



Our needs, our priorities; women and men from the slums in Mumbai and Pune talk about their needs for water and sanitation

Meera Bapat and Indu Agarwal

Meera Bapat is a researcher based in Pune (India) whose research interests have long centred on the shelter needs of low-income groups.
Address: 18 Madhav baug, Paud road, Pune 411 038, India; e-mail: meera18@pn2.vsnl.net.in

Indu Agarwal works with the Indian NGO SPARC (Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres) in Mumbai (India).
Address: SPARC, P. O. Box 9389, Mumbai 400 026, India; e-mail: admin@sparcindia.org

The interviews from which this paper draws were funded by DANIDA, the Danish Government's bilateral aid agency.

1. Mumbai, formerly called Bombay, is the capital of the state of Maharashtra and is situated on the western coast of India.

2. Pune, formerly called Poona, also in the state of Maharashtra, lies 200 kilometres east of Mumbai.

SUMMARY: *This paper presents extracts from interviews with slum dwellers, primarily women, in Mumbai and Pune, and discusses the conditions they cope with every day with regard to water and sanitation, and the ways these conditions have changed over time. These women live in a variety of circumstances – on pavements, beside railway tracks, in swampy areas, on steep slopes – and this affects the particular problems they face. But in all cases, dealing with their needs for water and sanitation is a stressful and time-consuming challenge. These interviews provide the kinds of insights that rarely emerge in quantitative studies.*

I. INTRODUCTION

THIS PAPER PRESENTS extracts from interviews with women (and some men) living in slum settlements in Mumbai⁽¹⁾ and Pune⁽²⁾ conducted during 2002 and 2003. These interviews give some insights into the daily difficulties faced by low-income groups. It is worth remembering as one reads these accounts that, according to official data, residents of Mumbai get on average 158 litres of water per day per person, and those in Pune 200 litres. These aggregate statistics, however, conceal the reality of acute inequality in the distribution of basic services and the consequent hardships faced by the poor, especially women.

A disproportionate share of the labour and burden of ill-health related to inadequacies in provision of water and sanitation in the household and neighbourhood falls on women. It is typically women who collect water from public standpipes, often queuing for long periods in the process and having to get up very early or go late at night to get the water. It is typically women who have to carry heavy water containers over long distances and on slippery slopes. It is typically women who have to make do with the often inadequate water supplies to clean the home, prepare the food, wash the utensils, do the laundry and bathe the children. It is also women who have to scrounge, buy or beg for water, particularly when their usual sources run dry. It is important not to underestimate this side of the water burden. There are no compelling international statistics, comparable to health statistics, documenting the labour burdens related to inadequate water provision. It is difficult for those who have never had to rely on public or other peoples' taps to appreciate how humiliating, tiring, stressful and inconvenient this can be. Not having toilets, or having to wait in long queues to use filthy toilets, carries health risks and is also

a source of anxiety. Most research on water and sanitation tries to quantify the inadequacies in provision. These interviews provide insights into difficulties that often go unrecorded and that rarely come out in quantitative studies.

II. PROVISION OF WATER AND SANITATION IN MUMBAI

MUMBAI HAS A population of 15 million, more than half of which lives in slum settlements. Under the programme of environmental improvement of slums, many of the settlements have been provided basic services of piped water supply, public latrines and open drains by the local authority. They are, however, woefully inadequate and badly maintained, as these interviews indicate.

Slum settlements in Mumbai are located on land that belongs to a variety of owners, generally in undesirable or hazardous locations. The land may be owned by the local authority (Bombay Municipal Corporation) or it may be privately owned. It may be under the jurisdiction of the district collector (provincial government) or of various federal government agencies such as the railways, Bombay Port Trust or the Airport Authority. In spite of the Slum Areas Act that enables local authorities to provide services in settlements that have been "declared" as slums, some of the government agencies do not permit the Bombay Municipal Corporation to carry out "improvement" of slums on their land.

a. Pavement dwellers

Nearly 30,000 families live on pavements in Mumbai. With the help of a non-government organization (SPARC) and the National Slum Dwellers Federation, they have formed Mahila Milan ("women together") groups and have succeeded in stopping repeated demolition of their shelter. Some of them have also managed to "secure" water connections.

Sagira: "When we came here in 1972, we did not know where to fetch water. We used to go to a hotel (restaurant) to have a cup of tea and bring a can of water from there. After we settled down on a pavement we bought an old 5-litre can for 25 paise³ and filled it in the morning. We used to ask around where a tap was working and we used to collect water there. If that did not work we used to go to the JJ hospital morgue, bathe there and fill our water containers. After we put up plastic sheet roofing on the pavement we used to go to Kamathipura nearby to collect water at the tap in the 14th lane. There, the people used to refuse to give us water saying '...they have brought toilet cans!' We did not understand what they meant. Then a woman told me that it was because of the pots that we carried to collect water. Then I bought a plastic bucket. If we did not get water in the 14th lane we tried to get it in other lanes. We used to go in search of water at 3:30 in the morning and collect three or four *handaas* (an urn that can hold 10–12 litres of water) by seven o'clock. If we did not get water we used to buy well water. Even now we sometimes have to buy well water for five rupees per *handaa*. We buy four or five *handaas* per day, just for cooking.

Local elections took place two months back. Our only demand was water – whoever gave us water would get our votes. We made ten boys our spokesmen. The one with a bow and arrow (the symbol representing

3. 100 paise = 1 rupee. At present, there are around 45 rupees to US\$1.

the political party Shiv Sena) gave us two taps before the elections. Now we have water. Those who had money spent 1,500 rupees or so extra and got individual taps inside their shacks. I also got one. We have fixed a rate of 20 or 15 rupees every month per family. These are unofficial taps. We cannot get taps officially. We have filled in forms so many times but the municipality throws them away. There is no provision for giving water taps to pavement dwellers.

To avoid fights over water in our area, three boys organize everything. Yashawant Jadhav gave 150 taps in all but each area got one or two. Sophia Zubair Road (pavement settlement) has one, Dimtimkar has two, Peer Khan has five or six. There was a big fight at the tap on the corner and people began to beat each other. The municipality person took away a hose pipe and a couple of *handaas*. The boys rushed to Yashawant Jadhav who sorted out the problem. Since then the boys have supervised things."

Rehmat: "We used to bathe and wash our clothes and vessels with water from the textile mill. That was for free. Then the mill closed down and the water stopped. That was a big problem. There was a water line passing under our houses. Two or three of us thought that we should steal the water by tapping into the pipe. Plumber Patel and I did it first five years ago. The cost of a pipe and digging came to about 1,000 rupees. Water came in the morning from 4 until 7 o'clock. A lot of people came to fill the water at the tap. There used to be a queue for water and we used to charge 20 rupees per month per person. In a few days, the cost of installing the tap for stealing the water was recovered. By then, many other families wanted to have their own taps. So there were six or seven more such taps and the municipality came to know about it. They came with the police. But we had come to know that the municipality people were coming and everybody shut their taps and concealed the connections with stones. After the men left we filled the water. We then placed a few people on the lookout for the inspector. After a few days, we made friends with a person from the municipality. We asked him to install a tap in our mosque and madarssa. He took about 600 rupees from us and put in a tap. Now they come to disconnect our taps once every month or two. Still, there are always two or three taps left. Also the main tap is never disconnected. It is always there."

b. Slums on land under the jurisdiction of the district collector

Khatrabai Londhe: "I used to live in Indiranagar in Ghatkopar. Our rooms were demolished because a road was built there. So we came here in 1985. Many other people also came. When we came, there were only four or five houses. It was desolate and quite scary. We filled up the swamp and built our shacks. It cost us a lot of money to get several truckloads of debris to reclaim the land. Last year, the municipal corporation filled up more area.

In those days, we had to get water from Mankhurd station. We had to walk through the slush and mud. It used to take us an hour to walk back with water pots on our heads. If we did not get water there, we used to go to other places like Bainganwadi and Shivajinagar. We had to fetch enough water for drinking and washing. The water here is saline. At high tide, the water level used to rise and our houses used to get submerged. This used to happen several times a year. Now that the whole area has been reclaimed we do not have this problem.

Five or seven years ago we got water taps. They were provided from the MLA (member of the Legislative Assembly – provincial assembly) funds.⁴ But those taps are dry. Because the pipeline passes through the marshy area, it is rusted. Some people have paid the money and have secured their own water supply. Some people go near the bridge to fetch water. It takes ten minutes to walk there. MHADA (Maharashtra Housing and Area Development Authority) is doing some work there. Pipes have broken and several people bring water from there. Even that water is not free. There is always someone sitting there who charges one rupee for a *handaa* of water. Anyone can take charge of water and collect money. Even I can do that.

I need 15 or 16 *handaas* of water every day. When we wash bed sheets, blankets etc., we need to buy water worth nearly 50 rupees. There are times when we do not get water for a couple of days in a row. Then we get it from Shivajinagar, Mohite Patilnagar or Shantinagar. It takes half an hour to reach Shivajinagar. Shantinagar is even further. We have to go on the highway. Sometimes the water is dirty. It has a foul smell. There are always fights for water, particularly if women try to jump the queue. Then complaints are registered with the police.

We have met our councillor many times to ask him to get us more water. He promises to look into our problem. So far he has done nothing. We also went on a protest march to the municipality. But nothing has changed here.

A toilet block is under construction at present. Until now, we have used open land for defecating – men go on one side and women on the other. People passing by can see women squatting. The day before yesterday, an old woman went out to defecate at seven in the evening and a man came from behind and grabbed her. A few of us generally go together for the toilet. Men hide behind the bushes and watch women when they are squatting. If they see a woman alone, they creep in and molest her. In the past, we met the councillor many times and told him about the circumstances in Sathenagar. But for years nothing happened.”

Shalini Sadashiv Mohite: “I am the secretary of the Mahila Mandal (women’s group) in Omkar Society. There are around 3,000 families that live in this settlement. Two years ago, groups of 10–15 families collected money and each group got a water connection. For the past six months, we have no water at all in these taps. We have complained to the municipal office, and they have promised to connect our taps to a different water line, but nothing has been done so far. Now we buy water for drinking, washing, bathing, everything; we pay ten rupees or more for water every day. We buy it in Bainganwadi or Shivajinagar and other such areas. It takes about half an hour to walk there and come back. Some people go there on bicycles and bring four cans at a time. Those who do not have bicycles hire them for two or three rupees or bring water in autorickshaws (three-wheeler hooded vehicles used as taxis). The people from whom we buy water have tapped water lines going into buildings there, and have put pumps to draw water. Some have put hosepipes from there to here and sell water to individual families at 100 rupees a month.

There is no toilet in this whole area. Men and women from the settlement squat along the road. Women do not go after six in the morning. They wait for the cover of darkness. We even eat less so that we do not need to relieve ourselves during the daytime because we do not have proper toilets. Now some toilets are being built here. We tried to get our MLA (member of the provincial Legislative Assembly) and the local coun-

4. Each MLA, MP and councillor has a certain amount of funds at their disposal that they can spend on projects in their constituency.



Photo 1: Washing clothes in Ramabainagar. Credit: SPARC

5. Bombay Municipal Corporation is constructing many toilet blocks in slum settlements in Mumbai under the project funded by the World Bank, and SPARC has been given construction contracts.

cillor to build toilets for us, but they said they did not have funds. We went to Apanalaya (an NGO) who told us to go to SPARC. And now SPARC is building these toilets.”⁽⁵⁾

Sushella Laxman Naidu: “I have lived here in Ramabainagar for 24 years. Until four years ago water was a big problem. We used to go sometimes to the police station for filling water; sometimes we used to fill it where a water pipe had a leak. We used to go looking for a leaking pipe. It was not one or two people but hundreds of us. My children used to get tired carrying water. Occasionally, I used to buy water when I needed it badly. I used to go to some of the houses around and say ‘...take one or two rupees, let me fill some water.’ I used to work in a house in Ghatkopar. I used to bring drinking water from there in an autorickshaw.

Four years ago people paid to have water taps installed. I do not have the capacity to pay for a tap. I pay 50 rupees a month to fill 10–15 small pots – four buckets, four *handaaas*. It takes me about 20 minutes to fill the water. But sometimes there is no water for up to two days. These days the problem has become acute. Sometimes the water is so dirty. I filter it through two layers of cloth. You need clean water for drinking; otherwise you fall sick. We use the dirty water for washing and for bathing.

The pressure is so low that the water does not flow if we have the pipe raised even one foot above the ground. So we have the outlet of the water pipe so low, below the ground level. If we connect hand pumps on the water pipe the municipality takes them away. The water pressure is a bit

better at night. Some people can keep awake at night to fill the water, some cannot. The water generally comes after midnight and goes off at six in the morning. But there is no guarantee that we would get water at night."

Surekha Dilip Yadav: "I have been living in Ambedkarnagar (Vikroli Park – a large settlement on a hilltop) for more than 12 years. Water has always been a problem here. The pressure is so low that we have had to make a hollow around the water pipe in the road just outside our houses. We fill up water by putting a pot in this hollow under the hole made in the pipe. Ten people fill water at one hole in the pipe. Because we have had to make holes in the water line to access water, insects go in the pipe; mud and dirt go in it. There are no fixed timings at which water is supplied; it can come any time in the 24 hours of a day. We can go out only after we have filled all the water that we can get. If I have to go out for some reason, I may not get water that day unless there is someone else in the house to fill it."

A community leader: "There is a quarry about two kilometres away. Rainwater collects there. We wash our clothes with that water. It looks green. In villages, even animals do not drink such water. But we have to use this water. We are human beings. We need clean water.

Now we have a new toilet block. It was completed nine months ago. If we keep it clean, it will remain clean. It is our responsibility. But who is going to take it? That is the problem. We have 360 member families. Of them, 300 pay 20 rupees every month. They know which families do not pay. They say, '...charge even 50 rupees, but keep the toilets clean.' We have a total collection of around 6,000 rupees. We have employed two people to clean the toilets. One of them stays in the caretaker's room up here. Their salary together with cleaning materials costs 4,000 rupees. Electricity costs 200 rupees. We used to fill the overhead tank with the motor but the municipality took it away. And people waste water. They leave the water taps open and go away. We have not received water bills so far, but we have to pay for the water. Our collection of 6,000 rupees is not enough for all our expenses. It is not easy to get money out of people. We have to go from house to house to collect the money. I am fed up."

c. Slum settlements located beside rail tracks

Thousands of families lived in slum settlements located beside railway tracks in Mumbai. The non-government organization SPARC and the National Slum Dwellers Federation helped them to organize and form cooperative housing societies. After years of negotiations with the railway authorities, 12,000 families were rehabilitated in the suburb of Mankhurd. Except for the incident in February 2000, when 2,350 slum houses were bulldozed unexpectedly by the railway authorities, the community-managed resettlement programme was peaceful and orderly. Many of the residents were re-housed in multi-storey tenement blocks and the rest are living in transit camps.⁶ They will eventually be accommodated in tenement blocks as and when they are built. The following interviews describe their situation with respect to access to water and sanitation when they were living beside the railway tracks as well as in their new accommodation.

Jayashree Gautam Waghmare: "I used to live in Govandi. I lived there for 15 years. My mother-in-law spent her whole life there. She was married there and died there. We had to cross two railway tracks to fetch water. We paid 100 rupees for water every month and could collect as much water as we wanted. But there was such a crowd that sometimes

6. See Patel, Sheela, Celine d'Cruz and Sundar Burra (2002), "Beyond evictions in a global city; people-managed resettlement in Mumbai", *Environment and Urbanization* Vol 14, No 1, pages 159-172. This can be accessed on the internet at <http://www.ingentaselect.com/09562478/v14n1/>

we could not get any water. The tap was only five minutes walk away, but because we had to cross the railway tracks it used to worry us. As we balanced *handaas* full of water on our heads, it used to be difficult to know which side the train was coming from. Even when we were warned about the approaching train, we did not know which way to run. We used to go to fetch water at four in the morning. Even my parents-in-law used to fetch water. There were seven of us in the house, so we needed lots of water. We used to stand in the queue, fill our *handaas* and take them home, and then queue again for a second round. Each tap had at least 25 people queuing.

In Govandi, we used the railway tracks as toilets. We used to go between midnight and four in the morning because at other times there were people around. Men would go in the daytime also, but women could not do that. We sat between railway tracks and, if a train came, we used to jump onto the other track. There were frequent accidents and, every week or so, someone used to get hit by a train and got killed on the tracks. So, many times, we used to find pieces of flesh outside our doors."

Mangal Sadashiv Kamble: "I used to live in Tatanagar in Govandi. For the past seven or eight years, I did not have any problem with water, as 14 of us shared a tap. Before that, we had to go quite a distance. The municipality had provided five taps, but there was no road beside the tracks to reach them. So we had to walk between the tracks for 10–15 minutes. There used to be lots of fights for filling water. We had to queue for as long as an hour and we had to leave our children behind. Once, my small daughter walked out of the house and sat on the railway track. I saw a train approaching as I walked back with water. I threw the *handa* down and ran towards my daughter. I managed to pick her up just before the train roared past.

There used to be many people who came to fill the water and they came from far. I used to drop my children at school and then go to fetch water around one o' clock in the afternoon. I used to finish filling water by five in the evening. To fill one *handa*, I needed to stand in the queue for one hour. I would take it home, empty it and go back and stand in the queue again. I could not afford to buy water as it used to cost five rupees for one *handa*. If I was not well, my husband used to fetch the water in the evening after he returned from work.

For toilets, we had to use the railway tracks. There were public toilets, but they were some distance away – about half an hour walk. They used to be so dirty that we did not feel like using them. And there were such long queues! Instead of using those filthy toilets, we used to go on the tracks after ten at night or early in the morning at four or five o'clock."

Hemalata Kailash Ardhoo: "I used to live in Tatanagar near Govandi station. People had put up huts there and I bought one in 1982 for 5,000 rupees. There was a municipal tap about 15–20 minute walk away. If that tap did not have water we had to go to Govandi station. It was a 25–30 minutes walk from my house. Then, small groups of people got together and obtained water connections. Initially, we had no toilets. We used to go to the municipal garbage dump for defecating. Later, the municipality built toilets for us, but there was nobody to clean them. We then employed a person to do the cleaning. He used to work for a day and then disappear for several days. Yet every family had to pay him ten rupees a month.

Later we joined SPARC. They told us that our houses would be demolished sooner or later and we would have to move. They helped us organize ourselves and form cooperative housing societies so that when our

houses got demolished we were able to get justice. We began to save whatever we could. They (the railway authority) put numbers on our houses. Then one day, they came with bulldozers and flattened our houses and everything inside. There was no time to take anything away. I shall never forget 28 February 2000. It was a black day for us.

I now live on plot number 138 in the transit camp at Mankhurd. Initially, there were problems because toilets were not ready when we moved; there was no water or electricity. We only had the roof over our heads. That was important. Gradually, we tried to get other services. The municipality told us that we would not get a water connection because it was a transit camp. But we had to have water – there are 900 families staying here. Finally, we took the connection from a building in the neighbourhood and brought water here. But because this is such a long pipeline, the water pressure is very low towards the end of the line. So we buy water from outsiders at five or six rupees for a can. They get water free from somewhere and sell it to us. One person carries six or seven cans on a bicycle. On days when there is no tap water, they jack up the price to 9–10 rupees for a can. We don't drink that water because we do not know where they fill it, but we use it for washing utensils and clothes. We use the tap water for drinking. We share whatever water there is. We get two or three *handaas*. Sometimes there are fights over water. But since we all belong to the Federation, how can we go on fighting? So we share the water.

Toilets are not a problem here, but there is no water in the toilets. There are 20 toilets for men and 20 for women. We get tankers to bring in water to clean the toilets. For every day use (flushing), we take water from our homes. For cleaning the toilets, we also bring water in buckets from those sections of the transit camp where there is more water. We have four people who clean the toilets and open drains. The cleaners live here in the transit camp."

Yamini Yashwant Gudiye: "I used to live in Agarwadi in Mankhurd, near the railway tracks. We had no toilets. The children relieved themselves in the open drain beside the railway track. For women, we erected a small tin shed over a large drain in an area not so visible to outsiders. But when the railway authorities found out that it was a toilet, they demolished it. They never used to accept any money or anything from us. After a while, we would put up the shed and use it again. This used to happen every four months or so. Earlier, there were a lot of bushes in the area. People used to cross the single railway track that existed then and squat in the bush. Gradually, slums grew up on both sides of the tracks. Buildings were constructed and there were no bushes left. So the idea of an enclosure over the drain came up.

There were municipal toilets for residents of a chawl (tenement) not far from our slum. They didn't allow us to use them, saying, '...slum people are dirty; they dirty our toilets.' They used to lock the toilets. We would sneak in, pretending to be from the chawl, and if they recognized us they used to swear at us. Six or seven years ago they approached the BMC (Bombay Municipal Corporation) and got another toilet block built. After that we could use the old toilets.

In the transit camp, toilets are not a problem. We pay a maintenance charge of 25 rupees a month for paying the cleaners. We are all members of Mahila Milan and maintain our toilets well. We repair any small leakage or crack immediately. We remove the cobwebs, change the light bulbs quickly when they fuse. If the women's toilet is dirty, we call a

meeting and discuss it. There is no water to wash the toilets. For that we have to call in a tanker once a month. People also keep buckets near the (local committee) office to store used water, say from washing clothes. That water is used for cleaning the toilets or for washing passages between the rows of rooms. It is not wasted."

d. Slums on land owned by Bombay (Brihanmumbai) Municipal Corporation (BMC)

Shainaz bi Abdul Sattar: "I came here to Kamla Rehman Nagar 20 years ago. Earlier, this area was a marsh. Over the years the marsh was filled up by dumping debris.

Our biggest problem is that we have very few toilets. This settlement has nearly 8,000 families. There are 12 toilets near the playground and the new toilet block has 30. There is no open area nearby where we can go for defecating. So people go and squat along the highway. And there have been many accidents because of that.

In the new block there are 15 toilets for women and 15 for men, and there is a squatting area for children – because of that the surroundings remain clean. But this isn't enough for the whole settlement. With 270 families that have become members, we have more than 1,500 users. This is already more than the norm of 50 people per toilet. If we take more members, we will not be able to maintain the toilets properly. The member families pay 30 rupees per month. But every one does not pay regularly. Forty to sixty per cent pay monthly. We have given notices to those that have not paid and have warned them that if they do not pay for three months, their membership will be cancelled. Non-members have to pay one rupee each time they use the toilet, so they go somewhere outside in the open. We have employed a person to clean the toilets twice a day. We need to get water supplied by a tanker because we do not have enough water. That is expensive. The money we collect is not always able to cover such expenses. Families with only two or three people feel that the monthly service charge is too much. For the old toilets, every one paid only ten rupees per month. We need to make categories of families according to the number of people and charge less for smaller families."

Rehmat Bi: "I live on the other side of this settlement. I do not have a water tap in my house and neither do any of my neighbours in the lane. We pay those who have taps in the lane behind ours 125 rupees a month and take water. We have applied to the councillor, even to the housing minister in the past, to give us public taps, but we did not get water taps. The minister sanctioned money from his fund to give water connections, but only the families that are close to him got water taps. Even now, those who have money can pay for the water connection. In the BMC, they require money even to pass on the file. How can poor people afford to pay? If many people take the connections, there will not be enough water for every one. Then we will have to install a motor (electric pump) on the water line. If one family draws water with a motor, others will not be able to get water. In any case how can the poor afford a motor?"

Residents of Mahatma Phule Nagar: "We used to stay near Lake Vihar. The BMC relocated us here. When we came here, we did not have water taps at all. We used to get water from Dhake Colony or Gandhi Nagar. We had to stand in a queue and wait for the water tanker day and night. There used to be so many fights. Even sisters used to fight for water. We have seen such difficult times! Then a bore well was drilled. The water was

saline, but even so we had to wait in a long queue and pay ten rupees every day. We had no choice. We may not eat once in a while, but we can't do without water.

Then, about ten years ago, we paid the BMC for water connections and got water taps. There was enough water then. But six months ago, they reduced the water supply. Now, there is very little water and very low pressure. We get just a couple of *handaas* of water for drinking and a few buckets for washing. We have to manage somehow. On some days, we do not wash clothes and on some days we do not bathe the children. Look at the way we have to fill the water. We have to put the bucket in a pit so that it is low enough for the water to flow from the tap. The water is very dirty. We have to strain it through cloth. Look here, you can see white larvae on the cloth."

e. Dharavi

Spread over 175 hectares, Dharavi is a large and densely built slum settlement in Mumbai with around 1 million inhabitants. Migrants began to settle in Dharavi in the 1930s, when this swampy stretch was at the edge of the city limits. Later, its convenient location between two railway lines that are the lifelines of Mumbai attracted migrants, who came to join the existing trade and industrial activities in Dharavi (such as recycling plastic and paper, tanning hides, and making garment and leather products) or to work elsewhere in the city. As the city expanded, Dharavi became much more central and is now located in the heart of Mumbai. The land occupied by Dharavi belongs to different owners, such as state government agencies, the local authority and private individuals. After 1985, sewerage lines were laid and roads were widened. After the mid-1990s, high-rise buildings replaced shacks on the periphery and along the major roads that pass through Dharavi. Parts of this settlement, however, are still a picture of urban blight and neglect.

Bhagwati: "I have been here for the past 18 years. Right here. Eighteen years ago we had to go the Ganesh temple for water. We used to go at four in the morning and stand in a line until six and get two *handaas* of water. We had to leave the children at home. Five years ago, we got a water connection. But when they drilled a bore well, they broke the pipe. Now, the water that we get is dirty and we can only use it for washing. We have to go looking for water.

The toilets are near the road crossing. Every time we use the toilet, we have to pay one rupee. It is a problem. In the morning, I have to send the children to school and husband to the office. I have to cook. There is very little time and there is a long queue at the toilet. Even if you go at 5:30 in the morning, there are at least four people ahead of you. Once you get in, the people in the queue start shouting at you to hurry up."

Kalyani: "I have been here for 39 years, since I got married. I came before the highway was built. There was no water, no toilets or drains. We had to beg for water. There was not even a path here. We put stones in the puddles so that we could go across. We used to manage to get only four to six *handaas* of water, and we couldn't bathe because there was not enough water. Now we have a water tap. But the water is so dirty that we cannot drink it. We have to fill up drinking water in one of the buildings around here. This we must do stealthily. If anyone allows us to fill the water, the others shout at that person."



Photo 2: Tapping low-pressure piped water supplies. Credit: SPARC

f. Slums on land belonging to Bombay Port Trust

Nearly 100,000 families live in slums on land under the jurisdiction of Bombay Port Trust (BPT), and many of them work for BPT or the Dock Labour Board. These slums have existed for more than 50 years. BPT has not provided any facilities nor does it allow the local authority to provide water and sanitation facilities. There have been some attempts to demolish the huts and evict the slum dwellers, but the people have resisted each time.

Jyotimani and Arogya Das: "We have to pay 200 rupees per month for water. This is a fire brigade water line that serves the BPT, not a municipal line. So there is water supply the whole time. But it is controlled by the local thugs who have fitted motors on the pipe. If we challenge them, they stop the water supply. Then there is no water. We have to cooperate with them. If we complain to the councillor of the area, he says that he is unable to do anything since we are living illegally on the land belonging to the BPT.

There is only one toilet here built by the BPT – for so many of us, only one toilet. We have to stand in a queue for an hour at least. There is another toilet on the other side, but it has been closed for some time because it is choked up. We have complained to the BPT. The person contracted to maintain the toilet says that he can restart the toilet if the huts built on top of the septic tank are removed. But the families whose huts are there are not ready to move. So the toilet remains closed. Many people go near the sea to defecate. Women go at night."

Uma: "Getting water is a big problem here. We pay 200 or 300 rupees every month, but we get water only once every few days. This hosepipe is connected to a tap near the road, and people have fitted a motor on the pipeline. Our turn for filling up the water can come at any time of day or night. If a woman has to go out to work, her neighbour may help by filling the water for her. The day before yesterday, my turn came at four in the morning. I was able to fill only a small quantity of water because I had to leave to go to work.

We use the water very sparingly since we are not sure how many days it will be before we get water again. Even those families that survive by begging have to buy water. There is no choice. There is nowhere around here where we can get water free. This whole area is a slum. People may not have food in the house but they have to buy water. Most of the people who live here are daily wage labourers. They are paid around 100 rupees a day. Out of this, they have to spend 20 to 50 rupees just for water. Often the water is dirty. It stinks. Even after paying for it we have to throw that water away."

III. PROVISION OF WATER AND SANITATION IN PUNE

PUNE HAS A population of 2.8 million and close to 1 million inhabitants live in slum settlements distributed throughout the city. Pune is blessed with an ample water supply. However, water is not provided equitably to all areas in the city. Where water is supplied by gravity, those at the tail end receive less water due to consumption at the front end. Where water is pumped, areas at higher elevations receive water at extremely low pressure. At present, the inner area of Pune gets abundant water, while the surrounding areas receive a less than adequate supply. Some slums are

located on private land and others on government land. Some settlements have been "declared" by the government as slums under the Slum Areas Act (with some responsibility for providing basic services), and others have not. Each of these aspects also has implications for access to water and sanitation.

a. Slum settlements in the inner zone in Pune

Jyoti Bhende: "I live in Jaibhavani Nagar on Parvati Hill. It is part of a very large slum area. My shack is near the top of the hill. Until seven years ago, there was no piped water supply anywhere in the settlement. There were just three water taps near the toilets. We also used the water from the canal that lies at the bottom of the hill.⁷ A strip of land on both sides of the canal belongs to the government (irrigation department).

I used to get up in the morning and first bring two *handaas* of water from the taps near the toilets. Sometimes, the toilets would get blocked and nobody did anything to get them repaired. Filthy water used to collect near the urinals. And we had to fill the water in all that mess. There used to be flies and insects flying all around. They would fall in the water. There are neither paved pathways in our settlement nor are there properly laid out drains. People have made trenches to carry off the wastewater. When my children were small, they used to follow me when I went to fetch the water. Sometimes, they would fall into the trenches. So, half my attention was on my children. In addition to this worry was the anxiety to get to work on time.

Men used to wash clothes near the taps and make us wait for a long time before we could fill our *handaas*. Men bathing near the taps would soap themselves and deliberately shake their heads vigorously so that the soap lather used to fly all around and fall in the water as we filled our *handaas*. They used to say all kinds of vulgar things to us. It was so humiliating! We would ask them to move aside and let us fill our *handaas*, but they never listened. In order to avoid having to face this, I used to go much further to another housing area to get water.

After the elections, I thought we would get water taps. But nothing happened. Politicians come to us when they canvass for elections and then they disappear. Then Mahila Milan was started in our slum. Several of us came together. We realized that we would have to try to get water connections ourselves. Before that we expected the local councillor to do everything for us. But he did not get us water. We met the municipal commissioner. He was very helpful and understanding. After we lobbied for months and made repeated visits to the municipal offices, pipes were laid and taps fitted, but they remained dry. After another wait and more visits to the municipal ward office, we finally got water. When we opened the stopcock and water came out with force, women and children were absolutely overjoyed. This was seven years ago. Over the last year, however, we have had very little water in our area. It is difficult to get even a few *handaas* of water for drinking. To do our washing we have to go all the way down to the canal. Going down the slippery slope to the canal is quite hazardous.

Our settlement extends for a few kilometres on the hill slope along the canal. At the far end there are no water taps. Women fill water that comes out of the air valves fitted on another canal that has been closed with a concrete slab. They have to walk quite a distance to reach the points where the valves have been fitted. Even though this water is not treated, they

7. The canal carries water from the reservoirs at Khadakwasla. Pune Municipal Corporation draws water from the canal and supplies it to the city after treating it. Further on, beyond Pune, the water is used for irrigation.



Photo 3: Washing clothes in the canal at Pune. Credit: SPARC

have to use it for drinking also. Climbing up the steep slope from the canal to the pathway with two or three *handaas* of water balanced on the head and then up the hill to their shacks is quite a precarious task. Every morning and evening, you can see several women and young girls going to fetch the water and returning with *handaas* perched on their heads.

There are no toilets in our settlement. We go up on the hill for defecating. Women go on one side and men on the other. We go at night under the cover of darkness. There are no lights up there. It is quite scary. When we go, we call out to others so that three or four of us can go together. In the rainy season it is difficult to walk there."

Padma Gore: "I live in Vignaharta Nagar in Dattawadi. It is a small settlement. Our houses are precariously perched on the bank of the river. The rainy season is an anxious time for us because, if the water level in the river rises high, our tin sheds can get washed away. The last time this happened was in 1997. About two weeks after that flood, Mahila Milan members came to meet us and we started working with them. After that, we succeeded in getting a water connection and street lights. Now we have a water tap for 28 families. We take turns to fill the water. We go down to the river to wash clothes. Until we got the water tap, I used to pay 50 rupees a month to a family living nearby, and would fill 10–15 *handaas* of water from their tap every day. The tap was just outside their house. There was a garbage dump nearby. I filled water there for three years."

Sangita Chavan: "I live in the Patil Estate slum on the bank of the river. Earlier, when we did not have water supply in our slum, we used to go to the district court building to get water. It is about ten minutes walk away. Then our councillor arranged for each house to have a separate water

connection. Now we have plenty of water. Many women are careless and waste a lot of water.

Toilets in our settlement are awful because they are not cleaned regularly. They are so dirty that when we squat inside, larvae crawl up our legs. There are long queues outside the toilets. I used to use the toilet in the house where I worked. Many people still go to the riverside for defecating."

Sukubai Dingle: "I live in Kamgar Putala slum. Our settlement is on the bank of the river. We used to have very few toilets. I was very anxious and tense about going to the toilet. There used to be very long queues, sometimes 20 or 30 women in front of you. If you have diarrhoea, it is impossible to hold back. That is why the problem of toilets always made me tense. If you went to the toilet very early in the morning, there would be a slightly shorter queue. If you were late, then it took a long wait.

Now we have new toilets. The two-storey toilet block has been built by SPARC and Mahila Milan. There is water in the toilets and no queues. There is no tension. And the toilets are so clean. I have a toilet in my house, but actually I like the new public toilets so much that I prefer to use them. Ever since the new toilets have been built, there is less sickness. The old toilets used to be so dirty that larvae used to come out of the chambers. The filth caused sickness. And children used to defecate in the open drains. Now there is such a good arrangement for children to squat that they go to the toilet happily. The new toilets have made a big difference in my settlement. I feel I live in a good area."

b. Slum settlements in the outer zone in Pune

Shobha Adhav and Manda Hadavale: "We live in Chandramanagar, on land that belongs to the government mental hospital. Until 1977, we had no water taps. Now we have one tap used by 35 families. Water is available from two in the afternoon until six in the evening. Each of us fills four *handaas* first and, if the water has not stopped by then, we take turns to get more. Since the water runs only a few hours each day, some people get it every other day. If a woman got no water one day, she is given first turn the next day. We are all members of Mahila Milan, but in spite of our efforts to share fairly, there are so many quarrels.

We do not have toilets. We have to use the open ground as a toilet. We do not even have drains in the settlement. Just before our shacks were demolished in 1997, we had ourselves built drains. The Mahila Milan group from Mumbai had helped us lay the drains. They were destroyed when the settlement was demolished. Now each of us collects the wastewater in a pit just outside our shack and empties it twice a day by baling the water away. Ours is not the only slum where we have to do this. There are many other settlements where this practice exists because there are no drains and water does not drain away as it does in settlements located on hills."

Chhaya Waghmare: "I live in Sanjay Park, near the airport. There are 280 families in our settlement. Many of them have been there for more than 20 years. The slum has occupied land that belongs to the Ministry of Defence. And because of that, the municipality has not been able to provide us any facilities. Every day, we get water brought to us in tankers. The delivery timings are not regular. We start queuing for water in the morning by putting our water containers in a line. If we have to go out, we can leave the house only after we have filled the water. I have to go to

work. My children are very young and cannot fill the water. So my sister stays at home and waits for the tanker. In order to be at home when the tanker comes, she has stopped going to school. She studied till the third standard. Occasionally, if the tanker does not come, we are really short of water. We cannot wash the cooking utensils or bathe. We have to get water from Nagpur Chawl (a slum settlement) which is more than a kilometre away.

When the tanker comes there is a scramble for water. There is always a big commotion. We had an awful accident two years ago. A young girl got crushed under the wheel of the tanker as she hurried to get her turn to fill the water before the tanker came to a halt.

Recently, new toilets have been built in our slum. There is an overhead tank for water for the toilets. The tank is filled with water delivered by tankers. We are totally dependant on the municipality to supply us with water. If the water is not delivered regularly, toilets cannot be cleaned."

Helen Baban Mayekar: "I live on Ram Tekdi (hill) in Hadapsar (close to the city limits on the east). Until I got a water connection in my house, I had to sometimes buy water at 25 paise for a *handaa*. We have a few water standposts near the foot of the hill. The water is available for only three or four hours a day. Those who live on the upper part of the hill have to carry the water from the public taps to their houses. Several women take their washing to the canal, which is about a kilometre away. There are days when we do not get any water. On such days, women bring water from the water tank at the cremation ground, which is about a kilometre away. A year ago, toilets were built near our slum. Before they were built, we used to go near the rail tracks, which are not far from the settlement. The new toilets have already become very dirty. There is filthy graffiti on the walls and women throw dirty rags."

Women from Laxminagar: "We have been in this settlement (in Kothrud, in the western part of Pune) for more than 12 years, since we worked as labourers on the construction of these apartment blocks that you see all around here. Nearly 700 families live here now. When the construction work was in progress, we got water at our work sites. But now we face acute shortage of water. We have public standposts in the settlement, but the water is available for only two to three hours a day. In such a short period of time, it is not possible for all of us to fill water. There is always a long queue and frequent fights. Women come to blows because some try to fill many *handaa*s or jump the queue. Those who do not get their turn before the water is turned off have to walk 20 to 30 minutes to fetch water. Some pay up to five rupees for one *handaa* of water. Some collect the water that keeps percolating in a small ditch by the side of the path near the water taps. As you can see the water is turbid. We cannot drink it, but we can use it for washing.

For a few weeks before the municipal elections, one of the candidates who lives just on the other side of this hill used to supply water to us in long hosepipes from taps in his house. After the elections, the hosepipes disappeared and our water supply stopped. Now if we go to him to ask for water he drives us away as if we are beggars. It is so humiliating!"