

# Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission, India

## Organisation implementing the project

This initiative is led by the Housing and Urban Development Department of the Government of Odisha, which is responsible for planned and inclusive growth of urban areas, including slums. They achieve this by building local institutions and ensuring adequate infrastructure, amenities and services to citizens through Urban Local Bodies (governance of towns, cities and metropolitan areas) and government agencies.

## Project Description

The Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission (OLHM) project is being implemented across all 114 urban areas in 30 districts of the eastern state of Odisha in India - this incorporates 2,919 slums. It aims to empower slum dwellers by providing security of land tenure and accessibility to a liveable habitat. It assigns land rights to eligible slum dwellers and then - through a community-led approach - organises the redevelopment, rehabilitation and upgrading of slums.

Before implementing the project, in 2017 the Odisha Government passed The Odisha Land Rights to Slum Dwellers Act - the first such Act to be implemented in India. It has two interlinked objectives: to provide tenure security to slum dwellers against the constant threat of eviction or demolition; and to create a legal base for improving the liveability of slum dwellings.

The OLHM has five components:

- 1 - Appraisals of slum settlements to understand the living conditions and issues faced.
- 2 - Participatory planning to improve the living environment.
- 3 - Improvement of basic services.
- 4 - Protection and development of communal facilities.
- 5 - Enhancement of social and economic infrastructure.

The project started in October 2017 and is ongoing. Within the first 18 months it has achieved:

- 1,725 slums mapped through drone aerial surveys;
- 15,000 homes built;
- 1,725 Slum Dwellers Associations formed;
- 147,000 households surveyed; and
- 51,041 family land rights granted.

The implementation of the project in the 114 urban areas will involve:

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- 109 medium and small towns - land rights to 206,000 families in 1,725 slums (927 tenable slums on an 'in-situ' basis and 798 untenable slums involving relocation) benefiting 1 million people; and
  - 5 large towns - 'Right to Dwelling Units' for 196,000 families (0.8 million people) in 1,194 slums, providing protection from possible eviction. This will involve the government facilitating the construction of affordable housing complexes through a public/private partnership on government land, where families will be provided with the dwelling units.

Throughout the process of implementation, some land has been reclassified from 'untenable' to 'tenable' - people living on land legally classed as untenable could never be granted land rights.

In addition, interventions such as physical and social infrastructure, skills development and livelihood support are being implemented in all 114 Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) which will, on completion, impact the lives of the 1.8 million population by improving their living standards.

The target for completion of the entire project is 2021 - 2023, depending on availability of funds for the infrastructure upgrading. The project will continue until all objectives are achieved.

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### **Aims and Objectives**

The main purpose of the project is to secure land rights and transform all slums in Odisha by:

- granting land rights to all households living in slums in all urban areas in Odisha;
- transforming living conditions with basic services, amenities and infrastructure;
- enabling households who have obtained land rights to improve their housing; and
- including beneficiaries through participatory planning and budgeting processes, so slum dwellers can participate in making plans for their settlements.

It aims to benefit every landless person who occupies land in a slum in municipalities (medium sized towns) and Notified Area Councils (small towns) by granting land rights. Any person who was occupying land on 10 August 2017 is eligible (the date of notification of the Act). Any Government or related agencies-issued document is taken as proof of stay in the slum.

On completion the project will cover the entire state of Odisha.

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### **Context**

In India approximately half of urban households are landless. The problem is particularly acute among certain groups including women, and some castes and tribes.

Odisha state covers an area of approximately 156,000 square km and has a population of over 41.9 million people. There has been significant population growth of 27% in urban areas over the last decade, mainly due to the migration of low-income people from rural to urban areas in search of better opportunities. Roughly one-in-four (23%) of the urban population (500,000 households) live in slums without any security of tenure. Without this, people are excluded from basic services including

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enrolling children in schools, finding work, opening a bank account, and a range of government benefits including caste/community certificates (which provide access to certain government schemes). The rapid growth of India's cities, combined with unclear land ownership has triggered legal disputes, conflicts and mass evictions.

An analysis of living conditions in the slums of Odisha revealed a vicious cycle of insecure tenure linked to lack of investment in housing, poor access to basic services, and exclusion from urban infrastructure and amenities - accentuating the poverty and marginalisation of households.

Despite a number of legislative efforts over the past few decades the state had not previously been able to make significant progress in reforming land tenure due to weak administration capabilities and a lack of updated land records. The ULBs have no authority to resolve land issues and are therefore unable to upgrade infrastructure and facilities. The project was developed by the Odisha Government as a major policy shift in the treatment of slum dwellers - it seeks to settle people on the land they currently occupy rather than seeing them as 'encroachers'. It also recognises the significant contribution of slum dwellers to the economy and to future growth by ensuring inclusive development for all residents of Odisha.

### Key Features

Implementation of the Act involves a unique combination of state-of-the-art technology (such as quadcopter drones to prepare high-resolution maps of slums), with participatory and community mobilisation approaches. Communities are involved in mapping, conducting door-to-door surveys, stickering and numbering of dwellings, and local decision-making.

At the state level the Principal Secretary of the Housing and Urban Development Department acts as Executive Chairman of the project. The state plays a facilitative role with the involvement of three technical agencies, 26 Community-Based Organisations (CBOs) and more than 600 field facilitators. The government also partners with [Tata Trusts](#), who provided technical support for the project and introduced global best practices by including organisations such as [Norman Foster Foundation](#), [Omidyar Network](#) and [Cadasta](#) - these provided support for slum mapping, online data collection and data digitisation.

The inclusion of a range of organisations has enabled an initially government-led initiative to build on extensive knowledge and experience of CBOs and to ensure a community-centric approach. They have also laid the foundations for long-term community empowerment through the development of Slum Dwellers Associations (SDAs) in each area they work in. The inclusion of large numbers of groups has helped ensure transparency of the process and significantly increased the speed of implementation. SDAs are involved in the entire process to ensure local ownership and they make the final application for land rights within the community. Women and community leaders were encouraged to play a lead role.

Using GIS (Geographic Information Systems) apps, the field teams - made up of one field manager and five data collectors per neighbourhood - captured records for 200-250 households per day. The data collectors are local slum dwellers, who use their local knowledge and trusted position as a 'local' to speed up the process and ensure its legitimacy. The SDAs are responsible for resolving any dispute between residents, preparing lists of eligible beneficiaries and a new slum layout plan with the help of CBOs.

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## Funding

The total cost of the project is approximately \$120,810,650 USD. It is funded mainly by the Housing and Urban Development Department's state annual budget (through convergence with different existing welfare schemes of the Union and State Government) with a contribution of \$6,115,578 USD from Tata Trust.

The State Government provided an additional grant of Rs 100 Cr (\$14,576,500 USD) for both the 2018-19 and 2019-20 budgets. They also use any existing budget from central or state government, or other sources, which was for infrastructure and related services, to support this project.

Norman Foster Foundation has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Tata Trusts to support development of a design and masterplan for in-situ and new habitat slum upgrades based on the vision of the community.

Tata Trust also supports the engagement of about 100 Fellows (known as Jaga Fellowship of young professionals) to support implementation on the ground.

The legislation promises a Certificate of Occupancy of 30 square metres at no cost to the household. They can also then access the government's housing scheme which provides financial assistance of up to 200,000 rupees (\$2,900 USD) to build a permanent house.

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## Innovation

They claim that this is the world's largest slum titling and upgrading project, which is being implemented quickly and at scale. This approach is making the significant change which is needed to respond to the increasing rate of urbanisation in Odisha and to move towards more inclusive cities.

High resolution maps have been prepared for all 1,725 slums in medium and small towns targeted by the initiative, making Odisha the first and only state in India to have detailed maps of all its slum settlements. Preparation of such a spatial dataset has enormous implications both for implementation of future urban poverty alleviation measures and for research on quality of life in slum settlements. This approach has made it possible to take action in all the state's ULBs almost simultaneously.

It uses advanced technology such as drones for geo-fencing (creating a virtual geographic boundary) of the current slum boundaries - this ensures a high degree of accuracy and transparency. Following the creation of images by drones, this is integrated with GIS data to create an overview of the community. Household survey data is later added by CBOs using applications such as smartphones and tablets utilising web-based platforms. All this information has enabled the creation of an up-to-date and multi-layered database for all urban areas. To the project's knowledge this is the first time that a combination of tools including drones, mobile apps and cloud technologies have been used at such a scale in India.

The Act is also unique in that residents were not required to visit any government office at any time, and it is being implemented within a specific time frame.

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## Environmental Impact

Solid waste management, which includes street sweeping; drain desilting; and rubbish collection, transportation and disposal was not previously available due to the attitude of the authorities towards unrecognised slums. This is now provided in the upgraded slums and will eventually happen in all of them. Households will also gain access to clean running water and toilets, eliminating open defecation.

Smart energy efficient LED street lighting is being implemented in all the towns including the slums, leading to substantial energy savings and contributing to a reduction in CO2 emissions.

## Financial Sustainability

The majority of funding is from the Odisha Government, which is using existing budgets to cover the work. They have committed 25% of the urban development budget for slum development. A number of Trusts and Foundations are providing funding for specific aspects of the work, e.g. technical and management support.

As the project involves major development of infrastructure and services, it is planned that funds will be leveraged from central, state and other development scheme budgets.

Eligible people are granted land rights free of charge, leading to around 15,000 households accessing financial assistance under the national housing scheme - they have started self-building concrete houses.

## Social Impact

The project enables extremely marginalised communities to gain land tenure and a guarantee of land rights, removing the fear of eviction. The land rights certificate is inheritable but not transferable - this removes the possibility of people selling on the land (which has been an issue in other countries where land rights have been given in slums). It works to formalise the rights of slum dwellers and mobilise communities to make their own decisions and improve living standards. More than 51,000 families have been granted their land rights certificate. With this formalisation of their right to land, people now have a proof of residence and the document can be used to access other benefits and schemes.

The project has ensured that women are given equal rights through joint ownership of land and through their active participation in the process. The Slum Dwellers Associations are encouraged to have at least half of their members as women. They also gave special priority to people with disabilities, women-led families and transgender people.

The mapping images produced by the drones have been used as a strong visual template to engage and involve communities and has proven to be more inclusive than traditional methods using a list of co-ordinates. The project has successfully combined community participation with the use of modern technologies - this has led to zero disputes and zero litigation to date. Land records could previously be changed by landlords but the use of technologies now prevents that while streamlining the process and increasing transparency.

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Many towns are located in high-risk areas, such as on the coast, waste dump sites or those prone to cyclones and floods. By improving houses, roads, drains and sanitation facilities, the project is reducing risk and creating a liveable environment for the residents.

Physical infrastructure developments, such as roads with drains, pipe-water supply, sanitation, individual and community toilets, and smart LED streetlights, are contributing to improved health and safety of residents.

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## Barriers

The magnitude of the scale - 2,919 slums and over 400,000 households - is a major challenge. The project was designed to happen at significant scale and pace.

The surveying work identified 1,452 untenable slums out of the total 2,919 - meaning new locations had to be found and agreed with residents. The project's principles only allow relocation sites to be developed with the voluntary consent of the community and they are involved throughout the process, including site selection.

Multiple stakeholder participation and co-ordination is a challenge. The project has set up a framework which ensures decisions are made at a local level but also holds regular co-ordination meetings with all key stakeholders at a state and district level.

Recent general elections to the parliament and state assembly slowed down implementation of the project – however, the same political party has been re-elected at both levels which is encouraging for continued backing of the initiative.

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## Lessons learned

Learning from other urban projects in India showed that where exclusionary planning or top-down government-led schemes are used in relation to informal settlements, this can lead to the widening of inequality in cities and the further entrenchment of slums. This project learned from those earlier approaches to formalise land rights and initially piloted in partnership with Tata Trusts in nine areas. The pilot developed detailed standard operating procedures, defined the scope of the work for each stakeholder and analysed the cost for different partners. At the conclusion of the pilot, 2,200 householders were given land rights certificates.

Networking with knowledge partners has been crucial to the success of the project. The involvement of technical partners for slum-mapping and GIS related activities has brought innovative techniques to the pilot by combining hi-tech drone surveys with ground level verification of slum settlements by CBOs and Slum Dwellers Associations.

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## Evaluation

The pilot enabled the core approaches and partnerships to be tested before full implementation began. The learning from this pilot was fed into the design of the main programme and established the need for:

- greater co-ordination between the local ULB and the state revenue department to understand the status of land use and occupation, and for planning purposes; and
- capacity building of all the stakeholders, in particular in community participation and mobilisation, and in areas of spatial data collection and management.

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The use of technology and updated maps showing land rights enables monitoring of the project's progress in numbers of certificates granted.

### Recognition

The project was presented at the [2019 World Bank Conference on Land and Poverty](#).

It has been featured by the [India Times](#), [Thomson Reuters Foundation](#), [esri](#) and [Land Portal](#).

Several dignitaries and institutions have visited the project, as well as university scholars and faculty members from Calgary, Canada and Chicago University.

### Transfer

The project was piloted in nine ULBs in two districts and was then subsequently scaled-up to cover the entire state of Odisha.

Several other states in India have discussed with the Odisha government the idea of implementing a similar land rights act. The pace of this has been slow due to uncertainty over the country's elections. However, after the elections ended, the Honourable Lt. Governor of Delhi (The Administrator of the Capital of India) invited the Principal Secretary of the Department of Odisha to make a presentation before senior officers to explore the possibilities of replication in Delhi.

The policy and the implementation process can both be replicated and adapted in other countries. The project has developed a 92-page process document setting out all its key stages.

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