



CREATING CHANGE GROUND-UP:

# MHT'S FOOTPRINTS IN DELHI





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# CONTENTS

<b>ACRONYMS</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>PERSPECTIVE</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>INTERVENTION IN DELHI</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>WATER AND SANITATION</b>	<b>8</b>
Slums	8
Community Speaks: Accessing Water Through A Community Based Model	10
Resettlement Colonies	11
Unauthorised Colonies	11
Community Speaks: Poonam, A Mother on A Mission	12
<b>HOUSING</b>	<b>13</b>
Slums	13
Resettlement and Unauthorised Colonies	14
Community Speaks: Munish Meets The Needs of Her Growing Family	15
<b>LAND</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>LIVELIHOOD</b>	<b>17</b>
Slums	17
Resettlement Colonies	18
<b>ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE</b>	<b>19</b>
In Focus: The Urban Labs Innovation Challenge - University of Chicago	20
<b>URBAN PLANNING</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY</b>	<b>22</b>
Main Bhi Dilli Campaign	23
In Focus: Adarsh Basti	24
<b>MHT'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS</b>	<b>25</b>
Community Speaks: Supporting Vulnerable Migrants In Times Of Crises	26
<b>WAY FORWARD</b>	<b>27</b>

## ACRONYMS

CAG	: Community Action Group
CPR	: Centre for Policy Research
DDA	: Delhi Development Authority
DPR	: Detailed Project Report
DUSIB	: Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board
EDMC	: East Delhi Municipal Corporation
IIHS	: Indian Institute of Human Settlements
ISST	: Indian Social Studies Trust
JJ	: Juggi Jhopdi
MHS	: Micro Homes Solutions
MHT	: Mahila Housing SEWA Trust
MLA	: Member of Legislative Assembly
NIUA	: National Institute of Urban Affairs
ODF	: Open Defecation Free
PDS	: Public Distribution System
RAY	: Rajeev Awaas Yojana
SEWA	: Self Employed Women's Association
WATSAN	: Water & Sanitation
WIEGO	: Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing

## INTRODUCTION

MHT was founded in 1994 in order to facilitate better housing and infrastructure for urban poor women in the state of Gujarat. We first started working in the water and sanitation sector in 1995. Recognising that access to electricity was also a major demand of poor women, MHT initiated a programme to provide legal electric connections in slums in 2001. Since then, our energy programme has expanded to include promoting use of energy efficient & renewable products, and building resilience capacities against climate risks. Since 2005, MHT has also played a significant role in connecting poor communities, specifically informal women workers, to public housing programmes by creating awareness, mobilising them to access finance, assisting them in the application & construction processes, and training communities to manage and monitor common infrastructure and services. Ensuring land rights for the poor is also a key aspect of our housing programme.



*A community woman in her home in Sundar Nagari*

We have provided skill training to women construction workers under our Karmika programme and have enabled informal women workers to demand their rights. The emphasis on housing rights is critical because, for several informal women workers, their homes are also their workplaces.

Today, MHT is working in 36 cities across 8 states in India and collaborating with partners in Bangladesh and Nepal. It is a leading advocacy organisation with expertise in policy development, grassroots organising, community development and technical know-how in land tenure, construction, management and oversight of government's infrastructure projects.



## PERSPECTIVE

As the conversation on climate change is being amplified and governments across the world are taking cognizance of the urgency for action, our work has become increasingly relevant. Informal women workers are one of the most vulnerable groups in this context. They are unprepared, lack access to infrastructure or resources, and do not have financial fail-safes to protect them. When there is a scarcity of water or electricity, they are the first to be deprived. Women are especially vulnerable as they spend hours fetching water, are confined to congested homes that lack ventilation and do not have access to income security.

Over the past 25 years, MHT's work with informal women workers in urban poor communities has evolved, with the model of '**responsible urbanisation**' and governance now at the centre of all its work. While initial interventions focused specifically on access to basic amenities and livelihood support to informal workers, it has adopted a broader approach wherein perspectives on sustainable and responsible urbanisation drive the programmes that it implements.

From the initial projects in Ahmedabad of providing piped water to informal settlements to our interventions on building climate resilience across South Asian countries, our focus has been on community engagement and mobilisation. We believe that building women's leadership at the community level will lead to systemic and sustained change.



*CAG members in Sawda Ghevra*

To this end, a **Community Action Group (CAG)** is created as a **slum level representative association formed through the general consensus of the women members of households in the listing of the slum. It works towards the community's development.**

This process of engaging and developing local leadership has also enabled MHT to be responsive to the needs of the communities by expanding its scope of work and collaborating with local government to build long-lasting partnerships.



# INTERVENTION IN DELHI

MHT began its intervention in Delhi over a decade ago with projects on water and sanitation (WATSAN) and livelihood training. The water and sanitation project focused on the resettlement colony of Sawda Ghevra in 2008. We also provided training to women construction workers under the Karmika programme, which not only helped them upgrade their skills, but also demand higher wages as a result of it. This project was implemented in the Resettlement JJ Colonies of Sawda Ghevra, Sundar Nagari and Nand Nagari.

Since then, **we have helped provide piped water, individual sanitation facilities, legal electrical connections, microfinance for housing, and trained hundreds of women leaders to work with local government officials and other stakeholders to collaboratively meet the needs of the community as and when they emerge.**

<u>Years</u>	<u>Areas</u>	<u>Lives</u>
12	57 informal settlements	100,000

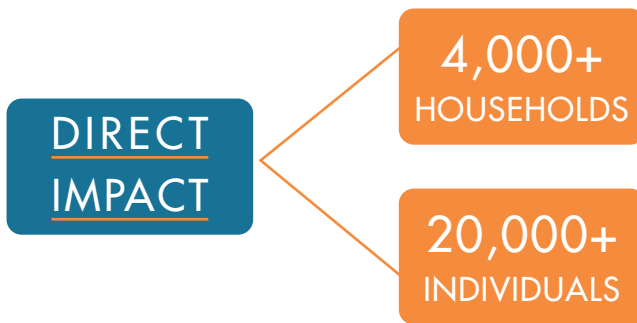
At its core, MHT’s focus is on participatory planning. To this end, we continue to engage regularly with communities in the planning and advocacy processes for amenities. The CAGs play a critical role in this process. They have and continue to advocate for streetlights, pucca roads, drainage (cleaning, maintenance, new drainage in lanes), parks (maintenance, tree plantation), playgrounds for children, maintenance of Basti Vikas Kendra, etc.



*Community women who benefitted from microfinance for housing*

# WATER AND SANITATION

MHT's intervention in Delhi has been across various kinds of informal settlements, i.e., notified slums, unauthorised colonies and resettlement colonies.



## Slums

We have focused on awareness building and behavioural change in these communities since the law was narrow in terms of the scope of possible interventions. Through participatory community workshops, we built awareness on the need for legal documents that prove individual ownership of amenities in order to strengthen their case for land ownership. Having lived without individual connections for decades, they did not see the need for it, but the complementary processes of educating the community at large and training local leaders led to a shift within the community.

In the slum of Sundar Nagari, we worked with the Councilor and MLA to get water network connection and community taps through it. We then provided loans for submersible pumps which were availed by 10 households (HHs) in 2012. In Mongolpuri, through individual contributions of Rs. 2000 per household, 40 HHs received sewer and individual water connection in 2017. We informed, mobilised and linked them to the government. Following this, they also invested in individual toilets.

Through collaborations with local government officials, we have enabled community leaders to directly access basic amenities.

Additionally, MHT has advocated for accessible, functional, clean and gender sensitive community toilets. We conducted an audit in Sundar Nagari, Mongolpuri, Sultanpuri, Bihari colony, and Sangam colony in 2015-16 to assess the functionality of community toilets and help address the sanitation needs of the residents of these slums.

Many interesting insights were gained through the audit of community toilets. Issues related to accessibility, safety, hygiene, and functionality emerged. The community toilets are open only between 7 a.m. and 9 p.m., making them inaccessible at night. This becomes especially critical when viewed through a gendered lens as women's safety has emerged as a pressing concern. Instances of gambling and anti-social activities near community toilets have been reported, making it difficult for women to use them. Often times, hygiene is not maintained in the community toilets due to scarcity of water and soap, as well as the inadequate maintenance of the facilities themselves. For women and adolescent girls, menstrual hygiene and reproductive health are jeopardised by these issues.

These factors reinforced our belief that individual, household toilets are a basic necessity and a fundamental right. Informal workers who accessed community toilets often faced loss of income due to ill health. The financial burden of accessing community toilets, in addition to the toll it takes on the family's well-being, has led to community members themselves recognising the need for individual toilets.



*A community toilet in a resettlement colony*

# COMMUNITY SPEAKS

## ACCESSING WATER THROUGH A COMMUNITY BASED MODEL

Chotiben has lived in Block F2 of Sunder Nagri for the past 35 years, sharing a lane with 15 other households. With no water connections, residents were forced to pay Rs 25 per day for their water needs. They were frustrated by having to schedule their day around water timing and the heavy physical toll of lugging water buckets. Yet, the lack of infrastructure financing options made alternatives seem impossible.

On hearing about this issue during a community meeting, MHT proposed building one community underground water pump and allowing residents to create individual water connections from this pump to their houses. One community underground pump would solve the physical constraints imposed by the dense neighborhood. In addition, costs would be spread amongst 16 users rather than just one or two - making the water pump affordable to residents.

MHT offered a Rs 20,000 loan to construct the underground water pump on the condition that all 16 households in the lane agreed to contribute to repaying the loan. Under this proposal, each household would have to pay Rs 125 a month to MHT and would get access to water in exchange.

The local Residents Welfare Association (RWA) that MHT had helped form assisted in organising community support for this infrastructure project. The RWA held multiple meetings at night and explained the mechanics of financing, constructing and maintaining the water pump. After several meetings, all 16 households finally agreed to finance the underground water pump.

The RWA also helped organise the maintenance and operations of the community water pump. As part of their duty, they decided upon the schedule and timing of the water pump, the maintenance fees, and the hiring of construction firms to build the water pump.

MHT's innovative community to individual infrastructure approach has been so successful that it has been replicated five times in Sunder Nagri alone. The model spreads large infrastructure costs over a number of users, thereby making it affordable and accessible to poor residents.

## Resettlement Colonies

As in the case of slums, it has been critical for us to create awareness on the need for individual ownership of amenities to build a case for legal title of land allotted to those resettled. In this regard, advocacy at the community level and with local government agencies continues.

A significant amount of our initial engagement in these spaces was on water and sanitation issues. In 2015, MHT ran camps with Delhi Jal Board to successfully get individual water connections in resettlement colonies of Nand Nagari and Sundar Nagari. In Sawda Ghevra, MHT provided submersible pumps + water tanks to around 800 HHs through microfinance between 2012 and 2014, as there was no access to individual water connections.

An audit of community toilets was conducted in Sundar Nagari, Nand Nagari and Sawda Ghevra. Additionally, microfinance loans have been provided for individual toilets in Sawda Ghevra, Bakkarwala, Nand Nagari, Sundar Nagari, Gokulpuri, and Sultanpuri. This programme continues to date and has created a significant behavioural shift within communities as well.

## Unauthorised Colonies

Our partnership with Delhi Jal Board extended to these colonies too, as we ran camps to successfully get individual water connections in A- Block of Harsh Vihar.

The emphasis on access to individual amenities continued even in these settlements. Through microfinance loans, the residents of Harsh Vihar and Rajeev Nagar were able to construct individual toilets.

In Jagatpuri, the community had not paid their water bills (having not received it) for long periods and were suddenly asked to pay one exorbitant sum. We advocated successfully to the Jal Board to reduce the bill amount/ wave off the interest. This created a huge relief for families in the colony as they would not have been able to afford the amount otherwise.



*Adolescent girls standing in front of their individual household toilet*

## COMMUNITY SPEAKS

### POONAM, A MOTHER ON A MISSION

In one of the narrow alleys of Sawda JJ Colony lives Poonam, a young mother of two. Her husband works as a rag-picker, so she is the primary care giver of her two boys, as is often the case in these settlements. Poonam spends most of her day watching over and taking care of her older, teenage son who is mentally and physically differently-abled.

Her son was born with special needs and requires constant care as he is susceptible to frequent seizures. He also struggles to walk and uses the wheelchair for long distances. She says, "The physical disability is still alright, it is the seizures that are graver. When he has them, I feel like he is going to die, and I can't see it."

A huge struggle for her was maintaining the boy's hygiene. Her son would defecate and urinate in front of their house since the community toilet was some distance away. The neighbours would also often complain about this, stating that "He is so big and she still makes him do it here. The whole alley smells because of this".

The issue persisted and one of our field officers informed her that we are providing material for the construction of a toilet. About 8 months ago, she availed the service and had the toilet constructed. "Now we have the facility, the boy goes and uses the toilet himself with ease. We neither have to run to the community toilet, nor does he have to defecate openly in front of the house. This is a very good facility."

What has been most significant for Poonam is the behavioural change she has witnessed in her son. She shared that she does not send her son to the school for children with special needs as he has often defecated or urinated in his pants. At home, however, he has learnt to use the toilet and, on most days, uses it by himself.



*Poonam with her son*

## HOUSING

One of the cornerstones of MHT's initial interventions was safe, secure and affordable housing. An ongoing part of our work is providing microfinance for paper-relieving, renovation, repair and up-gradation of homes to informal women workers.

Many informal women workers are engaged in home-based work, making their lived space also their workplace. Their productivity is often determined based on the condition of their housing infrastructure. For example, lack of space is a critical concern in informal settlements, often influencing the amount of work that these women workers can take on due to insufficient storage space, inadequate lighting and ventilation and cramped rooms.

### Slums

In addition to providing microfinance, as mentioned above, MHT partnered with DUSIB (Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board) on RAY (Rajeev Awaas Yojana) for in-situ upgradation. The Community Action Groups (CAGs) helped conduct household surveys and MHT worked with DUSIB on the drafting of the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for housing informal women workers along with Micro Home Solutions.



*A sample design created under the RAY projects*

The DPR captured inputs from the community, design imperatives and the Masterplan and RAY guidelines to provide alternatives for in-situ upgradation. MHT's involvement in mobilising the community and gathering inputs was critical in order for the design to be accepted. Multiple rounds of focus group discussions were conducted in the communities where a space was created for them to voice their concerns and discuss possible solutions.





*FGDs conducted with community members.*

## Resettlement and Unauthorised Colonies

MHT has provided microfinance in Sawda Ghevra, Bakkarwala, Gokulpuri, Nand Nagari, and Sundar Nagari and continues to provide this support to many of these communities.

Significantly, a DDA (Delhi Development Authority) housing scheme was introduced in 2014 for allocation of houses in Nand Nagari and Sundar Nagari JJ colonies. MHT identified eligible members, shared details about the implementation process to those eligible, facilitated submissions of applications, trained community members, and followed-up with the DDA till the process was completed. A total of 10 households availed the scheme

The unauthorised settlements wherein microfinance was provided for construction, repair, renovation and up-gradation were Harsh Vihar, Rajeev Nagar, Raghuveer Nagar and Sangam Colony.

## COMMUNITY SPEAKS

### MUNISH MEETS THE NEEDS OF HER GROWING FAMILY

Munish and her husband Virender are waste-pickers who have been living in Sawda since 2006 with their three sons aged 23, 20 and 17. When they first moved to the JJ colony, there was “nothing here, it was empty.” They used their savings and a small inheritance that they received from Virender’s family to build a one-room kutchra house from bricks. It cost roughly Rs. 70,000-Rs. 80,000 to build the one-room house, sourcing all materials locally. Now that their eldest two sons—who both work at Hilton Hotel as room attendants—are going to get married, Munish and Virender are eager to build an extra room for their son’s families. “We want to put in 4 pillars, make this roof solid, and build a floor on top. Our two sons are going to get married after Diwali so we’d like to finish building the first floor before then. Then, our sons and their wives can live in the floor above and we can live below. It will be better for everyone,” stated Munish.



*Munish and her husband Virender in their one-room home*

When asked “What does owning a house mean to you?”, Munish responded, “If you have a home, then you have everything. Even if someone comes from outside, he can’t do anything because you are in your own a home. A house is everything. If you don’t own a home you have nothing.”s

## LAND

MHT's intervention with regard to land rights in Delhi has been in resettlement and unauthorised colonies.

In the case of Nand Nagari JJ Colony, MHT ran awareness camps and assisted community members in accessing the DUSIB policy that would provide them with legal land title. Through this process, several loopholes of the policy became evident, especially in terms of affordability and access to adequate documentation. Since then, MHT has worked to build the case for a strong, community-friendly policy that provides for transfer of ownership of land in resettlement and rehabilitated colonies, including those excluded in the original policy, such as Sawda Ghevra, Bakkarwala, Dwarka and Baprola.



*A resident of Sundar Nagari outside her home*

In Harsh Vihar, an unauthorised colony, we held a camp on property tax. In unauthorised colonies, the payment of property tax is critical as it provides residents with legal documents that prove ownership over their homes. The government did not collect tax for 10 years and then charged the residents a lump-sum amount. The demand for property tax, while expensive, provided the communities with an opportunity to have their property recognised as legal by the government. MHT worked with the government and the communities to alleviate the huge financial burden on the latter by successfully advocating to have the tax paid in instalments in 2013.

## LIVELIHOOD

Most residents of these informal settlements engage in informal work. They lack employment security and often depend on multiple sources of income. Women are particularly vulnerable as they often engage in work that is invisibilised (such as home-based work) and also carry the additional burden of unpaid care work.

The communities that MHT works with have residents that engage in a range of informal work; from street vendors to domestic workers, construction workers to daily wage earners, these workers face the double burden of informal work and housing.

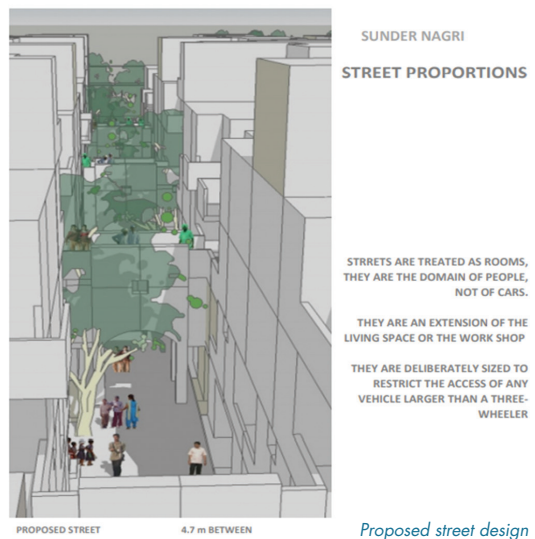


*Design for workshop pathways in Sundar Nagari*

## Slums

Many women who live in slums engage in home-based work. This is often very taxing as they lack adequate space, amenities and resources. Under Rajeev Awaas Yojana, MHT worked with Micro Home Solutions to design work spaces for home-based workers for 900 households of Sundar Nagari slum in 2012.

The design of workshop pathways is an example of the work done under RAY to visibilise and include home-based workers in the planning of Sundar Nagari. Several home-based workers use these common spaces for their work as their homes are small and cramped. It is essential, therefore, to take these uses of common spaces into consideration during the planning and design process.



*Proposed street design*



## Resettlement Colony

Our initial intervention in Sawda Ghevra was to provide training in up-skilling of construction workers under the Karmika programme. This enabled them to expand the scope of the work and demand higher wages. Over time, they have also been able to rise up the ranks and take on leadership roles. Most interestingly, several women construction workers were able to construct individual toilets in their own homes through the help of MHT without having to hire other workers, thus saving on the cost of the facility.

Community meetings in Sawda Ghevra and Nand Nagari are regularly conducted to understand the livelihood needs of home-based workers and how these can be addressed through planning and policy. These recommendations have been included in MHT's advocacy for mixed land use in Sawda Ghevra, Nand Nagari, and Bakkarwala.



*Images of home-based work*

## ENERGY EFFICIENCY AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Over the past 5 years, MHT has re-envisioned its work through the lens of the climate crisis. Across programmes, the common thread of building climate resilience in vulnerable communities emerged. This is at the very fabric of the organisation, from building CAGs to engaging governments in policies that are responsive to these needs.

Congested spaces, inadequate and unhygienic infrastructure, and physically exerting paid work makes residents of informal settlements susceptible to climate stress. In Delhi, heat stress and vector-borne diseases have had an extreme and unequal impact on poor communities.

The Community Action Groups (CAGs) receive training on climate and pre-monsoon action. The multi-session training programme provides critical insights into how these communities can deal with climate change. The training enables the community leaders to not only respond to the emerging climate crisis, but also build long-term resilience. It teaches them locally relevant solutions to combat heat stress and prevent vector-borne diseases, especially since these areas lack proper drainage facilities and water stagnation is common.

MHT has partnered with both local government and private institutes and organisations to promote energy efficiency and climate resilience. In Anand Vihar, we worked with BSES to successfully get individual electricity connections for households in 2011. This provided the informal settlement much needed relief. In 2019, the growing concern over rising air pollution in the city led to a partnership between MHT and EDMC (East Delhi Municipal Corporation) to track and reduce of air pollution.

As the conversation on the need for energy efficiency has got louder, MHT has stepped up to the challenges presented in its communities. For years now, we have been providing energy efficient technologies to our communities in the form of CFL, LED and solar bulbs, among others.

## IN FOCUS:

### THE URBAN LABS INNOVATION CHALLENGE - UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

The University of Chicago and the Delhi government launched The Urban Labs Innovation Challenge: Delhi—a unique competition that crowd-sourced the best local ideas to cut pollution in Delhi and meet the city's future energy needs. **MHT was one of the winners of the challenge for its proposal on cool-roof technology in urban informal settlements.**

Access to light, ventilation, and efficient energy is critical to improving the quality of life and productivity of the poor, especially women who spend the majority of their time indoors. Unfortunately, these women only have illegal and irregular access to electricity. Under this programme, four resettlement colonies and one slum were chosen to pilot cool roof technology – modular roofs and solar reflective paint. The colonies selected were Sawda Ghevra, Sundar Nagari (slum and resettlement colony), Nand Nagari and Nathu Colony, covering 540 households in total.

The project has also involved mobilisation of the community action groups (CAGs) to generate awareness on the benefits of using these technologies. The products have helped reduce exposure to extreme heat, making the households less vulnerable to weather impacts and improving their resilience against climate change risks.

Below are pictures of the installation of a modular roof and the application of solar reflective paint.





## URBAN PLANNING

Often, planning is done by a small group of 'experts' who are unaware of the needs and everyday reality of those affected by the planning. This is particularly in the case of vulnerable communities wherein they continue to struggle to access basic facilities and lack political salience to advocate effectively and strategically for it themselves.

On the other hand, when communities are included and participate in the initial stages of the planning process, they can provide practical solutions to their problems and assist in creating a more inclusive policy. Community-level participation also enables planning and implementation of contextually relevant solutions; in other words, it works on the understanding that one size does not fit all.



*A group exercise that captured the needs of the community and mapped it on the layout plan of the colony*

As the relationship with the community has strengthened over time, MHT has emphasised on the need for participatory planning and decision-making. This has also emerged in the context of the drafting of the Master Plan 2041, a document that plays a critical role in all planning decisions of the city over the next two decades. The Master Plan will determine how land is used, thus influencing allocation of resources and prioritisation of the needs of communities.

To make the planning process transparent and participatory, MHT conducted three community meetings in Sawda Ghevra JJ, Bakkarwala and Nand Nagari resettlement colonies.

During the meeting, MHT presented the manner in which city planning takes place, detailing out the various levels of planning. Following this, exercises were conducted wherein the participants were split into groups and were asked to (a) map the existing infrastructure available in their colony and (b) list out amenities that they would like and identify potential sites for them.

The objectives of the community meetings were manifold:

- ➔ To **demystify the urban planning process** in Delhi and facilitate the understanding of its impact on their habitat and livelihood.
- ➔ To **understand the needs and aspirations of urban poor, specifically women informal workers**, for the next two decades.
- ➔ To engage communities in **identifying solutions** along with the problems and creating alternative, inclusive models of planning.

## RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

Even as MHT has broadened and strengthened its relationship with communities across the city, we have also promoted robust, grounded research that can support our advocacy agenda. In the past decade alone, we have partnered with WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing), Centre for Policy Research (CPR), ISST (Institute of Social Studies Trust), IIHS (Indian Institute of Human Settlements) and the University of Chicago to produce research on a range of issues related to women's informal employment, housing and resettlement policies and the impact of relocation on livelihood and women's home-based work.

### Main Bhi Dilli Campaign

Since 2018, MHT has been an active member of the Main Bhi Dilli Campaign. The Main Bhi Dilli Campaign is a voluntary effort by a number of organisations to inform the Master Plan of Delhi 2041 in a manner that is more representative and inclusive. By starting public discussions on the kind of city the people of Delhi want through public meetings, workshops and advocacy, MBD is rooted in the realising of citizens' right to the city.



*Community meeting held as part of the Main Bhi Dilli campaign*

MHT's involvement in the campaign has not only been to build awareness on the Masterplan and its process among communities, but also to take forward the recommendations that are emerging from the communities to the decision-makers. We have presented the emerging demands to the NIUA (National Institute of Urban Affairs), the organisation that has been chosen to draft the Master Plan 2041 for the DDA.

MHT's advocacy agenda in resettlement colonies includes the crucial demand for legal title. Our work with DUSIB on the implementation of the 2015 policy that provided ownership to residents of resettlement colonies places us in a unique position to recommend amendments in the policy so as to ensure its successful implementation. This is currently one of the focal points in Delhi.

Most significantly, we have partnered with various government agencies to implement multiple schemes related to housing and basic infrastructure. MHT has worked with Delhi Jal Board (DJB), all the Municipal Corporations of Delhi, multiple councillors and DUSIB to facilitate access to amenities. We have worked on both national and state level schemes, including PMAY (Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana) and RAY (Rajeev Awaas Yojana).

## IN FOCUS:

### ADARSH BASTI

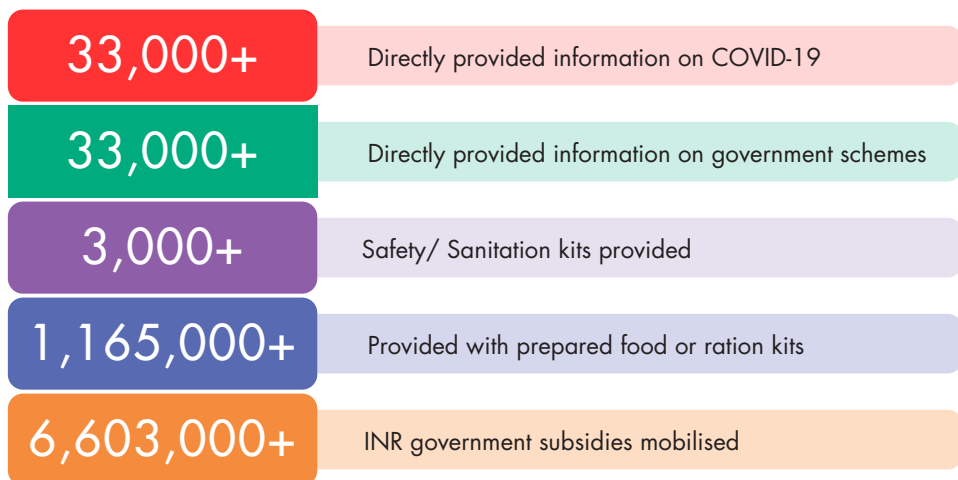
MHT was invited by DUSIB to implement the Adarsh Basti scheme in 8 slums. Under the scheme, 52 slums were selected to receive in situ redevelopment through the implementation of civic amenities and improvement of existing infrastructure. This includes the construction and maintenance of proper water supplies, individual and community toilets, streetlights, and solid waste services.

We built awareness on the scheme, facilitated provision of individual toilets and water connections, enabled community leaders to have public amenities fixed and maintained, and promoted the creation of safe spaces within the slums. Despite facing various bureaucratic obstacles, we were able to make some progress across all the sites.

<b>D-4 Sultanpuri</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built ODF Awareness</li> <li>• Repaired streetlights</li> <li>• Installed solar panels</li> <li>• Provided mobile chargers, LED bulbs, table fans</li> </ul>	<b>L-Block Mongolpuri</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobilised community to fund sewer line connections</li> <li>• Repaired streetlights</li> <li>• Installed solar panels</li> </ul>	<b>D-Block Mongolpuri</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built sanitation awareness</li> <li>• Cleaned drains</li> <li>• Installed gate through the help of the MLA</li> <li>• Electricity connections for streetlights</li> </ul>	<b>Bihari Colony</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognised as ODF</li> <li>• Secured funding for sewer line</li> <li>• Installed solar panel</li> <li>• Built a park</li> </ul>
<b>Sangam Colony</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built sanitation awareness</li> <li>• Submitted solid waste cleaning application</li> <li>• Submitted toilet construction application</li> </ul>	<b>Shashi Garden</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularised drain cleaning, waste collection and street light maintenance</li> <li>• Installed solar panel</li> <li>• Built sanitation awareness</li> </ul>	<b>Syed Peer Wala Ki Mazar</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repaired street lights</li> <li>• Built sanitation awareness</li> </ul>	<b>E-2 Nand Nagari</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularised community toilet maintenance</li> <li>• Repaired street lights</li> <li>• Built sanitation awareness</li> <li>• Built awareness on use of solar panels</li> </ul>

## MHT'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Since March 2020, MHT has mobilised all its resources and rallied its community leaders together to provide much needed support to its communities. Across cities, MHT is working tirelessly to provide rations, prepared food, and sanitation kits while continuing to build awareness on the pandemic and engaging in partnerships with various NGOs, donors and local governments to access amenities and ensure that their communities are protected. MHT has also mobilised women home-based workers to stitch masks for their communities, thus ensuring that the residents are adequately protected while generating an income for many families that have lost their main source of income due to the lockdown.



This work has continued and our reach is expanding on a daily basis, connecting those most in need with adequate relief. With the current crisis showing no sign of relenting and the mounting pressures on the informal sector, the role that MHT plays is critical. Our work is evolving and responsive, and we build our community leaders so they can rise to these challenges.

As lockdown restrictions continue to ease and informal workers return to work, MHT has repositioned its work to include long-term planning for its communities. Even as cases continue to rise, the urban poor are not only most vulnerable to contracting the virus, but are also most affected by the economic fallout. We are, therefore, working towards enabling these communities to access the necessary infrastructure and livelihood options so that they can get back on their feet and protect themselves.

## COMMUNITY SPEAKS

### **SUPPORTING VULNERABLE MIGRANTS IN TIMES OF CRISES**

In Delhi's Sawda Ghevra resettlement colony, CAG leaders came together to help 115 migrants from across Delhi who were trying to leave the city and go home following the imposition of the nationwide lockdown. When state borders were sealed, the government converted public schools into quarantine centres for those who were trapped in the city and had no place to stay. The migrants brought to such a centre in Sawda were left without any information on how and when they would be able to leave, if they were safe from Coronavirus under such circumstances, and whether their basic needs would be met.

On learning about the quarantine centre, CAG leaders approached the police officials in-charge and gained entry into the school. Their socio-political salience as CAG and RWA (Residents' Welfare Association) members legitimised their role as local community leaders. As Mumtaz, a CAG leader, shared after getting entry into the centre, "we went to meet the migrants and saw that they were scared and anxious. We comforted them and said, "Don't worry. We are with you. We'll help you get out of this. Consider us as your family members."... We asked them to maintain social distancing and not to huddle in one room. They were told all of these things already but we also told them. When we asked them to have a bath every day and change clothes, they said that they didn't have soap to have a bath. Then, we spoke to MHT and they arranged soap, detergent powder, Colgate toothpaste, oil, mask and other things. We took those things and gave it inside the quarantine centre. We also told them that they'll get food twice a day and water. When we did this work, even the police applauded us and said, "Sisters, your group is doing very well. You are doing an excellent job!".



## WAY FORWARD

MHT's resolve to strengthen local women's leadership and work towards responsible urbanisation has manifested in the wide range of activities and partnerships it has undertaken. The uncertainties brought forth by the Covid-19 pandemic have further reiterated the need for MHT to continue its work with informal women workers as the long-term effects are yet to be fully seen.

Our work has also become critical as the systems approach towards development has come to the forefront of conversations in the sector. By building a rung of local leadership, MHT is creating institutions that can take forward the work that needs to be done in the communities and enables women to advocate for themselves.

Going forward, our focus in Delhi is to continue to build partnerships, especially with the government, and expand the scope of our work. The advocacy for legal land title in resettlement colonies and the demand for inclusion in the Master Plan are some central points of our work currently. Most significant, however, remains the creation and development of the Community Action Groups (CAGs) of women in informal settlements across the Capital.





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