Squatters & the City: Reflecting on Kirtipur Housing Project

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The Ideal City: between myth and reality
Representations, policies, contradictions and challenges for tomorrow's urban life

U Sengupta, Queen’s University Belfast
Urbanisation & housing: Nepal

- Nepal is one of the poorest countries in the world with a per capita income of US$ 426
- Predominantly a rural country- only 17% people live in the urban areas and 83% population are still living in rural parts of the country.
- Average urban population growth rate at 6.65% as against 2.25% overall
- 80% in agricultural activities but rapidly reducing – only 18% productive land
- Urbanisation of poverty: 25% urban population under poverty line and growing
- Mismatch in housing supply and demand
- Between 20-50,000 population in 65 squatter settlements in 2010 and growing
Squatter and the City

Policy context

◆ No specific policy re evictions or for resettlement
◆ National Shelter policy (1996) archaic and up for significant update
◆ Alignment with the global policy of ‘shelter for all’

Legal context

◆ Legal framework slow to respond to squatter issues
◆ Squatting is unlawful but not illegal

Institutional context

◆ Public housing was never introduced
◆ Owner built homes & incremental
◆ Private sector housing catering to middle and high income people.
◆ Rise of third sector to support community activism but not consistent

• Soaring land and housing prices, high rents causing affordability problems
• According to Government estimate, half a million dwellings were needed to sustain the growing population (KVTTDC, 2010)
Growth of Squatter Settlements in Kathmandu Metropolitan City

Kirtipur Housing Project

Evolution

• Vishnumati Link Road Project conceived first in 1969; formally launched in 1999 with ADB loan

• 5 communities affected by the road project – all without any legal title to the land or planning/building permission

• Series of eviction notices & resistance from the community

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Year Settled</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Number of household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhumakhel</td>
<td>1971</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chagal</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khusibahil</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tankeswor</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaukhel</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lumanti (2001)
Organisational model

- NBBS, Nepal Basobas Basti Samrakchhan
- NME, Mahila Ekta Samaj
- Education Network
- Children are at Risk
- UDLE

Squatter community

- Centre for Integrated Development
- WaterAid
- ACHR
- UN HABITAT SHELTER FOR ALL
- Government of Nepal, Ministry of Physical Planning and Works
- Department of Urban Development & Building Construction
- KMC
Financial Model

• Finance management responsibility was left to the project beneficiaries
• A revolving - Urban Community Support Fund created with NRs 25 million
• Residents agreed to repay over 15 year period @ NRs 2000 per month
• Reinforces concept of cost recovery

Contributors of Urban Community Support Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributors</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slum dwellers International</td>
<td>2.1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Coalition of Housing Rights</td>
<td>4.8 million</td>
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<tr>
<td>Action Aid</td>
<td>9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water aid</td>
<td>0.6 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kathmandu Metropolitan City</td>
<td>8 million</td>
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</tbody>
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Kirtipur Housing Project

- 44 *Pakki* houses are constructed
- A modest two storied unit (row housing)
- Two wells in three filtered tanks
- Underground tanks are built to collect rain water and waste water treatment
Kirtipur Housing Project

- 3 Ropani land purchased in Paliphal, Kirtipur 7 Km from the centre of Kathmandu
- Location selected as per their needs and preference and repayment options

- Compromises made in mainly two areas: integration with existing community and impact of relocation on employment.
Is this a successful example of enablement policy?

- Systematic involvement of NGOs, advocacy campaign and subsequent support extended by all section of the society
- Close involvement of the beneficiaries at all stages of decision making
- Defines tripartite relationship ‘NGO-Community-State’ nexus
Why has not the project been repeated?

- Absence of POLICY FOLLOW UPS: There is no formalisation of institutional and legislative mechanism

- Driven by individuals/or NGO – lacking intellectual/material growth

- Lack of private sector participation: Missing ‘sustainable’ but ‘unplanned privatisation

- Return of the powerful state?