

PRESS RELEASE

Launch of Report – ‘Bengaluru’s Continuing Inequity: An Eviction Impact Assessment of Ejipura/Koramangala Four Years after Its Demolition’

Bengaluru, 29 July 2017

Between 18 and 21 January 2013, all homes in the EWS (Economically Weaker Section) settlement of Ejipura/Koramangala, Bengaluru (Bangalore), were demolished by the city corporation. After losing their homes and personal possessions, many families were forced to survive on the streets without any shelter, food, livelihood, and healthcare. Many lost their jobs. The impact of the eviction has been devastating and long-lasting for the affected families. Given the apathy of the government and the complete lack of state response, **Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN), Delhi; Forum against EWS Land Grab; and, Fields of View, Bengaluru**, conducted a study to determine the real extent of the losses and costs incurred by the community as a direct result of its forced eviction in January 2013. The study used HLRN’s human rights-based Eviction Impact Assessment Tool. The findings of the study have been compiled in a report titled, ‘Bengaluru’s Continuing Inequity: An Eviction Impact Assessment of Ejipura/Koramangala Four Years after its Demolition,’ which was released today in Bengaluru by Ms Violet Mary, a senior citizen from the evicted settlement.

Mr M.R. Prabhakar from Forum against EWS Land Grab mentioned that he was a part of the evictions that happened five years ago where families, women and even children were forcibly evicted from their settlements. The eviction has been documented in two reports, which cover eviction data and its impacts that range from mental anguish to loss of children’s education.

Mr Vinay Sreenivasa from Alternative Law Forum said that HLRN, Forum against EWS Land Grab, and Fields of View had conducted extensive surveys and an impact analysis which is documented in the report. He added that it is difficult to record the pain and rage of people who were witness to the demolition of their own houses.

Dr Sylvia Karpagham, a public health expert and practicing doctor, spoke about the impacts of the eviction on the health of the community. She mentioned that there were 1500 women and 2000 children living in the settlement. She also mentioned that toilets and water tanks were the first structures which were bulldozed and demolished because of which affected persons had to walk long distances to access water and sanitation facilities, due to which they were forced to reduce their water intake. This had severe implications on their health like diarrhea, malnutrition, respiratory disorders, malaria, and other diseases and health disorders. The public health system including ICDS centres/*crèches/anganwadis* remained non-responsive to their needs, abandoning them and leaving them to fend for themselves.

Mr Sunil Dutt, senior advocate at the High Court of Karnataka, said that many laws have been passed to protect the vulnerable but have proven ineffective and toothless when it

comes to enforcement and execution. He said that the law is not equal for everybody and access to justice for the weaker sections has become difficult.

Mr YJ Rajendra, a senior activist, thanked the organizations who were behind the survey, analysis, documentation, and compilation of the report, which consists of some significant findings and key recommendations. He said that there has been a severe travesty of justice and it can be said that it is partly due to the failure of the judiciary. He said that caste is an important issue that must be given due importance when such incidents occur to indicate the significance of social justice.

Mr Isaac Selva, from Slum Jagatthu, thanked everybody for attending the event and extending their support to the efforts of everybody involved in compiling this report, which will help in future judicial proceedings to get access to justice for the affected community.

Key Findings of the Report and Recommendations:

The demolition of houses without the provision of alternative housing/resettlement/compensation has resulted in extreme hardships for the people evicted, in the form of rising ill-health, mental trauma, loss of livelihood, loss of education, and increased security and safety concerns. The researchers found that as a result of the eviction, there has been a reduction in the monthly household income, by an average of seven per cent. This decrease in income has been accompanied by an increase in monthly household expenditure by six per cent. To survive, families are coping by adopting different strategies, such as reducing food consumption (by a factor of three) or not visiting hospitals, in order to keep healthcare costs to a bare minimum. As a coping strategy, the consumption of intoxicants has increased after the forced eviction. Four years after the eviction, families are living in rental housing or in relatives' homes or crèches/*anganwadis*. Only 42 per cent of those surveyed have permanent housing, whereas 55 per cent are living in temporary structures. Two per cent are living in semi-permanent structures, and one per cent are reported to be homeless.

The report recommends that all families residing in the EWS quarters during demolition be provided with adequate rehabilitation and financial reparation of their losses by the government. At the minimum, each family should be paid Rs 400,000 as compensation. The human right to adequate housing must be respected, protected, and fulfilled by the concerned government, in collaboration with Urban Local Bodies, within a consultative framework, which includes the voices of those affected, and adheres to India's national and international human rights obligations and commitments.

The report is available at: http://hln.org.in/documents/EvIA_Ejipura_Bengaluru.pdf

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