

Homeless Migrants or City Makers?

Many of the homeless in Delhi are migrants, from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, who have left their villages on account of extreme distress situations. While the term 'homeless' is a situational description and focuses on deprivation, the term "city makers" gives a more positive and dynamic identity. They are construction workers, rickshaw pullers, domestic help, rag pickers and other daily wage workers who provide critical services in the city.

The CityMakers' Programme is the urban poverty intervention for homeless populations of the Indo-Global Social Service Society (IGSSS). The programme was created out of the need for a comprehensive network to address homelessness in the city. It works towards: (i) ensuring a dignified life for city makers with opportunities to grow and prosper; (ii) creating community leaders from urban slums as housing rights activists in ten cities, falling under the *Rajiv Awas Yojana: Towards a Slum-Free India* scheme; (iii) building a National Coalition on Urban Housing Rights. Besides Delhi and Bangalore, IGSSS has initiated work in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana.

IGSSS is presently managing three permanent shelters and six temporary tent shelters which are functional around-the-clock, as well as two model bamboo-canvas shelters in the Nigambodh Ghat area of New Delhi, as a safe, airy and eco-friendly alternative to the temporary tent shelters. IGSSS also manages two Homeless Citizens Resource Centres (HCRCs): HCRC North Delhi and HCRC Central and New Delhi. HCRCs are an initiative of the Delhi Government under Mission Convergence, which aim to improve the quality of life of homeless citizens through a single window system.

Source: Indo-Global Social Service Society (www.igsss.org)
Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India, UNESCO, 2013



A Refuge from the Streets for Homeless Migrants



Within the confines of the IGSSS managed tin shelter, we find Gulab Shah, 40 years of age, reclining and reading the Quran. Hailing originally from Calcutta, she accompanied her husband to Delhi nine years ago when he came here to work. However, her husband left her soon after their arrival, leaving her to fend for herself. Gulab remarried a Hindu man outside of her community, but disaster struck again and her second husband was hurt in a work accident and passed away. This left Gulab distraught, as a result of which she suffered mental health problems.

Abandoned and alone, members from the IGSSS managed tin shelter came to her rescue, and suggested she live in the shelter and receive medical help. For the past six months Gulab has been staying at the tin shelter that IGSSS has established. Having previously lived in Viklang Basti - a slum for persons with disabilities located behind Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium- she was evicted from this slum when it was demolished in preparation for the Commonwealth Games held in Delhi in October 2010. She says there is no one in her life but God. Being unemployed and having no relatives in Delhi, she is grateful for the temporary shelter being managed by IGSSS and to the other members of the shelter who serve as her support system and get her food.



Adjacent to the tin shelter, IGSSS manages a temporary shelter, where homeless persons are camping whilst awaiting transfer to a permanent shelter home. Among the people who live in this shelter is Badshah, 51 years of age, who came to Delhi in 1986 from Murshidabad, West Bengal. Working as a kabadiwala (waste picker), like Gulab Shah, he too has lived in slums for brief periods in the Nizammuddin and Khanpur neighbourhoods in Delhi. Without any fixed shelter, and because of the vulnerabilities and challenges of living on the street, Badshah says that two of his children died. He used to frequently face police beatings. Even though he and his family of four daughters are currently housed in this temporary shelter, he says this is a marked improvement from the time when they used to live on the streets.

Source: Social Inclusion of Internal Migrants in India, UNESCO, 2013