

# Settlement Field Report

# Chennai, India

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## PART I

### 1 Introduction and Abstracts of the Case Studies

Since the turn of the century, the urban and economic development of Chennai has been impacted by “sector-specific corridors along road infrastructures, with heavy investments (...) as a means to attract investment at the national and international level” (Varrel, 2010: 26). Among those, the IT Corridor, located in South Chennai along the Old Mahabalipuram Road (see Maps 1 & 2 in Annexes 3 & 4), has been selected as the case study for the Work Package 2 (Large-scale economic and infrastructure projects) under the Chance2Sustain project. The IT corridor area further provides interesting sites for issues pertaining to sub-standard settlements (WP3), as the development of the corridor has been associated with land speculation, the extension of the Mass Rapid Transport System, and “beautification” operations, especially along the Buckingham Canal that flows parallel to the IT corridor, in short transformations that usually entail slum evictions. In addition, the larger resettlement colonies built in Chennai since the 2000s for evicted slum families –and the December 2004 Tsunami victims– are also located in the IT corridor zone.

The case study of Arignar Anna Nagar, an “objectionable slum” located along the Buckingham Canal in the IT Corridor, exemplifies the impact of public interventions that have affected the squatter settlements in this zone, as well as the ensuing social mobilization. The lack of basic services, proper roads and social infrastructure in these settlements has pushed the residents to pursue their endeavours for getting better civic amenities, with however

still limited improvements. The other major issue is the lack of security of tenure. In 2002, a large demolition drive was carried out in a series of settlements (including Arignar Anna Nagar) in order to facilitate desilting and widening of the Canal: 2300 families were evicted from the first rows of dwellings established along the canal and relocated in the resettlement colony of Kannagi Nagar, although the flats were not ready for habitation. The eviction was reported in the media as “a swift, low-resistance operation”. Although prior collective action against the evictions (including signature campaign, road blockage and rally) was organized by the Communist Party, it had no effect. Despite impending threat of new evictions targeting the remaining sections of the squatter settlements, most residents seem to accept the “inevitability” of their future relocation. Several factors limiting social mobilization were evidenced by this case study: the lack of accurate information regarding the date of eviction; the weak social organizational structure in the settlement; the divide between owners and tenants having diverging interests; the poverty of these dwellers who cannot afford to spend time and loose money in long-lasting collective action; and the geographical marginalization of the settlement, out of the reach of some major mobilization movements for workers and slum dwellers in the city.

Before detailing this settlement case, the broader context and policy background in relation to slums in Chennai are expounded, followed by the presentation of the methodology adopted.

### 2 Background and Context

The policy background at the national level (including main strategies implemented regarding slums and squatter settlements, and the new strategy for Slum-Free City Planning – Rajiv Awas Yojana) was already presented for the Delhi settlement cases. Therefore, we focus in this report on the background and context in the State of Tamil Nadu and its capital, Chennai (known as Madras till 1996).

#### a. Slum Population in Chennai

As per the Census data and definition (see Annex 1, Box 1), the slum population in Chennai was 820,000 people in 2001, accounting for 19% of the city population (within the Municipal Corporation limits) at that time<sup>56</sup>.

<sup>56</sup> The results of the 2011 census on slums were not published at the time of writing this report.

Baud et al.'s study of deprivation mapping in Chennai, also based on 2001 census data within the limits of the then Municipal Corporation, showed that the hotspots of poverty were found at that time in the old industrial northern areas of the city, built between 1900 and 1940 (Baud & al. 2009: 9). These areas had also a high percentage of people living in slums.

The 2003-04 survey of slums undertaken by a private consultant for the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB) and the Tamil Nadu Urban Infrastructure Financial Services limited (TNUIFS)<sup>57</sup> listed 242 'undeveloped'<sup>58</sup> slums within the limits of Chennai Municipal Corporation, housing around 72,000 families or 330,000 people, accounting for less than 10% of the city population. A large majority (65%) of these settlements were located on government land. Noteworthy, out of these 242 identified slums, 122 (41,683 families) were categorized as 'objectionable' slums<sup>59</sup>, which comprised a majority of squatter settlements located along water ways (73 slums housing 29,144 families), the rest being located along road margins, railways, and the seashore. Within the metropolitan area (but outside Chennai Municipal Corporation), 202 undeveloped slums were identified, out of which 90 located in objectionable areas, mostly squatter settlements along waterways and informal settlements along the seashore. However, this survey underestimated the actual number of undeveloped slums: during field work conducted in 2011 and 2012, we identified in the metropolitan area twenty-year-old (or more) objectionable squatter settlements along the Buckingham Canal (such as Arignar Anna Nagar selected for our case study), which were not listed and mapped in the 2003-04 survey.

57 See in the list of references and documents: TNSCB & TNUIFS 2005 and 2006.

58 'Undeveloped' slums are differentiated from 'developed' slums, i.e. slums identified in a previous survey conducted in 1986-87, and which were since then developed and/or improved through development schemes and initiatives.

59 As per the Chennai Metropolitan Authority, "the slums situated on river margins, road margins, seashore and places required for public purposes are categorized as objectionable slums". *Source*: Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority, "Shelter", p. 147. URL: [http://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=9&ved=0CFwQFjAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cmdachennai.gov.in%2FVolume3\\_English\\_PDF%2FVol3\\_Chapter06\\_Shelter.pdf&ei=ZKSsUOj8G4urrAeX8oHoBQ&usg=AFQjCNEEzGedP8vGn8c9RI58VapSwIC87Q](http://www.google.co.in/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=9&ved=0CFwQFjAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.cmdachennai.gov.in%2FVolume3_English_PDF%2FVol3_Chapter06_Shelter.pdf&ei=ZKSsUOj8G4urrAeX8oHoBQ&usg=AFQjCNEEzGedP8vGn8c9RI58VapSwIC87Q) (last accessed 20-11-2012)

## b. Policy Background

### *Policies toward slums*

The Tamil Nadu Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act, 1971 was modelled on the national Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act of 1956, which was first implemented in Delhi (See Annex 1, Boxes 2 & 3 for the definition of a slum area under these Acts). However, the policies of the Dravidian parties which came in power in Tamil Nadu in 1967 "sharply diverged from the national housing policy. While central government housing policy began to emphasise the role of the state as a facilitator of housing rather than a builder the DMK [Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam] housing policies focused on state construction of housing, explicitly limited evictions, and created a public discourse that allowed groups of political adept squatters to consolidate their hold on public land" (Raman, 2011: 75). The initial populist orientation of the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB), created in 1971, is reflected in its motto: "*God we shall see in the smile of the poor*", which is still said to underlie the strategies "to improve the environs of the slums and the living standards of the urban slum families" (Government of Tamil Nadu, 2012: 18). The stated goals of the board at the time of its inception were "to fully clear the city of slum within seven years, to prevent new slums from taking shape, and to provide basic amenities for slum-dwellers until their huts could be cleared and replaced with tenements" (Raman, 2011: 76). Three main broad strategies have been implemented by the TNSCB:

1. *In situ* Development – whereby the basic infrastructure/ amenities like water supply, road and sanitation facilities are made available in the slums on site.
2. *In situ* Reconstruction – the dwelling units (multi-storied tenements) are constructed at the same location without any relocation of inhabitants.
3. Rehabilitation and Resettlement - provision of houses at alternative locations along with infrastructure, livelihood programmes with a holistic approach.

TNSCB has been one of the pioneer agencies to construct *in situ* houses for the slum dwellers. However, in the recent past, TNSCB states that it is facing issues in implementing *in situ* development as well as reconstruction schemes because of lack of adequate open space in the urban areas for planned housing initiatives." (PUCL, 2010: 12).

The intervention of the World Bank in Chennai has in fact strongly impacted the implementation of policies toward slums in the city, as analysed by Nitya Raman (2011) in her paper "The board and the bank" (2011), that provides a good summary of the changing scenario:

“Arguing that the initial years of the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board were dominated by the priorities of the then ruling party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, whose government created it in 1971, this paper points out that shelter policies in the state had a formal orientation away from eviction and resettlement and towards in situ tenement construction, alongside an informal tendency to protect and reward those groups of the urban poor that the party was trying to court for votes. This arrangement was affected by the World Bank’s entry into the domain of urban-sector funding in 1975, which, despite stiff resistance from the implementing agencies, eventually managed to change the focus of local policies and to a great extent delink the TNSCB from political influence. The effects of this can be seen in the TNSCB’s current housing policies.” (...) Thus, “by 2000, the TNSCB was almost exclusively involved in building large-scale tenement clusters on the outskirts of Chennai to house slum-dwellers evicted and relocated from central areas of the city.” (*ibid*, 2011: 74)

The two large resettlement complexes which were established in the years 2000s in the southern periphery of Chennai, outside the limits of the Municipal Corporation at that time, namely Kannagi Nagar and Semmenchery resettlement Colonies, are an illustration of the above policy shift; they house today around 16,000 and 6,800 households respectively (see Map 2 in Annex 3 for location, and the Settlement Profiles of these two colonies in Annexes 5 & 6). Another resettlement complex in multi-storeyed buildings, namely the Perumbakkam scheme, located near Semmenchery, is under construction, with funding from the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. This large-scale complex was initially planned for a total capacity of 20,000 tenements, in order to resettle residents of slums located on objectionable land. The first phase of around 6000 tenements is nearing completion.

### **Infrastructure projects and slum evictions**

The construction of “world-class infrastructure” in Indian metropolises is generally associated with slum demolition and population displacement. Chennai is not an exception, and some urban transport infrastructure projects<sup>60</sup> deserve mention in this regard: the Mass Rapid Transport System (MRTS), that started in the 1990s and is still under completion (phase 3); the Chennai Metro Rail project (partly underground, partly elevated), launched in 2007; the Chennai High Speed Circular Transportation Corridors,

an integrated project planned in the Second Master Plan for Chennai Metropolitan Area (published in 2008- CMDA, 2008); and the Chennai Port–Maduravoyal 19km Expressway, a project announced in late 2009 and which is expected to displace 12,000 squatter families from the banks of the Cooum river (Coelho & Raman, 2010).

### ***The restoration of water bodies in Chennai: environmental ‘concerns’, beautification and slum clearance drive***<sup>61</sup>

In addition, several restoration projects of waterways, canals and riverbanks were launched in Chennai since the 2000s, with further adverse impact on traditional and informal habitat. The beautification plans of the Marina beach also entailed conflicts between the State and the fishermen, whose traditional villages (*kuppams*) were treated as slums –squatter settlements on the beach, therefore under the threat of eviction (Arabindoo, 2011). Noteworthy, some of these projects of waterways restoration cum beautification intersect with other infrastructure projects, such as in the case of the Cooum river (Coelho & Raman, 2010). Another case in point is the construction of the MRTS in the stretch that runs along the Buckingham Canal, at the beginning of the IT Corridor. The IT Corridor project itself also envisaged the beautification of the Buckingham Canal, including water quality management, beautification of MRTS pillars, and landscaping and agriculture – this last component necessitating the removal of “encroachment” (see Annex 4 for photos of the project, and Malmarugam & Narayan, 2006). Thus, as analysed by Karen Coelho and Nithya Raman (2010: 19) “beautification, restoration and development serve as metonyms for slum clearance”.

The restoration projects of Chennai’s waterways and water bodies gained momentum under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (a Centre Government sponsored programme launched in December 2005): the conservation measures included cleaning up, dredging and desilting, widening of canals, strengthening of lake bunds.... These projects were also aimed at preventing floods. A complementary project was the restoration of the Adyar river estuary and its transformation into an ecopark<sup>62</sup>. Under the national inland waterways project launched in 2008, it was further planned to revive the Buckingham Canal as a navigation channel for efficient

60 See also the “City Profile of Chennai” prepared by Varrel et al. (2010) for the India Country Report under Chance2Sustain project.

61 This section draws from the “City Profile of Chennai” (Varrel et al., 2010), and other cited sources.

62 Arabindoo, Pushpa. “Constructed ecologies, imagined communities: The politics of Adyar Poonga in Chennai”, Talk at the Centre for South Asian Studies, Paris, 9.12.2011.

and cost-effective transportation, with in addition a ferry service to be started on an experimental basis to exploit the tourism potential<sup>63</sup>. These various projects and plans insist on the need to protect the waterways and water bodies from encroachments, and to evict the existing “encroachments”, including settlements established for decades, and whose dwellers are now considered as “polluters”. The implementation of these projects would cause altogether the eviction of around 35,000 slum households and among them around 15,354 households settled along the Buckingham Canal (some evictions were already carried out)<sup>64</sup>.

In early March 2012, newspapers announced that the eviction of encroachments along the water ways and roads margins would start in April, and listed the canals (including the Buckingham Canal) that would be cleared and “improved” after the relocation of their “encroachments”<sup>65</sup>. However, one month later, the same newspaper reported “the Chennai Corporation has suspended biometric identification of thousand of slum residents along 16 canals in the city, following stiff opposition from AIADMK<sup>66</sup> councillors. (...) AIADMK councillors opposed it, alleging that the list prepared by the previous DMK-led council had failed to include many actual beneficiaries”<sup>67</sup>, and on the other hand included some bogus entries (the identification process being the first step to prepare the resettlement of the affected families). The biometric identification resumed in June, with however new interruptions for the same

reasons in another zone<sup>68</sup>. This illustrates the interference of party politics in slum matters, here a factor of delay for the original eviction and resettlement plans of the TNSCB.

### c. Governance System<sup>69</sup>

#### ***Chennai city & Municipal Corporation, Chennai Metropolitan Area & Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority***

Chennai is the oldest municipal corporation in India, created in 1688 by the British. Its limits were extended lastly in 2011, in order to integrate 42 local bodies. The expanded Corporation comprises now 200 wards, an increase of 45 wards. The area under the Corporation subsequently increased from 174 sq. km to 426 sq. km.

The Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) was first delimited in 1967 to face demographic growth and urban expansion; and it has not changed since 1978. It is the fourth largest metropolitan area in India, designed at a very early stage. The Madras Metropolitan Development Authority (now Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority -CMDA) was set up as an ad hoc body in 1972 and became statutory in 1975 (under the Tamil Nadu Town and Country Planning Act, 1971).

Whereas Chennai Municipal Corporation (CMC) has an elected body, the CMDA is only an administrative structure. It is controlled by State-level politicians and civil servants, and does not have an elected board. The Municipal Corporation and local bodies within the metropolitan area (municipalities, town *panchayats*, village *panchayats*) are in charge of maintaining roads, pedestrian ways, streetlights, waste collection and management, micro-drainage, and parks under their respective jurisdiction.

*State and parastatal agencies:* Regarding housing and slums, two boards administrated by the State government require mention: the Tamil Nadu Housing Board (TNHB), created in 1961 in order to manage all government housing construction projects in the state; and the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB), created in 1971 by the DMK Chief Minister as an agency separate from the TNHB, in order to deal specifically with the problem of slums. The omnipresence of the state-level agencies in Chennai has been recently reinforced by the burgeoning of new

63 See: “Buckingham Canal to be revived with waterway plan”, by Ajitha Karthikeyan, *Time of India*, Chennai, 11-06-2008; “Buckingham Canal to be made navigable again”, by Ajitha Karthikeyan, *Time of India*, Chennai, 10-12-2008.

The Buckingham Canal was constructed by the British in 1806 as a salt water navigation canal aimed at connecting the natural backwaters along the coast between Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. With a total length of 420 kms it was once a major channel for trade and industry between these two regions.

64 Source : PUCL (2010), based on Pre-feasibility study on the proposed road alignment along water courses of Chennai – Final report prepared by Tamil Nadu Urban Infrastructure Financial Services Limited & Division of Transportation Engineering, College of Engineering, Anna University.

65 “Eviction along the canals, on roads to begin in April”, Aloysius Xavier Lopez, *The Hindu*, 7.03.2012.

66 AIADMK (*All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam*) is the ruling party at the level of both the Municipal Corporation and the State since 2011.

67 “Identification of slum residents suspended”, Aloysius Xavier Lopez, *The Hindu*, 30.04.2012.

68 “Biometric identification of slum dwellers resumes”, *The Hindu*, 7-06-2012; “Smart cards work now suspended in city’s north”, *The Hindu*, 4.07.2012.

69 This section draws from the “City Profile of Chennai” (Varrel & al. 2010) that was nevertheless updated.

parastatal agencies and special purpose vehicles, which bypass two or more agencies, such as: the Tamil Nadu Urban Infrastructure Financial Services Limited; the Tamil Nadu Road Development Corporation (TNRDC); and the Chennai Rivers Restoration Trust.

*Role of the World Bank and the private sector in slum programmes:* In contrast to the situation in Delhi, the intervention of the World Bank has deeply influenced the orientation and implementation of slum policies in Chennai, as explained above. In fact, in the mid-1970s, “Chennai was one of the bank’s first urban-sector projects” in India, and seen as a “testing ground” for the new theory of market deregulation, privatisation of municipal services, affordability, cost recovery and replicability (Raman, 2011: 77; Pugh, 1990). Yet, whereas the private sector has been involved in slum resettlement and rehabilitation projects in Mumbai since the 1990s and its role is now promoted by the Delhi Development Authority for new in-situ rehabilitation projects, in Chennai, the resettlement complexes for evicted slum dwellers have been developed and built by the public sector –the TNSCB.

## d. Politics and Power in the City

*Party politics:* At the State level, either the Dravidian party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) or its secessionist outgrowth *All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam* (AIADMK – or ADMK) have alternated to form governments since 1967, promoting a regionalist and populist agenda. The last elections in 2011 were marked by the return of the ADMK in power and of Ms J. Jayalalitha as the Chief Minister for the third time. Madras/Chennai has been traditionally a stronghold for the DMK. However, the situation was also reversed at the last municipal elections of October 2011, as the ADMK won a large majority of the seats (168 out of 200).

*Civil society associations among the poor and collective action: “from collapse to co-production”<sup>70</sup>:* Two published papers by Karen Coelho and T. Venkat (2009) and K. Coelho and Nithya Raman (2010) provide an illuminating analysis of the evolution of collective action among slum dwellers. The paragraphs below are a combined edited and abridged version of the relevant portions in these two papers (Coelho and Venkat, 2009: 362-366; Coelho and Raman, 2010: 23).

70 As per Coelho and Venkat’s terms (2009: 362). These authors defined collective action “as involving mass-based or membership-based mobilisations, thus excluding NGOs which typically represent a corporate rather than a collective structure: constituted by a board or trust, and run by an executive staff of paid employees” (ibid: 367).

A brief historical review of collective action among the urban poor in Chennai indicates profound shifts in its character since what is widely regarded as its heyday in the 1970s and 1980s, when the city witnessed intense struggles by the urban poor around the three axes of land rights, housing and basic amenities. The central strategy in these struggles was to resist evictions, demand *pattas* (legal titles) and retain hold of squatted land in the city. The struggles brought together a cross-section of groups who were active in slum-based mobilisation at the time, including autonomous movements of slum-dwellers such as *Pennurimai Iyakkam* and Madras Slum People’s Organisation, NGOs such as Centre for Development Madras (CEDMA) and Madras Christian Council for Social Services (MCCSS), and advocacy groups like Human Rights Foundation and the National Campaign for Housing Rights. Despite differences in approach and minor hostilities and turf wars, groups banded together at the points of struggle. Battles were waged both on the streets and in courtrooms: public interest litigation cases (PILs) were filed in the Supreme Court, and massive rallies and demonstrations held in the city. A widespread and relatively stable local base was provided for these struggles through *sangams* or action committees established in each slum by NGOs or movements. Youth *sangams* associated with different political parties were sometimes incorporated into the struggle platforms.

The 1990s saw a gradual weakening and eventual collapse of slum-based, struggle-oriented collective action against evictions, resulting from a convergence of several interconnected trends. The hardening stance of state agencies towards squatting in the inner city and the strenuous outreach and persuasion efforts by the trained social workers of the TNSCB’s Community Development Wing resulted in relocation becoming an acceptable option among slum dwellers in the 1980s. The growth of the state-sponsored self-help group (SHG) movement in slums, mediated through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), fostered relations of patronage and cooptation between the state and NGOs and between NGOs and slum associations. Gradual changes in the occupancy of slums, a strengthening grip of divisive party politics in slum communities, and the gentrification of TNSCB tenements, combined with the state’s persuasive tactics, weakened the cohesion needed to stand up to eviction drives. Organised and large-scale opposition to evictions is now rarely evidenced, and movements like Unorganised Workers’ Federation and *Pennurimai Iyakkam*, which continue to fight evictions, remain in the minority.

Slum-based mobilisation continues to face intractable challenges for two major reasons: one is political party

control in slums. Attempts to organise slum-dwellers outside the ambit of party politics have thus in recent years been largely unsuccessful. A second challenge is the pervasive monetisation of the urban poor. Money has increasingly become crucial to slum mobilization—any attempt to bring people to meetings has to be accompanied with cash payments and a meal.

The space left by the collapse of struggle-oriented collective action among the urban poor was filled over time by a range of collectivities of varying types. Two of the most common are the self-help groups (SHG) and the Resident Welfare Associations (RWA).

SHGs are among the most ubiquitous social phenomena of the last two decades in Tamil Nadu and Chennai. By the late 1990s, the TNSCB's Community Development wing had begun increasingly to turn to women's SHGs to participate in resettlement schemes and welfare programmes. All slum improvement programmes, from health to solid waste management, are now channelled through SHGs, with attempts to federate them into Community Development Societies.

Aside from RWAs formed in connection with Slum Clearance Board Housing Schemes, associations or *sangams* in slum areas were established by local units of political parties or by powerful local leaders. Their main efforts centre on issues of land and property rights. According to association leaders, the major ongoing *raison d'être* of the associations was to obtain *pattas* for all members. The tactics of slum-based *sangams* have shifted markedly over the years, according to their own

accounts. Most had abandoned agitational modes of demand-making in favour of persuasion and negotiation. Almost all had come to the conclusion that confrontational strategies rarely brought results, and that negotiations were the best way to get their demands met.

Analysed through the lenses of spaces for participation and mobilisation which were used by the slum dwellers, there has been a clear shift over time from resorting to confrontational, "invented spaces", defined by Miraftab as those spaces "occupied by the grassroots and claimed by their collective action, but directly confronting the authorities and the status quo", to operating through "invited spaces", defined as "the ones occupied by those grassroots and their allied non-governmental organizations that are legitimized by donors and government interventions" (Miraftab, 2004: 1).

Nevertheless, two recently published reports evidence the activism of some organisations in denouncing the human rights violations in relation to slum eviction and resettlement, namely:

- a report on the public hearing organised on 6 January 2010 by the Chennai Slum Dwellers' Rights Movement and CSOs, focussing on "Slum evictions for implementation of infrastructure development in Chennai",
- the fact finding report of the People's Union for Civil Liberties on forced eviction and rehabilitation of slum dwellers in Chennai, with a focus on resettlement in Kannagi Nagar and Semmenchery (PUCL, 2010).

## 3 Methodology

### a. The Selection of Settlement Cases

In accordance with the case-study choice made for Chance2Sustain WP2 (Large-Scale economic and infrastructure projects) in Chennai, we selected cases of sub-settlements in the I.T. corridor. At the first stage we identified two categories of settlement, the squatters settlements under the threat of eviction, and the resettlement colonies for evicted slum families, and we further selected three localities:

- the two large-scale resettlement complexes which were developed by the TNSCB in the zone of the IT corridor, namely **Kannagi Nagar** (known also as

Okkiyam Thoraipakkam and occupied since 2000) and **Semmenchery** (occupied since 2006) – see Map 2 in Annex 3. The main issue in these resettlement colonies has been the access to adequate amenities and resources, including livelihood opportunities due to their location on the outskirts (especially in the case of Semmenchery);

- the squatter settlements located along the Buckingham Canal, in the section which flows parallel to the IT Corridor, south of Thiruvanmiyur MRTS station (see Map 2 in Annex 3), and is affected by restoration and beautification plans. Since slum dwelling stretches along at least 7 kms, we further focussed on a restricted locality. Following

reconnaissance field visits in November 2011 and informal interviews aimed at tracing mobilisation drive among the slum dwellers, we finally selected a settlement called **Arignar Anna Nagar** in Neelankarai former Panchayat – also identified in this report as the Canal Bank Road squatter settlement.

A settlement profile for each of these three settlements was prepared, following the guidelines detailed in the Conceptual and methodological framework to address issues of sub-standard settlements (Braathen et al., 2011); information to that end was collected and compiled by Dhanalakshmi in December 2011, and completed for the case of Arignar Anna Nagar in February 2012.

Meetings and discussions with research scholars (from different institutions) working in Chennai convinced us that the resettlement colonies of Semmenchery and Kannagi Nagar were already well researched, although the findings of these on-going studies are yet to be published. In addition, a master student from the University of Amsterdam, Clare Cummings, has also conducted fieldwork in Kannagi Nagar and her findings are available in her master thesis (2012) focussing on *Contesting the Governance of slum resettlement. Power, interests and relations in the resettlement and rehabilitation of slum dwellers in Chennai*. The findings of these studies will be used as second hand information.

To avoid replication of work already done by others, and aim rather to add an original contribution, we eventually decided to concentrate on a less researched area for an in-depth case study in Chennai, namely the Buckingham Canal Bank Road squatter settlements. Their location along a waterway further provides relevant linkages with the Chance2Sustain research theme on environmental issues.

Nevertheless, the detailed settlement profiles collected for the two resettlement colonies in the IT corridor area will be very useful to compare the living conditions in the squatter settlements and in the resettlement colonies. Moreover, many families evicted from the Canal Bank Road and resettled in Kannagi Nagar eventually came back to their initial locality. The settlement profiles of Kannagi Nagar and Semmenchery resettlement colonies are included in Annexes 5 and 6; the settlement profile of Arignar Anna Nagar is detailed in Part II.

## b. Methods Applied to Collect and Analyze Data

For the case study of Canal Bank Road squatter settlements, a series of in-depth interviews with various

stakeholders were conducted in February-March 2012, and then in November 2012, following the guidelines provided in the Conceptual and methodological framework (Braathen, Dupont, Jordhus-Lier, 2011), and the related generic interview guide<sup>71</sup>. This comprised the following:

- In-depth interviews with residents of Arignar Anna Nagar, covering three different situations: present residents not yet evicted from the canal banks, previous residents relocated in Kannagi Nagar, and returnees from this resettlement colony – which should help us better understand the flaws and limitations of the resettlement project. In selecting the respondents, special attention was also given to the spatial spread of the sample, since the threat of eviction and living conditions are linked with the location of the house. In-depth interviews were conducted during daytime, and mainly with the wives of the household heads, as they were more available than their husbands for long interviews. Interviews were conducted in Tamil, not recorded, and transcribed directly into English.
- Interviews of activists involved in issues of slum evictions and relocation.
- Interviews with government officials in the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, who granted us a large access to information, including statistical data and maps.
- The interview solicited from a local politician, the former president of the Panchayat, affiliated to the party now in the opposition, met a refusal, possibly because of the recent change of government and ruling party, and thus the fear of investigation in land issues.
- Interview with the newly elected Municipal councillor of Neelankarai.

These interviews were completed by a press review and the collection of secondary data and reports (see References). Further details about the interviews, their main contents and other information collected, the profile of the respondents, etc. are given in Annex 7. The purpose of the second round of interviews conducted in November 2012, including with some respondents already interviewed ten months earlier, was to probe points or investigate specific questions emerging from the preliminary analysis, and also to follow up the reaction of the residents and activists to the pressing threat of eviction of the slum dwellers located on objectionable land along waterways.

<sup>71</sup> All the interviews were conducted by the two (or one of the two) researchers and authors of this report.



## PART II

### THE SETTLEMENT CASE<sup>72</sup>

#### 4

## Squatter Settlements along the Buckingham Canal in the IT Corridor Zone

### The Case of Arignar Anna Nagar – Canal Bank Road

## 1. Settlement Profile

### a. Geographic Location and Location in Urban Poverty Map

Arignar Anna Nagar (AAN) is part of the Canal Bank Road – or Canal Puram – squatter settlements located along the section of the Buckingham Canal that flows in the IT corridor zone, i.e. south of Thiruvanmiyur MRTS station, between Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR- renamed Rajiv Gandhi Salai) on the West and East Coast Road on the East (see Map 2 in Annex 3). Arignar Anna Nagar stretches along 1,5 km on both side of the canal, in Neelankarai area, a former *Panchayat* integrated in the Chennai Municipal Corporation (Zone XV) since November 2011. The stretch on the eastern side of the canal is included in the ward no 192 and the stretch on the western side of the canal is included in the ward no 193 of Zone XV.

Due to its location outside the boundaries of the Chennai Municipal Corporation till very recently, AAN and adjoining Canal Bank Road squatter settlements were not covered by the deprivation mapping exercise carried out by Baud et al (2009) in Chennai. Moreover slums located in Neelankarai were missed out by the 2003-04 slum survey although the Metropolitan Area outside the Corporation area was also covered (TNSCB & TNUIFS, 2006).

### b. Population

The population of AAN is difficult to assess; it may be estimated roughly that around 1500–2000 households are living in this locality. People who settled there are mostly Tamils, some natives of Chennai but more often migrants from other districts of Tamil Nadu, and coming from other

places of the city. The first settlers arrived 30-35 years. The most recent settlers include migrants from North India, bachelors working in the nearby industrial area, staying as tenants. People belong mainly to backward classes or scheduled castes (i.e. former untouchable castes), mostly Hindu, with nevertheless a notable Christian community and also Muslims. Commonly found occupations include, for men, construction workers, auto-rickshaw and car drivers, security guards, unskilled industrial workers, street vendors, and for women, domestic servants. Some young women (still unmarried) were reported to work in the electronic industry and in call centres.

### c. Housing and Layout

Arignar Anna Nagar is considered as a squatter settlement, in the category of ‘objectionable’ slums due to its location on the banks of the Canal, on land, which is the property of the Public Works Department. This implies that the inhabitants have no security of tenure. Earlier settlers could just occupy the land free of cost, but successive settlers had to “buy” it from the then politicians and local real estate dealers or landlords who controlled the area; they got a document called “B-memo” notice for this transaction. They also used to pay property taxes to the former *Panchayat*. Whereas some dwellers believe that such documents will help them prove their ownership on the land, or even consider the B-memo notice as a land title, this “notice” is in fact a “statement showing the details of unauthorised encroachments on Government lands, the use of which is regulated by village *panchayat*”.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>72</sup> This part of the report is based primarily on information collected during our fieldwork (see Annex 7 for the details) and other quoted sources.

<sup>73</sup> Source: The Tamil Nadu Panchayat (Restriction and Control to Regulate the use of Poramboke in Ryotwari Tracts) Rules, 2000. [“Poramboke” land means village or government land set apart as common land for the whole community, and on which private construction is not authorized.]

The land being on the canal bank, it was marshy and low lying, thus the place had to be filled with heavy earthen materials to lay the foundation for houses and the residents spent quite some money on this. Yet, the settlement is still prone to flooding. In the beginning, the dwellers built small huts, with thatched roof and mud floor, which were improved and consolidated over time. Since most of them could not afford to spend on labour charges, they managed to build their houses using their own family labour. Now, one can find many *pucca* (concrete) houses, more in the inner streets, including some with one additional floor. Most of the houses comprise a provision for tenant occupancy in the same premises with a common courtyard or alley. The land-use in this settlement is essentially residential, apart from a few convenience shops concentrated around the main bridge. Over time, the area had spread out and comprised two or three rows of houses along each side of the canal, linked by one bridge built by the government, plus a small pedestrian bridge built by the residents. During the 2002 eviction, the first row of houses on each side of the canal was demolished for desilting and widening the canal.

#### d. Infrastructure & Services

This settlement is characterized by an acute deficit in basic infrastructure and services. First of all, the connectivity of this locality with the rest of the city is bad, as the residents need to walk to the main roads – East Coast Road or Old Mahabalipuram Road (OMR) – to avail public transports, which means around 20mn walk minimum, depending on the location of their house, and at least one hour walk to access the nearest MRTS station in Tiruvanmiyur. To improve the access to OMR (the IT Corridor), the residents located on the eastern side of the canal had financed themselves the construction of a pedestrian bridge five years ago. Auto-rickshaws are reluctant to come till inside the settlement because of the bad state of the roads. Apart from a couple of cemented streets, the rest are earthen roads or lanes, which become extremely muddy during the raining season, or even flooded. The residents expected road improvement – one of their main demands – after the inclusion of the area in the Municipal Corporation, yet no upgrading work has been carried out so far.

Although the Panchayat had installed an overhead tank and public taps, the water supplied is not potable, and people have to buy bottled water for drinking and cooking. Moreover, water from public taps is supplied at the best twice in a week for a couple of hours, and in some sections of the settlement once every ten days for 2-3 hours, a situation which requires individual storage

arrangements. Besides, there is no drainage system and no sewage system in the settlement, and no public convenience. Some houses are equipped with septic tanks, but the houses located just along the canal have connected their individual toilets (if any) with a pipe and outlet directly into the canal. Since all houses are not equipped with individual toilets, open spaces are also used for defecation. When the area was under the jurisdiction of the Panchayat, there was no system of garbage collection, and the garbage has been dumped all along the canal or thrown into the water. The integration of the settlement within the limits of the Municipal Corporation in November 2011 implies, in principle, the availability of municipal services. During interviews conducted in February and November 2012, some residents mentioned that a Municipal truck did come to collect the garbage, but only a couple of times.

As a result of these combined deficiencies, the area is highly unsanitary. The canal has become an open drain filled with polluted water and dumped garbage, a breeding place for mosquitoes and other insects. In addition to individual toilet outlets and sewage outlets, industrial effluents and water from Perungudi Sewage Treatment Plant are also released into this canal. People complained that the sewage water is not treated properly. Those living close to the canal suffer from the constant stinking air, mosquito menace, and health problems, especially skin diseases. The present situation contrasts sharply with the memory of the first settlers, 30-35 years ago, at a time when the canal water was salty but clean: they used the water for purposes other than cooking and drinking, and they could play and swim in the canal.

The situation in the settlement is better in terms of electricity supply. The houses have electricity connections that were regularised by the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board in 2004-5 (providing a deposit of INR 4,500). There are also streets lights, but not everywhere: on the road along the canal on the eastern side, street lights were removed in 2002 at the time of the demolition of the first row of houses. It shows how the demolitions have also affected civic amenities, making the living conditions of the remaining dwellers more difficult.

The settlement is further deprived of any social infrastructure such as schools, crèches, Integrated Child Development Service, primary health centre or dispensary. The nearest government Primary Health Centre is located in Okkiyam Thuraipakkam, but this facility is not commonly used by all. In the settlement itself, only a couple of private doctors operate. As for schools, there are found in the neighbouring 'legal' localities.

To sum up, the spatial location of this settlement, on the outskirts of the city, has gone along a lack of access to proper urban amenities. Nonetheless, one year after the integration of this area in the Municipal Corporation, our last field visits (in November 2012) proved that some improvements are under way, as shown by the installation of water tankers and streetlights.

## 2. Identification and Description of the Relevant Actors

The remarkable feature about the social organization in this settlement is the lack of local representative and of community based organization. Thus, there is no leader representing the entire locality, and no leader either who would represent smaller distinct communities. Furthermore, there is no resident welfare association, and no Christian association. It was reported by one respondent that an organization called the “Canal Bank Dwellers Protection Committee” was set up by a resident of Arignar Anna Nagar in 2008: money (details not known) was collected but not used for public purpose, and the organization is not functioning anymore. In fact we could not trace the founder of this committee, and none of the other residents interviewed was aware of its creation. Only Self Help Groups (SHG) were found: the majority of the women in AAN are members of SHGs but they are engaged merely in money lending activities among the group members and do not seem to be involved in any other income generating activities or livelihood programmes. Nonetheless, a group of around 35 young people in AAN are members of the Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), and they have played an active role to address certain issues in the settlement. DYFI is politically linked to the Communist Party of India (Marxist) –CPI(M)–, and the DYFI wing of this area takes part in Blood Donation Camps and other meetings organized by the Party. Although NGOs are commonly found working in poor urban areas such as those squatter settlements, no NGO could be traced in Arignar Anna Nagar.

The relevant external actors, who matter to understand the past and present development of this settlement, include the following.

### Elected politicians:

- The president of Neelankarai Panchayat was the main elected local figure until the extension of the limit of the Chennai Municipal Corporation in November 2011 and the integration of this former Panchayat in Zone XV of the Municipal Corporation. Till then, the

Panchayat had the responsibilities (among others) of looking after streetlights, construction and repair works of the roads, of providing water and sanitation facilities, and of collecting local taxes. Thus, the residents of AAN used to go to the Panchayat office for any complaint; some of them would also approach a ward member living in the vicinity of AAN and who was affiliated, like the latest Panchayat president, to the DMK party (in the opposition since the 2011 elections). Now, the provision of basic amenities is under the responsibility of the Municipal Corporation, and the municipal councillors of the recently created wards 192 and 193 in Zone XV are the two local representatives who receive the grievances of the inhabitants of their respective ward.

### Political parties:

- Communist Party of India (Marxist) – CPI(M)– is supportive to the residents of the Canal Bank Squatter Settlements. The Party operates in the settlement through young people who are members of the affiliated Democratic Youth Federation of India (DYFI), or through residents who are members of the Centre of India Trade Union (CITU) – the trade union attached to the Party.
- On the other hand, volunteers of the two main parties in Tamil Nadu (AIADMK and DMK) have not been active in this specific settlement.

### Public institutional actors:

- The Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board, in charge of the implementation of the slum resettlement programmes and the development of the resettlement colonies.
- The Public Works Department (PWD), that owns the land along the canal, which is encroached upon by squatter settlements. Since 2009, if the land-owning agency wants to reclaim land occupied by slums, it has the responsibility of identifying the slum families eligible for resettlement, and of conducting the eviction process<sup>74</sup>.

### Actors under public-private partnership:

- The Tamil Nadu Road Development Corporation (TNRDC) in partnership with Information Technology Expressway Limited (ITEL) for the development of the IT corridor expressway and adjoining areas, including the canal banks.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with the Chief Community Development Officer at the TNSCB, on 24.02.2012.

### 3. Overview of the ‘Case Story’

The following table summarises the time line of relevant events for the Canal Bank Road squatter settlements, including Arignar Anna Nagar (AAN), as well as the broader context of slum resettlement and rehabilitation policies in Chennai.

1971	Creation of the Tamil Nadu Slum Clearance Board (TNSCB)
c. 1975	Entry of the World Bank in the domain of urban-sector funding
2000	Kannagi Nagar resettlement colony, developed by TNSCB, receives the first groups of relocated slum families.
2002, July-August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Road blockage and demonstration to the Secretariat (seat of the State Government) to protest against slum eviction along the Buckingham Canal.</li> <li>– Demolition of squatter settlements along the Buckingham Canal (in the IT Corridor area, from Lattice Bridge southward) to facilitate desilting and widening of the Canal: about 2300 families evicted, including almost 500 from AAN. Evicted families were resettled in Kannagi Nagar.</li> </ul>
2004, Dec.	The tsunami hit Chennai, leaving 131 dead and thousands shelter-less
2006	Semmenchery resettlement colony, developed by TNSCB, receives the first groups of Tsunami affected families and relocated slum families
2008	Publication of the <i>Second Master Plan for Chennai Metropolitan Area, 2026</i> , that promotes a vision of Chennai Metropolitan Area development in specialized corridors, including the IT Corridor on the Old Mahabalipuram Road.
2008	Under the national inland waterways project, plan floated to revive the Buckingham Canal as a navigation channel for efficient and cost-effective transportation.
2011, April & May	Elections for the State Legislative Assembly (on 13 April): defeat of then ruling party, the DMK, and return to power of the AIADMK, with Ms J. Jayalalitha as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu for the 3rd time (on 16 May).
2011, October	Municipal elections in Chennai, the AIADMK won a large majority of the seats, putting an end to the domination of DMK in the city.
2011, November	Extension of the limits of Chennai Municipal Corporation, including thereafter the former jurisdiction of Neelankarai Panchayat (and AAN).
2012, February	The CPI(M) publicized the demands for better amenities for the residents of Neelankarai canal bank area as part of a banner campaign for the Party state-wise conference. However, the large banner displayed near the main bridge in AAN was hardly noticed by the residents.
2012, March	Announcement of the eviction of squatter settlements along the water ways (including Buckingham Canal) and road margins, to start next April.
2012, April-August	The Municipal Corporation started the biometric identification of slum residents along 16 canals in the city (first step to prepare the resettlement of the families); however the process had to be suspended in some zones, following stiff opposition from AIADMK councillors contesting the validity of the list of beneficiary slum families prepared under the previous DMK government.
2012, Nov.	The original eviction and resettlement plans of the TNSCB regarding slum dwellers located along canals have subsequently being delayed.

## 4. Critical Issues and Social Mobilisation in the Settlement

### a. Issue of Eviction and Related Mobilisation: From Limited Protest to Acceptance

One major issue for the dwellers of the canal bank squatter settlements has always been the lack of security of tenure and subsequent threat of eviction, although all of them were initially not really aware of it. As mentioned above, some residents were under the impression that the “B memo notice” that they got when they “bought” the land from private realtors and the property taxes that they used to pay to the village Panchayat were a proof of their landed property. But such illegal transactions and subsequent returns for the Panchayat rather suggest connivance between land grabbers and local politicians. Other settlers were informed of the risk of eviction when they bought their plot, but they did not take it seriously as many others were also buying land at that time and, in any case, they could not afford to buy land anywhere else in an authorised residential colony. Residents who settled in Arignar Anna Nagar in the early years mentioned that they were warned against occupying this area, and were instructed to vacate the places by some officials. They used to vacate and be away for sometime, and again returned to the same places. This was a regular happening at that time. But there was no strict action taken by the public authorities to evict the settlers away. So gradually, the settlement extended and most of the houses were consolidated.

The situation had radically changed by the 2000s, when plans to restore the waterways of Chennai were on the anvil. By that time the width of the Buckingham Canal had shrunk considerably. To allow the desilting of the canal as part of the flood alleviation programme, the Ministry for Public Works declared in July 2002 that about 5000 houses had to be removed along the Buckingham Canal<sup>75</sup>. Subsequently, from the last week of July to the first week of August, about 2300 families were evicted from the canal banks, in the IT corridor zone, from Lattice Bridge southward, including almost 500 from AAN<sup>76</sup>. The remaining families were to be evicted within the following months. For an operation of that scale, officials of the Public Works

Department, the slum Clearance Board, the Revenue Department and the police were mobilised<sup>77</sup>. Evicted families were relocated in Kannagi Nagar resettlement colony, although the flats there were not ready for habitation: there were soiled, with clogged toilets, and without power and water supply.

The eviction was described in the press as “a swift, low-resistance operation”<sup>78</sup>, which was confirmed by our interviews in AAN. Evicted residents explained that they cooperated with the government officers when the latter came to survey them, took their photos and distributed tokens for allotment, as they were afraid of losing their entitlement to a flat and become houseless if they opposed. The large deployment of police force was another deterrent factor. In fact, families to be displaced were informed of the exact date of eviction at best one week before, and some realized it only on the eve of the eviction when they got their allotment tokens. According to some residents, the government planned the demolitions in such a way that people had no time to organise a protest.

Yet, the lack of resistance in the settlements at the time of eviction did not mean the lack of prior collective action to protest against it. Although residents were informed at the last moment of the exact date of eviction, for the last five years there were oral warnings through the Panchayat that the settlements in the area would be demolished for the “beautification” of the canal. After each new threat, residents reacted by meeting officials (Collector, the revenue officer...), or submitting petitions to the Chief Minister. For instance, a signature campaign conducted through the All India Democratic Women Association (affiliated to CPI(M)) collected 5000 signatures from the Canal Bank settlements’ dwellers. Before the 2002 eviction, a road blockage was organised in a big road junction, and later a rally to the Secretariat (seat of the State Government) to give representations to the Chief Minister (the demonstrators were however not allowed to enter the premises). Slum dwellers from all the settlements along the Canal participated in this rally (around 750-1000 people)<sup>79</sup>. The main demands were: no eviction, provision of all civic amenities, and ownership rights with proper land titles. However, this protest had no effect and ironically the actual demolition in AAN took place on the same day, when the slum dwellers were on their way to the Secretariat. This demonstration was organized by the CPI(M), but all other

75 “Evicted slum dwellers shifted to Okkiyam Thoraipakkam”, Feroze Ahmed. *The Hindu*, 31.07.2002

76 The exact number of evicted families from Arignar Anna Nagar is not known; 500 is a rough estimate taking into account the information provided by different respondents.

77 “Eviction of slum families along Buckingham Canal completed”, T. Ramakrishnan, *The Hindu*, 09.08.2002.

78 “Evicted slum dwellers shifted to Okkiyam Thoraipakkam”, *ibid*.

79 Source: Interview with the General Secretary of CITU for Sholinganalur industrial area.

political parties participated. The CPI(M) also helped the evicted families to get their allotment tokens (in case they missed the distribution, or for any other difficulty) as well as during their resettlement process in Kannagi Nagar.

Following this major demolition drive nobody could ignore the pending threat of future evictions, especially after PWD officials came to make some measurements in the settlement and marked the limits of the areas, which would be demolished in future on both banks of the canal. Another reminder of the transformations at work in this area is the construction of a wall all along the canal, for flood control, but also to protect its banks from new encroachments and garbage dumping, as part of a “beautification” plan in which squatter settlements will not find a place. Yet, most of the residents of Arignar Anna Nagar seem to accept the fact that, being on government land, they will be relocated one day to a resettlement colony that may not be to their liking. But they also know that a flat in Chennai is an asset and a prospective profitable good (as irregular transactions of flats in resettlement colonies are a common practice).

## b. Struggle for Better Civic Amenities<sup>80</sup>: Continuous Endeavours

Since the inception of this settlement, its residents had to make repeated representations to the Neelankarai Panchayat president in order to get gradually more facilities (such as water, electricity, roads). Nevertheless, the services obtained were not without counterpart, given that the Panchayat used to collect money for property taxes, although the land squatted upon is the property of the PWD or *poramboke* land on which private constructions are not authorized. After the evictions started and they realized that their house would be demolished one day, the residents stopped paying property taxes. It seems that the Panchayat had taken advantage of the precarious situation of the slum dwellers. The latter now hope that the inclusion of Neelankarai in the Municipal Corporation will have a positive impact on the provision of civic amenities and services in the settlement, and they address their demands to the municipal councillor of their respective ward.

It is also only after repeated representations that the Government built a bridge across the canal in AAN, which

is used by small vehicles. As for the second bridge, a small pedestrian one, its construction resulted from the efforts of the DYFI members who collected INR 60,000 from 1500 people in the area. They had tried too to get this second bridge built by the Government, but as it was delayed endlessly they decided to carry out this project on their own. This indicates that the residents could organize themselves at times of necessity and achieve some results.

The DYFI members had further approached the TNSCB to put forward their demands for social services in the settlement such as government schools or Integrated Child Development Service. They were told that they have to approach the District Collector’s office for this purpose, which is in Kancheepuram. They went there in August 2011 and represented their problems, including a pressing demand for better roads. The collector promised that he would visit the Canal Bank Road settlement in two days but so far did not come, and nothing has improved. Yet, they could not follow up and push for their cause by going back there, as Kanchipuram is 76kms away from Chennai, and they simply cannot afford to lose one-day wage and in addition pay for transport and food. Hence, the residents’ efforts of mobilization have been barred by their economic conditions.

In their endeavour to improve the living conditions in their settlement, the DYFI members get support from the Communist Party. For instance, in February 2012, the CPI(M) publicized the demands for better civic amenities and services for the residents of Neelankarai area as part of a banner campaign for the Party state-wise conference. The patronage of the communist party is also a way for the DYFI members of AAN to scale-up their demand: they take part actively in party activities and try to address their problems to the government during the meetings held by the party.

## c. The Limits to Social Mobilization in Canal Bank Road Squatter Settlement

Several factors limiting social mobilization in this squatter settlement are evidenced by the above description of attempts at collective action. A first obstacle to efficient mobilization in the context of risk of eviction is the lack of accurate information<sup>81</sup> regarding the date of eviction. Some

80 This section does not address the issue of lack of adequate amenities in Kannagi Nagar after the resettlement of the evicted families and their related struggles, but rather focuses on AAN squatter settlement. For information regarding the situation in Kannagi Nagar, see Annex 5: Settlement Profile of Kannagi Nagar Resettlement Colony.

81 Some evicted families resettled in Kannagi Nagar also complained about the lack of adequate information regarding the conditions of allotment in the resettlement colony, in particular about the required money deposit to get a flat allotted.

respondents among the affected slum dwellers even interpret the lack of prior notification sufficiently in advance as a deliberate government strategy, to prevent people to organise a protest.

A second obstacle stems from the weak social organizational structure of the settlement. We already mentioned the lack of local leader to represent the residents of the locality; on the whole, the residents of AAN are not organised among themselves to represent their demands and defend their own interests. The only active organisation working in the settlement at a collective level, for the larger residents' interest, is the DYFI, under the political patronage of the Communist Party. Yet, the level of political awareness seems low, and many residents were not aware of DYFI and CPI(M) activism in the locality, thus its impact remain limited. For instance, those residents who participated to the rally carried out before the 2002 evictions were not necessarily aware that it was organized by the Communist Party. More recently, our interviews showed that the large CPI(M) banner displayed in February 2012 near the main bridge in AAN, to publicize the demands for better civic amenities and service for the residents of Neelankarai, was hardly noticed by the residents<sup>82</sup>.

The possibility of a common position and united collective action to respond to the risk of eviction and resettlement is further hindered by a major divide among the residents of the Canal Bank Road squatter settlements, namely the divide between the house owners and the tenants (whose presence is very significant). Whereas the former suffer heavy losses with the demolition of their house and the wiping out of all the investments made toward improving their habitat and local environment (in addition to the initial cost of the plot), the latter are only winners in a resettlement programme as they have no loss of fixed asset and gain a flat under a highly subsidized hire-and-purchase scheme<sup>83</sup> (a unique opportunity for them to improve their residential status). In the government resettlement programmes of slum dwellers, tenants are not excluded providing they can prove their identity and residence with a ration card<sup>84</sup> or voter card. Yet, on the ground, this usually generates struggles between the house owners and their tenants, with owners trying to grab more

allotments by baring the tenants to claim their entitlements, or with fierce negotiations between the two parties where the tenants eventually need to pay compensation to their house owners to be able to claim their allotment. Nonetheless, interviews in AAN revealed that there were also few good-hearted owners who helped their tenants, because of their long time relationship, to get allotments in Kannagi Nagar without demanding any money. Even though, it remains difficult to expect co-operation and to organize mobilization among slum residents divided into two groups, the owners and the tenants, with strong diverging interests.

In addition, in these squatter settlements, poverty proves to constitute another structural factor that limits the possibility of mobilization campaigns in a sustainable way, as also observed in the slums of Delhi. In other words, poor people cannot afford to spend time and thus loose money in long-lasting collective action for common causes.

Finally, the location of the Canal Bank Road squatter settlements, on the fringe of the city, has also an impact on the mobilisation capacity of their dwellers. The geographical marginalisation of these settlements may explain to some extent that they remained out of the reach of NGOs and of some major mobilisation movements for workers and slum dwellers, which have a greater impact in the old industrial northern areas of the city. Furthermore, the impression (that emerged from our interviews) of resignation faced with the risk of eviction, and of acceptance of the resettlement option, is better understood when one takes into account the location of the resettlement colonies as compared to the location of the Canal Bank Road squatter settlements: for the dwellers along the Buckingham Canal (in the IT Corridor zone), Kannagi Nagar resettlement colony is not so far, so the displacement is less significant than for slum dwellers from inner parts of the city<sup>85</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions

The transformations at work in the IT Corridor zone, including “cleaning” and “beautification” of the Buckingham Canal, have entailed in 2002 a large demolition drive of squatter settlements located along the canal. Notwithstanding some –unsuccessful– collective protests

82 It is true that the banner was displayed at the time of the Chief Minister's 60th birthday, when huge banners and hoardings were put all over the place, including near this bridge.

83 The monthly instalments were initially Rs 150 for 20 years, recently revised to Rs 250.

84 These are cards that provide access to ration shops (i.e. shops selling staple food items and other basic necessities at rates subsidised by the State), and which, in fact, serve as identity cards.

85 If Semmenchery and Perumbakkam resettlement colonies are much farther southward in the IT corridor, the comparative distance of displacement (and subsequent impact) remains much more important for slum dwellers living and working in the inner parts of the city than for the slum dwellers of Arignar Anna Nagar.

against the foreseen evictions, the eviction operation itself encountered low-resistance on the site. Furthermore, the impending threat of new eviction is by and large met with acceptance, as the affected residents consider their relocation as inevitable, although they remain very critical of the living conditions in the resettlement colony. Yet, the location of the resettlement colonies, in the same fringe area as their present settlement, makes the displacement comparatively less disruptive than for dwellers from inner city slums.

This case study evidenced a combination of factors limiting social mobilization, such as the lack of accurate information about the eviction schedule, weak social organizational structure, precarious economic conditions, divergence of interests between house owners and tenants. It also showed that the geographical marginalization of the

settlement, on the outskirts of the city, not only aggravated its deprivation in terms of access to urban services and infrastructure, but also entailed its marginalization vis-à-vis the main mobilisation movements for workers and slum dwellers. In addition, we should also consider the coping strategies deployed by the affected families in the highly constrained context of the removal of “objectionable slums” along the waterways in the city. If the eviction is seen as inevitable, efforts are better focussed on getting some compensation in the form of a resettlement flat, an asset and a prospective profitable good that they may resell for immediate or future monetary benefice. As per this rationale, it is no surprise that the recent agitation triggered by the launching of the biometric identification survey of slum dwellers along other canals in the city, did not attempt to oppose the announced eviction, but centred on the list of beneficiaries for the resettlement scheme.



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# Addressing Sub-Standard Settlements

## WP3 Settlement Fieldwork Report

*Coordinator Einar Braathen*



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**Chance2Sustain** examines how governments and citizens in cities with differing patterns of economic growth and socio-spatial inequality make use of participatory (or integrated) spatial knowledge management to direct urban governance towards more sustainable development.

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