ABSTRACT

Chennai Metropolitan Area (CMA) has a population of 5.90 million. In order to meet the housing demand, various organisation have been providing different types of housing, of which Sites and services is one significant scheme. In CMA Sites and Services Schemes (SSS) taken up so far under MUDP-I and MUDP - II has 30227 plots, while Tamil Nadu Urban Development Project (TNUDP) has Developed 29,747 plots in Madhavaram, Velachery, Avadi, Ambattur in CMA and other towns of Tamil Nadu. There are mixed responses to this programme from various stakeholders namely, the public, beneficiaries and organisations involved in the programme. A few studies have revealed that settlement status differs in their rate in different schemes in CMA. They have also revealed that the sites have been raided over by higher income groups. It is generally mentioned that the allottees were ejected out of the SSS either after a brief stay or without occupying the site. There are a few instances where the beneficiaries have rented out the plots and are residing elsewhere. A fall out of this process witnessed in the very first SSS in Arumbakkam is a manifestation of different forms of intensifications and change in the land use. While many studies have been conducted on SSS no comprehensive study on the land use changes and the impact of transfer process on shelter units had been undertaken so far in Chennai. It would be of immense value if the policy makers and others involved in shelter projects got an understanding of not only the context and reasons for transfer but also the
physical manifestation of such moves on the scheme area and other parts of the metropolitan city for making future policy decisions for providing shelter for the urban poor.

In order to understand the SSS, about their settlement status, transfer of plots, a detailed study is called for. The study is restricted to 3 selected scheme areas, the selection of which is based on the following criteria namely, temporal variation, magnitude of occupancy, rate of transfer.

Studies were conducted to identify the current land use of all the three case study areas to assess the variations that have taken place from that of land use originally proposed in the schemes. Information collected through household surveys were analysed by applying appropriate statistical tools. The result of the analysis was matched with that of the objectives, and the conclusions were drawn.

As far as our study is concerned, it is found that transfer process has initiated development in terms of increase of additional constructions to existing shelter for tenants. The buyers occupancy had increased to 25-50 per cent in their plinth area from the previous type of residence. Another important area of scrutiny is the differential pricing. The plots for EWS category are allotted at a highly subsidised price, while the same has been sold out sooner or later for a very exorbitant price ranging anywhere from 25 to 60 times its original price. Even though it acts as a catalyst for
increase in shelter, further research is required to decide, whether such a trend is either inevitable or to be encouraged as part of shelter strategy.

The findings clearly reveal that the poor households, though would like to retain a house, allotted with subsidy, have to trade off between their other social commitments and retention of the house. Nevertheless, the fact that many of them have gone for ownership housing in outer areas only show their desire for permanent shelter. At the same time the basic concept of housing as a process has not been acknowledged by the allottees. It is seen that most of them have treated the house as a commodity which requires a careful scrutiny for future.

There is, therefore a need to have a serious reconsideration about the continuance of such subsidy. For instance, some argue that they may be priced as per the actuals, so that too much is not given too soon at too less a price, tempting the EWS to sell their shelter. Since the research reveals that additional housing at sites and services and new housing elsewhere by movers are produced, especially in a situation where housing shortage is not fully met, it will be worthwhile to promote similar schemes through public as well as private initiatives. However, the fact remains that the fundamental barrier to an effective SSS scheme is the rising cost of the land. Further research is required to identify modes of providing infrastructure for the already subdivided land and also methods of identifying and means of developing the same with the required services. It could address the legal, structural and participatory aspect of public, private and cooperative agency.