

HOW TO negotiate for collective resettlement and housing in the heat of an eviction crisis



The case of the eviction of informal communities along waterways in Karachi Pakistan

Urban Resource Centre (URC)
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1. How do the poor in Karachi make their housing and settlements?

There are no policies or programs for housing the poor in Karachi, so people make their own shelter



Poor families buy land from informal land providers, even though that kind of land has no legal title

Then they build their houses incrementally, and obtain services like water, electricity and sanitation through collective efforts





It takes at least 20 years or so to shape a settlement from scratch into a well developed settlement



This fully-serviced informal settlement was made by people's collective efforts and with the life savings they invest in their housing.



People buy land on the outskirts of the city from informal land developers



And they build their own drains and infrastructure through collective investment and struggle



Bringing in basic services and infrastructure through collective effort and lobbying the city



Government officials and police get huge bribes from the building process in informal settlements

Views of
some well
established
informal
settlements
in Karachi



But what all these informal settlements lack is security of tenure



. . . and because of that, they face the constant threat of eviction and displacement, to make way for municipal infrastructure plans and private sector developments

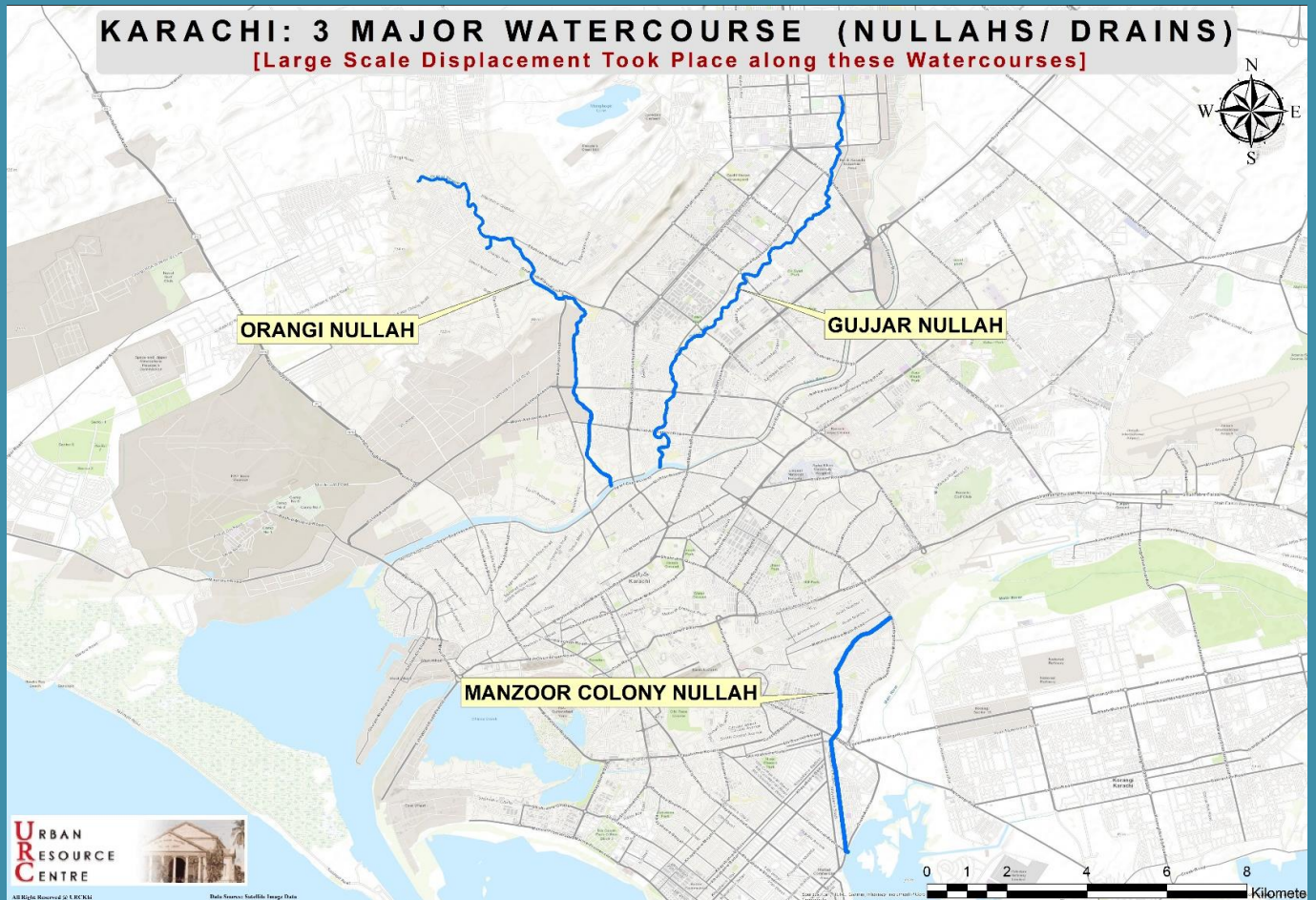
The government does have a policy to provide land tenure and to upgrade these kinds of informal settlements.

But instead of following this policy, the city resorts to eviction: a man-made disaster which destroys people's enormous investment in their own housing.

WATCH VIDEO 1: Demolition and displacement in Karachi
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7-K06huJv0>



2. The case of forced eviction of settlements along Karachi's waterways



In last few months, the government bulldozed many thousand of houses. The evictions took place during the worst of the Covid pandemic, and no resettlement was offered to the displaced families

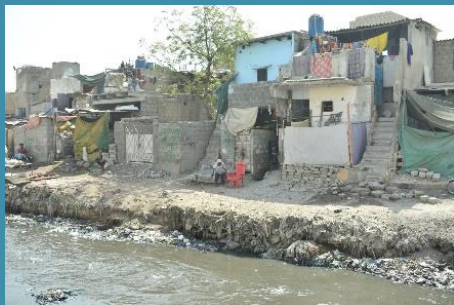


On 14 June 2021, the Supreme Court rejected appeals to stop the evictions. In violation of national and international law, they also ordered the demolition houses with legal title.

The Supreme Court's judgement to demolish houses along these waterways reinforced the opinion of civil society organizations that Karachi's planning and policy decisions are governed by a strong anti-poor bias.



Forced displacement in Karachi



The Supreme Court has also ordered the demolition of leased houses along the waterways, claiming the leases were fake without any investigation. This would never happen in middle-income settlements.

All over the world, the Covid has hit the poor more than anyone else. Especially those who have no homes or live under threat of eviction in informal settlements, without water, electricity or secure jobs.



That's why the United Nations has asked governments to stop evictions and provide relief for renters who can't pay their rent.



VIDEOS on evictions in Karachi

WATCH VIDEO 2: Demolition and displacement in Karachi

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZixrGc1Wrww>



WATCH VIDEO 3: We want house for house

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A9Ye9Iir70c>



WATCH VIDEO 4: Why are they punishing us?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mgp54ALn1EE>



WATCH VIDEO 5: Give us alternative housing

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E1bUesUMdoI>



3. People protest against forced eviction



Displaced families protesting for proper resettlement



Despite the advice from the UN, demolition of poor people's housing continues in Pakistan, and poverty is increasing. The worst evictions are in Karachi.



WATCH VIDEO 6: For God's sake do not bulldoze us
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mN327h-iS9Y>



WATCH VIDEO 7: They destroyed my house and life savings
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJVEW-b5ftg>



4. How do community networks and civil society fight for resettlement?

Engaging communities in the development process



Community activists hold regular meetings at the URC to discuss collective resettlement plans for the families displaced by eviction.





Women community activists continuously lobby for better resettlement plans





A network of communities and civil society organization gives regular media briefings



The participants demanded the immediate halt of forced evictions and developed a participatory resettlement plan for displaced families





URC works with community networks organize All Party Conferences

Leaders from the major political parties are invited to these All Party Conferences to express their views on eviction and displacement. These political leaders often become allies, and promise to demand for suitable resettlement to the displaced families.



Participating in talk shows



URC representatives and community leaders regularly take part in media talk shows (digital, print and TV shows) to present the stories of eviction and displacement to the public and demand for proper resettlement





Children protesting inadequate compensation for displaced families

The compensation provided to evictees was only 15,000 rupees a month for two years. After that, most will find a home in another informal settlement, adding to the problem.



More women protesting against demolition



A large number of community and civil society activists protesting in front of the Supreme Court

The court rejected an appeal to review of the demolition order without hearing from the affected communities





Prominent citizens and civil society groups come to express solidarity with displaced families

Reporters and journalists also visit an eviction site



Teams of community and civil society activists visit displaced families in one area

5. Waging the battle on the legal front



Community networks and civil society groups continue to battle for resettlement of communities in high court and Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court issued orders for the decent and proper resettlement of displaced families three times:

- 9th May, 2019
- 14th June, 2021
- 22nd September, 2021
- 25th October, 2021

On 25th October, 2021 the Supreme Court issued orders to the Chief Minister to provide built houses with all basic facilities to each displaced family within two years. On the basis of this order, the Chief Minister presented a resettlement plan costing 10 billion rupees.

6. What do the communities themselves do?



1. Negotiate with government to stop evictions or get suitable resettlement
2. Continue with their protests and demonstrations and rallies
3. Mobilize their community members and build their numbers through meetings, exchanges and visits
4. File cases in the High Court and Supreme Court for proper resettlement and housing

7. What do support organizations do?



Support the communities by:

1. developing and disseminate information
2. helping with documentation and mapping
3. developing alternative plans
4. briefing the media through press conferences
5. promoting debate in discussion forums
6. taking part in media talk shows
7. arranging field visit of journalists and reporters
8. organizing All Party Conferences
9. supporting communities in their legal battles
10. sharing information with international donors, UN and housing rights groups

Community activists
meet at the URC office
to discuss city
development plans



8. What has worked?



EXAMPLE 1:

The Lyari Expressway (2001 - 2015)

Over 14,000 families faced eviction to make way for this unnecessary and badly-planned project. After sustained lobbying and advocacy campaigns, the government agreed to provide land for resettling families displaced by the project.

The government provided an 80 square yard plot and 50,000 rupees compensation to each family, and developed all the basic services at the resettlement sites like roads, water, sewers and shools.





EXAMPLE 2: The Khasa Hill Link Road Project (2007)

The government built this link road by cutting through an existing hill, displacing many families who were living in the way of the road.

After long negotiations and protests, the government agreed to give cash compensation at market rates, for the land taken away from affected families.





EXAMPLE 3:

The Korangi Bridge Project (2006)

43 households who were displaced by this project got cash compensation, at market rates, which was enough to compensate for their lost land and also to pay for the construction of new houses. Each family also got a plot of 80 square yards.





EXAMPLE 4: The Preedy Street Extension Project (2005)

A large number of houses were demolished in the city centre to make way for the construction of this new link road. All the affected families received alternate land for resettlement.



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