

Pod 4. Slums

Mumbai is a megacity and a global city.

A problem of rapid rural to urban migration is the development of squatter settlements. In Mumbai the squatter settlement of Dharavi is now home to more than 1 million people. Dharavi lies between two railway lines and is one of the biggest squatter settlements in the world. The squatter settlement is unplanned and has these characteristics:

- overcrowded and noisy
- houses are made from cardboard, wood, corrugated iron, plastic sheeting and metal from oil drums
- lack of sanitation and clean drinking water
- open sewers
- pollution and disease are common
- thousands of workshops and people employed in the informal job sector

Other urban challenges

As well as the need for better quality housing, Mumbai also suffers massively with transport problems. Mumbai's rail system is one of the busiest in the world. At peak times the trains carry over three times the number of passengers than what they were designed for. People hang from doorways and even ride on train roofs. Overcrowding is more than just uncomfortable – it is also very dangerous. Many people die every week on Mumbai's railways.

Reducing the impact of poverty in Mumbai

Squatter settlements can be improved through urban planning. The plan to improve Dharavi is called Vision Mumbai. This involves replacing squatter settlement housing with high-quality high-rise tower blocks of flats. Work has now begun on the improvement of Dharavi, and some recent developments include:

- the aspects of building will make use of natural light and ventilation
- solar panels on the roof will generate electricity
- air source heat pumps will draw in natural heat in order to heat the tower
- good street lighting and communal areas
- wide tree-lined streets and pedestrianised areas
- CCTV to improve security
- sewage treatment plants and water recycling

Reducing the impacts of poverty in other NICs

Like India, Brazil is an example of a newly industrialised country (NIC). In Brazil, squatter settlements have been improved through self-help schemes. This is when residents improve their own homes with the support of the local authority. For example, the local authority may provide cheap building materials or a loan for residents to purchase them. Residents make all the improvements to their homes themselves.

Questions

1. Where is Dharavi?
2. How many people live there?
3. What are the characteristics of squatter settlements?
4. What are the problems facing transport in Mumbai?
5. Why is travelling on the train dangerous for people in Mumbai?
6. What are strategies to reduce the impact of poverty in Dharavi?
7. What are self-help schemes?