

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Redevelopment Programs in Informal Settlements

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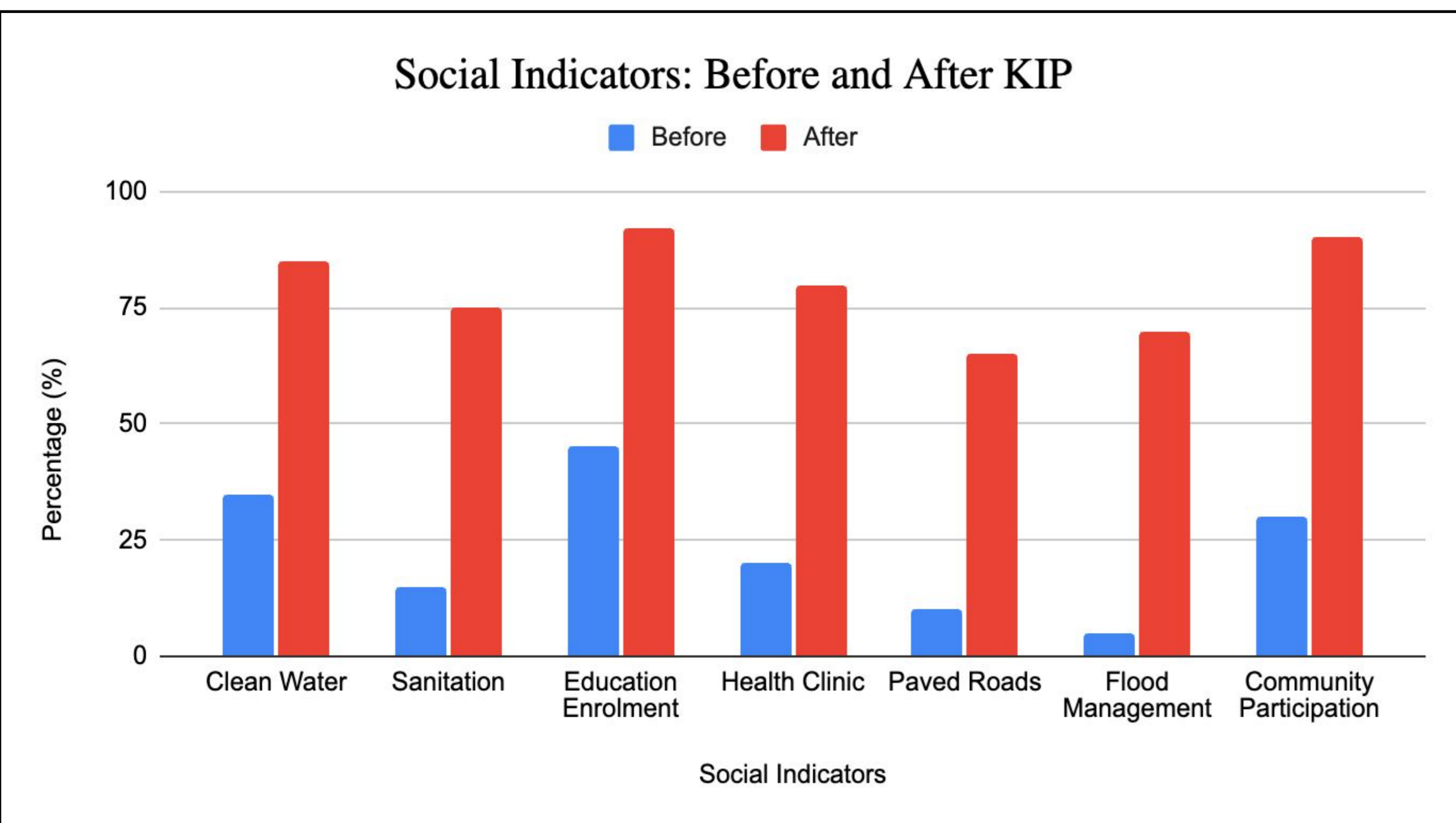
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Introduction

Over a billion people around the world live in informal settlements (more commonly known as slums), having little to no access to basic human rights such as food, water, education, sanitation, and electricity. In order to understand how this problem can be mitigated around the world, this project attempted to analyse three redevelopment programs, each in a different location and time period, to analyse strategies, initiatives, and projects that could be implemented universally. The three programs chosen were the Kampung Improvement Program in Indonesia (1969-2989), the Favela Barrio Project in Brazil (1994-2008), and the Dharavi Redevelopment Program in India (2024-Present). Each of these programs were evaluated on their ability (or potential ability) to improve social, economic, and environmental development. This was measured using both quantitative indicators and qualitative data such as interviews and statements of key stakeholders.

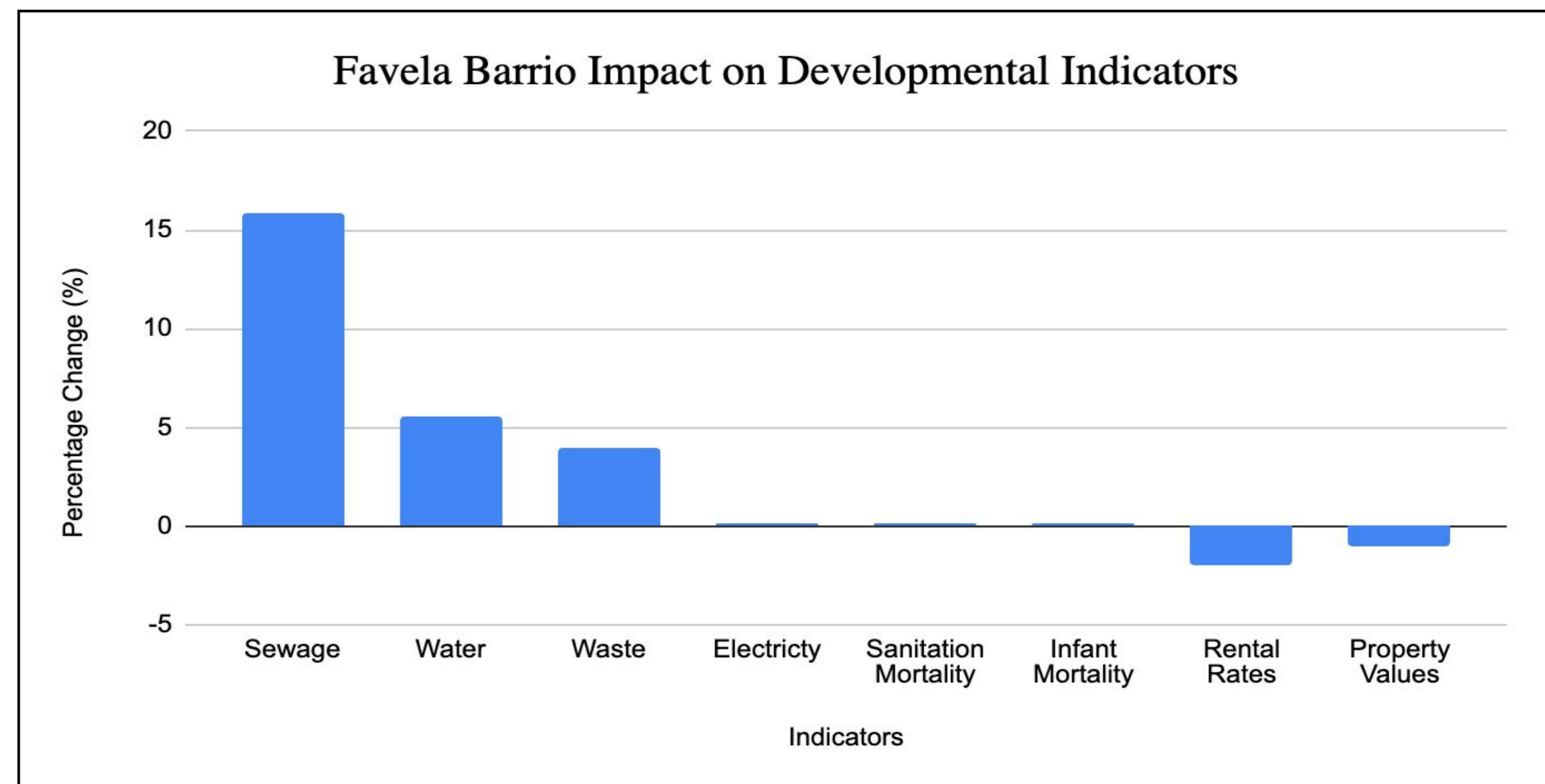
Kampung Improvement Program Jakarta, Indonesia



The Kampung Improvement Program (KIP), launched in Jakarta in 1969, is recognized as the world's first large-scale slum upgrading initiative. Targeting Indonesia's informal "kampungs," which housed some 60% of Jakarta's population, KIP provided basic infrastructure—paved roads, sanitation, drainage, clean water, schools, and clinics—without displacing residents. Over 20 years, the program improved living conditions for millions: clean water access rose from 20% to 75%, paved roads from 5% to 85%, and household incomes more than doubled. Initially funded locally at just \$13 per person, KIP expanded nationally with World Bank support, eventually reaching 800 cities and about 30 million people. The program's success stemmed from participatory approaches, community cost-sharing, and adaptive design, earning international awards and serving as a global model. While KIP dramatically raised quality of life, reduced disease, and increased economic activity, it also faced challenges—limited early resident involvement and ongoing needs for infrastructure maintenance. Regardless KIP's legacy persists: it proved that informal settlements could be inclusively and affordably modernized, setting standards for urban policy in the future.

The Favela-Bairro Program (1994–2008) in Rio de Janeiro was one of the largest and most influential urban upgrading initiatives for informal settlements globally. Targeting over 127 favelas and benefiting around 600,000 residents, it prioritized physical infrastructure, such as sewerage (up 15.8%), water (up 5.6%), and garbage collection, and sought to legally integrate favelas into the city. Internationally recognized for design and institutional innovation, the program nevertheless faced critical shortcomings. It showed no measurable improvement in health, safety, or economic outcomes, with property values declining and infrastructure often deteriorating due to poor maintenance and lack of sustained investment. Community participation was initiated but limited in influence. Favela-Bairro's mixed legacy demonstrates both the transformative potential and sustainability challenges of large-scale slum upgrading, emphasizing the need for ongoing investment in both infrastructure and social development to achieve lasting impact

Favela Barrio Project Rio De Janeiro, Brazil



Dharavi Redevelopment Project Mumbai, India

The Adani-led Dharavi Redevelopment Project in Mumbai is Asia's largest slum renewal initiative, aiming to transform 620 acres and rehabilitate nearly 1 million residents. Driven by a ₹2.5–3 lakh crore investment, the project offers 350 sq ft homes, upgraded infrastructure, and modern sanitation, especially benefiting longstanding residents. However, stringent eligibility criteria mean up to 700,000 people face relocation, sparking protests and concerns over displacement and environmental safety, notably at sites like Deonar landfill. The initiative promises economic formalization for 10,000+ industries, but risks disrupting livelihoods, cultural bonds, and informal networks if not adequately managed. A key stakeholder emphasized its "human-centric" focus, aiming for safer, more dignified living, while acknowledging the challenge of housing all residents in-situ. The project's success depends on balancing infrastructure gains with inclusive, transparent welfare measures

Metric	Current/Baseline	Projected/Target	Impact Assessment
Total Population Affected	10,00,000	485,000 (in Dharavi)	Major population reduction
Eligible for Free Housing	3,00,000	300,000 (free housing)	Positive - modern housing
Ineligible/Displaced	7,00,000	700,000 (relocated)	High risk - toxic relocations
Small Industries Affected	10,000	10,000+ (formalized)	Critical transformation needed
Annual Economic Value at Risk	\$1 billion	\$1 billion+ (formalized)	Potential growth if managed well
New Housing Units	0	72,000	Significant improvement
Population After Redevelopment	10,00,000	4,85,000	Decongestion achieved
Total Investment Required	0	Rs 2.5-3 lakh crore	Massive financial commitment
Construction Jobs Created (Est.)	0	100,000+ (estimated)	Substantial employment generation
Years for Completion	Ongoing delays	7-17 years	Long-term commitment required

Concluding Remarks

The three case studies give an insightful look into the failures and successes of redeveloping informal settlements. Overall, it can be said that it is imperative to increase community participation, prioritise in-situ development, and develop an integrated delivery strategy that prioritizes several basic necessities such as healthcare, nutrition, and shelter all at once (since they all complement each other). For a deeper dive into these insights, please read the accompanied research paper!