



## URBAN BASIC SERVICES FOR THE POOR: CRITICAL EVALUATION AND ITS AVAILABILITY AND UTILISATION BY URBAN POOR

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### **Abstract**

*This Study is done in Aligarh District of Uttar Pradesh. This shows the actual situation of availability of Development scheme and its utilization by the urban poor. Due to the increasing trend of Urbanization in India at rate of almost 2.5 % annually pressure is on the civic amenities and also on government development scheme the condition of under-served areas of Aligarh district becoming more worst in providing basic services. There are many areas within the city in which people still lacks basic services. They are unaware about the government developmental schemes and lack of awareness leads to lack of opportunities for them to improve their living conditions. Due to the recent Development of Smart City now things are changing fast and conditions are improving. Inner city is being developed in terms of sanitation, sewerage, water supply, transport services and infrastructure. Inner city is being transformed into a smart city which has all the basic services which are required by the people. Still a lot has to be done to improve the Urban Basic Services for the poor population.*

**Keywords:** *Urban Basic Services, Poor, Urbanization, Population.*

### **Introduction**

India's urbanisation presents a picture of contrasts and complexities in terms of size, pace, pattern and consequences to overall development. In terms of size, the urban population in India is around 217 millions constituting 25.72 per cent of the total population in 1991.<sup>1</sup> According to one estimate<sup>6</sup>, by 2001, the urban population of India would be of the order of 320 to 338 millions; in other words, doubling of the population in a span of two decades. By 2021, the population is estimated to be between 524 to 642 millions. If the higher scale is accepted, it implies another doubling in the following two decades. According to UN's projections, India's urban population by 2025 658 millions constituting 34.2 and 53.6 per cent respectively.<sup>4</sup>

Urbanization is a key indicator of economic development and should be seen as a positive factor for overall development. Also, as an economy grows, its towns and cities expand in size and volume and the contribution of the urban sector to the national economy increases. For instance, the contribution of urban sector to India's GDP has increased from 29% in 1950–51 to 47% in 1980–81. The urban sector presently contributes more than 65% of the GDP in 2021<sup>6</sup>

Urban population refers to people living in urban areas as defined by national statistical offices. It is calculated using World Bank population estimates and urban ratios from the United Nations World Urbanization Prospects. Aggregation of urban and rural population may not add up to total population because of different country coverages.<sup>9</sup>

- India urban population for 2021 was **493,169,259**, a **2.32% increase** from 2020.
- India urban population for 2020 was **481,980,332**, a **2.32% increase** from 2019.
- India urban population for 2019 was **471,031,529**, a **2.33% increase** from 2018.
- India urban population for 2018 was **460,304,169**, a **2.34% increase** from 2017.



Such a rapid growth leads to economic, social, and ecological disruptions having an adverse impact on the living conditions of the urban slum dwellers. The socio-economic conditions of these urban slum people are much worse than those of the rural poor because of overcrowding, congestion, dirt, pollution, etc., resulting in poor health and living conditions. Urban growth puts heavy pressure on civic amenities and services like water, shelter, electricity, employment opportunities, and recreational facilities.

- There are large variations in the spatial patterns of urbanization across the States and cities.
- The pattern of population concentration in large cities reflects spatial polarization of the employment opportunities.

**The urban poor livings under a variety of deprivations are the worst victims of this situation. Urban poverty manifests itself in many forms. Most visible of these are**

1. Proliferation of slums;
2. Fast growth of informal sector;
3. Increasing casualization and underemployment of labour;
4. Crushing pressure on civic services;
5. Deprivation of educational and health contingencies;
6. Retarded growth and a growing sense of helplessness leading to crime and violence.
7. This unemployment give rise to unlawful activities.
8. Social problems like Drug addiction, Beggary, Theft, Prostitution increases.
9. Increase in Drug Addiction among children's and weaker section of society

Due to increasing urban population so as slums tremendous pressure on civic infrastructure systems, water supply, sewerage and drainage, uncollected solid waste, parks and open spaces, transport, etc. It has also led to deterioration in the quality of city environments. In several cities, the problems of traffic congestion, pollution, poverty, inadequate housing, crime, and social unrest are assuming alarming proportions. This urbanization is characterized by incompleteness of functions to the elected bodies, lack of adequate financial resources, unwillingness to progress towards municipal autonomy, adherence to outdated methods in property taxation, hesitation in levy of user charges, unsatisfactory role of parastatals in the provision of water supply and sanitation services<sup>12</sup>. Also, the governance requirements under the 74th Constitution Amendment Act (CAA) in respect of the District Planning Committees and Metropolitan Planning Committees (MPCs) have not been met in a number of States.

The urban population is increasing at almost 2.5 % annually which calls for extra efforts by city planners and managers to cope up with the ever-growing strain on the urban infrastructure. Special attention is needed for management and governance of urban areas which are at present fragmented between different State-level agencies and urban local bodies (ULBs), with lack of co-ordination<sup>14</sup>.

The rapid increase in India's urban population has led to economic, social, and ecological disruptions and the consequent deterioration in urban living conditions<sup>17</sup>. Some of the most visible forms of urban poverty are: proliferation of slums; fast growth of the informal sector; increasing casualization and underemployment of labour; crushing pressure on civic services; deprivation of educational and health contingencies; retarded growth and a growing sense of helplessness leading to crime and violence<sup>20</sup>. Non-provision of basic needs such as shelter, water, education, sanitation and health has serious consequences to the health of the community and women, responsible for collecting and carrying water



from long distances, often suffer the worst. Various policy interventions and programmes have had limited effect because of sectoral approaches and neglect of community involvement<sup>21</sup>.

This paper examines the implementation of the Urban Basic Services (UBS) Programme launched in 1985 with support from UNICEF and Central and State Governments. The programme, which seeks to develop urban slums by providing basic services, is guided by the principles of community initiative and participation, convergence, cost effectiveness and continuity. Neighbourhood Committees (NHCs) identify the needs of the community, prioritize them according to resources, prepare action plans and implement them. The NHC assumes leadership and takes responsibility on a self-help basis for the well-being of the community. The programme aims at community participation and self-management as well as building the capacity of slum communities to organize themselves to implement development programmes.

It is in this context that the Urban Basic Services Programme launched during the seventh five year plan period with the support of the UNICEF, and Central and State Governments, gains importance. Urban Basic Services Programme was launched in 1985 to cover over 200 towns. By the end of 1989, it was under implementation in about 168 towns.<sup>23</sup> The broad objectives of the programme are similar in all the states. There are, however, variations in implementation of the programme from state to state. Basic aim of the UBS programme is to upgrade the quality of the life of the urban poor, especially the most vulnerable sections like women, children and other economically weaker sections.<sup>9</sup>

The programme envisages development of urban slums by making provision of basic services like water, health and sanitation, education, environmental upgradation, etc. Its guiding principles are community initiative and participation, convergence, cost effectiveness and continuity. The strategy is to bring awareness and to promote collective action. It envisages organising the community and encourage community management. In tune with its nomenclature, the programme, aims at providing the basic amenities and services to the identified slum communities. The activities include provision of water, health care, education, nutrition, economic activities, environmental sanitation, recreation, and shelter. Each slum community based on local needs and resources prepares a mini-plan and implements it after approval by appropriate bodies.

### **About Aligarh City**

Aligarh city, also called Koil is situated about 130 km south east of New Delhi, the capital city of India. Aligarh is known for Aligarh Muslim University and its world renowned lock industry. In the past there have been many problems in the city in terms of Urban Basic Services. The city lacked in proper sewerage and sanitation facilities. As the city has not been developed in a planned manner, it lacked in the infrastructure and other basic facilities. The poor population which lived in the slum areas, did not get access to the government schemes and policies. Over the years things have changed a lot in the Urban Basic Services distribution. With the launch of the Smart City project, infrastructure has changed a lot and the reach of the government projects has been enhanced to provide the basic services to the poor population of the city. Post covid period has seen many changes in the approach of government like free ration and providing better health facilities to the poor.

### **The Urban Basic Service (UBS) programme in India**

The Urban Basic Service (UBS) Programme in India was initiated during the VII Five Year Plan period for urban poverty alleviation. Based on the experience of Implementing the UBS Programme and the



recommendations of the National Commission on Urbanisation, the Government revised it as Urban Basic **Services for the Poor (UBSP) (1991) and integrated it with other urban poverty alleviation programme, namely, Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums (EIUS), Nehru Rozgar Yojana (NRY) and Low Cost Sanitation (LCS).**

The objective of UBSP is to **create participatory community based structures through which community participate** in identifying normative/ felt needs, prioritize them and play a major role in planning, implementing, maintaining services and monitoring progress.

One of the important features is to provide social services and physical amenities through convergence of various on-going schemes of Ministry of Urban Affairs & Employment and various specialist departments like Health, Family Welfare, Women & Child Development, Education, Welfare Labour, Small Scale Industry, Non-conventional Energy Resources and Science and Technology. Such a convergent approach will lead to optimum utilisation of scarce resources and help in successful implementation of various sectoral programme thereby providing social services and physical amenities to the urban poor.

The urban poor residing in low income Neighbourhoods are the target groups for provision of social services under the Scheme and physical amenities to be provided under the Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums (EIUS) Scheme. Urban poor residing contiguous to low income neighbourhoods slums would also be able to avail of the social services provided under the Scheme. Special emphasis is given to women and child beneficiaries.

The present study is an endeavour to evaluate the availability and utilisation of UBS by urban poor. Towards this end, *SWOT* analysis has been undertaken. The acronym SWOT stands for Strength, Weakness, Opportunity and Threat. It is one of the effective tools of strategic management. Here various ‘internal and external’ factors are analysed so as to maximize the potential of strengths and opportunities and minimize the impact of weaknesses and threats. The internal analysis examines the content of UBS by analysing its strength and weaknesses. The external analysis look at utilisation of UBS by urban poor by identifying those points that pose opportunities for the success of UBS and those that pose threats or obstacles in the utilisation of UBS. It can be illustrated as:

**Conceptual Framework of SWOT Analysis**

SWOT ANALYSIS	Positive	Negative
Internal	Strengths	Weaknesses
External	Opportunities	Threats

**Strengths**

**Convergence of Services:** The soul of UBS programme is the integration of services. A package of services ranging from primary health care, education, to employment has been made available to urban poor. In primary health care the emphasis is on preventive health care viz. Immunization, improved infant feeding practices, child growth monitoring, home based diarrhoea management, drinking water supply, environmental sanitation, family welfare, and birth spacing and the contributory factors of primary education. In addition, curative health care facilities in the area will have to be coordinated with newly programmed health activities for a comprehensive coverage of health care. The provision is a lead for strengthening and encouraging local mahilamandals and other NGO’s to provide pre-school



education. The UBS programme helps the urban poor to obtain technical, financial, and marketing inputs from the existing plans, programme and schemes of the government through the small scale industries corporation, the minimum need programme, the lead banks, and so on. In regard to sanitation provision is made that low cost pour flush latrines can be constructed as per UNICEF design in order to eliminate the dry bucket type latrines.

**Provision of People's participation:** The UBS programme has laid down quite realistic grounds for the true people's participation. The bedrock of community participation in the UBS programme is the grass root level unit of the 'neighbourhood group'. A good deal of attention has to be focussed on enabling this group to become a cohesive unit where every member must be motivated to work with and for all the members of the group.

**Utilisation of Available Resources via UBS Programme:** On the basis of case studies it can safely be said that urban poor are exploiting the specific aspects of UBS programme. Basically, whatever beneficial schemes they come to know they run to exploit it economically. For example, many have taken loan under urban self-employment scheme but some have not undergone training that is to be provided by the District Urban Development Authority (DUDA) so that the money can be utilized in a fruitful manner. Similarly, urban poor have taken a sum of Rs.500 for the first or second girl child but they are unaware that further scholarship is available if they sent these girl children to school. There are also instances that poor have utilized UBS programme for bringing change in the sanitary conditions.

**Self-Employment Opportunities:** Above paragraph has clearly illustrated the utilisation of available UBS programmes. But here one point needs special attention in the sense that UBS programme is opening the window for social betterment and social equilibrium. As many of the respondents who have taken loan under urban self-employment scheme have successfully expanded their enterprises irrespective of the fact that they have taken training or not.

### **Weaknesses**

**Inadequacy of Information and Awareness Generation:** UBS programme with its convergence approach provides a variety or comprehensive package of services. Unfortunately a very small section of urban poor are aware about the depth of this package of services. Moreover, those who have a little bit of information that also about specific schemes have come to know from relatives or so called local 'netas'. This reflects the lack of commitment on the part of implementing agencies. To spread requisite awareness about these schemes among urban poor there is an urgent need to carry out various information, awareness and education (IEC) activities.

**Involvement of vested interests:** In order to secure true people's participation for the implementation and monitoring of UBS programme, the provision of community involved was inducted in the form of neighbourhood committee. However, these committees are nothing but a collective group of vested interests of the specific locality and the officials implementing various aspects of UBS programmes. From the case studies it is apparent that there is one person in the form of local 'neta' or 'middleman' who is enabling the people to appropriate loans. Realistically looking into the matter also answers the question of why majority of urban poor taking loans and aware of this scheme especially since in this loan facility a poor will get a handsome amount. That is why they endeavor to exploit this facility. But more important is the fact that this middleman can have a good share in this venture of enabling the



poor to get loan. That is why they are spreading awareness among poor about loan facility and taking them the ways and means to appropriate loan due to their vested interests.

**Procedural Hassles:** If simply awareness about schemes specially urban self-employment scheme to urban poor enables them to avail the benefits that these vested interest, discussed above, might have ended up by enabling and exploiting only a single urban poor in a community.

But to the amazement and consternation they are so much procedural hassles in gathering loan that a well-educated person cannot have access to it leave alone an uneducated poor. Furthermore, a nexus has been developed in which it is almost impossible to get the benefits of the scheme.

**Problems of re-payment:** Interestingly the urban poor have more awareness about a single scheme that is urban self-employment scheme but they are also exploited for the same. From the case studies it is apparent urban poor have taken debt from the local baniya to pay advance commission so as to get the loan. Because of this the poor end up with this half-eaten package and even forgets to pay back the money. They have either not deposited any repayment installments or they have deposited only few installments and finding out ways and means to be free from this obligation.

### Opportunities

**Desire to avail the schemes:** The effective utilisation of known UBS package shows the strength of UBS as it is appealing to the poor. But problem lies in the fact that poor are not aware about this comprehensive package. In the process of carrying case studies detailed discussion has been taken place with the head of the family as well as the other elder members. The observation thereon argued to conclude safely that poor have shown desire to avail the variety of services including the family planning. Only thing that is needed was the clear-cut explanation about the ways, benefits and means to access the schemes to the urban poor.

**Desire to raise family income:** All the respondents were much bothered about the manner in which they can increase the income of the family and accordingly their status. Some argued for increase in the income, as they have to marry off their daughters. To them ‘money’ appears as the single most important determinant of one’s status in the society.

**Commitment towards the family:** The respondents were highly committed towards the well being of their family. Although they alone (in majority of cases) were investing sweat and blood nevertheless they feel it their responsibility to work for the family. What is important here is the element and intensity of ‘commitment’ in the urban poor that can be channelised for the welfare of these urban poor in the form of self-help groups.

### Threats

**Institutionalization of the problem:** From the profile of respondents it is apparent that they are living in a poor health and hygienic conditions. They are having no knowledge about the importance of ventilation, some are having no access to regular water supply, and having dry sanitary latrines. There are also critically ill persons in certain facilities but they do not bother about proper treatment. In spite of the absence of such basic amenities, the poor are satisfied with their living condition or in other words they have become habitual to the prevailing conditions. Sincere efforts are needed to generate consciousness of all aspects of life as problems have become institutionalized in nature.



**Large family size and high dependency:** All the respondents whose case studies have developed have a family size with an average of 6 members per family. Similarly the profile of respondents illustrate the large family size of urban poor. Furthermore, in each family there is either one single income earning family member, in some families there were two. In the majority of cases the dependent are of young age and in a position to contribute significantly towards the family purse. Although the large size and high dependence is a burden on family but concerted efforts can turn them into assets.

**Lack of faith on government medical facilities:** Interestingly the majority of the respondents is seeking the treatment from private practitioners in case of illness instead of government hospitals. The reasons cited were those of improper attention, no medicinal supply, and far distance from the place of residence. These facts on the one hand reflect the negative attitude that the poor have developed about government hospitals. Of course the medical staff also has something to contribute towards this negative image. However, on the other hand this shows how poor people are losing their hard-earned money on these private practitioners even without knowing if they are genuine doctors or quacks.

The very tool SWOT argue that for the effective availability and utilisation of UBS for the poor there is a need to maintain and enrich the strength so as to remove or overcome the weaknesses which are ‘internal’ to the UBS package itself. Further, the opportunities or the potentials of the urban poor should be firmly exploited to reduce their threats.

The SWOT analysis can be summarized as:

**SWOT analysis of Availability & Utilisation of UBS by urban poor**

SWOT Analysis	Positive	Negative
<b>Internal</b>	<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convergence of services</li> <li>• Proper utilisation of available resources via UBS schemes</li> <li>• Provision of people’s participation</li> <li>• Self-employment opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate information about schemes</li> <li>• Procedural hassles</li> <li>• Problem of repayment</li> <li>• Involvement of vested interests</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to avail the schemes</li> <li>• Desire to raise family income</li> <li>• Commitment towards the family</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalization of the problem</li> <li>• Lack of faith on government medical facilities</li> <li>• Large family size and high dependency</li> </ul>

The foregoing clearly brings out the strengths and weaknesses that underlie the implementation of UBS programme. the programme has been reformulated as Urban Basic Services for the Poor and is being implemented with the financial support of the Government of India.<sup>34</sup> The programme is integrated



with the Nehru Rozgar Yojana<sup>35</sup> and Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums under urban poverty alleviation package.

The former is a programme aimed at providing employment opportunities and the latter aims at providing infrastructural facilities in the urban slums. Efforts are being made to associate Neighbourhood Committees in the identification of beneficiaries under these schemes. The emphasis under the revised Urban Basic Services for the Poor programme is also on the participatory processes. Implementation of Urban Basic Services Programme should be based on the experience gained in Urban Basic Services during the past five years. There is need to convert the weaknesses into strengths and opportunities.

The UBS programme is the first serious effort for the provision of basic services to the urban poor emphasising on the participatory processes. Fulfilment of basic needs as an objective is non-controversial though there may be differences on the approaches and the strategies adopted. UBSP should not be construed as only a programme for the provision of certain amenities. It should be construed as a philosophy, a process, a method and an approach.

As the purpose of development is to develop the man and just not developing things, the UBSP aims at harnessing and developing human potential for the fulfilment and satisfaction of basic amenities. This becomes all the more imperative in the context of rapid urbanisation.

**Thus, Following recommendations can be put forth**

1. Information, Education, and Communication (IEC): To spread awareness about UBS programmes
2. Easy access to urban self-employment scheme with the requisite training
3. Generating the importance of re-payment of loan
4. Involvement of local bodies and NGO's and active citizens instead of people with vested interests
5. Exploiting the motivation towards schemes
6. Relating the unhygienic condition in the family to the commitment of poor towards their family
7. Developing consciousness of responsibilities in the dependent youth by showing them various opportunities
8. Strengthening urban local bodies through capacity building and better financial management.
9. Increasing the efficiency and productivity of cities by deregulation and development of land.
10. Dismantling public sector monopoly over urban infrastructure and creating conducive atmosphere for the private sector to invest.
11. Establishing autonomous regulatory framework to oversee the functioning of the public and private sector.
12. Reducing incidence of poverty.
13. Using technology and innovation in a big way.
14. More stress on providing education specially to the poor people as education can changes their mind set and will make them enabled to become aware about the basic services and policies being launched for them and how to avail them.
15. Proper implementation of the projects should be there.





The transformation of the Indian cities faces several structural constraints. Foremost, the current urban development model starves cities of financing. Also, weak or out dated urban management practices—inappropriate planning systems, unsustainable service delivery models, and lack of focus on the urban poor—negate the benefits of agglomeration economies in Indian cities by distorting land and housing markets, rendering cities non-creditworthy, and leaving them with expensive yet poorly functioning urban services.

The current urban management techniques are also out-moded. The Master Plan concept—as currently practised in India—is not widely used elsewhere. Besides, it is not well suited to rapidly growing cities and multi-jurisdiction urban agglomerations. The Master Plan concept has also not been useful in addressing India’s large and widely spread slums. There is an urgent need to develop new management and service delivery approaches across the board.

### **The Smart Cities Mission**

Launched on June 25, 2015, the Smart Cities Mission is a flagship scheme under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. This ambitious programme by the Indian Government aims at building 100 Smart Cities across India with focus on planned urbanisation and sustainable development as a support system for the neighbouring cities. It also involves the development of high-quality infrastructure with provision of basic amenities, education, health services, IT accessibility, digitisation, e-governance, sustainable development, safety and security. Global cities such as Singapore, Japan, and the USA are offering valuable support to India’s mission, which also emphasises on economic development of urban centres by creating more jobs and enhancement in income

**Progress so far:** The mission involves as many as 3,183 projects worth Rs 1,45,245 crore. But so far, work has been finished only in projects worth Rs 4,960 crore, amounting to only five per cent of total projects. The target of completion of the projects was extended from 2019-20 to 2022-23 for execution of projects in cities selected in round four. Funds worth Rs 500 crore will be released for the top 15 cities as per data released by Ministry of Urban Development.

The overall SWOT analysis along with the recommendations put forward can be summarized as:



**SWOT Solution of Availability & Utilisation of UBS by urban poor**

SWOT Solution	Positive	Negative	Recommendation
<b>Internal</b>	<p><b>Strengths:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convergence of services</li> <li>• Proper utilisation of available resources via UBS schemes</li> <li>• Provision of people's participation</li> <li>• Self employment opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inadequate information about schemes</li> <li>• Procedural hassles</li> <li>• Problem of repayment</li> <li>• Involvement of vested interests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEC activities about UBS programme</li> <li>• Easy access to urban self-employment scheme</li> <li>• Generating importance of repayment</li> <li>• Involvement of local bodies and NGO's</li> </ul>
<b>External</b>	<p><b>Opportunities:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desire to avail the schemes</li> <li>• Desire to raise family income</li> <li>• Commitment towards the family</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institutionalization of the problem</li> <li>• Lack of faith on government medical facilities</li> <li>• Large family size and high dependency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relating unhygienic condition in the family to the commitment of the poor</li> <li>• Exploiting motivation towards UBS programme</li> <li>• Developing consciousness of responsibility on dependant youths</li> </ul>

The programme has been reformulated as Urban Basic Services for the Poor and is being implemented with the financial support of the Government of India.<sup>34</sup> The programme is integrated with the Nehru Rozgar Yojana<sup>35</sup> and Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums Balika Samridhi Yojna under urban poverty alleviation package helped in Increasing peoples participation in the form of self-employment and also helped poor families in upbringing infant girls by providing care and now the policymakers need to focus on new ways to achieve the results and on different benchmarks that capture efficiency, effectiveness, quality, and sustainability in governance, service delivery, inter-governmental municipal finances, and social development and ways to minimise the paper work and simplify the process of getting benefit of urban development schemes ,mobilise adopt effective people friendly ways to connect them in urban development process

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