Slums and Urban Housing

What is the issue?

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A last year repost states that there is 23% vacancy in urban housing built under the PMAY.

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What are the problems in slums?

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- A slum is a heavily populated urban informal settlement characterized by substandard housing and lack of hygiene.
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- The global urban population is about to be doubled by 2050.
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- In most of the developing countries, the first residence for a migrant in the city is in the slum.
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- Slums comprise of significant health risks.
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- They lack basic facilities like road and drinking water.
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- The illegal nature of housing makes slum dwellers susceptible to extortion.
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- They are also more prone to disasters like urban floods.
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What has been done?

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- The agenda of “Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” was enshrined in the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal.
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- It was complemented in the **Habitat III summit in Ecuador** by a “New

Urban Agenda" of giving slum dwellers upgraded housing with basic services by 2030.
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- A common approach is to build higher quality, affordable housing for the poor on the city's periphery.
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- Same is the case with the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), which aims to achieve Housing for all by 2022.
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- Yet there is 23% vacancy in urban housing built under the PMAY.
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Why slum dwellers reject new housing?

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- There is a pattern where people are willing to give up better living conditions like more space and toilets on premises for better opportunities in the core areas.
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- The main reason is a lack of affordable housing finance.
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- **Social Networks** – The new housing distances the one who relocates, from the family members who don't.
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- The credit ecosystem that existed based on trust, social relationship and nurtured for generations is also lost.
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- Slum dwellers give each other material and psychological support along with informal insurance that the state does not provide.
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- Some of them do not move to the relocated areas as their livelihood is deeply rooted in these slums and the new areas have poor accessibility and livelihood options are limited.
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- Intrinsic skills like zari making are related to specific markets. Relocation renders these skills redundant.
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- Slums in the core areas have better access to education and medical facilities.

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- The benefits of relocation only materialise among those relocated at an early age.
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What is the solution?

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- The link between shelter and livelihood options should be understood.
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- The slum development should also promote affordable social infrastructure and mobility options to livelihoods.
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- The services and lives of the slum people need to be acknowledged and included in designing solutions, through participatory negotiations and institutions.
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- Policies can be designed and tested to allow people to preserve their social networks even as they are relocated.
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- Greater investment should be made in collecting data on the preferences of poor migrants not just on interest subsidies.
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- Also slums can be viewed as partial solutions to a bigger problem.
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- They represent a survival strategy in the face of insufficient affordable housing and lack of tenure security.
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- They blend production and distribution spaces along with living quarters. e.g Beedi work is done at home.
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- They demonstrate innovative shelters and efficient livelihood strategies, which form an important part of the urban ecosystem.
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Source: The Indian Expres

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