

# Searchlight

## SOUTH ASIA

TRACKING URBAN POVERTY TRENDS IN INDIA, BANGLADESH, NEPAL AND PAKISTAN

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CHF INTERNATIONAL

### FEATURE

## Decentralized Waste Management Targeted at Urban Poor

BY BALAJI THANGARAJ

Increase in consumerism, rapid urbanization and greater population densities have resulted in high proportions of waste being generated in Asian cities. Dhaka alone generates about 5800 tons per day of waste.

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**FEATURE** continued

Bangalore, which generates 3500 tons of waste per day, hosts close to 10 million citizens – more than double the population that it had about eight years back. While population and therefore, waste generation, has increased, there has been no change in the Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike, or the Bangalore Municipal Corporation's (BBMP) strategy for waste management.

The city follows a centralized waste management model, which essentially involves a single agency collecting and transporting waste to a designated landfill. "There is neither institutional arrangement nor legal provisions to enforce segregation across all waste generators. And the tenders for waste, which have not been renewed for five years, purely focus on collection and transportation and do not incentivize segregation. There needs to be a concerted effort across the value chain to ensure segregation. Otherwise, all the waste will continue to be dumped in landfills at Mandur and Mavelipura" says Rathish Balakrishnan, Director of [Sattva](#). In the centralized model of waste management, slum and other low income areas invariably get ignored.

## Most waste in urban India moves to landfills, and when one location is filled to capacity, a new landfill site is identified to repeat the process.

Most waste in urban India moves to landfills, and when one location is filled to capacity, a new landfill site is identified to repeat the process. Experts, however, feel that the 'landfill' based approach is not sustainable in the long run, particularly since soaring land prices in cities ensure that new landfills are further away from the older ones.

Bangalore had its own share of problem with landfills. During August 2012, the city's landfill at Mandur stopped receiving 3500 tons per day of waste due to public interest litigation (PIL) in court against it by [Environment Support Group](#) (ESG) and other residents. As a result, the city spilled over with waste. There was no dumping area available and vehicles carrying waste were grounded. Bangalore was re-christened as India's "garbage" city – a definite drop from its position as the country's "garden" city. The court eventually came up with clear directions for managing waste in the city. It has made segregation of waste mandatory at source and directed setting up of a minimum of three Segregation and Wet Waste Processing Stations in each of its 198 wards (division within city). The court also emphasized the importance of decentralized waste management and announced, "We think that decentralization in the system of solid waste management would lend efficacy and prevent bottlenecks impacting the entire city at a given point of time."

### **DECENTRALIZED SOLUTIONS FOR WASTE MANAGEMENT**

The [zero waste generation model](#) is being seen by experts as a sustainable long term solution. This model will remove the need for landfills, which are at best seen as temporary solution and also save on transportation cost. Post the Bangalore crisis, a citizen's initiative called [Wake up Clean up](#) (WUCU) was set up, led by a citizen, Kalpana Kar. "Designed as a 7-day event, WUCU brought various stakeholders together demonstrating the willingness of civil society in partnership with Government and industry to collaborate to put together systems and processes that will deliver a clean city", says Kalpana Kar. It is seen as a step towards finding a sustainable and scalable solution for the waste situation, not only for Bangalore but also other cities in India. Decentralized infrastructure for waste management at a ward level – having facilities for segregation of waste and composting facility for treating organic waste, is one of the solutions suggested by WUCU.

**FEATURE** continued

Decentralized waste management systems help in providing focused waste collection and recycling services to low income areas, particularly slum communities. They also employ people from same community like informal recyclers and waste pickers, many of them being migrants from rural areas, thus helping in improving their livelihoods. Although this community plays an important role in the waste management chain, their efforts are seldom recognized by the other stakeholders. Importantly, the decentralized approach could help in changing the mindset of people towards waste management, and engender a move away from the “Not in my backyard” (NIMBY) mindset to embrace a more responsible and sustainable solution of waste management.

Decentralized waste management systems help in providing focused waste collection and recycling services to low income areas, particularly slum communities. They also employ people from same community like informal recyclers and waste pickers, many of them being migrants from rural areas, thus helping in improving their livelihoods.

Although there is in-theory acceptance of the efficacy of the decentralized model, most households in India still hesitate to treat waste in their backyards. In the urban poor communities, the situation is worse, as slums are illegal and given the density of population, difficult to navigate for waste collection agents. Further, these communities are not perceived as being able or willing to pay for the services. Despite these challenges to their adoption, various organizations have not only come up with innovative solutions to waste management but also helped communities to earn incomes, get recognition for the role they play in managing the city’s waste and obtain basic rights and entitlements. Interestingly, several of these programs seek to create value from the waste, adding to the model’s sustainability.

**“TRASH TO TREASURE” IN BANGALORE, INDIA**

[CHF International](#), a not-for-profit organization partnered with [Centre for Social Action](#) (CSA) of Christ University, Bangalore and the [Caterpillar Foundation](#) to launch the “Trash to Treasure” program in 2008. It established a recycling center run by women to provide waste collection service to 1,300 slum households and 1,500 low income non-slum households in Rajendra Nagar and Ambedkar Nagar, Bangalore. This initiative not only introduced a valuable service that the slum community did not previously have, but also offered a livelihood program for some community members.

Ms K. Latha, Program officer, CHF says, “we faced initial challenges – to begin with, all houses had to be mapped in the area as there was no data given that the local municipal body (BBMP) had not included this area under its regular waste management program.” Another challenge pertained to the collection of a monthly fee for the service INR 10 - 15 (US\$0.18 – 0.27) per household. The popular belief was that the local government should collect garbage free of cost. Despite this, CHF managed a conversion of 70% of residents who agreed to pay the monthly fee. The others chose to simply throw the garbage in a nearby drain.

## FEATURE continued



CHF INTERNATIONAL

Their waste management model was simple. CHF employed about 8 women waste pickers to collect waste door-to-door from 2800 households in Rajendra Nagar and Ambedkar Nagar. The waste was segregated at source and brought to the waste management facility. The recyclable waste was sold to various recyclers and the wet waste was taken for composting. CHF says that white paper fetched INR 11/Kg (US\$0.2), Metal Cans and PET Bottles fetched a higher price – INR 70/Kg (US\$1.27) and INR 26.50 (US\$0.48) respectively. Organic waste of about 1000 kg of food waste per month was composted, yielding about 300 kgs of compost (after 3-4 weeks of composting). This earned CHF INR 900 (US\$16) per month. The waste pickers earned over INR 110 per day (US\$2), enjoyed better working conditions and a life of dignity.

The model's simplicity made it successful. BBMP now included Rajendra Nagar and Ambedkar Nagar in their tender for waste collection. CHF then decided to hand over the treatment center to a local entrepreneur from within the community. This center is yet to break even with income of INR 35,000 per month (US\$630) from sale of recyclables and expenditure of INR 56,500 per month (US\$1,025). The entrepreneur has now extended the services to nearby apartments and higher income areas as well, in a bid to ensure that the venture becomes self-sustainable. BBMP decided to open four more centres collaborating with NGOs during 2011 and now wants similar centers in all 198 wards.

### “WASTE TO WEALTH” – THE VELLORE TEMPLE PROJECT, INDIA

Vellore is a small city about 150 kms from Chennai, Tamil Nadu. It is home to the [Golden Temple](#), popularly known as “Narayani Peedam”, located in a 100 acre campus. The temple attracts around 5000 tourists daily, who generate about 2 tons of waste per day. Faced with waste management challenges, the temple authorities adopted a comprehensive decentralized solid waste management plan.

[Exnora International](#) is an NGO focusing on environmental services. Dr. MB Nirmal, Founder of Exnora says, “The Golden Temple of Vellore is one of the best models for green and environmentally friendly campuses, and can be followed in other cities as well.”

All recyclable waste is collected daily by women workers called “Temple Beautifiers”, and brought to a Waste Processing Facility (WPF) within the temple campus. This facility employs about 150 workers, most of them women. The recyclable waste is sorted, dried, processed and segregated (upto grade level) into 45 different varieties, before it is packed and sold. The effort of sorting and processing is significant – for instance the milk sachets are cleaned before packaging to eliminate odor, and PET

**FEATURE** continued

bottles are crushed and shredded before packing. The bio-degradable waste is taken to composting centre to be converted into organic manure through vermin composting process. The temple earns about INR 100,000 (US\$1,800) per month from the sale of recyclables and manure. The natural manure is used for enhancing the green cover in the campus, while segregated fruit and vegetable peel are also used for making cleaning power. The temple’s zero waste management model has become so popular that communities from neighboring areas have expressed an interest in replicating it in their locality.

**“CASH FOR TRASH” – THE DHAKA EXPERIENCE**

**Waste Concern**, an NGO dealing specifically with solid waste management, was started by two young urban planners Iftekhar Enayetullah and Maqsood Sinha during mid-1990s. Dhaka generated 5800 tons per day of solid waste, 80% of which was organic waste suitable for composting – this translated to about 1200 truck-loads.

Waste Concern’s approach was to see waste as a resource rather than a problem. Their strategy was to establish a network of community-based composting plants, which would convert household organic waste into bio-fertilizer, and provide jobs for poor people, especially women.

Waste Concern started a pilot composting plant in Mirpur, Dhaka during 1995, including several slum and squatter settlements including one at Bashantek slum. Utilizing the existing network of waste pickers and simple technology, Waste Concern was able to demonstrate the benefits of a community-based approach. It paid residents about US\$75 per ton of waste collected. Apart from earning money from waste, incidents of disease drastically reduced and living conditions in the slum improved. Prior to the project, the slum reported high prevalence of diarrhea and cholera, particularly during the summer.

The success of the Mirpur pilot project convinced all stakeholders that the model was workable. In 1998, with support from UNDP, Waste Concern replicated this model in four other poor communities around Dhaka. Today, Waste Concern is treating nearly 200 tons of garbage a day at six different locations in and around Dhaka.

**CONCLUSION**

The urban poor including slum dwellers and low income residents, informal recyclers, and waste pickers are a neglected lot, even in government programs. Waste is also not seen as income opportunity. Decentralized waste program brings in several advantages. Slums and low income areas can be covered more efficiently in decentralized programs.

A common theme emerging from the three examples of successful community-led waste management program is that waste should not be seen as a problem, but as a resource with the potential to earn money. This could be the one way to change the NIMBY mindset of people. The earning can also be shared among employees, who are typically people from bottom of pyramid. .

Decentralized systems provide better working conditions and an identity to these workers. Some of them could also go on to become social entrepreneurs. This system also helps keep slums / low income areas clean and thereby reducing instance of disease. Replicating the decentralized model and scaling up these units to cover an entire city would go a long way to resolve the endemic waste challenges across various cities.

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**DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**

# Mentoring as a Positive Youth Development Strategy

**BY MEENA AIER**

Policy initiatives to promote universal education amongst India's youth population have led to significant improvement in school enrolment statistics of the country. Almost six and a half decades post-independence, India hosts one of the largest school systems in the world, with over 195,000 secondary and higher secondary schools. The Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009 further aided enrolment and access to education for all children. The number of children in the age-group of 6-15 years OR attending secondary schools has seen a dramatic rise; the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for secondary school education has increased from 43% in 2000 to 63% in 2010. Around 98% of the school children can now access a primary educational institution within 1 kilometer of their homes, while 92% have access to a secondary educational institution within 3 kilometers of their homes. On a country wide level, today, 180 million children are enrolled in more than 1.2 million schools, and are taught by over 5.7 million teachers.

In urban areas, there are over 0.2 million schools accessed by 40 million students who are taught by 1.5 million teachers. The growth of 24.5% in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in urban areas is also a positive indicator of improved access to education among the urban youths in the country. However, amidst encouraging signs of greater education proliferation, the quality of education provided in these mushrooming schooling institutions has come into question.

**DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**  
continued**SUB-PAR EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

Although the rising GER and schools statistics are in tandem with the basic RTE requirements, a deeper investigation into the quality of education delivery indicates some significant gaps. In terms of infrastructure, only 64% of the urban schools have *pucca* buildings (structures that are more permanent and are made out of concrete) and majority of the schools consist of merely 4-6 classrooms. Additionally, schools face a dearth of resources – 58% of the schools have libraries and 47% have access to computers. Paucity of human resources also poses a major problem; a paltry 53% of the schools have a regular headmaster, while about 50% of the schools are managed by less than five teachers.

Teacher quality is another challenge. Of the 1.5 million teachers in urban areas, only 20% have received in-service training and 30% haven't received a college edu-

In urban areas, there are over 0.2 million schools accessed by 40 million students who are taught by 1.5 million teachers.

cation. Out of a total 322 school working days, teachers in urban areas devote on an average, 6 days to extra-curricular activities. The lack of education or training qualifications, compounded with a dearth of other developmental activities has created 'physical and emotional barriers in education'.

A number of studies have underlined the persistence of teacher biases, unappealing schooling facilities, and lack of community support and absent channels of communication as major reasons for the underdevelopment of youths in Indian schooling institutions. This problem is likely to affect the urban poor too, who attend schools that are not conducive for holistic development. A study conducted by Ashish Singh in 2010 found that, lack of opportunities for urban poor youth due to family backgrounds can account for up to 17% of the total inequality of wages in adult life. Studies have also shown that adolescents from urban poor families often face self-esteem challenges, have trouble controlling and channelling their emotions, have low aspirations and are not informed enough to plan for the future. Educational infrastructure, as it stands today, seems ill equipped to address these attitudinal and emotional problems faced by the adolescent urban poor.

**THE POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT MODEL**

The Positive Youth Development (PYD) paradigm propounded by Reed Larson in 2006, asserts that young people possess a 'built-in motivational system that has enormous potential to engage youth in positive development'. However, more often than not, challenges of daily life act as obstacles that can 'keep the motivational system turned off' – either temporarily (in case of minor, transient problems) or permanently (in case of extreme conditions of economic poverty and social deprivation). In such cases, interventions in the form of family support, extra-curricular activities or a mentoring relationship becomes extremely important to ensure that these adolescents communicate their distress and overcome their obstacles. A March 2013 J-PAL Youth Initiative Review paper posits the long held notion that non-cognitive skills can be just as significant as cognitive skills in determining how well young people 'are able to navigate the transition from childhood to adulthood'.

Since families and schools do not provide any additional support to these adolescents, and 'natural' mentors are hard to come by in urban poor communities, mentoring by young adult professionals can prove to be an effective intervention system.

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**DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**  
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Adult professionals with steady, thriving careers, and committed to play the role of a patient guide to poor youths form an important crux of the mentoring system. With additional training on subjects related to cognitive and non-cognitive development, they become a significant part of youths' development. The localized administration of these programs makes it easier for administrating NGOs to identify the youth pockets in need, and recruit the 'right' mentors. Additionally, it also ensures that the mentoring program can be delivered effectively and improved over time.

Mentors, in consultation with the NGOs, can form their own localized version of the PYD model and ensure that school going adolescents stay sufficiently motivated to learn and grow holistically. Mentors are also capable of addressing issues that parents or teachers cannot, for adolescents will not view them as authority figures. Acting as friendly guides, mentors can communicate transparently with their mentees and provide strong moral support in times of distress. Mentors also have the

Of the 1.5 million teachers in urban areas, only 20% have received in-service training and 30% haven't received a college education.

additional advantage of having access to various social networks, which can prove to be extremely helpful while nurturing youth talent and aspirations.

**MENTORTOGETHER: MENTORING URBAN POOR IN THE INDIAN CONTEXT**

In the Indian urban context especially, mentoring can fill the void in holistic education for adolescents from marginalized and often unsafe communities. [Mentortogether](#) stands out as one example of an existing mentor-mentee organization that has already begun to make an impact in this regard. A registered not-for-profit organization based in Bangalore, Karnataka, Mentortogether envisions nurturing fruitful, democratic relationships between disadvantaged urban youth and working professionals. It aims to empower the at-risk youth population by honing their non-cognitive skills and provide them with access to social networks and thereby, opportunities that they would not otherwise be aware of. Arundhuti Gupta, CEO & Founder, Mentortogether, believes that mentors can boost their mentees' self-confidence (through language skills and improved awareness) and could also connect them to future or current employers and educational institutions, which would allow the mentees to pursue their career goals.

Mentortogether's model is based primarily on the PYD paradigm and follows a one-on-one mentoring process. In its pilot mentoring program, 20 girls in the age group of 14-18 years from a government home (a shelter run by the State Department, for girls at risk and in need of care) in Mysore, Karnataka were paired with female mentors from different fields and professions. The mentees were selected based on a needs assessment exercise, while the mentors were put through a rigorous interview and training process before the start of the mentoring program. The training workshop provided the mentors with useful tools to address possible issues faced by their mentees and establish a transparent channel of communication. Thereafter, the mentors and mentees met twice every month, for 60-90 minutes to conduct structured face-to-face sessions often in the presence of organizers from Mentortogether; mentees could also contact mentors via online platforms such as emails using computers. Additionally, workshops focusing on life skills and English language communication were held for the benefit of mentees. Progress and feedback were constantly documented by Mentortogether in an effort to keep track of the program and to decipher various

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**DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**  
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developmental outcomes. The program was designed to be a year-long 'formal' mentoring relationship, which could then devolve into non-formal relationships.

The formal mentoring program led to a number of encouraging developments among the girls. The evaluation conducted during and at the end of the mentoring program (in the form of questionnaires, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews) showed that the mentees felt more confident while facing various family and community pressures. In many instances, mentees reported that they were able to form practical, realistic goals for the future and start working towards it. Over the course of the relationship, mentees felt safe sharing some of their deepest concerns and fears with their mentors, and were successfully able to address them. For the mentees, their mentors took on the roles of a friend, role model and guide as the situation demanded – it allowed the girls to genuinely participate democratically in the mentoring process. A significant cognitive development was observed in the English language aptitude; something that a number of girls felt uneasy with before the mentoring program. With some guidance from their mentors, they were able to overcome this barrier and felt that their new-found comfort with English language significantly improved their career and educational prospects.

## DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE continued

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Other mentoring programs in the country such as 'Mentor Me India' and 'Dream and Dream' too have embarked upon similar mentoring projects. In large metropolises particularly, various social and professional networks are easily available and the youth display greater levels of awareness. In such cases, says, Arundhuti, "Mentors are required to act more like facilitators and less as instructors. Young people in metropolises aspire for white collar jobs and the focus is to create a match based on mutual professional interest." At the end of the program, she adds, mentees reported having concrete plans for their future, and credited their mentors for providing them with useful inputs which ensured that their motivation levels could be sustained through various obstacles.

### MENTORING: A SUSTAINABLE INTERVENTION FOR THE URBAN POOR?

Given the state of India's current education system, mentoring seems to present very significant advantages for its youth population. Mentors bridge an important developmental gap faced by urban poor adolescents and facilitate their upward mobility. However, in the Indian context, mentoring also faces some very real roadblocks. The urban poor often hesitate to open up, or engage in transparent communication with their mentors. Further, at the end of a formal mentoring relationship, reports Arundhuti, mentees do not seem to be comfortable reaching out to their mentors; any initiative for a meeting or an activity is often undertaken by the mentor. The adolescents' passivity also makes it difficult to determine if the various skills (especially non-cognitive skills) imparted and developed upon during the formal mentoring relationship has been truly understood and absorbed. Mentortogether evaluations also suggest that mentees, sometimes, perceive mentoring relationships as an extension of classroom activity and feel that they need to 'learn' about 'decision making and assertiveness.' One of the challenges facing evaluations in such contexts according to Arundhuti, is gauging whether the mentees are 'learning to exercise their own independent thought and rational judgment or simply agreeing with whatever is being taught.'

Despite these disadvantages, mentoring constitutes a promising intervention. Potentially, unlike pure livelihood intervention models that provide specific skill training and placement to unemployed youth, holistic youth development models ensure that the urban poor are given access to resources that can amount to significant future gains, and hone their life skills. It seeks to ensure that the urban poor do not remain deprived and have sources for further development and progress. In a highly unequal society such as India, channels that promote equality of opportunity - especially among disadvantaged youth - form a significant indicator of future growth. Although there are numerous challenges of implementing a sustainable mentoring program - such as finding suitable partner organizations, gaining adequate funding, conducting fool-proof evaluations, organizations such as Mentortogether, that focus on scientifically informed mentoring programs, have started laying the building blocks of holistic youth development eco-system for India.



FLICKR USER AKEG

## NEWS DEEP DIVE 1

# Climate Risk Vulnerability and Government Policy

BY UTHARA GANESH

Climate change causes severe damage to the most socio-economically exposed communities. South Asia is home to almost 40% of the world's poorest, and therefore faces a double conundrum. Countries in the region must not only support their populations from negotiating the swift socio-economic changes that have come to characterize their economies, but must also make concerted efforts towards mitigating the various additional risks that climate change vulnerability entails.

In the context of rapid South Asian urbanization, climate change and poverty are increasingly demonstrating a close causal affiliation. Asian cities are estimated to contribute around 80% of the region's GDP drawing more people to them in search of livelihoods. The Asian Development Bank [reports](#) that by 2050, 52.4% of South Asians are expected to live in cities. The absolute number of people living in South Asian cities is projected to be among the highest in Asia, growing from about 549 million people in 2010 to 875 million in 2030. This constitutes 38% of the expected increase in the urban population in Asia and 23% of the expected urban population increase in the world in the next 20 years. While estimates on the proportion of the urban poor in these cities are absent, they appear to be high, given that almost 190.7 million people, or 35% of those living in South Asian cities, inhabit slums.

Slums and other marginal areas in cities tend to be highly exposed to climate-related risks, and urban services such as water and food supplies, sanitation and electricity come under increasing strain due to floods, droughts, heat waves and rising sea-levels. Governments in the region have been concerned about the adverse impacts

**NEWS DEEP DIVE 1**  
continued

of climate change, and are seeking ways to address them. Recently, the governments in [Pakistan](#) and [Nepal](#) initiated policies around climate change in a bid to accelerate efforts to mitigate adverse climate impact.

**CLIMATE CHANGE AND SOUTH ASIA**

In the last decade, poor communities South Asia have had to pay immense costs due to their exposure to climate change related disasters. According to the [German-watch Global Climate Risk Index](#), Pakistan, ranked amongst the ‘most affected countries in 2011’, showed an average weighted ranking in the index at a high 10.50%. Bangladesh fared five times worse at 50.83% and Nepal at 38%. Bangladesh, however recorded a lower loss per unit of GDP ratio at 0.01% compared to Pakistan and Nepal, for which the figures stood at 1.19% and 0.03%, respectively. The loss of lives in Pakistan was the highest in 2011 (due to the massive floods that ravaged the Sindh region that year), with the death toll standing at 500; Nepal lost 191 lives in 2011 while that for Bangladesh stood at 160. The report adds that in the decade from 2000 to 2010, climate change caused Pakistan to experience the worst floods in its history and see a cumulative death toll of as many as 3000 people. It is estimated that nearly 20 million Pakistanis were displaced by the 2010 floods, and continue to bear the socio-economic costs of climate change exposure. Even as 600 million Pakistanis were stranded without homes, the region was concomitantly hit by a food security crisis. With harvests being destroyed as well as transport and warehousing facilities

Slums and other marginal areas in cities tend to be highly exposed to climate-related risks, and urban services such as water and food supplies, sanitation and electricity come under increasing strain due to floods, droughts, heat waves and rising sea-levels.

impacted, the price of essentials such as rice, flour, fruit and vegetables surged. The most impacted by these developments were the urban poor that represented [9 million people](#), or as much as one fifth of the country’s total population.

Nepal too, has experienced the negative impacts of climate change and rising global temperatures. The report states that in 2011, the Himalayan nation lost 282 lives to glacial floods. The [4<sup>th</sup> Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#) noted that serious and recurrent floods hit the region from 2002 to 2004, and that a decrease in precipitation in the region has caused acute water shortage. The country also faces a challenge in domestic electrification. The World Energy Outlook’s [Energy Development Index](#), which measures household electricity provision, ranked Nepal near the bottom of countries evaluated in 2012. With grid extension to the country’s hilly and mountainous areas being prohibitively expensive, renewable, off-grid energy solutions are the only realistic way to provide energy in the most remotely accessed parts of the country. The Nepalese leadership too has demonstrated a strong inclination towards promoting the use and access of renewable energy technologies (RETs). The [Rural Energy Development Program](#), run between 2009 and 2011 in the country, is a case in point. The program connected over 50,000 households to micro hydropower installations, installed around 15,000 improved cooking stoves and 3,200 solar home heating systems.

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**NEWS DEEP DIVE 1**  
 continued
**RECENT POLICY INITIATIVES IN THE REGION**

With rapid urbanization, cities in the region already struggle to provide for its poorest communities in terms of living spaces, food and other essential amenities. Disasters further exacerbate these conditions. Climate related risks, though are not easily identifiable to a pointed source. Policies aimed towards addressing the problems therefore face the challenge of design precision – they must address all the closely knit multifarious factors.

In February 2013, the Governments in Pakistan and Nepal initiated policies to address challenges posed by climate change. The *Pakistan Tribune* reported the drafting of the country's first ever [climate change policy](#), developed in partnership with the [United Nations Development Program](#). Around the same time, the government of Nepal endorsed the extension of the Renewable Energy Grants Policy, which provides a 40% subsidy to rural households that chose to install renewable energy technologies, to urban centres in the country. While Pakistan's policy is more overarching and indicative with 120 interventions to slow down the impact of global warming,

In the decade from 2000 to 2010, climate change caused Pakistan to experience the worst floods in its history and see a cumulative death toll of as many as 3000 people.

Nepal's policy is more specific in promoting use of renewable energy. Both, however, face questions regarding implementation and time-frames.

Pakistan's Climate Change Policy enlists five measures that could be taken to address 'the problems of poor communities in Pakistan's urban areas in the context for climate change'. The five measures include: a) integrate the poverty-climate nexus into economic policies and plans; b) Ensure the implementation and expansion of national population planning strategies and programs, as the population explosion is likely to significantly exacerbate the impact of climate change; c) Enhance general awareness of the problems of unchecked population growth and the demands it places on natural resources; d) Strengthen community level climate change adaptation measures to prepare communities for enhanced and efficient natural resources management; and e) Ensure that the development process is sustainable and caters to the needs of the poor.

Nepal's February 2013 policy is more focused on energy security. It extends the government's existing rural subsidy awarded to households that used renewable energy technologies to urban areas as well. The new policy funds technologies sourced from hydropower, solar, biogas (a mixture of methane and carbon dioxide produced by fermenting organic matter) and - for the first time - wind. The policy also seeks to use biomass, a traditional energy source, more efficiently. According to reports, under the policy, the Nepalese government will bear 40% of the total installation costs, an additional 40% of the cost would be made available through non-collateralized loans awarded by banks and financial institutions. The consumer would only have to bear the remaining 20% of the cost. The absolute cost of renewable energy however will determine its affordability to the urban poor.

The impact of these policies on the urban poor populations remains unclear. Pakistan's draft policy does not clearly outline climate adaptation strategies that the urban poor could adopt. The recommendations are also silent on details such as budgeting, timelines for roll out-out, and implementation mechanisms. While the introduction

**NEWS DEEP DIVE 1**  
continued

of the policy is laudable, there are some immediate questions to identify specific focus areas for interventions. Given that Pakistan is the most urbanized country in South Asia, climate policy will have to place bolstering the capacity of the urban poor to deal with climate change at a priority.

Nepal’s policy evoked similar reactions. Although Nepal’s policy is more specific, **experts** say that there is an additional need for legislation to further reinforce and regularize RET usage, guarantee financing and also create institutional mechanisms to sell surplus energy to the national grid. Capacity development, consumer awareness drives and streamlined quality management services are also pivotal logistical concerns imperative to the success of the policy.

### CONCLUSION

South Asia currently finds itself strategically placed at the very centre of a transforming global climate change dialogue. With nearly half of the world’s top 20 mega-cities — those with populations of 10 million or more in the region, these countries have the potential to be the pioneers in adoption of climate change solutions. The most vulnerable to the effects of climate change are the urban poor— a sizeable number, who occupy marginal areas exposed to climate and environmental hazards. In the face of ever increasing risks through climate-caused disasters, city plans need to be climate proof and protect their most vulnerable sections, and bolster their capacities to adapt.

Undoubtedly, the governments of Pakistan and Nepal have begun to take concerted action towards mitigating the impacts of climate change. Significantly, both countries have a plethora of successfully run small scale projects that locally address climate adaptation issues at the community level. The leadership would do well to capitalize on the technological and knowledge innovations produced in their countries and ensure the achievement of a sustained beneficial impact by reforming the larger institutional systems of governance responsible for their implementation.

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**NEWS DEEP DIVE 2**

# Garment Workers at Risk in Bangladesh

BY NOOPUR DESAI

In the last decade, Bangladesh has witnessed many industrial disasters including factory fires, the most recent being the collapse of various garment factories housed in a multi-storeyed building named Rana Plaza on April 24, 2013. The collapse killed **over 400 workers, with 2500** people injured and missing. A large majority of the workers who perished were poor and earning as little as **US\$37 a month**. The Garment industry accounts for **17% of the country's GDP** and garment exports have increased considerably with less than **US\$1 billion in the 1985** to nearly **US\$20 billion in 2012** making Bangladesh the world's second largest apparel producer after China.

Bangladesh currently has more than **5400 garment factories** that work for large western retailers, with those from Europe accounting for nearly 60% of the country's apparel exports followed by the United States at 23% of exports. In order to attract foreign investments, the Government of Bangladesh set up special economic zones in Dhaka and surrounding cities, boosting the number of factories in the country. The garment industry, especially the factories focused on exports have been less careful about adopting adequate safety measures, primarily due to the focus on cost reduction to ensure lucrative exports.

One of the key drivers to the growth of the industry has been the availability of informal and low cost labor in Bangladesh. The garment industry employs more than **4.5 million people of which about 85% are women**. The workers include migrants from within and outside Bangladesh, who live in absolute poverty in **the slums** of the capital city. Working in hazardous environments, garment factory workers work up to **18 hours a day** to earn less than US\$2.

After a series of protests in 2010, the national minimum wage in Bangladesh was increased from **1,662 taka (US\$21.32)** to **3000 taka (US\$38.49)** – up by 80%. Despite this increase, the minimum monthly wage of a garment factory worker is lower than

**NEWS DEEP DIVE 2** continued

the minimum monthly cost of living in Bangladesh, calculated by the National Garments Workers' Federation, which is approximately 5000 taka (US\$64.15). These wages are much lower than those in China where the minimum wage for garment workers ranges from US\$154 to US\$230; and Cambodia where the monthly minimum is US\$80; making Bangladesh the hub for low cost garment manufacture.

The garment industry, especially the factories focused on exports have been less careful about adopting adequate safety measures, primarily due to the focus on cost reduction to ensure lucrative exports.

**LACK OF SAFETY**

Dhaka is the world's most densely populated cities, with 115,000 inhabitants per square mile and land is scarce and expensive resource. Given the scarcity of land, multi-storey buildings that violate building codes are a common occurrence. Many of these buildings are residential apartment blocks for families converted into factories, and are inadequate in terms of fire escapes, proper ventilation and sanitation, for the increased number of people they now have to cater to. Adding illegal floors to buildings is also a common practice. Needless to say, these floors are added in violation of structural concerns and fire and other safety measures.

Many factories are often run out of a single building, with multiple tenants on different floors. Apart from limited regular and emergency exits, high density of people, and lack of safety measures, the lack of coordination between tenants of these buildings pose greater risks as compared to small factories with single tenants. Additionally, these buildings house power generators to help the factories cope with frequent power cuts. In the recent incident at Rana Plaza, according to the initial government enquiry, there were five large generators in the building which were fully functional right before the collapse. These generators were running due to a power cut and may have been instrumental in the collapse of the building. These poorly constructed buildings cannot take the heavy load that these generators create. Over 600 workers in the last five months have been killed in Bangladesh due to similar working conditions. [Labour Behind the Label](#) is an international campaign funded by the European Union, striving towards improving working conditions and empowering workers in the global garment industry. In an [interview](#) with BBC after the incident, Sam Mehers, Policy Coordinator from the campaign suggested that "Many of these buildings are a death trap, often with no proper escape routes. So while this incident is shocking it is not surprising".

**REACTIONS FROM GLOBAL CUSTOMERS**

These recent events in Bangladesh have been distressing for several international brands whose clothes were found at the disaster sites. These global companies often commit to a [tightly scrutinized](#) system and assure buyers that the clothes sold are produced in safe conditions. However, in spite of ground level checks, these companies often have very little control over how the subcontractors run the factories. In December 2012, [the fire in Tarzeen Fashions, a garment factory killed 112 people](#). Boxes of sweatshirts with Disney characters bound for Wal-Mart stores were found in the rubble. It, however, came to light that the work was subcontracted to Tarzeen Fashions without [authorization from Wal-Mart or Disney](#).

Similarly, the Rana Plaza building collapse brought the spotlight on a few western

**NEWS DEEP DIVE 2** continued

brands. Of these, two western retailers, [Britain's Primark](#) and [Canada's Loblaw](#) have pledged compensation to the families of the garment workers who were killed while making their clothes in Rana Plaza. It is not clear though whether this settlement will reach the victims' families soon, considering that it is now four months after the Tarzeen factory fire, the victims are still waiting for their compensation from the retailers, who have not responded to the call of compensation. In the meanwhile, The Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters association and the Bangladeshi government have begun to pay compensation to the workers.

In order to avoid such accidents and promote better safety conditions for workers, Labour behind the Label is part of a campaign, started by the [International Labour Rights Forum](#), advocating that retailers sign the [Bangladesh Fire and Building Safety Agreements](#). This agreement looks at action work which includes independent building inspections, training in workers' rights and reviewing safety standards of the factories regularly. Only some companies like [Germany's Tchibo](#) and [United States' PVH Corp](#) (makers of Calvin Klein and Tommy Hilfiger) have signed these agreements. Some companies like [Sears Holdings Corp.](#), are re-examining the dangers of factories run by multiple owners or at multi-level locations and buildings.

These developments have also resulted in some companies deciding to move on from Bangladesh or reduce the number of factories they subcontract to in the country. Walt Disney Co., the world's largest licensor withdrew from Bangladesh in March 2013 as a part of a larger movement out of countries with higher worker safety risks such as Pakistan and Venezuela. Along with Walt Disney Co., [Wal-Mart](#) and [Levi Strauss & Co.](#) have backed away from factory buildings housing multiple tenants. Target Corp. and Nike Inc., are also reducing the number of factories they use in

Many of these buildings are residential apartment blocks for families converted into factories, and are inadequate in terms of fire escapes, proper ventilation and sanitation, for the increased number of people they now have to cater to.

Bangladesh. The [on-going civil and political unrest](#) in Bangladesh has caused losses of up to [\\$25.7 million daily](#) and a [40% drop](#) in foreign orders for the garment industry. With global firms exiting the market, Bangladesh faces a larger threat which could affect the economy and the livelihoods of the millions who make a living out working at these factories.

**INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

[The National Garment Workers' Federation](#) (NGWF) established in 1984, has been fighting for the rights of garment workers and successfully managed to increase their wages in 2010. They are also working towards strengthening the trade union movement and organizing workers in order to promote workers' rights and safety. Adding to the above, there are various international activist groups like Labour behind the label and [War on Want](#) that are working towards ensuring better employment conditions, safety and rights to workers' at these garment factories. Following the Tazreen Fashion factory fire, UK's [Ethical Trading Initiative](#) has been working with member companies, trade unions and NGOs to build an alliance that addresses fire and building

## NEWS DEEP DIVE 2 continued

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<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/may/01/bangladesh-workers-protest-may-day-building-collapse>

safety in the garment sector. The alliance details will be released on May 15, 2013 with active involvement of the [International Labour Organization](#) and [IndustriALL](#). In the meanwhile, there have been different responses from Global retailers. The question of the ultimate responsibility of workers' safety – whether it should rest with the government, the local manufacturers, the global brands or the global consumers - still remains a conundrum.

These disasters highlight the needs for stricter implementation of the law. Additionally, stronger [urban search and rescue measures](#) would help avoid higher death tolls in the event of future natural and manmade disasters. Stronger monitoring of suppliers by global companies – although difficult to implement – would help Bangladesh's garment industry more than an exodus of large contracts and orders that provide income and employment to thousands of families. These exists are certain to have adverse effects on the workers' families, pushing them further into poverty.

## CONCLUSION

South Asian countries, especially Bangladesh and Pakistan have been victims of illegal subcontracting, low value associated with human life and industrial disasters, resulting in many deaths. Bangladesh has ratified various International Labour Organization Conventions such as [C001 Hours of Work Convention](#), [C182 Worst forms of Child labour Convention](#), with many Occupational Safety and Health conventions still pending. However, the recent incidents have brought to light the lack of implementation of these conventions.

According to [reports](#), two babies were born under the debris as their pregnant mothers were trapped under the ruins. While they were rescued with their mothers, and the possibility of expectant mothers delivering sooner out of shock is high, it still certainly brings to light the gravity of the situation. However, the need to strengthen urban search and rescue measures is extremely important. Bangladesh lacks specialized equipment like [micro-cameras](#) which can go under the rubble to search for survivors or [scanners that can detect human heat](#). Basic equipment like flash lights also seemed to be missing. At the disaster spot, it was [witnessed](#) that some of the rescuers who were weren't wearing helmets or gloves were asking the public surrounded to flash lights. Along with the notable gap in equipment, the rescuers need to be trained thoroughly and there needs to be better coordination amongst members of the rescue operations.

The Bangladesh garment industry mishaps are a wakeup call to global citizens, governments and companies for taking sustainable measures to address the lack of safety in the garment factories. For the millions of workers who craft apparel in these factories, their daily trek to work in the quest for survival is a toss-up between life and livelihood.

# Regional News Summaries

## Development & the Economy

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India and Bangladesh are working towards implementing developmental projects. Pakistan is likely to miss out on its targeted growth.

### **INDIA, BANGLADESH INK MOU FOR DEVELOPMENTAL PROJECTS**

April 12, 2013

[Bangladesh] India and Bangladesh signed a memorandum of understanding for implementation of small scale developmental projects in Bangladesh. These projects include areas in livelihood activity, education, health and community development. The ministry of finance of Bangladesh will scan the project proposals that do not exceed Taka 250 million (US\$320709.44).

<http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/india-bangladesh-ink-mou-for-developmental-projects#.UYuyiLVgfzw>

### **PAKISTAN TO MISS 4.2% GROWTH TARGET: IMF**

April 18, 2013

[Pakistan] The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecasted that Pakistan might not be able to achieve the economic growth target of 4.2% and would remain at 3.5%. The consumer price inflation is likely to surge up to 9.2% and the unemployment rate going up by 10.7%.

<http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/business/18-Apr-2013/pakistan-to-miss-4-2pc-growth-target-imf>

## Education & Health

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Slum dwellers in India have high out of pocket expenses because of failures in the public health systems. Meghalaya is focusing on investing more in human capital development of the state.

### **ILO REMOVING BARRIERS TO INCLUSION IN BANGLADESH**

April 2, 2013

[Bangladesh] The International Labour Organization has initiated a Vocational Training Project in Bangladesh in order to give an opportunity to the disabled. The programme is a part of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Reform project in partnership with the Government of Bangladesh, funded by the European Union. With an overall objective to reduce poverty, the aim is to help more people acquire skills to generate income.

<http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/ilo-removing-barriers-to-inclusion-in-bangladesh#.UYuzdLVgfzw>

### **34% OF CITY SLUM DWELLERS COULD HAVE HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE**

April 6, 2013

[India] A study done in a slum in Chennai reveals that 34% of slum dwellers have high blood pressure. The study was done in light of World Health Day whose theme was 'Control your BP'. Irregular food habits and stress stand out as the some of the main reasons for high BP.

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/chennai/study-says-34-of-city-slum-dwellers-could-have-high-bp/article4585633.ece>

## HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT: A CONCERN FOR MEGHALAYA

April 27, 2013

[India] Meghalaya is working towards prioritizing investment in human capital development by increasing the focus on formal and informal education along with skill development. The current situation in Meghalaya barely presents an environment for human development in terms of skills and employability. The focus is going to be on improving the infrastructure and services pertaining to human capital development.

<http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2013/04/27/human-capital-development-a-concern-for-meghalaya/>

## SLUM DWELLERS LOSING FAITH IN PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES

April 30, 2013

[India] A study done by the International Institute of Population Sciences (IIPS) covering cities of Pune, Bhubaneswar and Jaipur suggests that a large portion of the urban poor is taking up expensive private healthcare services leading to high out of pocket expenses. This is due to the lack of available public health systems and slum dwellers not being entirely convinced with the quality of public health services.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/slumdwellers-losing-faith-in-public-health-facilities/1109619/>

## Energy & the Environment

.....  
Nepal and India are working towards improving renewable energy usage.

### NEPAL SUBSIDIZES RENEWABLE ENERGY

April 11, 2013

[Nepal] With the recent adaptation of policy in clean energy, Nepal is working towards electrifying the deprived areas. The subsidy is aimed at women and the socially excluded who adopt renewable energy methods; along with promoting micro finance through financial institutions that are backed by the central government fund.

<http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/nepal-subsidises-renewable-energy#.UYuy37Vgfw>

### INDIA TO DOUBLE RENEWABLE ENERGY CAPACITY

April 17, 2013

[India] The Indian subcontinent has made plans to double its renewable energy capacity to 55,000 MW by 2017 as a part of initiatives for renewable energy use. The 12th Five Year Plan has expanded role for clean energy including hydro-electricity, solar and wind power adhering to a low carbon strategy for sustainable growth.

<http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/india-to-double-renewable-energy-capacity-pm#.UYuyVbVgfw>

## People & Poverty

.....  
A building housing various garment factories collapsed in Bangladesh killing and injuring many workers. The unemployment rate has increased in India. Slums in Bangladesh are due to get improved housing and solar street light. Surat city in India has witnessed a sharp drop in the number of slum dwellers.

### SURAT BEATS METROS WITH SHARP DROP IN NUMBER OF SLUM DWELLERS

April 10, 2013

[India] Only 9% of the population in Surat city of India lives in slums. According to the latest slum data, out of the 45 lakh people, about 75,000 live in slums. Attempts are being made by the Surat Municipal Cooperation to rehabilitate slum dwellers into areas made for economically weaker sections of the society.

<http://www.indianexpress.com/news/surat-beats-metros-with-sharp-drop-in-number-of-slumdwellers/1100184/>

**NEWS SUMMARIES** continued**JOBLESS FIGURES STUMP INDIA**

April 22, 2013

[India] Between 2004-05 and 2009-10, the increase in employment in India in this period was a minimum 0.3%. The percentage of the self-employed workforce has shrunk from 56.4% to 50% along with formal sector jobs flattening out. The worrying fact is that the employment in informal sector has grown which is often accompanied with lack of social security and low wages. The industrial activity has considerably fallen because of political and policy inaction.

<http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/jobless-figures-stump-in-india#.UYuyPbVgfw>

**SBI LAUNCHES PREPAID CARDS FOR THE UNBANKED**

April 24, 2013

[India] State Bank of India has launched prepaid cards as an alternative to provide bank accounts to the unbanked. The bank has minimized the 'know your customer' norms to simplify the process of banking. The card is aimed at blue collar employees and is pushing the card through businesses and employers who have workers without bank accounts.

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/SBI-launches-pre-paid-card-for-unbanked/articleshow/19704551.cms>

**DHAKA: MANY DEAD AS GARMENT FACTORY BUILDING THAT SUPPLIED WEST COLLAPSES**

April 25, 2013

[Bangladesh] On 24th April, 2013, a building housing numerous garment factories in Sarvar near Dhaka city collapsed, killing and injuring many workers. These garment factories are suppliers to a large western clothing market. The collapse was due to the lack of safety measures in the building. The garment industry in Bangladesh has witnessed various industrial mishaps in the last few months including factory fires.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2013/apr/24/bangladesh-building-collapse-shops-west>

**SLUMS TO GET SOLAR STREET LIGHT IN RAJSHAHI OF BANGLADESH**

April 26, 2013

[Bangladesh] Slum Dwellers in the city are due to get improved housing and solar street light to improved livelihoods. The Rajshahi City Cooperation is working towards eco- friendly infrastructural improvement of slum communities. To that end, the cooperation along with Urban Partnership for Poverty Reduction Project (UPPRP) have worked closely and distributed 2.52 crore Taka (US\$32327.51) to the initial implementation of the project.

<http://southasia.oneworld.net/news/slums-to-get-solar-street-light-in-rajshahi-of-bangladesh#.UYux4rVgfw>

**Water & Sanitation**

.....  
India coastal cities focus on water and sanitation interventions to improve livelihood conditions.

**SANITATION INVESTMENTS MAKE INDIA'S COASTAL CITIES 'MORE LIVABLE'**

15 April, 2013

[India] Prioritizing 10 urban centers for investment, the Asian Development Bank supported Karnataka Urban Development and Coastal Environmental Management Project to improve living conditions of about 1.2 million people. The project provided for water and sanitation services which included laying 2200 kilometers of water pipelines, clean water provision, waste water treatments, low cost sanitation and solid waste management projects.

<http://www.adb.org/features/sanitation-investments-make-indias-coastal-cities-more-livable>

# Events

## **8TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON PUBLIC POLICY AND MANAGEMENT**

August 12-14, 2013

Bangalore, India

[http://hrm.iimb.ernet.in/iimb/Public\\_Policy\\_&\\_Management/index.htm](http://hrm.iimb.ernet.in/iimb/Public_Policy_&_Management/index.htm)

## **SIXTH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GLOBAL STUDIES**

September 5, 2013

New Delhi, India

<http://onglobalisation.com/the-conference/call-for-papers>

## **SECURE CITIES 2013**

September 20, 2013

Mumbai, India

<http://www.securecitiesindia.com/>

## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION ON SOLAR ENERGY AND POWER GENERATION TECHNOLOGIES**

September 26-28, 2013

Hyderabad, India

<http://www.omicsgroup.com/conferences/solar-power-generation-technologies-2013/index.php>

## Editorial Team

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### **EDITORS**

Shree Ravindranath  
Usha Ganesh

### **CONTRIBUTORS**

Noopur Desai  
Uthara Ganesh  
Meena Aier  
Balaji Thangaraj

### **DESIGN**

HNH!digital

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Intellecap is a pioneer in providing innovative business solutions that help build and scale profitable and sustainable enterprises dedicated to social and environmental change.

We seek to build institutional capacity and channel investments in the development sector through Knowledge Services, Consulting, and Investment Banking Services. Intellecap hosts Sankalp Social Enterprise and Investment Forum, Asia's largest social enterprise forum that brings together over 700 investors, innovative social enterprises, policy makers, funders and other key stakeholders from across the world.

Intellecap also promotes I<sup>3</sup>N, India's first angel investment network that makes early stage investments in double bottom line for-profit enterprises.