

NGOs draw plans to free city of slums

Clara Lewis | TNN

Mumbai: Social welfare groups working with the poor have drawn up a five-point plan to make Mumbai slum-free, their focus being on slum redevelopment and generation of affordable housing, implementation of work and life concept to allow formalization of the informal economy with legal entitlements and jobs.

The plan is part of the Development Plan consultative exercise initiated by municipal commissioner Sitaram Kunte to ensure maximum participation and consultations before finalizing the city's fate for the next 20 years. The workshop will be conducted on January 11 at the F-South office between 2pm and 6pm and is open to the public.

Activists want the BMC to apply town planning norms to slum rehabilitation projects as it does to the rest of the city. "If you want to see the city free of slums, the same norms need to be applied, ensure amenities and open spaces when slums are redeveloped. The Existing Land Use Plan mentions some slums will be developed by Special Planning Authorities and in some areas, it shows the BMC will provide infrastructure. Builders will only take advantage," said Shweta Damle, a member of Committee for the Right to Housing (CRH).

Architect PK Das, who is also an activist and town-planner, said their chief demands were that all slum land in the city be reserved for affordable housing. "There is no more public land available in the city for social welfare projects including affordable housing. So, slums must be redeveloped to produce affordable housing. There should be no commercial complexes on these plots," said Das.

The NGOs, which include Nivara Hakk Suraksha Samiti, CRH, Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA), Slum Rehabilitation Society, along with Tata Institute of Social Sciences, want the BMC to publish a map of all slum-occupied land with areas and population. "We want the BMC to identify tenable and non-tenable slums and state reasons for non-tenability. CRZ II slums must be identified along with slums in eco-sensitive areas such as along rivers, creeks, buffer zones and mangroves," member of YUVA Sitaram Shelar said. The group also wants the BMC to maintain the current FSI of 3 for slum rehabilitation but at the same time, assess the density that will emerge upon development of the land.

The plan is part of the Development Plan consultative exercise initiated by municipal commissioner Sitaram Kunte to ensure maximum participation and consultations before finalizing the city's fate for the next 20 years
