

Stop land grab ! Ensure land rights for all residents of Kathputli colony, New Delhi !

It has been 50-60 years since our Kathputli colony came into being. This was made possible by the hard work of many performers, artisans and workers who live here. We improved the barren land, built our homes and provided services to the area. But in the name of "redevelopment", the govt. land agency, Delhi Development Authority has auctioned away this land in just Rs. 6 crore 11n lakhs to the private builder Rahejas and under this plan of 'Insitu Slum Redevelopment' signed in 2009, the private builders are going to construct multistory housing and shopping complexes. !

Why is it so ?! The government says it doesn't have money to spend on poor and housing for the poor, and neither does it have land for us. Of the total 5.2 hectares of land (more than 13 acres) that has been siphoned off to the private builders, 1 acre of land has been given to Rahejas to build spectacular houses in return for building houses for poor. But Is this what is really happening ?

After many continuous efforts by people, some information has been gathered through the right to information. The financial bid for this project was submitted by Raheja builders on 29/01/2009 and, according to the Agreement between DDA and Raheja, the contract was awarded 7 months later with a starting date of 04/09/2009 and a completion date of 03/09/2011. The Tender money of Rs 6,11,11,000 and the Performance Guarantee of Rs 10,00,00,000 were deposited by Raheja builders by 19/09/2009. Why did DDA not taken penal action against Raheja builders for non-completion of the project by the agreed date?

The Audit report of the project by the AG (Auditor General) Delhi dated March 2011 reports that there were four irregularities. One of them was the allotment of 35 sq.m of excess land to Raheja builders, which the Auditor valued at Rs 70 lakh, or Rs 2 lakh per sq.m. At that rate the total land of 5.216 ha should have cost Rs 1043.2 crore. On what basis was it awarded to Raheja builders at a minimal cost of Rs 6.11 crore? And have Raheja builders paid this money, esp. after the findings of the AG, Delhi ?

Further, It was at a meeting in DDA on 23/09/2011 that Raheja builders requested for an extension of the completion date by 2 years. Was this extension granted? If yes, why did DDA not take steps to terminate the contract as per the provisions of the Agreement even when the project was not completed by 03/09/2013?

But 5 days ago we received calls from Raheja Builders and we were told that our Kathputli Colony would be shifted to a transit camp in Anand Parbat within the next 2 weeks. We have also read newspaper reports quoting DDA that they will set up 5 day camps for residents and provide them with 'allotment letters'.

All of us living in Kathputli colony have not been informed about this policy adopted by DDA and the plan to 'redevelop' our homes, and neither have we been given an opportunity to participate in the process and give our suggestions. DDA chose a company (Gian P Mathur and Associates) to conduct a survey and map our homes and this too was done without our participation. These documents were also not shared with us and we found out about them only through the right to information.

Newspapers report that DDA finished conducting a survey of families in 2011. But when we asked for the final list of 'eligible' families from DDA through an RTI, we have been denied access to the list. There are many families in Kathputli colony who have not been surveyed by DDA and we are unaware on what basis they have been excluded by DDA. On one hand, we keep coming across information that 2700 flats are being made for the residents of Kathputli colony and on the other hand DDA refuses to show us the list of 'eligible' families. We also know that there are over 3200 families in Kathputli colony and if DDA continues to pursue its plan, most of them will be left homeless and their livelihoods will also be destroyed. We want to know on what basis has DDA conducted the survey in Kathputli colony, esp. since the DDA themselves changed its guidelines for conducting surveys in 2011. These guidelines specify that a notice must be put up one month before any survey is conducted, maps must be displayed publically, photos and videos of each family must be taken and every member of the concerned families who is above 18 years of age should sign and give their consent. Has DDA followed its own guidelines ? Also the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) had notified DDA about new guidelines formulated

by them, have these been considered too ? Further, In a letter to the Lieutenant Governor dated 14/06/2011 Raheja refers to the project as a "slum redevelopment under Rajiv Awas Yojana". Has this PPP model been undertaken under Rajiv Awas Yojana ?

According to the resettlement policy, all costs incurred in the process are shared by the 'slum dwellers', delhi government, DDA and the central government. These costs as of today are Rs. 60,000 contribution of 'slum dwellers' family, Rs 62,000 to be paid by Delhi Government, Rs. 93,000 by the DDA and Rs. 1,19,000 by the Central government. This totals up to Rs. 3,34,000. But those families that are being resettled in flats, will have to pay most of this amount, barring the contribution to be made by the central government. That means each family has to pay Rs. 2,15,000 to be resettled into a flat ! Will families of Kathputli colony be able to pay up this cost ? And what will be the fate of those families who are unable to pay this cost !?

The contract signed between Raheja Builders and DDA says that the cost of building each of these flats for urban poor will be Rs. 900 per sq. mts. That means the construction of each of these flats will cost Rs. 1,78,000. We donot know whether this policy has been made to benefit our families or to ensure that DDA and the Raheja builders make enough profit !?

We are not sure of how many flats will be made for us but the contract between the Raheja builders and DDA says that they will build 2700 flats, each of 30.5 sq. mts. For us. But when we added the size of the room, hall, kitchen, toilet and bathroom in each of these flats, the total size of the flat being made for us adds up to 20.9 sq.mts. In addition, the Viability Calculation for the project gives a figure of $15.047 + 4.58 = 19.62$ sq.m as the area of one DU. What is the exact area of the flat that will be available for the evicted family? This means that the builders will be grabbing more and more land in every possible way.

It is important to adhere to the laws and norms laid out in the Delhi Master Plan to construct any building. First and foremost, till now the land where our Kathputli colony is situated is earmarked as residential land under the Delhi Master Plan but the DDA has changed the policy for this land to mixed land use. The land on which the flats for us are proposed to be constructed is only 25,709 sq. mts of the total land. According to the Delhi Master Plan 2021, the FAR (Floor area ratio) norms for residential buildings is 400 i.e. these flats can be constructed in G +3 but the site plan given by the Raheja Builders is for G + 14 so that even lesser land is utilized to house 'urban poor'.

The SEAC (State Environmental Appraisal Committee) and the DUAC (Delhi Urban Arts Commission) both scrutinized the contract signed between the Raheja Builders and DDA and had raised some questions on the site plan and maps prepared for the project. According to the Agreement, the maximum ground coverage for the remunerative component of 170 free-sale premium flats is 3,242 sq.m and the total built-up area permitted is 19,471 sq.m, which allows for G+5 construction at the FAR of 200 permitted under the Master Plan. On what basis have plans been made for a G+42 tower ? According to the Viability Calculation the commercial component is on a built-up area of 16,969.69 sq.m. Why does this exceed the 10% FAR permitted for the commercial component under the Master Plan? Also on what basis has G+9 construction been permitted for this commercial component ?

Along with this, Raheja builders have said that Rs. 1600 per sq. ft. will be the cost incurred to construct each of the flats in the G + 42 towers being built for rich people. The Raheja Builders have said in their contract that these will be sold by them at Rs. 5200 per sq.ft. The cost bein incurred for commercial buildings being constructed will be Rs. 2700 per sq.ft. and these will be sold by the Raheja builders at Rs. 7700 per sq.ft. That means a profit of Rs. 20.25 crores on a total cost of Rs. 202.48 crores. But if we calculate the prices of this land and the flats according to the report of the AG, Delhi at the rate of Rs. 2 lakh per sq. mts., the profits earned by the builders are going to be much higher than what they have quoted !

A draft Agreement for Resettlement of Slum Dwellers was submitted by Raheja to DDA on 29/06/2011. Who finally vetted this Agreement in DDA ? And why did DDA not prepare its own draft Agreement that would protect the rights of the "Slum Dwellers" after consulting residents of kathputli colony ? It is becoming more and more evident that this is an effort to snatch away land from us. All the emphasis is being given on earning profits and not our lives.

We have always demanded that we should be given land right here at Kathputli colony but DDA and politicians always told us that there is not enough land in the city. Then why has all this land that we developed over years, been sold off to private builders ?!

According to the master plan, DDA was to build about 23.6 lakh homes from 1962 to 2001. But only 11 lakh homes were constructed. The non fulfillment of the responsibilities of DDA in our city led thousands of families like ours to build our own homes and provide basic services for our survival. Till today, DDA has not accounted for those missing 12.6 lakh homes and neither have they accounted for all the residential land that was reserved for building these houses.

Yet, in the last 13 years, about 320 'slums' were evicted in Delhi and about 640 acres of land was forcefully taken away from them. Those families that were evicted were not fully resettled by DDA and those evicted families who were resettled were sent off to far off areas like Bawana, Holambi Kalan. Thousands of families were rendered 'ineligible' by authorities and their hard work and lives were destroyed. The former Lt. Governor of Delhi, after being pressurized by many evicted families, had to pass orders saying that there are faults in the surveys conducted by DDA and thus people's own documents will be considered as proof for allotment under the resettlement policy.

Are all these rules and laws, orders and directives really being followed ? Are people willing to reside in flats being built by the DDA and the Rahejas ?

We have always had a dream to have our own homes on this land of kathputli colony that we have been living on for the past 50 years so that our families and our livelihoods are secure. If we are shifted into flats then how will all the wood workers, singers who practice their skills, idol makers, puppeteers who make 15 feet tall puppets, those of us who walk on 15 feet tall stilts, rickshaw pullers, weavers, tailors, painters, construction workers, rope makers, toy makers, magicians, sanitation workers, drummers who play dhols that weigh 50-60 kgs and many other workers and artisans who live here be able to sustain our work and livelihoods ? How will women who cook on traditional choolas be able to sustain this way of working ? It seems like our lives and all the traditions of our country that we have preserved over the years will cease to exist if this project is implemented.

If this project to redevelop Kathputli colony is really aimed at creating brighter futures for us, then this must be done with our participation and our understanding. The government and its agencies should work in a transparent way and be accountable to the people of this city. They should not work in collaboration with private builders to make them earn profits. We the residents of Kathputli colony donot want to go to the transit camps built by Raheja Builders at Anand Parbat. All of us want that any policy or plan made for our development should not be done by builders, but by the government along with the participation of people. We donot want flats in multi story buildings. We want plots of land with ownership rights on this land of Kathputli colony which should be distributed equally among all families residing here. This would ensure that all of us here at Kathputli colony can build our own homes and secure our work, our identity and our lives which are connected to this land of Kathputli Colony.

We appeal to all of you to support our voices and strengthen our demands.

On behalf of all the residents of Kathputli colony,

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