



REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON HOMELESSNESS AND SHELTER FOR THE URBAN HOMELESS

July 07, 2021 | Ahmedabad



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Photographs and Notes: Shriya Khelurkar

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Important Resources for this document:

1. CISHAA study on homeless shelters (March, 2020)
 - a. http://saath.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/REPORT-SUH_CISHAA_March-2020.pdf
2. MHT Study on homelessness in Ahmedabad
 - a. <https://www.mahilahousingtrust.org/resources/state-of-the-homeless-ahmedabad/>

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Background

This workshop was organized by CISHAA (Citizens for Shelter and Housing Alliance, Ahmedabad) and Azim Premji Foundation. The key objectives of the meeting were:

- To share key observations and recommendations of the 'Study of Homeless in Shelters' conducted by CISHAA in March 2020
- To get an overview of the Shelter for Urban Homeless - Status and future plans supported by Urban Community Development, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation
- To share the Recent study on homelessness in Ahmedabad conducted by Mahila Housing Trust
- To identify opportunities for developing/ strengthening appropriate support services for the homeless in Ahmedabad in collaboration with various stakeholders

The meeting was conducted over 2 sessions from 10 AM to 3 PM on 7th July 2021. The first session consisted of 4 presentations which were:

1. Presentation by Mr Mahesh Chandrasekar on Azim Premji Foundation's work with homeless populations
2. Presentation by Mr Venugopal Agrawal on the study of homeless shelters in Ahmedabad conducted by CISHAA
3. Presentation by Mr Manishkumar Parmar on the progress of implementation of homeless shelters by UCD department, AMC
4. Presentation by Mr Siraz Hirani on a study of homeless conducted by Mahila Housing Trust

After the presentation, Ms Surashree from Azim Premji Foundation also shared some findings about homeless from Bangalore. After these presentations, the meeting took a break for lunch. A session on open discussions based around 4 key questions, was conducted. The 4 questions were:

- In your experience, what have been the biggest challenges working with the homeless and in managing SUH?
- What do you think is the most important area in which quality of shelters needs to be enhanced? (For example - Outreach services or Training of Human Resources or access to health/entitlements/legal aid etc.)
- Are there any specific homeless groups which are unable to access the any shelters or other services? (for ex - women/children who have left home, the infirm, elderly, disabled, persons with mental illness, transgender, victims of substance abuse, and groups with no shelter) Why and what do you think needs to be done here?
- What role would you as an individual, organization, or network play to address these issues or needs?

Key Points Highlighted during Presentations and Discussions

The key points that were highlighted in the presentation are summarized here, grouped by the main topics that they addressed.

Social and Occupational Profile of the Homeless

1. Most Homeless are not Migrants

- a. It is a common conception that a majority of the homeless are migrant workers. However, it was made clear by comments by participants that based on their anecdotal experiences, many of the homeless are not migrants, but rather families who have lived in Ahmedabad for a long time and lost their homes due to some or the other circumstance. This was also corroborated in MHT's study, which clearly found that **82% of 920 respondents had been living in Ahmedabad for more than a decade, of which 77% were permanent migrants who do not travel back and forth from Ahmedabad.** This indicates that a large proportion of the homeless needs solutions that can help them gain access to permanent housing, rather than temporary shelter.

2. Homeless are from Socially Backward Classes

- a. The social profile of homeless also needs consideration, since many homeless are members of minority groups such as SCs and STs and are originally from Adivasi areas around the Gujarat-MP-Rajasthan-Maharashtra border.

3. A majority of Homeless are daily wage labourers.

- a. A majority of the homeless population is employed in daily-wage informal sector jobs, with unskilled construction work being a major component. There is also a high prevalence of child labour.

4. Prevalence of Single Male Migrants

- a. A distinction needs to be made between the need for shelters and labour hostels – presently a majority of the residents of shelters are single male migrants who need services as may be present at worker hostels, rather than homeless shelters.
- b. It was highlighted that the services provided at present shelters like free food are preferred and appreciated by single male migrants. Physical spaces of the shelters are also designed for single male type occupants. Therefore, a transition from shelters to worker hostels may not be very difficult to implement.

Quantity of Shelter Services Required

1. Number of Homeless

- a. The following table gives a clear picture of the estimated number of homeless in Ahmedabad as opposed to the capacity of current and planned homeless shelters.

Total Capacity of All Homeless Shelters (existing plus planned)	Number of Homeless persons as per Census 2011	Total Number of Homeless Persons as per official Homeless Survey	Number of Homeless persons as per the survey by Mahila Housing Trust in 2020	Homeless shelter capacity as recommended by the NULM-SUH guidelines (100 per 1,00,000 population)
5,197	11,293	8,095	10,315 (excluding those in SUH)	5,500

It can be seen that even after the proposed expansion, the total capacity of the homeless shelters will fall short of all estimates of homeless population in Ahmedabad.

2. Increasing the opportunities for shelter provision

- a. Several opportunities for using public facilities such as schools and public buildings as homeless shelters during non-working hours exist but a detailed plan for ensuring such coordination and implementation is non-existent at the higher levels of local government. UCD officials stated that despite their requests to open shelters at public hospitals, higher levels of government have denied these requests. This indicates the need for a strategic plan to combat homelessness that goes beyond just implementing homeless shelters. UCD officials indicated that advocacy aimed at planning institutions like GULM and State government Housing Department is required for these.
- b. The spatial spread of the shelters can be vastly improved if the projects under BSUP, RAY, PMAY, which are all being implemented and managed by the AMC can be brought together for better and more efficient coordination

3. Upcoming Shelters to be constructed by AMC

- a. AMC is going to construct 8 new homeless shelters, which are to be 5 storey structures, to be able to house 350-400 homeless persons, including provisions for families. These shelters have been designed and the grant for their construction has been released, with construction to be managed by the AMC engineering department.
- b. It must be noted that there has not been any invitation on the part of the designers or the AMC to invite stakeholder participation in the design of these shelters. The design of these shelters should be reviewed and spaces for provision of value-added services such as training etc should be included in these structures.
- c. UCD has also invited CISHAA to review the locations of these structures and give recommendations if the location should be changed or other locations can be more beneficial.

Issues of Children, Women and People with Special Needs

1. Children

- a. The MHT study found that a large number of homeless children are involved in child labour.
- b. Homeless children have no opportunity to join public schools due to issues such as a lack of documentation which needs to be addressed. They also do not have access to other municipal services for women and children.

2. Mental Illness, Alcoholism and Addiction

- a. Many homeless consume alcohol and drugs. Due to prohibition, these activities need to be prosecuted by the police, but for the departments, it becomes difficult and burdensome to process and prosecute such persons. Furthermore, imprisonment makes poor people completely the responsibility of the state.
- b. Focused work on de-addiction and reduction of alcohol consumption must be undertaken for the homeless workers.
- c. It was highlighted that many persons who are homeless have mental illnesses and that after the discharge from mental hospitals are still not accepted back into their families. Proper pathways need to be identified to be able to rehabilitate them into their families or into livelihoods so that they do not end up homeless on the streets.

3. Transgenders and Beggars

- a. Shelter management reported that very few cases of transgenders living in SUH. A more active outreach to identify their living conditions needs to be made.
- b. Shelter for beggars, women and special needs groups are being managed by different departments and need to follow different application and bureaucratic processes,

such as police verification of beggars. Therefore, the UCD, which has the highest spread and reach of all, is not able to efficiently redirect homeless with special needs to such shelters.

Way Forward and Action Points

1. Long Term Interventions

- a. A consensus was that while there has been a lot of good work on the ground regarding increased provision of shelters and services, the main causes of homelessness remain unaddressed by this program.
- b. Pathways to use shelters as means to access more permanent and tenable forms of housing need to be developed, since many of the homeless in Ahmedabad are long term homeless who need housing, not shelter.

2. Value Added Programs

- a. Several programs that can add value to the existing systems were proposed, including
 - i. Skill development for homeless and homeless shelter residents including
 1. Increased skills in construction sector
 2. Opportunities for women
 - ii. Access to education for the children of homeless groups
 - iii. Increased access to health services
 - iv. Access to entitlements and public benefits
- b. It should be noted that existing NGOS which are managing the SUH are quite proactive in supporting residents to access entitlements. Therefore, these NGOs can be supported to develop their capacity for implementing value added programs.

3. Actions by Attendees

- a. Organizations who were part of the meeting were invited to approach Azim Premji Foundation with proposals for what they would like to do for the homeless. They may approach existing grantees for support in developing their application.
- b. CISHAA and its members may develop a coordinated strategy for intervention for homeless populations.
- c. UCD department has stated that they will assist Area Level Federations who are working to manage SUH to be able to approach Azim Premji Foundation for expanding opportunities.

4. Development of operating organizations

- a. AMC is only going to provide a 5 year grant for operations of shelters, after which the O&M organization needs to operate the shelters on its own. 3 years of the 5 year grant are almost over. Most organizations are unsure of how they are going to fund the operations of the shelters once the 5 year period is over and they need specific support to develop and implement sustainable strategies for this over the next 2 years – and this can be an important intervention by interested stakeholders.

5. UCD Department Recommendations for Interventions

- a. UCD recommended that a more efficient infrastructure can be developed for rescuing homeless by supporting the department to procure a rescue van for each city zone.
- b. Furthermore, a citizen's app can be created to help people mark images and geo location of homeless so that shelter rescue teams can approach them and help them move to the homeless shelters.

Annexure A – Workshop Design

Workshop - Opportunities to strengthen/ develop appropriate support services for the homeless in Ahmedabad

Organisers:

- CISHAA - Citizens for Shelter and Housing Alliance, Ahmedabad
- Azim Premji Foundation

Wed 7 July from 10 am to 3pm

Venue: CAMA Hotel, Shahpur, Ahmedabad

Participants: Total – 36

1. NGOs running shelters – 17
2. CISHAA Members – 12
3. Urban Community Development, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation – 4
4. Azim Premji Foundation – 3

Objectives

- To sharing key observations and recommendations of the ‘Study of Homeless in Shelters’ conducted by CISHAA in March 2020
- To get an overview of the Shelter for Urban Homeless - Status and future plans supported by Urban Community Development, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation
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Schedule

- 10 AM – 10.15 AM – Tea
- 10.15 AM – 12.30 PM – Panel Discussion
 - Moderator –Rajendra Joshi
 - Speakers –Mahesh Chandrashekhar, Venugopal Agrawal, Manish Kumar Parmar, Siraz Hirani
- 12.30 PM – 1.30 PM – Lunch
- 1.30 PM – 3.00 PM – Open Discussions and Key Questions
 - In your experience, what have been the biggest challenges working with the homeless and in managing SUH?
 - What do you think is the most important area in which quality of shelters needs to be enhanced?
 - Are there any specific homeless groups which are unable to access the any shelters or other services? Why and what do you think needs to be done here?
 - What role would you as an individual, organization or network play to address these issues or needs?

Annexure B – Attendees

Sr no.	Name	Ph. number	Email.id	Organisation
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Annexure C – Photographs

