SLUM POLICY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN CHENNAI:
THE RECENT PAST, AND WHAT ONE CAN EXPECT FOR THE FUTURE

Over the last ten years, cities in India have accessed large amount of funds from two significant central government programs - the JNNURM and RAY. These funds have been spent mainly on urban infrastructure and the provision of basic services for the poor. Here is an overview of the impacts of the JNNURM and the RAY in Chennai.

JNNURM
- 76 projects worth a total of Rs. 5324.05 crores have been approved till 2014. Of these, 52 are Urban Infrastructure and Governance (UIG) projects, approved at a total cost of Rs. 3935.8 crores. There were 24 projects approved under the Basic Services for the Urban Poor, approved at a total cost of Rs. 1388.27 crore.
- Almost half of all UIG projects in the city were aimed at improving water supply; they were approved at Rs. 1390 crores, around 35% of the total cost of UIG projects.
- Our field work in six areas in Alandur and Thiruvottiyur has revealed that access to individual piped water supply, especially for the poor, has not been facilitated. In areas where property rights are difficult to define, people continue to rely on shared taps and hand pumps. Households depend heavily on water from private suppliers (lorries and water cans).
- 77% of the money available for the provision of Basic Services for the Urban Poor (BSUP) (Rs. 1073 crore), was spent for construction of high rise resettlement tenements at Perumbakkam, characterized by poor design and construction quality, and poor access to basic services.
- In situ housing assistance and service provision were available only for a few declared slums in the city.
- Tenure security has not improved in a meaningful way as a result of the JNNURM.

RAY
- Rajiv Awas Yojana was a program started in 2009 to create "slum free cities" through provision of tenure security, in situ housing development, and public participation in notified and non-notified slums.
- In Chennai, a survey of all slums in the city has been nearly completed by private consultant Darashaw with little public participation, published only in 2015.
- Despite focus in RAY on in-situ rehab, the only project that has been approved under the RAY in Chennai is also a resettlement project: construction of 1,472 tenements at Athipattu at the cost of Rs. 115.2 crores.
- No attempt has been made to guarantee property rights to slum dwellers. No legislation has been formulated yet.
- No vacant land mapping has been undertaken, despite this being a requirement of all surveys in the RAY.

New projects in the NDA regime
A slew of new schemes have been announced in the last few months. Not many details are available yet, especially on Chennai's specific plans, but here is a short summary on what to expect:

Housing for All - Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY)

Conversations with TNSCB officials revealed that in the place of RAY, they will work on new projects under the centrally sponsored Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) - Housing for All scheme that is proposed to be implemented between 2015 and 2022[1]. PMAY aims to provide "every family a pucca house with water connection, toilet facilities, 24x7 electricity supply and access." Cities are required to undertake a demand survey to gauge the demand for housing in every city, following which a Housing For All Plan of Action (HFAPoA) is to be prepared. Annual implementation plans are also required to be prepared until 2022.

The project offers four implementation possibilities:
In situ slum redevelopment with private participation: Houses built through this mode will provide housing with basic infrastructure for eligible slum dwellers. The slum rehabilitation project will also include a 'for sale' component to enable developers to cross-subsidize the project. This mode of implementation is recommended for "tenable" slums.
Affordable housing through credit linked subsidy: Interest subsidy for EWS and LIG residents on home loans taken for new house construction or incremental improvements. Home loans can also be facilitated by the ULB or other agencies.
Affordable housing in partnership: The state, either through its own agencies or in partnership with the private sector, will construct affordable housing.
Subsidy for beneficiary-led individual house construction: Central assistance of Rs. 1.5 lakhs will be provided to eligible EWS families.

The PMAY is very different from the RAY in many respects. Here are some matters of concern:

- **There is no mention of tenure security or land rights for the poor anywhere in the scheme. The scheme offers no guarantee to provide any additional legitimacy or documentation for the urban poor living in slums, and is likely to perpetuate their vulnerability.**
- The only option that seems to be available for those living in "untenable" slums seems to be affordable housing provided by the state. In Chennai, this could translate to the construction of more resettlement houses in the outskirts, except this time, private players could also be involved.
- The involvement of private players in the construction of affordable housing is dangerous in that their profit motive could shortchange the poor. However, mixed income neighbourhoods have prospered in the long run across the world, and in Sites and Services schemes in Chennai.
- Banks have so far been hostile to the urban poor, even towards the eligible few who are able to provide collateral. It remains to be seen how cooperative they are in providing home loans. A TNSCB official we spoke to voiced the same concern.
- As corroborated by the TNSCB official, the amount of central assistance seems to have been considerably rolled back, compared to the JNNURM and RAY. This may prove to be a deterrent to constructing large resettlement housing like in Perumbakkam. Self-help housing has worked in the past in Chennai, however this is an option that is likely to be available only for residents of declared and/or "tenable" slums.

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[1] http://mhupa.gov.in/pmay/repository/01_PMAY_Guidelines_English.pdf

Smart Cities Mission

The objective of the mission is "to promote cities that provide core infrastructure and give a decent quality of life to its citizens, a clean and sustainable environment and application of 'smart' solutions,"[2] i.e. through the use of technology. Infrastructural elements include supply of adequate water, electricity, transport and sanitation facilities, affordable housing, IT connectivity and digitalization, good governance, sustainable environment, safety, health, and education. 'Smart' solutions could include things like electronic service delivery, video crime monitoring, waste to energy initiatives, smart meters for water and energy consumption, smart parking and tele-medicine.

The explicit purpose of the scheme is to drive economic growth and enable local area development (like in slums) through technology. No particular model is prescribed by the central government: each city is required to shape its own vision. Nearly Rs. 1 lakh crores of central and ULB government funds will be available for the development of 100 smart cities across the country.

Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)[3]

In an attempt to provide water supply, sewerage and urban transport facilities to all households, the government has announced the AMRUT scheme. The goal of the scheme is not just universal coverage (provision of taps and sewerage connections to all), but also to meet service level benchmarks. City spaces such as parks will be improved in order to increase the "amenity value" of cities. Governance in cities will also be enhanced through the implementation of reforms.

AMRUT is budgeted at Rs. 50,000 crores for five years (till 2020) for 500 cities.

The implications of the Smart Cities and AMRUT missions?
There is a widespread concern that the Smart Cities Mission with its focus on the use of advanced technologies will result in cities that do not provide for its poor residents. However, the Mission offers flexibility to cities to make their own plans, and speaks to the "aspirations" of the people, including the poor. This opportunity can perhaps be leveraged to pressurize city government agencies to make plans that reflect the aspirations of the urban poor. Similarly, AMRUT must provide much-needed basic services for the poor.

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[2] http://smartcities.gov.in/writereaddata/SmartCityGuidelines.pdf
[3] http://amrut.gov.in/writereaddata/AMRUT%20Guidelines%20.pdf