

Project Notes

Note No. 37

Leveraging Agra's Lesser-known Heritage Sites for Improving Sanitation and Livelihood in Low-income Communities Crosscutting Agra Project (CAP), Uttar Pradesh, India

The Crosscutting Agra Project (CAP), an initiative of the Agra Municipal Corporation in partnership with USAID FIRE (D), private sector, NGOs and CBOs, is aimed at improving the urban poor's access to sustainable livelihoods and adequate sanitation services. CAP is strategically set around a heritage trail of four lesser-known monuments in the city with several low-income communities in its neighbourhood. The CAP experience has highlighted the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships led by local government for achieving success in pro-poor service delivery. The process also highlights the importance of community participation at every stage of program development. The program has demonstrated that access to basic services and livelihoods for urban poor can be sustained by integrating low-income settlements with city-level infrastructure and economy.

BACKGROUND

Agra, one of the fastest growing Indian cities, is set to double its existing population of 1.27 million (Census 2001) to 2.27 million by 2011. Estimates of the proportion of urban poor in the city range between 10 percent (Census 2001) and 44 percent (District Urban Development Agency, 2007), i.e., between 0.12 million and 0.86 million people.

The Taj Mahal, two other world heritage sites, and several lesser-known monuments¹ make Agra a favored tourist destination. It is, however, challenged by inadequate and poor quality urban and tourism infrastructure. In particular, Agra suffers from partial coverage of underground sewerage coupled with ineffective wastewater drainage and solid waste management systems and the absence/poor maintenance of public sanitation facilities. These phenomena threaten to irreparably damage the city's economy and jeopardize the health and well-being of its citizens. The worst affected are the poor and marginal groups living in slums and low-income communities.

¹ Agra has three world heritage sites and over 200 big and small monuments.

² CAP is supported by four functional streams within the USAID – Social Development; Population, Health and Nutrition; Energy, Environment and Enterprise; and Economic Growth.

³ CURE, a NGO, facilitated the community mobilisation and planning processes for improved sanitation and sustainable livelihoods under CAP. For more information visit CURE's website: www.cureindia.org.

CROSSCUTTING AGRA PROGRAM – PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

The United States Agency for International Development² (USAID) in August 2005 committed assistance to the Agra Municipal Corporation (subsequently referred to as ANN, acronym for Agra Nagar Nigam) for improving the quality of life in low-income communities of Agra using a cross-sectoral approach. The Centre for Urban and Regional Excellence³ (CURE) was selected as the implementing partner. The program is also supported by USAID FIRE (D)⁴ and the private sector⁵.

The key objectives of the Crosscutting Agra Project (CAP) were to improve poor people's access to adequate sanitation services and sustainable livelihoods. CAP was set within the overall context of the city, i.e., tourism, and aimed at facilitating participation of women and youth from low-income communities in slum upgrading and livelihood development. CAP was strategically located around a heritage trail that integrates lesser-known monuments of Agra with several low-income

⁴ Support from FIRE (D) was initially targeted towards improving community sanitation, in particular, solid waste management and networking support from ANN. Since October 2006, FIRE (D) has also been supporting community mobilization and livelihoods initiatives.

⁵ Tourism Guild of Agra.

communities in the neighborhood.

THE PROGRAM SETTING

The Mughal Heritage Trail and Walk – CAP was designed along a Heritage Trail of four lesser-known monuments: *Ram Bagh, Chinni ka Rauza, Itmatud Daulah and Mehtab Bagh*, located on the eastern banks of the River Yamuna across from the Taj Mahal. The trail also has four low-income communities in its midst: *Katra Wazir Khan, Yamuna Bridge Colony, Marwari Basti and Kucchpura*. A one-kilometer walking loop called the Mughal Heritage Walk (MHW) has been identified,



which links *Marwari Basti, Kucchpura and Mehtab Bagh* along with additional and largely forgotten monuments and architectural features like the *Humayun's Mosque, Gyarah Sidi* (Observatory), and the aqueduct system. The MHW forms the core of the livelihood and slum upgrading project.

THE PROGRAM STRATEGY

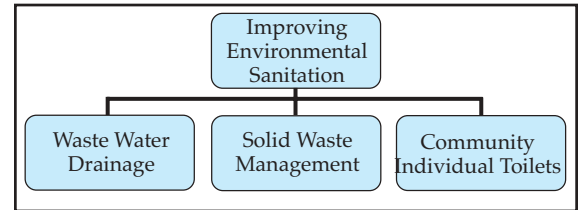
Community Mobilization and Community Action Planning – Community groups were mobilized and organized in project communities using participatory processes. Participatory Learning and Action (PLA)⁶ tools enabled CAP and its team of locally identified community facilitators to understand community concerns, ground realities, people’s perceptions and priorities. These findings were used to develop community action plans for sanitation and livelihood improvements.

Community-based Information System (CBIS) – Under CAP an organic information system was built with community data gathered through PLA processes. The information was digitized on a Geographical Information System (GIS), a map-based platform. At the request of ANN, the CBIS was expanded to cover the entire city and serves as an instrument for monitoring slum upgrading.

Improving Environmental Sanitation – Environmental sanitation improvements under CAP initially focused on solid waste management (SWM) and a reduction in accumulated waste within communities through regular waste disposal by the ANN (Box 1). With additional resources⁷, the effort was broadened into a total sanitation model in *Kucchpura*, addressing all four

⁶ Including community resource maps, household maps, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), trend analysis, and SEED technique.

⁷ CAP received a small grant from FIRE (D) under the *Kucchpura Settlement Upgrading Project (KSUP)* for physical works in the settlement.



Box 1
Community-led Solid Waste Management - A Case of Katra Wazir Khan

Low-income communities are most often left out of municipal service coverage. In Agra too, ANN had an ineffective outreach for collection and disposal of solid waste from low-income communities. Under CAP, *Katra Wazir Khan (KWK)* residents were mobilized to clean up the large open area at the entrance to the settlement that had become a waste disposal site.

Community Awareness Campaigns helped draw attention of all households to the importance of sanitation and included street plays, *prabhat pheris* (walk throughs) and painting competitions.



CAP facilitated a friendly cricket tournament across participating communities. Young residents of KWK raised resources through community contributions and cleaned up the ground for the event. Subsequently, the private owner fenced the land and converted it into a plant nursery, which has considerably improved environmental conditions.

CAP also helped in expanding the existing door-to-door (D2D) collection system that is carried out by private waste collectors and managed and financed by local residents, and which covers nearly 80% of the settlement. Traditional waste collectors were included in the dialogue to improve sanitation conditions in the area. They were provided with locally designed equipment for easy transportation of waste from homes to the collection site.

components of sanitation – access to toilets, improved wastewater disposal, solid waste management (SWM) and better hygiene practices. Physical interventions across communities included the construction of wastewater drainage channels (*Marwari Basti*), individual toilets (*Kucchpura*, see Box 2), community toilets (*Marwari Basti*), and improvement of drains and pathways (*Kucchpura*).

ANN’s commitment to change was demonstrated by its determined effort at setting up a zero-waste zone in its own offices. Dialogue with sanitation staff was used to evolve a practical waste disposal action plan.

BOX 2

Improving Access to Toilets

Access to toilets under CAP has included participatory design of community and household toilets in *Marwari Basti* and *Yamuna Bridge*; facilitating dialogue between ANN and community groups for toilet repair and management; supporting construction of a community toilet complex in *Marwari Basti* with financial support from a local charity; and construction of individual toilets in *Kucchpura*.

People friendly toilet designs were developed in an inclusive, inside-out planning process that helped capture women's toilet needs/wish lists, i.e., shelves for soap, clothes hooks, saree guards around water taps, dustbins, open/visible toilets for children, etc. In *Marwari Basti*, the community was helped to set up community management systems and O&M plans to ensure sustained toilet usage.

In *Kucchpura*, individual toilets have been designed by social architects, who engaged with families to develop designs that made a good fit, spatially and financially. The households were facilitated in saving for toilet construction through the formation of Toilet Saving Groups. London Metropolitan University (LMU), under its MOU with CURE, has provided additional subsidies from the Water Trust, UK, to willing families for household toilet construction. Individual toilet construction activity was initiated along the MHW to improve sanitation conditions in the area, making the place more attractive for tourists. Two toilets have also been built in the local school to develop toilet use habits among children.



shoe covers, in the tourism sector. A *Community Credit Fund (CCF)* was set up under the project that provided interest free credit to the group. CAP assisted the groups in purchase of raw materials, sample development, product costing and marketing. Two fully functional women's groups have increased daily income of women from Rs. 15 to Rs. 80 and have ensured sustainable employment for 60 days. Initially, operating from residences, women have rented a place in the community that also doubles as a community resource and information center⁸.

Mughal Heritage Walk Enterprise for Tour Animators: A group of young boys from low-income communities was trained to facilitate tourist walks along the MHW. The MHW walk itself was improved physically through repairs to drains and pathways, toilet construction and design of a wastewater treatment system. The Mughal story line⁹, brochures, map scroll and souvenirs were developed to promote tourism in the area. Tour animators were organized into a tourism business enterprise with support of a local NGO, Sankalp, and they now undertake paid walks with support of CAP and the Tourism Guild. The Archeological Survey of India (ASI), India Tourism, and Central Pollution Control Board were the other partners in this initiative.

KEY OUTCOMES/LESSONS LEARNED

CAP has succeeded in setting up a demonstrable model for inclusive planning for slum upgrading and sustainable livelihoods.

For the four communities and approximately 2,000 households covered by CAP, the process has been empowering, with communities organized and capacitated to articulate their needs and negotiate with local government for their rights. Besides improving access to basic services, the settlements are now mainstreamed with city systems and the local economy. Improved access to basic services has resulted in a cleaner environment due to a greater willingness among residents to maintain community

ANN provided the impetus by purchasing dustbins for each desk, for wet and dry waste and large ones for transporting waste from each floor to outside the office. ANN undertook cleaning and painting of toilets and hallways. The initiatives were supported with awareness posters, public notices and personal letters to staff by the Commissioner to participate in the zero-waste program. USAID's Global Micro Enterprise Development (GEMD) program provided training to 150 sanitary staff on effective waste management techniques. ANN headquarters are much cleaner and a culture of cleanliness and waste management has found a place in the organizational ethos.

Promoting Sustainable Livelihoods

Tourism being a key economic driver in the city, sustainable livelihoods were conceived in partnership with the Tourism Guild. Two key interventions taken up under CAP include promotion of micro-enterprises for women and tour animation for youth.

Micro Enterprises for Women: Women from participating low-income communities were organized into small livelihood groups. A value chain study helped sift through existing options for home-based enterprise and identify potential areas. Women's sewing skills and need for home-based work was matched with demand for various types of items, such as bags and

⁸ *Kucchpura Soochna Sansadhan Kendra* - Information Resource Centre.

⁹ The MHW story includes the old history of *Kucchpura* and other minor monuments on the Walk, such as the aqueducts, well foundations & embankments, a mosque and remains of an astronomy site known as the *Gyarah Sidi*.

infrastructure/resources. Livelihood interventions have ensured sustainable options and enhanced incomes for women and youth.

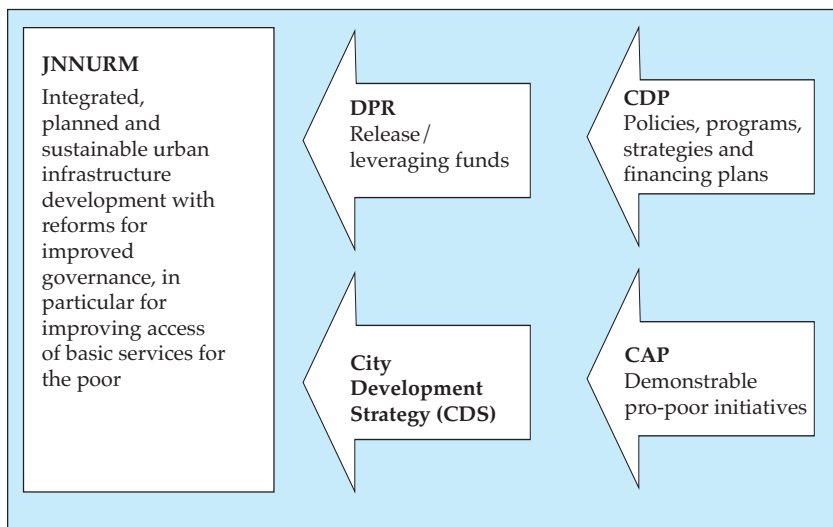
CAP has successfully forged multi-stakeholder partnerships between government agencies, private sector and civil society. Critical capacity has been built within the ANN to facilitate pro-poor urban development. Agra civil society is more cooperative and engaged in positive dialogue. Sankalp, the local partner, has been capacitated for community-based development.

Lessons Learned: CAP experiences demonstrate that sustainable urban poverty reduction requires multi-stakeholder partnerships of local government, civil society, private sector and all government partners in the city. The initiative must be anchored in the local government for better ownership, responsiveness and accountability to the poor. Community inclusion is critical for sustainable development and participatory processes must be given due time and resources. Sustainable livelihoods development and community sanitation pose enormous challenges. Sanitation, a key priority in low-income communities, must follow a total sanitation, citywide integrated approach with a high-level of investments in hardware. It must be flexible and enable people to choose the best fitting solution. Livelihood plans must be linked to city economies to ensure long-term sustainable change.

POTENTIAL FOR SCALING UP AND REPLICABILITY

CAP has helped initiate a process of engagement between organizations of low-income communities and the government for inclusive planning in Agra. It has resulted in several demonstrable and replicable projects aimed at improving community sanitation and building sustainable livelihoods. It has received additional support from Cities Alliance to provide technical assistance to Agra to scale up the CAP slum development model citywide and implement the reform-based JNNURM urban development agenda in the city. CAP’s path breaking work in building the MHW has led to Agra being identified as the coordinator of JNNURM’s PEARL (Peer Experience and Reflective Learning) group on Heritage Cities.

Additional resources have been provided to the project from USAID’s Office of Social Development to deepen and broaden CAP’s effort with young people and from USAID FIRE (D) to implement the total sanitation model in *Kuchhpura* along the MHW under the *Kuchhpura Settlement Upgrading Project (KSUP)*.



The project was implemented by CURE, New Delhi. Dr. Renu Khosla led the team with support from Shveta Mathur, Kumar Saket and Rajesh Kumar.

The project note has been prepared by Renu Khosla, Chetan Vaidya and Shikha Shukla Chhabra based on various reports/notes and powerpoint presentations prepared by CURE.

Indo-US Financial Institutions Reform and Expansion Project – Debt Market Component FIRE (D)

The mission of the Indo-US FIRE(D) Project is to institutionalize the delivery of commercially viable urban environmental infrastructure and services at the local, state and national levels. Since 1994, the Project has been working to support the development of demonstration projects and of a sustainable urban infrastructure finance system. Now, the Project is also pursuing this mission through:

- Expansion of the roles of the private sector, NGOs and CBOs in the development, delivery, operation and maintenance of urban environmental infrastructure;
- Increased efficiency in the operation and maintenance of existing water supply and sewerage systems;
- Strengthened financial management systems at the local level;
- Development of legal and regulatory frameworks at the state level;
- Continued implementation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment; and
- Capacity-building through the development of an Urban Management Training Network.

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