

CASE STUDY

Making Resettlement Efforts Gender Inclusive



Women beneficiaries of showing off their housing lease documents. Photo credit: ADB.
An ADB-supported project in Kolkata awarded flat titles to women as a mechanism to promote women's rights.

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Overview

Women and other vulnerable groups should be considered in the planning and implementation of resettlement programs to achieve gender- and socially inclusive results.

An Asian Development Bank-supported project that aimed to enhance the quality of life of the people of Kolkata, India by improving the urban environment and providing equitable services demonstrated this strategy in its resettlement effort for over 2,000 households in 2006.

Project snapshot

Dates

- **05 Jun 2003:** Approval Date
- **09 Nov 2010:** Closing Date

Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • US\$ 280.00 million: Total Project Cost
Institutions and Stakeholders	<p>Financing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Asian Development Bank</u> • Government of the United Kingdom <p>Executing agency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kolkata Municipal Corporation • Irrigation and Waterways Directorate, Government of West Bengal

Development Challenges

With a population of 4.5 million people, Kolkata Municipality is the most densely populated inner core area of the Kolkata Metropolitan. It had severe environmental problems and a high proportion of poor constituents.

Canal and drainage improvements were needed as one of the means to address environmental health concerns in the city. Living conditions along the canals have impacted on the dwellers' health. Gastrointestinal disorders, influenza, and colds were the most common illnesses.

The relocation of 16,317 individuals living on the banks of five canal segments was inevitable. Most of them have already lived in these settlement areas for more than 15 years.

There were 3,626 households along these canal segments, 11.2% of which were headed by women.

Context

Most women worked as domestic maids or rag pickers in the project area. Only a few work as midwives.

A large majority of the women-headed households had incomes of less than 2,300 rupees (US\$32) per month, which was below the poverty line. Together with households headed by the elderly, they were considered the most marginalized because of their limited earning potential.

A resettlement effort that would help women economically and empower them was indeed needed.

Solution

The ADB-funded Kolkata Environmental Improvement Project (KEIP) was formulated to address human development and environmental health concerns in the city of Kolkata. While no gender action plan was included in the project design, the following substantial efforts were made to consider women's concerns, specifically in the resettlement side of the project:

Providing livelihood training and opportunities for women and men

Through the Entrepreneurship Development Program, the project assisted in livelihood restoration and capacity building by providing training, microcredit, and marketing support to the affected persons. A total of 38 training courses were conducted and were attended by 618 women and 17 men.

Neighborhood committees also provided income-generating opportunities such as managing public toilet facilities, maintaining park areas, preparing food for a school mid-day meal program, and other unskilled jobs through the poverty reduction programs of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

Prioritizing women and other vulnerable groups in the awarding of ground floor flats

The project established five resettlement sites, each comprising six buildings of 24 to 32 flats. Women- and elderly-headed households were identified as being among the most vulnerable because of their limited earning potential. Thus, ground floor flats that have opportunities for small businesses were given to them.

Likewise, the project's Social Development Unit awarded legal titles of the new flats to women, as a mechanism to promote women's rights within their families and communities.

Establishing mechanisms for women's participation in neighborhood committees and housing cooperative societies

Group mobilization played an important role in facilitating women's involvement.

The Social Development Unit organized self-help groups that included a significant number of women members. They meet regularly in their homes on a rotation basis to plan, undertake community work or income-generating activities, and/or encourage savings.

Housing Cooperative Societies also led the capacity building, rehabilitation, and other efforts in managing the new neighborhoods including the communal space, such as corridors, water tanks, and surrounding land.

Actual Outcomes

Participation in livelihood activities

The training, microcredit, and marketing support provided by the project helped the women engage in

livelihood activities and contribute to the household income.

Some of them had taken out loans to start their own business. These include sewing or buying ready-made clothes to sell, crafts-making, embroidery, and beauty services.

Renewed perception of women

Putting the women's names in the property titles, instead of their husbands' or any male member of their family, boosted their sense of self. This enhanced their status in the household as this gave them more authority in decision making. It also paved the way for people to change their perception and acknowledge other modalities of ownership of important family assets, thereby challenging entrenched social and gender practices that discriminate against them.

More community involvement

Women's participation in self-help groups, neighborhood committees, housing cooperative societies, and wards empowered them politically. In a few cases, women were able to attain leadership positions in these organizations and were able to reach out to and help neighboring communities. At the community level, the poor and other vulnerable groups achieved a greater sense of community spirit and strengthened their faith in their own abilities to raise their living standards.

Moreover, the provision of a permanent residence with adequate water, sanitation, and solid waste management facilities improved their living conditions. Having also a permanent address enabled them to apply for various government services.

Lessons

The resettlement effort of the project demonstrated the following best practices in mainstreaming gender:

- Develop a grounded and evidence-based resettlement plan.
- Use new modalities, like awarding property titles to women, to challenge discriminatory cultural practices and to promote gender equality.
- Allocate resources for socially inclusive and gender-responsive activities.
- Engage gender-sensitive process monitors who will ensure the positive outcomes of the resettlement plan.

Resources

Asian Development Bank. 2011. Kolkata Environmental Improvement Project. *Gender Mainstreaming – Case Studies India*. PP. 9-17. Mandaluyong.



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Ashok Srivastava has been with ADB since 2005. Prior to his current role, he helped the urban planning efforts of the government of Rajasthan. His expertise includes urban planning and development, project design, management, and public policy. He earned his master's in Urban Planning from the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi.



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