assessment should examine the potential for the project to negatively impact the lives and development of children both directly and indirectly. The Involuntary Resettlement policy should also include specific measures requiring that resettlement sites are child friendly with access to schools, health care facilities, safe spaces for play, and other necessary services assured.

The safeguards review is an opportunity for the Bank to heed its own advice when it comes to avoiding deprivations in childhood and finally adopt policies that will encourage investment in children and others vulnerable to the effects of poverty, thereby furthering their goals for poverty eradication.