

# **SHAHRI ADHIKAR MANCH: BEGHARON KE LIYE**

*(Urban Rights Forum:  
For the Homeless)*

**VISION AND MISSION  
STATEMENT**

Homelessness is both a result of inadequate state policies and response. Burgeoning property and housing prices, land speculation, the lack of affordable and public housing options in cities and towns, lack of livelihood options in rural areas, and demolitions and displacement without adequate resettlement forces many men, women, children and entire families to live on the streets. While there is no official government data on homelessness in India, the number of homeless people is on the rise.

A homeless person is considered to be someone who is not living in a “census house” and found living in adverse locations and precarious conditions such as on the roadside, pavements, drainage pipes, under staircases, in temples, and on railway platforms. Of particular concern are the threats faced by homeless women and children. The homeless population also consists of the destitute, handicapped, persons with disabilities, older persons, persons with mental illness, as well as workers of the unorganized sector. The majority of the homeless are employed and contribute to the city’s economy but are denied the basic rights of city dwellers.

While being denied a range of human rights, the most severe violations the homeless face are related to the human rights of:

- ✓ Adequate housing
- ✓ Food
- ✓ Health
- ✓ Work and livelihood

One of the greatest issues that homeless people struggle with is that of legal identity, as identity is integrally linked to place of residence and determines eligibility for a number of other benefits such as ration cards, voter identification cards and access to ICDS centres.

## **ORIGIN**

The last few years have witnessed several initiatives and efforts towards realizing the rights of Delhi’s homeless. Recently, a need was however perceived for a stronger and larger coalition consisting of groups and movements of the homeless to deal with the severity of the homelessness crisis in Delhi.

The Indo-global Social Service Society (IGSSS) recently completed a survey in which it found that the number of homeless people in Delhi has increased more than 60% since the last study conducted in 2000 by Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan (AAA). The study also revealed that the condition of homeless people has remained the same and there has not been any improvement in their lives. All government plans and programmes for the urban poor are limited to slum dwellers while the homeless are left to fend for themselves, against all odds.

Even the number of temporary shelters for the winter months has remained static over the period, and the condition of the aged, women, handicapped and children has worsened. A large numbers of families have been rendered homeless due to displacement and demolitions and are living out in the open. While government response has been inadequate, the number of non-government organizations working with the homeless is also insufficient.

Several organizations thus came together in September 2008 and agreed on the need to work collaboratively on the issue of homelessness as the problems are multi-dimensional. These discussions led to the creation of SHAHRI ADHIKAR MANCH: BEGHARON KE LIYE (*Urban Rights Forum: For the Homeless*). The main purpose of this Manch is to develop a platform to work with and for the homeless people and ultimately to enable them to lead their own movement and advocate for their own rights.

## **VISION**

To promote and protect the human rights of the homeless, as guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and international human rights instruments, and to ultimately secure adequate housing for all homeless people.

## **MISSION AND OBJECTIVES**

- ✓ To work on the issue of homelessness in solidarity with the homeless and organizations concerned about them for protecting their human rights;
- ✓ To develop stronger networks and links between homeless people and government and non-government agencies.
- ✓ To include involved stakeholders to act as facilitators on this issue.
- ✓ To develop and support strategic actions to strengthen and expand partnerships for the cause.
- ✓ To make government schemes accessible to the homeless.
- ✓ To ensure the participation of the homeless in government policies and programmes;
- ✓ To empower the homeless to advocate for their own rights.
- ✓ To facilitate health and livelihood training options, and promote social security for the homeless.
- ✓ To focus on specific issues of homeless women and children
- ✓ To set up mechanisms at state and city levels to monitor the conditions of the homeless and the effectiveness of interventions targeting them.
- ✓ To promote human rights education around issues of homelessness and rights of homeless people.
- ✓ To assist the homeless in gaining recognition of their identity.

In the short-term the Manch aims to improve response to the crisis of homelessness by ensuring better services for the homeless, including through the provision of shelters, kitchens, and access to other basic services and livelihood options. The ultimate long-term goal is to ensure the provision of adequate and secure housing for all homeless people by holding the state accountable to its national and international legal commitments.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Manch will operate on the principle of collective identity, not of the identity of member organizations/individuals. The following principles will guide the work and action of the Manch:

- ✓ Transparency
- ✓ Participation and inclusiveness
- ✓ Gender equality
- ✓ Non-discrimination

## **ACTION POINTS**

To achieve the Vision and Mission of the Manch, the following immediate action points have been planned:

- ✓ Focus initially on the four entitlements of: housing/shelter, food, identity and health.
- ✓ Initiate dialogue with the government for more and improved shelters and health facilities.
- ✓ Strengthen links between government and non-government agencies to improve service delivery.

- ✓ Focus on increasing the number of temporary shelters in winter and increase the number of permanent shelters.
- ✓ Create separate shelters for women, children, and medical support shelters.
- ✓ Start meal kitchens for the homeless.
- ✓ Make medical facilities accessible to the homeless.
- ✓ Start a helpline for the homeless.
- ✓ Secure ration cards and Voter ID cards for the homeless.
- ✓ Facilitate the formation of community-based organizations (CBOs), including women's CBOs, of the homeless.
- ✓ Initiate capacity building and training programmes for homeless people.
- ✓ Advocacy with the media to highlight the problems being faced by the homeless.
- ✓ Networking with institutions like National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), National Commission of Women (NCW), National Commission for the Protection of Children's Rights etc. for the basic rights of the homeless.
- ✓ Sensitizing the general public, civil society and government officials in order to counter myths about the homeless.
- ✓ Engage the corporate sector and other sectors of society to join the campaign and contribute to measures towards ameliorating the crisis of homelessness.

*Shahri Adhikar Manch* has been created in a spirit of participation and inclusion to strengthen the movement of the homeless in their struggle for their own rights and to address the structural causes of homelessness. Over 30 organizations and individuals have resolved to work together, in whatever capacity they can, to tackle the homelessness crisis in Delhi. The Manch invites interested and concerned organizations and individuals committed to the issue to join and help build the movement.

*For more information, please contact:* [shahriadhikarmanch@gmail.com](mailto:shahriadhikarmanch@gmail.com)

## LIST OF MEMBERS OF SHAHRI ADHIKAR MANCH

### AS ON 1.12.08

1. Indo-global Social Service Society (IGSSS)
2. Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN)
3. Beghar Mazdoor Sangharsh Samiti (BMSS)
4. AHAD
5. St. Stephens Hospital
6. Aman Biradari
7. Child Trust
8. Sharan
9. FSI
10. NACDOR
11. Butterflies
12. Business Community Foundation (BCF)
13. Social Action And Training
14. Humanity And Peace Society
15. Labour Education
16. Abhyudaya
17. SEWA
18. Sangam
19. Sathi all for Partnerships
20. DANMU
21. SLJF
22. PRAXIS.

### INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS

1. Lokesh Jain
2. Rajesh Upadhyay
3. Ram Kishan
4. Sashi P. Sanjay

There are also around 15 other organizations who pledge their support for the Manch.