Ashwin Parulkar, Centre for Equity Studies
Institute of Global Homelessness, Chicago, June 2, 2015

# Conceptualization of Homelessness in India: Context

- Investigations and media reports on homeless deaths in winter 2009-2010 moved Supreme Court to Order each city to construct 100 temporary shelters per each location with 100,000 residents and provide basic services to people on streets: community kitchens, subsidized grains,

- Included as part mandates that arose out of public interest litigation on right to food, issued by Peoples Union on Civil Liberties in 2001 after evidence of starvation deaths in Rajasthan.

# 'Who is homeless in India?' must be asked in context of 'Who is poor in India?'

# Poverty Measurement in India: A contentious exercise

- 1960s: policymakers acknowledge that concerted government effort is required to address abject poverty in which over half of population lives. Central aim of development strategy to provide every citizen a level of income needed to afford nutritive diet and reasonable standard of living (Vaidyanathan 2013).

- 1970s: 'Poverty line' defined as minimum income required for minimum calorie intake to lead a healthy life (per capita consumption expenditure)

# Evolution and controversies over time

- 1970s and 1980s: regional variations in rural and urban needs to taken into consideration
- Lakdwawal Committee (1993): revised methods of adjusting for regional price variations and inflation. Rural poverty 37.3 rural 32.4 percent urban considered poor.
- Tendulkar Committee (2009): broadened concept of poverty measurement by including expenditure requirements on education, health care and 'de-linked' poverty line from specific calorie intake. Criticised for setting cut-offs too low. At Rs. 18 a day for rural areas and Rs. 20 a day in urban areas 28.3 percent of rural Indians deemed poor, 41.8 percent urban
- Various other committees have attempted revisions (i.e. Rangarajan Committee – suggested raising urban poverty consumption to Rs. 47, which would increase the number of urban poor by 103 million)

# Conceptualization: Who is homeless in India?

Census definition: 'persons who do not have a house, either self-owned or rented but instead:

- Live and sleep on/in pavements, parks, railway/bus stations, places of worship, outside shops and factories, construction sites, under bridges, under the open sky or places unfit for human habitation

- Spend days/nights in shelters, transit homes, short stay homes, beggar's homes and children's homes

# Conceptualization (continued)

- Those who live in temporary structures without walls under plastic sheets or thatch roofs on pavements

Source:  Tenth Report of the Commissioners of the Supreme Court (The National Report on Homelessness for the Supreme Court of India), 2012

# Vulnerable Groups

- Single women
- Elderly
- Disabled
- Mentally Ill
- Physically Ill – high prevalence of tuberculosis, HIV and HIV/tuberculosis

# Who is homeless ←→ Who are the homeless?

- Hashim Committee (2012): "In order to be able to plan and design appropriate interventions, and to ensure their targeted delivery, it is not enough only to know who the poor are and where they live. It is also important to know the precise nature of the vulnerability and deprivation that they face, as also the extent of such deprivation, both absolute and relative."
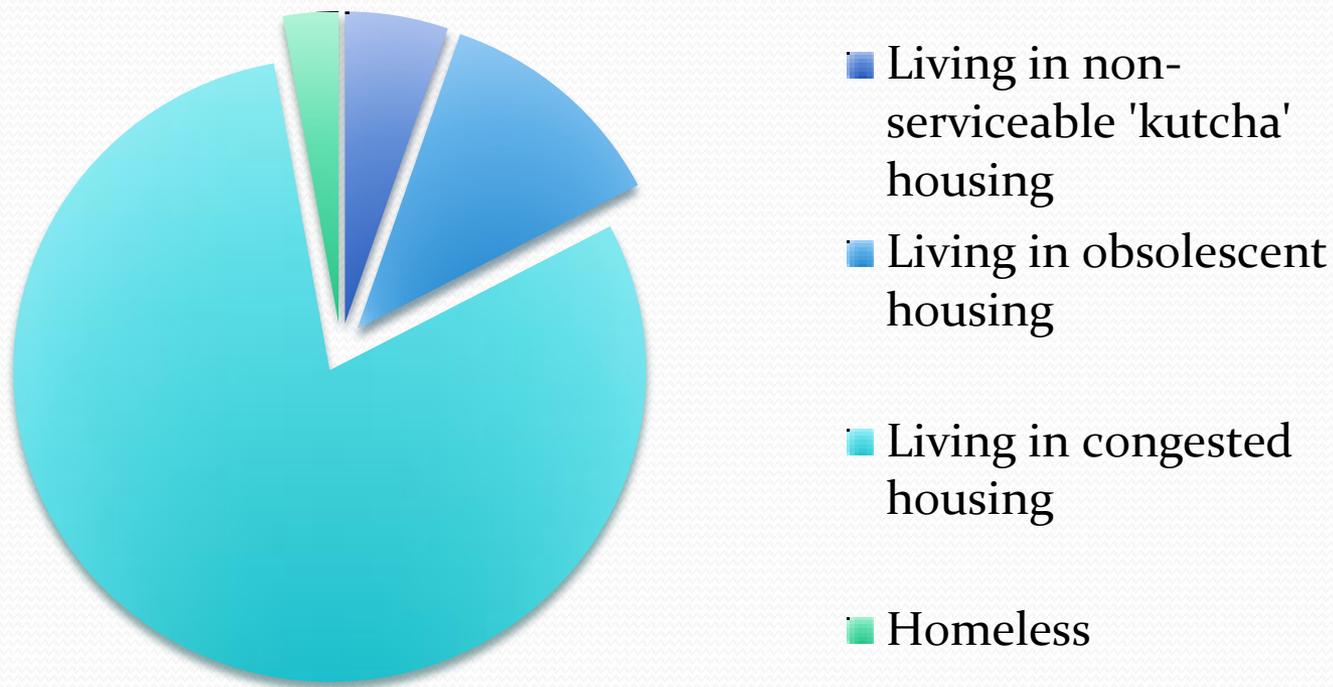
| Category | Description | Income | Street v Shelter | Vulnerability |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Independent Men w Regular Income | In touch with families; return home every few months to provide | Semi-skilled: painting houses; tailoring; | Sleep in night shelters | Economic; come from rural poverty |
| Independent Men with Irregular Income | Not in touch with family; causes for isolation varied | Seasonal labor such as wedding parties | Varied: hard drug users stay outside; | Poverty, physical and mental health, addictions |
| Men dependant on charity | Older men who can't work; disabled; mental health; heavy drug use | Begging | | Poverty, physical and mental health, addictions |

# Sub Groups: Women

| Category | Description | Income | Street v. Shelter | Vulnerability |
|----------|-------------|--------|-------------------|---------------|
| Women w Partner and Child | Lives on street with family; men either main source of income or dependent on women | Rag picking, begging, prostitution, drug peddling | Not comfortable living in shelter because of complications with partner | Routine abuse, health problems associated with child birth/rearing practices |
| Single Women w children w Regular Income | Less number in this group; live in matrilineal/kinship groups to support children | Seasonal labor, rag picking, begging | 'Single' may mean 'unmarried' but partners exists – therefore, live on streets | Abuse, health problems associated with child birth/rearing practices |

**Composition of Housing Shortage in India (in millions)**



- Living in non-serviceable 'kutcha' housing
- Living in obsolescent housing
- Living in congested housing
- Homeless

## Housing Poverty:  All-India and Vulnerable Social Groups (Source:
Registrar General of India (2011), Housing Tables, Census 2011; Cited in India Exclusion Report, Centre for Equity Studies (2014)

|  | Grass/Thatch/Bamboo | Mud | Burnt Brick | Concrete |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| All-India | 8.96 | 23.69 | 47.54 | 3.49 |
| SC HHs | 10.48 | 27.92 | 44.26 | 2.48 |
| ST HHs | 15.69 | 46.45 | 21.21 | 1.85 |
| Female headed | 8.91 | 25.09 | 43.32 | 3.45 |
| Female Headed | 10.21 | 28.01 | 42.13 | 2.65 |

# Attempts to Measure Homelessness

Census 2001/2011

Supreme Court Commissioners Office (2011) – Delhi

Aashray Adhikar Manch (2000)

Mission Convergence (UNDP and Gov of India) 2010 – 2011

Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (2014)

ActionAid India and Partners

# Supreme Court Commissioners Survey with Partners

Phase I: Planning with partners and stakeholders (1 week)

A. Finalized projected timeline
B. Methodology for ID'ng areas in city
C. Partners and stakeholders
D. Finalized interview questions

Phase II (5 weeks)

A. Rapid Survey: FGDs and quantitative surveys (2 weeks) --- divided teams per districts and worked with respective HRCs to build and verify lists.

B. Resource Mapping: Identify shelter and street based locations and potential of coordination with government agencies

Supreme Court Commissioners 2011 Homeless Survey in Delhi: RESULTS

- 190 locations and 175 concentrations covered across 9 districts
- Total population 134,000; 80% men, 20% women.

# Studies on Homelessness in India expand awareness on dimensions to measure and research

- Enumeration and causes of death on the streets (Mander and Jacobs 2010)

- Health burdens and barriers to access to public health care (Prasad 2011)

- Access to water and sanitation (Walters 2014)

- Drug addiction and psychosocial risk factors (Armstrong et al 2013; Armstrong et al 2014)

# Studies on the Homeless

In a CES study of 340 homeless people in four cities, researchers found:

Chronic poverty associated with homelessness.  Only 11% of respondents newly homeless. In Delhi, 31% of respondents in present location for more than 10 years

40% of the homeless work as casual laborers, 28% beg for alms

# Studies on the homeless in India

- Psychosocial risk factors:  Armstrong's work amongst homeless men in Delhi shows that of a sample of 400 homeless drug injecting men, 53% reported thoughts of killing themselves and 36% attempted to do so in previous 12 months. (Armstrong et al 2014)

- Violence against women:  Gopikumar shows that violence occurs in context of multiple vulnerabilities - 'marginalization of women's needs in a patriarchic structures' and 'greater but unacknowledged economic and social contribution' linked to 'lack of access to healthcare and lower health seeking behavior.' (Gopikumar 2014)

India's 'definition' of homelessness in comparison with neighboring countries  (Source:  G. Tipple, S. Speak, Habitat International, 2005)

|  | Location | Housing | Welfare entitlement | Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| India |  | Not living in census houses | In settlements officially recognized as 'slums' |  |
| Bangladesh |  | Sleeping in rail stations, public and open spaces |  |  |
| China |  |  |  | Outside district of registration |

# THANK YOU!