

Urbanization

7

STRUCTURE

- 7.1 Introduction
- 7.2 Objectives
- 7.3 Urbanization and Urban Growth
- 7.4 Feeding the Urban Jungle
- 7.5 Unit End Exercise



7.1



Today in India over a quarter of the population lives in urban areas. This proportion is increasing. Cities have been the driving forces of economic and social development. The variety of activities like manufacture, trade, professional and other services, leads to economic growth of an urban area.

The attraction of facilities like better education, health care, drinking water, sanitation, employment opportunities, etc., symbolizes the hope of a better life and pulls people from rural to the urban areas. While this phenomenon is called the 'pull factor', one should also note that fast depleting natural resource base and lack of access to basic amenities in rural areas tend to 'push' its residents to cities in the hope of better prospects in life.

Not only in India, but throughout the rest of the world, people are leaving rural areas to resettle in large cities. For some this is a choice, but for most it is a stressful transition. Besides this, there are many other problems associated with urbanization.

7.2

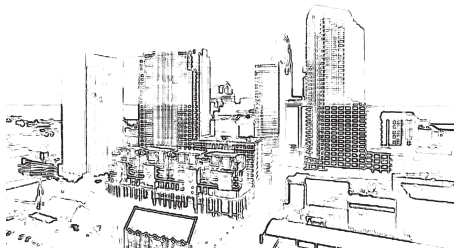
On completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the significance of planning in the process of urbanization

7.3 URBANIZATION AND URBAN GROWTH

The terms 'urbanization' and 'urban growth' are often erroneously used as interchangeably. In fact although the two are interrelated, they dynamics are distinct from each other. Urbanization is the process by which a society becomes urban in terms of occupations, land use, population density, etc., graduating from primary sector (agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting, etc.) to secondary sector economic activities (manufacturing) to tertiary sector occupations supporting them (provision of services such as trade, banking, transport, etc.) Urbanization is expressed as the percentage of the total population of a large area such as a country, or one of its divisions, living in urban areas. On the other hand, if we say that a particular city-or cities collectively in a country or region-increased in population over a number of years, we are referring to urban growth, not urbanization. Urban growth can happen in one of basically three different ways.

1. by net natural increase (excess of birth over deaths in the resident population);
2. by net migration (excess of people migrating into the city over the number migrating out of it); and
3. by reclassification city limits (the inclusion in them of contiguous populated areas with urban characteristics, which previously lay outside), or of rural places becoming urban.



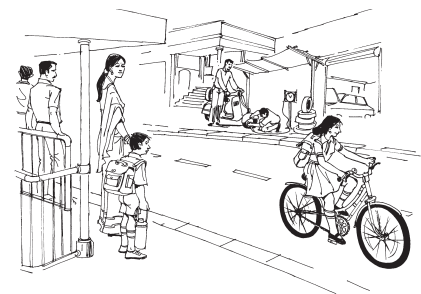
Urban growth is possible without accompanying urbanization; but for urbanization, urban growth is a must (except in the far-fetched scenario or a calamity selectively decimating the rural population without affect the urban). To understand this difference quantitatively, let us see how India grew between the censuses of 1991 and 2001. In that decade, the combined rural and urban population increased by 21 per cent to cross 1 billion. The urban population increased 31 per cent (urban growth). But the urbanization of India as a whole grew by just two percentage points, from about 26 per cent to 28 per cent. The absolute growth in the urban population during the decade was 67 million – more people than the entire populations of major countries such as the UK, Italy or France. In relative terms, it was negligible for a large developing country such as India.

The overall increase in urbanization levels over the decade was not dramatic, but the distribution of the population across urban places of different sizes is significant. In 2001, about 38 per cent of it lived in cities of populations of more than 1 million. The remaining 62 per cent lived in some 3,600 small and medium towns in the population range of 5,000 to 100,000. Of the former 38 per cent, nearly 15 per cent lived in three range of 3 to 6 million, and nearly 15 per cent in cities or UAs of 1 to 3 million. Thus it is evident that the share of metropolitan centres in both the urban and total population has been growing at a higher rate than that of small towns and cities with populations of less than 1 million.

Where does an Urban Area Stop?

For administrative purpose a demarcation between an urban and rural area can be done on a map. However, defining, demarcating or putting a boundary line for an urban area is difficult in reality. Urban boundaries are dynamic and keep changing in response to the growth of the place. The rapid growth of urban area has led to the expansion or spread of cities. This expansion takes place into the adjoining rural areas. Soon these areas too get crowded. People from the city begin moving in large numbers to newly developed adjoining areas, looking for a better lifestyle and cheaper accommodation. This reverse flow, begins the process of the formation of sub-urban areas. Soon these areas too get crowded and a lot of development takes place in an unplanned manner. In some cases the urban development authority acquires adjoining farmlands for development into sub-urban areas.

Since the development authority cannot acquire habitations, residential pockets in these areas are not covered. These then become potential areas for development of slums.





7.4 FEEDING THE URBAN JUNGLE

A city is like a big organism, ever expanding and consuming resources from wherever they can come from. As in any life-supporting system, a city requires a continuous flow of energy and nutrients. Urban centres, as they exist today, are not self-sustaining. They do not have their own lasting supply of natural resources essential for their development, but are dependant on the areas outside the city, or even distant places. When the local supply cannot meet the increasing demand, most cities survive by importing food, water, energy, minerals and other resources from both nearby and distant places.

With economic growth, the purchasing power of individuals increases, and there is a shift to increased consumption of resources. Though the number of urban dwellers is small as compared to that of the rural areas, the consumption of resources in urban areas is much higher. City dwellers consume more per capita, than the rural population, and also generate more waste. In many cases these wastes are non-biodegradable. With rapid growth, the provision of housing, water supply, garbage disposal, sanitation facilities, etc. have not been able to keep pace with the rate of urbanization. This has led to polluted, overcrowded living conditions for many who move into a city with hopes of a better life.

Do you know the population of your city and how it has grown in the last decade?

Where do the common provisions of your city like water, food, electricity come from? Has there been a decline in quality of these services?

7.4

1. SWAMI'S STORY

Swami left his village of Karimnagar, Andhra Pradesh with his wife and children to travel to Mumbai. He was told that there was work there in construction, and he hoped for a better income than what he could earn from the agricultural work in his village. He found much construction work in Mumbai, but no home for his family. So they stayed on the construction sites. At the waterlogged construction site at Thane, Swami said, "we just had four 'chatais' around, some four-by-four feet area, no door and lots of mosquitoes."

Swami and his family were forced to move from construction site to construction site, none of which had toilets or clean drinking water. Eventually his family had to return to their village to escape these conditions, but Swami stayed on alone in the city, while he was able to send the money from some of his earnings in Mumbai, his absence from the farm increased the workload at home, and his children often had to stay home from school in order to help out at home. Like many of the young men, he was disconnected from his family. Swami saw many of his co-workers turn to alcohol to escape their



living conditions and isolation from their families. Some of his co-workers' families stayed on. Their children were excluded from education and began to drift into begging. While Swami thinks of returning to his village, situation at his village has also gone from bad to worse. With no choices, he continues to live in the city.

1. What do you think lured Swami to migrate to Mumbai? Was he able to get what he wanted to in the city?
2. Have you seen a slum in your city? Compare the living conditions in the slum with that of a village.

2. A CITY CLEANS UP

The city of Surat is among India's fifteen most populous cities. As in all cities, the rapid growth of population and urbanization resulted in the growth of slums, garbage and overflowing drains. The situation would have been taken for granted had it not been struck by an outbreak of pneumonic plague in September 1994. Close to 200 deaths were linked to the plague. The disease created widespread panic and led to a mass exodus from the city. It was a severe blow not only to Surat's economy which suffered a loss of several millions of rupees every day but also to the national economy.

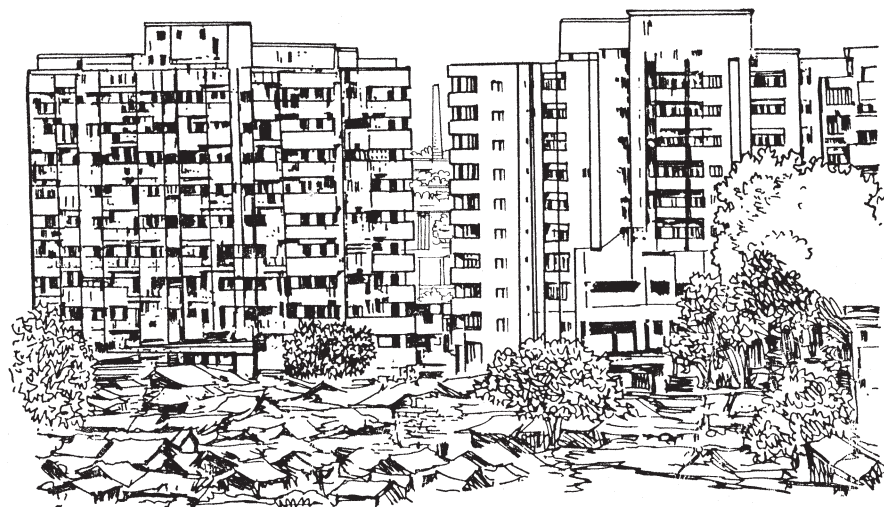
In the face of this crisis, the Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) immediately launched a seven-point programme for restoring normalcy at the earliest involving government, non-government, community organizations and the private sector. The whole city was divided into 52 sanitary wards, falling under six administrative zones. A commissioner is appointed for each zone with additional powers. The officials responsible for solid waste management were made accountable for their work; and field visits were made mandatory for them each day. The solid waste management department and other related departments were made to work and cooperate with one another. The big industrial groups in the city loaned their excavators and trucks to the SMC to clean the 4000 tones of garbage, which had accumulated over the days. This helped in making the city clean again and resulted in an efficient system of solid waste management.

But long-term measures were needed so that this situation was not repeated. In May 1995, the Government of Gujarat launched a major programme to clean up Surat on a permanent basis. Within one year through well-orchestrated methods, the SMC increased the cleaning of accumulated garbage from 50 per cent to almost 94 per cent of the 1100 tones of garbage generated everyday in 1995. Community water hydrants, pay and use community toilets, paved open drains, paved roads and streetlights were provided on a priority basis in a majority of slums. Within a span of 18 months the city made a complete reversal from a dirty, garbage-strewn city to one of



the cleanest cities in the country. Community participation played a key role in the rapid implementation of decisions taken by the corporation. Subsequent to the disaster, the attitudes of the citizens changed and they diligently tried to improve its living conditions.

1. Do you think that your city is also waiting for 'a disaster to happen'? Explain your answer with reasons.
2. Do you think you contribute in making your city a 'better' or a 'worse' place to live in? How?
3. Are you aware of any similar effort by a government agency, an NGO or a citizen group for cleaning and greening the urban environment? Find out more about the same.



SUGGESTED READINGS

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