

# **Human Right to Shelter: The Political Economy of Sustainable Housing in Urban India**

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## **Abstract**

The highly-unbalanced nature of growth of India's cities, is infamously termed as being messy, hidden and exclusionary. With rapidly increasing urbanization (natural growth and area extension) and increase in migration, access to shelter has been recognized as one of the foremost human need. Even the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (to which India is a signatory) explicitly mentions shelter as a human right as well in the Goal 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations and the New Urban Agenda of UN-HABITAT.

Amid a rise in the number of government schemes and programs for ensuring affordable housing to all, this paper would study the various challenges in the governance that have had negative repercussions upon the urban population, and inhibited the overall prosperity of India.

The rationale behind undertaking a political economy approach to housing is to understand the nuances of the right to housing in urban sprawls across India, especially for the poor and marginalized. Its significance becomes more embossed due to the pressing issues of temporary houses, obsolete conditions, homelessness and need for shelter camps, affordability and urgency of an inclusive approach in the delivery of basic amenities to every household. It would also discuss the need for policy intervention amid rising homelessness, vacant houses and non-standardized conditions of rental housing that have massive security considerations for children, women, students and the elderly. A discussion on the housing situation is pertinent because it reflects uneven and parched development taking place in the developing world. India is a prime example of this phenomenon, and understanding the challenge while paving the way forward could yield to implementable lessons in the third world.

It would underscore the fact that overlapping objectives of sustainable economic development and political decision-making as well as the processes of implementation or opposition of relevant public policy play a vital role in ensuring the access to shelter to the hitherto deprived.

The proposed paper would adopt a qualitative and quantitative research methodology. To ensure authenticity, the analysis would be based on the database of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India, and Sustainable Development Goals Index for the years 2016, 2017 and 2018 would be compared with the statistics from the city governments. This would foster a realistic appraisal of the policy, planning and implementation, as well as the socio-economic, political, legal and environmental challenges. It would provide a way forward to guarantee decent sustainable shelter and standard of living as a fundamental human right and in achieving the SDG 11 in a time bound manner.