



## **Governance Framework for Unauthorised Colonies**

### **An executive summary**

#### **Greha**

The spread of unauthorised construction in our cities has assumed significant proportions. It is estimated that in Delhi, the population resident in unauthorised colonies is about 4 million.

Recently the Delhi Government issued ‘provisional regularisation’ certificates to about 1400 of the unauthorised colonies, and started the process of redevelopment/renewal to bring these into the urban mainstream. However, the morphology and the urban structure of these colonies is different from the ‘greenfield’ planned development guided by the Delhi Master Plan. A new paradigm is required to address and resolve the complex set of environmental, cultural, and legal issues arising from this ‘spontaneous’ development.

One such provisionally regularised unauthorised colony is Aya Nagar, situated in South-West Delhi, on the Mehrauli-Gurgaon Road, adjacent to the Delhi-Haryana border. The colony has grown in the last three decades on the agricultural lands of an organically evolved village, originally populated by ‘gurjars.’ Most of the agricultural lands of the village were acquired by the Government of India to establish defense and security related establishments in planned and secure compounds. Between these compounds the unauthorised development has spread over the undulating and rocky portions of the Aravali hills on the state border.

Aya Nagar extension is settled by migrants from all parts of the country. The population of the village and the extension is nearly one hundred thousand persons. The settlement now represents a microcosm of urbanising India, and it could serve as a model for planning intervention in most rapidly urbanising towns in the country.

Towards this end a voluntary organisation called GREHA, with expertise in environmental planning and habitat design, settled in Aya Nagar in 2000 CE and started working with the local communities for an urban renewal exercise. This led to the formulation of the Aya Nagar Development Project, which proposes that the inhabitants along with technical experts create, document, and partner with local authorities for implementing a prototypical model for urban development to serve as a guide for similar settlements in the country.

Working on the ground for nearly a decade between elected representatives, officials of government departments, planning authorities, autonomous boards/agencies for infrastructure provision, voluntary organisations, and ordinary citizens has been a learning experience. This leads us to a 'diagnosis' of the existing framework of governance, wherein policy alternates between the two extremes of rigid type plans and institutional neglect of 'slums' and the like. Public consultation being kept to a minimum, the authorities are bedeviled by lack of coordination between departments, leading to faulty implementation of public works and lack of fit with people's needs.

Field experience and research have revealed the outline of an alternative framework, which seeks to integrate planning and implementation through the instrumentality of scale to focus at the neighbourhood level, while centralising public participation through the institution of local parliaments working in collaboration with a local planning board of government officials and public representatives, monitored by a tribunal functioning as a court of appeal. This needs to be initiated by determining the boundary of the local area according to the logic of its ecological setting.

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