Knowledge
Product

Urban Wage Employment
Initiative of Odisha

British
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New Delhi

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1. Background

In India, the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 quickly turned from just being a public health emergency to including a major economic crisis for the urban poor and informal sector workers. According to the World Bank, 40 million internal migrants were impacted by the nationwide lockdown between March 25 and May 1, 2020. Within weeks, the Housing & Urban Development Department (H&UDD) of the Government of Odisha (GoO) responded by announcing the Odisha Urban Wage employment Initiative (OUWEI) on April 18, 2020, through a government order. The objective of the OUWEI is to secure the livelihoods of the urban poor, who face severe economic vulnerabilities amidst the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. OUWEI leveraged already available resources and prevailing governance frameworks for the provisioning of existing welfare schemes and legislation for the urban poor of the GoO.

1.1 The demand for Urban Wage Employment Scheme and the genesis of OUWEI

The urban unemployment crisis: Urban India already suffered from a high unemployment rate of 6.1% in 2017-2018, the highest in the past 45 years. Further, about 83% of the urban workforce continued to work in the informal sector. The onset of the pandemic exacerbated this downward spiral owing to COVID 19 induced lockdowns and variations, changes in modes of work, widespread job loss, and lower wages. Without any social safety nets, the most vulnerable were further pushed below the poverty levels. The growing economic precarity was evident, and the crisis of urban employment could not be ignored.

Most of the national flagship programmes focus on large cities: As per Census 2011, there are more than 7500 small and medium towns, and many of them remain outside the purview of national urban programmes such as the Smart Cities Mission and the initially launched Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) in 2015. These schemes benefit only a fraction of all small towns and cities (covers most cities that are either state capitals or have a population over 100,000, representing only 6 to 7% of the total number of cities). Most ULBs remain overstressed due to high infrastructure and service delivery demands hastened by the high rate of urbanisation while lacking inabilities to carry out basic functions in want of financial and human capacities.

In this context, the need for an urban version of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) has long been debated. [1]That would provide employment for various works for people with various skills and education levels. Such a programme would address the concerns of underemployment and unemployment of the large informal workforce and potentially unblock much-needed public

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[1] Swarna Jayanti ShehariRozgaarYojana (SJSRY) was launched in 1997, and part of it was focused on wage employment, but it failed to make much impact. So this scheme was replaced by NULM, which focused on self-employment and entrepreneurship rather than wage employment.

investments, creating multiplier effects in the economy. Moreover, it would help boost local demand, enhance the quality of urban infrastructure and services, restore urban commons while building skills of unskilled and semi-skilled workers. GoO has been one of the early movers to design a comprehensive urban wage employment programme in response to the ongoing pandemic uniquely leveraged for empowering local groups and creating public infrastructure.

COVID 19 impacts prioritized the need; the national-level scheme would take time: An urban wage employment programme has been deliberated upon in the national ministry to safeguard the urban poor from exogenous shocks like the ongoing pandemic. The discussion was ongoing in Indian policy circles for some time but not prioritized with the assumption that the urban areas could absorb the workforce– both unskilled and semi-skilled, although there could be prevalent under-employment[2]. COVID 19 pandemic with prolonged lockdowns imposed all over the country brought economic activity to a standstill. The economic shock that impacted the employment potential of migrants and the unorganised workforce brought the issue to the forefront of the Government of India. The GoI conducted deliberations with the States, and the felt need was unanimous and urgent. Other than Kerala's Ayyankali Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme (AUEGS)[3], a scheme of the state, Odisha was one of the first states to launch Urban Wage Employment scheme during the ongoing pandemic, followed by HP and Jharkhand. There were no other urban wage employment initiatives deployed in any other State. The National Government was contemplating an urban employment guarantee programme, but administrative protocols for approvals, etc., would take time.

The GoO implemented the OUWEI with immediate effect: The GoO realized the urgency of the issue and decided

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[2] Sreevatsan, A., 2020. The growing clamour for an urban jobs scheme. livemint. Available at: <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/the-growing-clamour-for-an-urban-jobs-scheme-11601903485203.html>

[3] launched in 2010, that prioritises work for women in urban households by setting aside 50% of the total jobs available for them, aimed to provide 100 days of employment in a financial year, but for urban poor households.

Odisha: Urban Wage Employment Initiative (now Mukhyamantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan)

Date of Operationalisation: April 18, 2020.

Objective: Urban poor largely in the informal sector get immediate wages by executing labour-intensive projects.

Budget: Rs 100 Crore; 70:30/ 60:40 (Phase 1/Phase 2) between wage and material cost components.

State Agency (planning, coordination, and monitoring): Housing and Urban Development Department.

Local Agency (implementation and operations): Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) with SHGs, SHG federations, and Slum Dwellers Associations.

Eligibility Criteria: Preference for workers of the local area | Have to be at least be from the concerned ULB

Key operating and institutional guidelines

1. Every ULB has a Ward Level Committee to prepare a "List of Projects ."Ward Level Committee consists of representatives from Government (AE/JE), SHGs, Slum Dwellers Association.

2. The ULB Level Committee finalizes a suggested list of projects prepared by the Ward Level Committee. This Committee will consist of representatives from Government and SHGs.

3. Implementing Agency of works will be SHG/ Slum Dwellers Association if the project costs less than 1 lakh. If the estimated cost exceeds 1 lakh, the implementing Agency will be the ULB.

4. Assistant Engineer/Junior Engineer is responsible for preparing the plan and estimate of projects.

5. Final list of projects with a plan and estimate shall be placed in the Council for administrative approval.

to take action on this front, as a State-led initiative, and was able to float the scheme on April 18, 2020, after a week of post-national level deliberations. As a result, in the wake of the COVID crisis, the Odisha government introduced the "**Urban Wage Employment Initiative**" on April 18, 2020, for an initial period of six months till September 2020, to employ the urban poor by engaging them in creating urban infrastructure.

GoO expands the OUWEI to a long term statewide scheme: Later, the GoO formulated and launched a long-term wage employment scheme, Mukhyamantri Karma Tatapara Abhiyan (MUKTA), on February 1, 2021, expanding the scope of OUWEI for providing sustainable livelihood opportunities and creation and maintenance of community assets, critical to ensure inclusive, sustainable and equitable growth. The initiative is considered unique in its attempts to achieve convergence of several critical urban development areas, i.e., wage employment, empowerment of marginalised women, environment protection, community assets creation, and building partnership with community-based institutions. In addition, the significant contribution in **the recovery phase from the pandemic** of such a program in the urban context **is crucial**.

This note documents the key policy contours from Odisha for designing such an urban wage employment scheme and highlights the key transformative interventions and the enablers that made them possible. The note lists the insights from the transferable experience and the imperatives for scaling up such an initiative. Some of them may be generalized, although some aspects may be unique to the state.

6. List of final projects in the public domain.

7. Once work has the required approvals, Muster Rolls will be issued for the work. The implementing Agency will maintain muster Rolls. Wages and Material expenses due will be credited to the implementing Agency, who in turn will credit it to workers and vendors

8. Implementing agencies will be paid a 'supervising charge' of 7.5 percent of the project cost.

• **Payment of Wages:** Minimum wages to be notified by the Labour or ESI ministry. A DBT will be made to the beneficiary's account every week.

• **Types of Jobs:** Focus on monsoon preparedness and creation of public assets and maintenance in ULBs, stormwater drainage, rainwater harvesting structures in public places, development of new water bodies, parks/playgrounds based on local needs and vacant government land availability, Increase in green cover and beautification, sanitation, building community centres and open space development which include micro centres for SHG, Involving local artisans for beautifying cities through wall paintings and murals

• Other components include- a well-defined SOP, Workers' rights around basic worksite facilities in terms of clean drinking water, support for childcare, etc.

• Quality control mechanism through technology solutions for geotagging works, performance monitoring, as well as enhanced transparency and accountability.

• **Update:** Original programme ended September 30. In January 2021 expanded into Mukhyamantri Karma Tatpara Abhiyan, described as 'an urban equivalent of NREGS

2. Key Game-Changing Interventions

2.1 Ability to float the scheme quickly

2.1.1 Gaining from the sustained political will of keeping the poor and vulnerable at the centre of the development agenda

With the political mandate and vision to transform the lives of urban residents, the GoO has placed the poor and vulnerable at the centre of development. The people-centric urban development agenda is based on the 'Vision 5T' of the state with a close alignment of UN SDGs such as SDG 1: No Poverty, SDG 2: Zero hunger, SDG 3: Good Health & Well-being, SDG 6: clean water and sanitation, SDG 8: Decent work and Economic Growth, SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and infrastructure, SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities. Several programmes to achieve this are being implemented, including the JAGA Mission, PMAY – Urban, Equitable, efficient, and sustainable urban water supply projects like Drink from Tap-Mission, BASUDHA. Additionally, convergence with other schemes like Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns Scheme (UIDSSMT), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Development Management Fund (DMF), Odisha Mineral Bearing Areas Development Corporation (OMBADC) to ensure universal coverage of piped water supply, revamping of the urban road transport system, urban sanitation programmes, for deduction of poverty and vulnerability of the urban poor households, etc. The urban wage employment proposal was aligned to the mandate and vision of the state, and in fact, would complement and further the outcomes. Due to the political will, Odisha could bolster the national schemes with parallel state schemes to complement and sustain the program's sustenance. Convergence has been one of the major aspects of every program in Odisha.

2.1.2 The timing added strength to the Scheme proposal, which was considered long overdue.

When the lockdown due to COVID 19 pandemic started on March 23, 2020, there was a standstill in economic activities. This was something unprecedented, and with the uncertainty of the lockdown period, there were concerns on the issue of urban poor, who lost their daily jobs due to the lockdown. As indicated earlier, the GoI also deliberated on the same issue and expressed interest in bringing out a new scheme during this time. Still, it had its challenges of administrative approval, scale, etc., among others. The issue was urgent, and the state needed to act immediately and not wait for the national scheme. The timing added strength to the relevance of the proposal, which anyway had its merits, and also an urban wage programme was under discussion since 2019[4]. This was considered long overdue.

[4] Sreevatsan, A., 2020. The growing clamour for an urban jobs scheme. livemint. Available at: <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/the-growing-clamour-for-an-urban-jobs-scheme-11601903485203.html>

2.1.3 Political stability and confidence

With one political party in power for the last two decades, political stability in Odisha has provided clear policy goals and has empowered the bureaucracy with sufficient autonomy in implementation. This stems from the vision of transformational change guided by teamwork, transparency, technology, and time governance principles. The tenure and team stability have imparted the responsibility and confidence to aspire for transformational changes. With a well-established track record of performance, the administration and their partners had the confidence of the Honourable Chief Minister of Odisha.

2.1.4 Agile policy-making through the convergence of schemes and resources

Time was of utmost importance. If it had to go through the conventional protocols for sanctioning schemes, it would take at least a month to get feedback from the Empowered Finance Committee (EFC) and finalize the scheme. The convergence mechanism with existing large ongoing welfare schemes of H &UDD helped create its unique quick response model at a large level.

The H&UDD had launched an urban transformation initiative called "UNNATI" to transform the state's urban areas with enhanced

Components of JAGA Mission

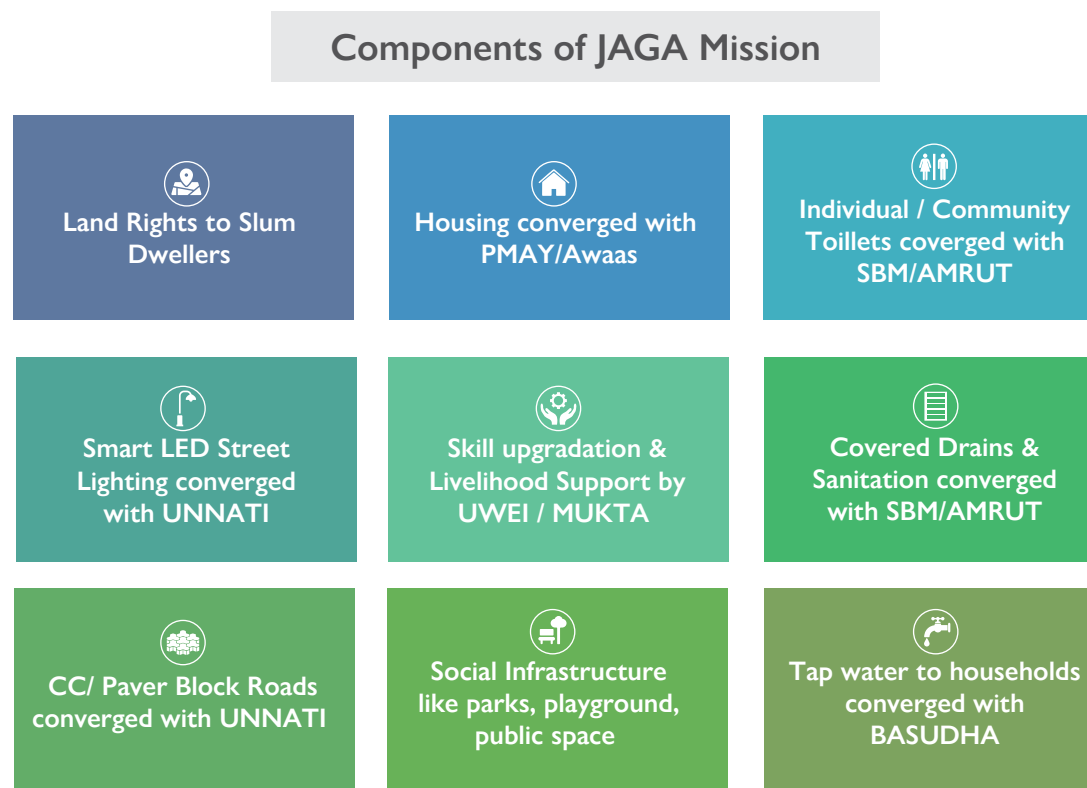|		
Land Rights to Slum Dwellers	Housing converged with PMAY/Awaas	Individual / Community Toillets coverged with SBM/AMRUT
Smart LED Street Lighting converged with UNNATI	Skill upgradation & Livelihood Support by UWEI / MUKTA	Covered Drains & Sanitation converged with SBM/AMRUT
CC/ Paver Block Roads converged with UNNATI	Social Infrastructure like parks, playground, public space	Tap water to households converged with BASUDHA

Figure 1: Convergence with various government programmes

infrastructure and service delivery and ensure that the benefits reach citizens from all sections of society quickly and sustainably uphold the resilience agenda of the GoO. This initiative of the State government was launched in 2017 to bring all-around inclusive development of urban areas by synergizing the resources from various schemes agencies and providing critical gap funding. This strengthened the national programmes with various state-led schemes like water supply, sanitation, and solid waste management and resorted to innovative, low-cost technologies like resilient, non-sewered sanitation services. The various government welfare schemes mentioned earlier funded these public works components (except for the individual house construction support), converging and collaborating to cover all project parts. For example, when JAGA upgrades slums, it does not create a separate component for drinking water supply within its project parameters. Rather, it simply converges with Mission BASUDHA, a dedicated fund of INR 236 crores (GBP 23.3 million) for providing piped water supply to all urban households as per the state budget for 2020-21. And these schemes were open to all 114 ULBs in Odisha.

Effectively, all that OUWEI had to do was to operationalise and add to the activities of the public works that were already planned under the slum upgrading phase of JAGA. It leveraged funds from UNNATI and was included as part of this umbrella programme. For example, the OUWEI converges funds and resources from UNNATI Mission – aimed at providing infrastructure for the urban poor; and JAGA Mission – which is aimed at comprehensive upgrading of all slums in the state and is itself based on legislation - "The Odisha Land Rights to Slum Dwellers Act, 2017". So, there was no requirement for the conventional protocol for scheme approval through the Expenditure Finance Committee (EFC) and the Finance Department. Such convergence with existing schemes was critical as the OUWEI, in cognizance of the urgency of the scheme to be planned and initiated within days to effectively protect livelihoods.

OUWEI drew on resources and innovative technology used in H&UDD schemes for the urban poor, including slums. For example, high-resolution drone-enabled geo-databases of 2000 slums created under JAGA Mission (a scheme aimed at transforming slums into liveable habitats) were used for targeting OUWEI activities. In addition, the locations for construction sites while constructing community centres in slums were decided using high-resolution drone imagery produced under JAGA Mission.

A provision of INR 100 Crore (GBP 9.8 million) was made under UNNATI for spending under the OUWEI. In addition, under OUWEI, works were be identified in ULBs that will provide temporary employment for the urban poor and simultaneously support the creation of public assets and maintenance in ULBs.

2.2 Resilient Infrastructure Design and Delivery

2.2.1 Infrastructure Resilience through asset creation and improved service delivery

OUWEI safeguards the livelihood needs of the urban poor by converging with and building upon the resources created in H&UDD's JAGA Mission – the world's largest and well-acclaimed slum land titling and upgrading initiative – and through labour intensive urban infrastructure projects (70: 40 -Phase 1| 60:40- Phase 2 - labour to material ratio). Under OUWEI, works were identified in Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) that provide temporary employment for the urban poor and simultaneously support the creation of public assets and maintenance in ULBs. In addition, OUWEI added components for monsoon preparedness to the list, such as de-silting drains, installing steel grill filters at outfall points, constructing percolation tanks for rainwater harvesting, and creating waterbodies.

For all of these activities, Mission Shakti Groups (MSGs) or the Slum Dwellers Associations (SDA) were either the Implementation Partners (P) or Supervision partners. The selection of SHGs/SDAs were done on the basis of their capacity to execute and supervise the work.

They were also responsible for identifying job seekers, preferably from the same slum, where implementation had to be done, for opportunities suited to their skills. Jobseekers were required to contact the concerned Mission shakti groups and SDAs and initially relied on word of mouth. The IP/supervisory partner would then share the list of job seekers with the AE/JE of the ULB, based on which the project wise muster rolls were prepared by the AE/JE and handed over to the SDA/SHGs for execution of the projects. Given MSGs and SDAs were new to this, ULBs in many cases supported them in the process of connecting to labourers. The scheme forbids machinery for activities like digging tanks, relying instead on manual labour. Specific activities have been defined for different projects (Annexure 1) that include enhancement of stormwater drainage, increase in green cover and beautification, sanitation Activities and Community centres & Open Space development, along with implementation guidelines.

The initial focus was on beautification- wall painting for sanitation, solid waste, and health-related IEC messages. Post that, stormwater drainage and rainwater harvesting projects were prioritized. Odisha receives high-intensity rainfall for a short spell, and the idea was to conserve rainwater, prevent flooding and beautify urban areas in the state. To retain rainwater, water harvesting structures were constructed to minimize runoffs through stormwater drains. The conserved water was then recharged to natural ponds and reservoirs to groundwater.

Additionally, de-silting and repair of stormwater drains were carried out to redirect the maximum quantum of runoff water without causing localized flooding. Similarly, efforts were taken to increase green cover by plantation drives in public lands, roadside, parks, near banks of rivers/ water bodies. The creation of community centres like PARICHAYA and Mission Shakti Gruha were also taken up for the creation of Workspace and micro activity centres.

Implementation Guidelines

1. List of projects shall be identified by ULBs ward-wise from the specified categories/activities.

2. ULBs will carry out appropriate IEC (information, education, and communication) measures to create awareness at the ULB level on the job opportunities, enrolment procedures, and benefits.

3. Community-based organizations such as SHGs and their Area Level Federations, City Level Federations, and Slum Dwellers Associations (SDAs) would be engaged in implementing the work as implementation partners.

4. Work-Orders will be directly issued to engineers without the need for a tendering process. Therefore, engineers will provide all community-level partners with the required plans, estimates, and technical supervision.

5. Additionally, engineers will document all work-related procedures -ward level record of people engaged activity-wise and date-wise, before and after situations (with photographs and geo-location) for verification by appropriate authorities.

6. Material procurement will be done by ULBs, and implementing partners will not have any role in it.

7. Payment shall be transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer mode to beneficiary bank accounts on a weekly frequency.

8. All information relating to work undertaken, the number of beneficiaries, and financials would be placed in the public domain.

9. Technology-based solutions, including mobile apps, will be developed to geotag the works, monitor performance, and enhance transparency and accountability in the implementation.

10. ULBs shall ensure that social distancing is maintained, ensure there are no gatherings, basic worksite facilities – availability of clean drinking water, support for childcare, use of masks and sanitizers, and other required facilities be factored into the process.

Parichaya

(For slum area)

Storm Water Drainage

Green Cover and Beautification

Rain Water Harvesting

Mission Shakti Gruha

(Non slum area)

Open Space Development Around Water Bodies

Figure 2: Scope of the programme

In nine months, about 7,500 projects worth INR 122 crore (GBP 12 Million) were implemented across 114 ULBs with more than 5,600 Mission Shakti Groups and around 460 SDAs as implementing partners 1,300,000 person-days generated, and 350,000 wage seekers engaged.

2.2.2 Use of context-sensitive design specifications for infrastructure

The projects were planned based on the needs of the community. Slum communities spend most of the day in the community space; their houses are mostly used for storage and sleeping. The need for a Community Centre was felt for these low-income settlement communities, so it was decided that there would be a Community Centre for every slum. These were called PARICHAYA. Simple design specifications were developed with three key design criteria – i) Easy to build designs ii) easy to build, with locally available materials; iii) Could be built quickly by the local masons, with the community's help. About 761 PARICHAYAs were made within months, and work is in progress to have one PARICHAYA for every slum in all 114 ULBs.

A Ward level Committee

1	Ward Officer	Member Convener
2	AE/JE in-charge of the ward	Member
3	President/Secretary of Federations of that ward (Registered/Formed)	Member
4	President/Secretary of one or two Mission Shakti SHGs of the ward	Member
5	President/Secretary SDAs/Slum level committee for each slum	Member
6	Swachha Sathis/Swachha Supervisors, as may be decided by MC/EO	Member

A ULB level Committee

1	MC/EO	Chairperson
2	City Engineer/Municipal Engineer	Member
3	Health Officer	Member
4	Child Development Project Officer (Mission Shakti in Charge)	Member
5	Nodal Community Organiser & CMMU Managers	Member
6	President & Secretary of the Federation (Registered/Formed)	Member
7	President/Secretary of SDA/ erstwhile SDA	Member
8	Other officials as may be decided by the MC/EO	Member

Figure 3: Ward & ULB level committee

Post the success of building PARICHAYAs, it was thought that similar centres could be built for all Mission Shakti Groups in the non-slum areas. This was also part of strengthening the 4th tier of governance. It was envisaged that these groups have a place for meetings, any congregation, or carrying out any economic activities. These were called MISSION SHAKTI GRUHAs. It would be expensive to have a Mission Shakti Gruha for each Mission Shakti Group (MSG), so it was decided that for every 10,000 population, a minimum of one Mission Shakti Gruha should be built. Mission Shakti Gruha and Parichaya are some of the key projects of the OUWEI.

2.3 Service Provision Models: Community as implementation partners

The scale and pace at which the projects were implemented could not have been possible without the partnership with the community.

Odisha has demonstrated that partnership between citizens, municipalities, and the state can deliver transformative urban change in the state. The Slum Dwellers Associations are emerging as the 4th tier of governance structures with poor urban communities actively participating in the development and governance process. Federalism is in-built into the design and execution of various schemes and missions in Odisha. Similarly, Slum Dwellers Associations (SDA) and Mission Shakti groups were strengthened by involving them in the planning, supervision, and implementation as well as being custodians of the assets created (build and operate).

2.3.1 Trust and partnership with the community- established Mission Shakti Groups.

The Odisha model of decentralisation is a unique[5] model for strengthening the fourth tier of the governance is conceptualised, designed, & executed

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[5] While SHGs are not new, Odisha is the only state with a special department for Mission Shakti at the state level called the Department of Mission Shakti, GoO, to promote women empowerment
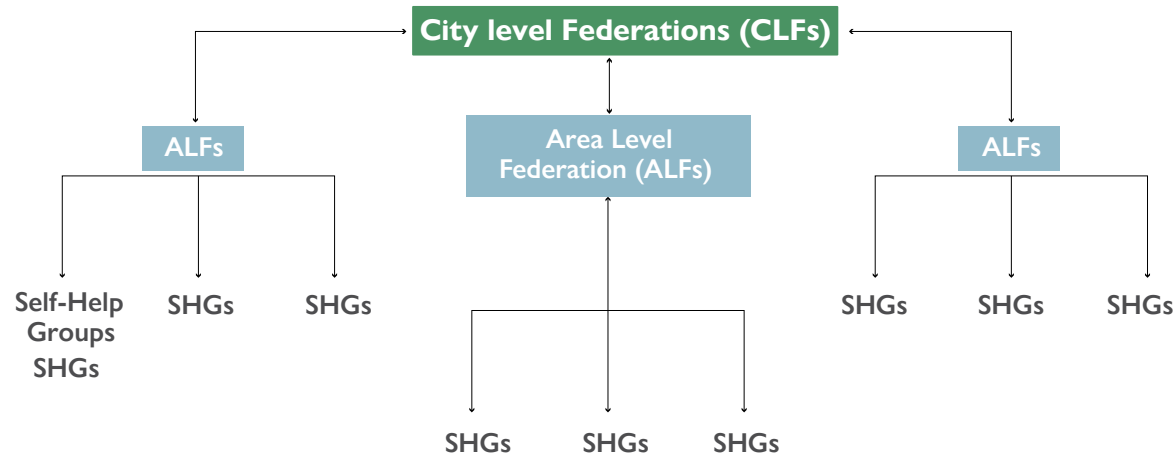
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                              ┌──────────────────────────────────┐
                              │  City level Federations (CLFs)   │
                              └──────────────────────────────────┘
           ┌──────────┐          ┌──────────────────┐          ┌──────────┐
           │   ALFs   │          │   Area Level     │          │   ALFs   │
           └──────────┘          │ Federation (ALFs)│          └──────────┘
                                 └──────────────────┘

 Self-Help     SHGs    SHGs                            SHGs      SHGs      SHGs
  Groups
   SHGs

                      SHGs        SHGs        SHGs
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Figure 4: Institutional structure of ALFs/CLFs

as an integral part of programmes/ schemes. Community participation features in all their schemes by the government as vehicles to promote their missions. It has helped the state achieve the objectives of such programmes and generated employment for the urban poor, thus improving their livelihood. Mission Shakti Groups, Swachha Sathi, Jala Sathi, Slum Dwellers Associations (SDA), etc., are now active partners of ULBs in Odisha for SWM, 11,660 SHG members are engaged to manage all 250 Micro Composting Centres (MCCs)/ Material Recovery Facilities (MRF)s, leading to employment generation of 4,250,000 women days & generating wages worth around INR 145 crore (GBP 14 million) annually. For the Faecal Sludge Management (FSM) value chain, O&M of Septage Treatment Plants in 8 cities are managed by SHGs, each earning around INR 120,000 (GBP 1184) per month. Thus, the experience of working with the community groups was tested, and the results were very encouraging. However, they would need handholding, provided by the ULB engineers, given the priority of the government to create wage employment. Thus, community-based organizations such as Mission Shakti WSHGs and Area Level Federations, City Level Federations, and Slum Dwellers Associations (SDAs) were engaged as implementing partners and /or supervisory partners in the execution of the projects under OUWEI.

2.3.2 Strengthening the 4th tier of governance

The Odisha model of decentralisation is conceptualised, designed & executed as an integral part of programmes/schemes. UWEI took the opportunity to leverage the existing partnerships and governance structures to achieve the scheme's objective and further strengthen the 4th tier of governance. It makes the partnership process compulsory and not optional. Mission Shakti Groups, Slum Dwellers Associations, transgender groups, ragpickers group, etc., are now active partners of ULBs and function as 4th tier of the Governance system. They are the development partners, playing a dual role as implementing Agency and supervisory responsibilities. It has resulted in capacity building, institutional strengthening & economic empowerment. The key enabling decisions by the government include:

• Partnership for service delivery in water, sanitation, subsidised food program, employment scheme & other municipal functions

• Eliminating contractors in the implementation process

• Developing business models, SOPs, guidelines, protocols, standardisation, model service contracts to engage Community Based Organisations (CBOs)

Figure 4: Framework of the 4th tier of the governance

- Systematic Capacity building of CBOs & other stakeholders

- Community engagement through CBOs is not only a means but an end in itself - not only process but the purpose

- Progressing towards non-conventional, skilled tasks with managerial & technical capacities

- Focus not just on financial benefits but overall growth & professional competencies of CBOs leading to a sense of pride, accomplishment & dignity

- Sensitisation & Orientation of various Government functionaries to partner & work with CBOs through the preparation of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and handholding in specific activities

- Building of Mission Shakti Gruhas provides them the workspace for meetings congregations and to partake in economic activities

2.3.3 Contractor free initiative

The already established partnership, the confidence, and the trust of the community groups enabled the GoO to consider this a contractor-free initiative. Moreover, the value add of contractors are usually centered on mainly three aspects – i) bringing in finances,

ii) know-how and technology, and iii) construction, and sometimes operation and maintenance. For this initiative, finances were already allocated, there were no highly skilled activities to be implemented for the assets planned. Also, the assets to be created were low risk in terms of low cost, and very basic infrastructure did not have any social and environmental risks or operational risks. SDAs and SHGs are implementation partners; the community supported by the ULB does the construction, and the maintenance also lies with them. It is one of the uniqueness of the scheme. This was done to instill a sense of ownership among the community and generate employment for them. So, the role of contractors and the profit motive were negated for this initiative. As a result, the ULB –contractor nexus was deterred. It has been the experience of the GoO that partnership with the communities from previous initiatives has resulted in less corruption, increased community ownership, and improved quality of the execution. This reiterated the confidence in community partnership and thus the decision to make them the implementing as well as supervisory partners. This has also furthered the opportunity to strengthen the 4th tier of governance.

Implementing Partner Selection

- **Selection of Implementing Partner/Implementing Agency**
  - After preparation of Plan and Estimates & Administrative Approval, MC/EO will select MSGs/SDA as IA/IP

- **SDAs to be engaged as IA/IP**
  - SDAs are to be engaged as IP for projects to be taken up. In case of not having SDA, MSGs/ALF from slum will be engaged as IP/IA

- **Criteria for Selecting IA/IP**
  - The capacity to execute and supervise the work, track record, consent to abide by the guidelines – Not more than one project to be awarded to MSGs to ensure equitable distribution

There was clarity in the understanding of the department in the activities that were to be implemented and the understanding that the contractors would not add any value to the implementation process.

2.3.4 Incentives for participation

The interest and the participation of the community groups would not be guaranteed if they were not adequately incentivised. The community workers are daily wage earners, and if they are not paid, they are unlikely to participate, interests likely to wean.   The incentives are as follows;

- Payment to the Wage Earners will be made as per the provisions of the Minimum Wage Act- Rs.308/Day (The Odisha Minimum Wages Notification (Oct 2019).

- The IAs shall be paid Supervision Charges @7.5% of the total estimated cost of the work if the work orders have been issued in their favour. However, suppose the work order is issued favoring the Assistant Engineer/Junior Engineer. In that case, IP shall be paid @7.5% of the total wage component of the work as Supervision Charges (I. A Mission Shakti Group/SDA/ALF who have been involved in project execution or work order issued with their name. I.P- Mission Shakti Group/SDA/ALF engaged only in supervision work.

- ULB shall pay sitting fees out of their funds for participation in meetings. President and Secretary of MSG/ SDA: Rs 250 per Meeting and President and Secretary of Federation: Rs 500 per Meeting. (For identifying works, scrutinizing the work, field visit, meeting for approval, etc.)

- For technical verification of works by engineers, each gets paid a daily allowance of INR 500 (GBP 4.9) :

2.3.5 No ambiguity in implementation partners' roles- detailed implementation guidelines

While the OUWEI scheme contours were decided and finalized within a week, the operational guidelines took about a month to be issued. The department wanted the operations to be streamlined detailed so that there is no ambiguity during execution. So the department took it upon itself in defining the step-by-step process in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guidelines for OUWEI. These guidelines evolved through many deliberations, scenarios, scenarios, possible challenges, community responses, and solutions. With subsequent modifications, these SOPs and guidelines were introduced. However, these guidelines have since evolved after understanding some of the loopholes and solutions to plug them. Some of the changes have made it simpler and easy to implement. It is an ever-evolving document, enhanced with experience and feedback from implementation on the field. The SOPs and guidelines are the most important asset of the OUWEI initiative. The details of some of the guidelines are included in the **Annexure.**

2.3.6 The community partnership model is mainstreamed.

This program has also given a works code for implementing work in partnership with the community. The works code is a public works code issued by the public works department that governs all public work. The OUWEI scheme SOP has been included in the Works Code as a chapter. This would act as the reference manual for future execution of work with community groups. So, this mainstreams the protocols into the existing Works Code document, enabling the execution of works through contractor and tendering and community partnerships. This will further enhance opportunities and strengthen the 4th tier of governance.

Document Title	Date of Issue
Guideline on Implementation of UWEI	Letter no. 8293 dated 18th April 2020
Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)	Letter no. 8531 dated 28/04/2020
Revised Guideling on Implementation	(File no. HUD FUND POLICY 0002-2020/304 dated 23rd July 2020)
Revised Guideling on Implementation	Letter no. 15891 dated 12th October 2020
Amendment to UWEI Guideling	Letter no. 18255 dated 24th November 2020

2.4 Informal Urban Employment— Recognizing and Supporting Informal Workers

The basic premise of the OUWEI initiatives is providing sustainable livelihood opportunities to the urban poor, informal and migrant labourers, and the creation & maintenance of community assets, critical to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and equitable growth. One of the non-negotiable aspects of the initiative is that the projects need to be labour-intensive. Usually, 20% of the work is done by local skilled workers, while most of the work (80%) is completed by the rest of the workforce. For example, for beautification projects like wall painting, the skilled painters and artists do the final painting, while most of the other work like cleaning, scrapping of old paint, applying the first coat of paint is done by the self-help groups or the SDAs. Working with the skilled workforce, the capacity of the unskilled workforce has also improved, and over time their skill level has been enhanced. The scheme is unique in so far as it attempts to achieve convergence of several critical areas of urban development, including wage employment to the workers from unorganized sectors affected by the pandemic, empowerment of Mission Shakti Groups especially, the marginalised women, along
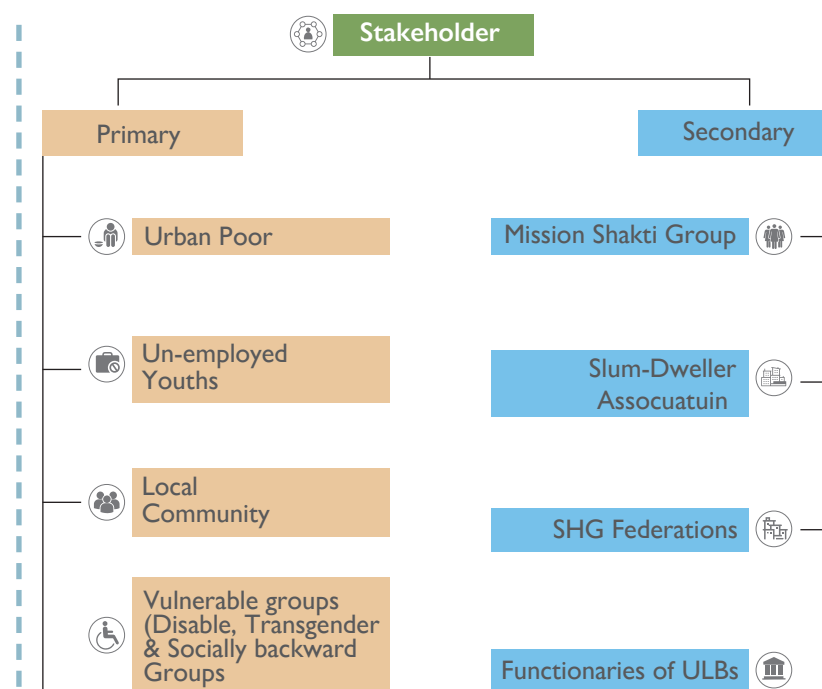

Figure 6: key stakeholders

with protection of the environment, creation of community assets and building partnership with community-based institutions to achieve community-centric and community-led development.

The ULBs of Odisha have 16 lakh families, out of which 4.5 lakh families or around 20 lakh people work in the informal sector for whom the scheme has been targeted.

(Source: The Pioneer. "State to Execute Urban Wage Employment Scheme," April 22, 2021. https://www.dailypioneer.com/2021/state-editions/state-to-execute-urban-wage-employment-scheme.html.)

2.5 Process transparency and continuous monitoring

Process transparency has been integral and embodied in the salient features of the OUWEI initiative in each step of the process, not only through the detailed guidelines about roles and responsibilities but through regular monitoring and information sharing.

Monitoring of the process, with bottom-up information flow, provided transparency in the process. In the initial stages of implementation, the focus was to identify beneficiaries and transfer the benefits to them. However, the monitoring process evolved starting with WhatsApp Groups, progressing gradually from static Microsoft Excel spreadsheets to more dynamic Google spreadsheets. Later a monitoring framework evolved with key parameters and indicators about the following:

• Physical progress

• Financial progress

• Outcome indicators

• Impact indicators

• Project overview (pictures of the projects, documentation, etc.)

Currently, the monitoring framework has been finalized, and plans to tender out the development of the monitoring software MUKTA-Soft have been finalized. The H&UDD constituted the Project

Steering Committee and Project Management Committee for smooth management of MUKTA-Soft. The Terms of Reference (ToR), including Scope of Work (SoW) and functionality of MUKTA-Soft, is already prepared, and a field visit for preparing the Detailed Project Report (DPR) was undertaken by the MUKTA State team in Dhenkanal. The DPR is under preparation. The State Urban Development Agency (SUDA), Bhubaneswar, is currently being undertaken.

Different channels of communication helped the day-to-day updates and monitoring of the progress of the projects from identification to approval and completion. The initiative was implemented through community partners. They identified the infrastructure needs, built them, operated and maintained them- participation from the implementing partners – the SDAs and the SHGs were continuous. The regular and continuous communication process founded on the pillar of trust of this partnership was key to the successful implementation of the initiative. The communication strategy was multipronged (all types of media channels from hoardings and billboards to social media), multilevel (local, district and state), and most importantly, regular communication. For example, the projects identified and approved by the implementing partners were uploaded on the ULB website, ensuring transparency in the communication process.

To ensure smooth operation of the implementation process, and ensure participation of the implementing partners in the monitoring process, ULB staff, city managers units, Jaga Fellows, and other field level workers worked with the partners, handholding them through the process of paperwork needed for monitoring purposes, bank transfer processes, preparing work orders, invoicing, etc. The detailed SOPs guided this handholding process.

2.5.1 Mid Term Evaluation

A midterm evaluation of the OUWEI initiative was conducted by Scaling City Institutions for India (SCI-FI) at the Centre for Policy Research (CPR). The assessment showed that there are benefits, with some recommendations on strengthening the initiative and converting

💬	Community Consultation	Identification and Finalization of Projects in consultation with the Community.
⚙️	Implementation	Implementing Partners (IP) : MSGs, ALFs, CLFs & SDA
📋	Work-Orders to SHG	Work Orders are directly issued MS-SHG
⚙️	ULB level Facilitation	ULBs would facilitate procurement of materials in consultation with SHG
🤝	Direct Benefit Transfer	Payment is transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) on weekly basis
📷	Information System	Details of Aadhar and bank account to be maintained at the level of IP
🔍	Geo Tagging	All projects should be geo tagged
◎	Transparency	All information relating to work undertaken, number of beneficiaries and financials are placed in public domain as part of transparency measures.

Figure 7: Salient features

it into a full-fledged scheme. This would provide sustainable livelihood opportunities to the urban poor, informal and migrant labourers, and creating and maintaining community assets critical to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and equitable growth. Therefore, the OUWEI was extended till it was scaled up to MUKTA in February 2021.

2.6 Capacity Building

The capacity building lies at the core of strengthening the 4th tier of governance. The community groups needed capacity building, and it was felt that the government needed to invest in capacity.

2.6.1 Just in Time learning

Capacity building happened at the time of execution, just in time before the execution of the project. The engineers from the ULBs do the capacity building of the community groups. For example, for the Rain Water Harvesting System (RWHS) projects, a core group of

40 engineers was trained by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), Delhi, on planning, estimation, and technical details. They developed 5 City Action Plans and model plans and estimates. This core group of trained engineers developed detailed SOPs. They further trained 246 engineers across all ULBs. These 246 engineers would be the ones who would train the community groups with the help of the detailed SOPs.

2.6.2 Administrative /ULB Capacity

Normally for the Missions like the SBM or AMRUT, one person per ULB is provided to coordinate the mission projects. However, the OUWEI, when metamorphosed into the statewide MUKTA scheme, three people per ULB were sanctioned (Program Coordinator, Accountant, and JE -Infrastructure Consultant) – a total of 335 consultant posts were sanctioned with 2-year contracts. They would primarily work with the community groups providing technical assistance, monitoring, aiding in the plan and estimates.

3. Lessons for scaling up and replication

The key success factors include:

- **Community Partnership at the centre of development policies and programmes:** The well-established 4th tier of governance and the continual attempt to strengthen and enhance their capacity to empower them in planning, execution, and monitoring. The contractor-free initiative provided the opportunity to plan, design, build, and operate the assets created, enhance, and strengthen their capacity and confidence. 7024 SHGs and SDAs could complete more than 10,000 RWHS structures, with contactors, this would not have been possible. Building their capacity, as well as incentivising them to participate, is also imperative for their empowerment.

- OUWEI partnered not just with the urban poor by involving associations of slum dwellers and women's self-help groups in its execution but also with private service providers to use innovative digital technology and other welfare schemes of H&UDD other Government Departments.

- **De-mystifying technology:** All the technology needed for the infrastructure planned for the initiative is very simple. It can be built with the help of local skilled masons, the community's help, and locally available material. The technology chosen was simple and was made clear and easy to understand for adoption and execution through detailed SOPs and handholding.

- **Process standardization is key:** Starting from the composition of institutional structures selection of communities to model plans

- The HUDD-FCDO-CPR partnership supported the GoO in formulating a long-term wage employment scheme, Mukhyamantri Karma Tatapara Abhiyan (MUKTA), expanding the scope of OUWEI, launched in response to the economic hardships instilled by the ongoing coronavirus crisis. The scheme was formally notified in April 2021.

- H&UD Department entered into an MoU with the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi, a center for excellence on WSUDP, to create Blue-Green Infrastructure (GI) to address urban flooding and capacity building of the officials.

- The HUDD, in collaboration with JANAGRAHA, is constructing PARICHAYA CENTRES is a multipurpose platform for the slum communities.

estimates, all are documented in a simple step-by-step process in the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and guidelines. These guidelines are ever-evolving updated based on feedback from the ground. The process standardization is key to scaling up so that the execution team can focus on execution, without any ambiguity, during execution.

- **Identification and planning for knowledge transfer:** The process of knowledge transfer from the experts to the

community is vital for ensuring quality execution and building the community's capacity, and empowering them. A core group of engineers/planners needs to be trained from a state for the various activities planned by the experts directly. For example, MoU may be signed with expert institutions. This core group becomes the Trainer for the rest of the engineers in the state. The next level of engineers/planners are then trained, who then directly train and build the capacity of the community groups. The knowledge transfer plan or the capacity-building plan forms the foundation for executing the works under the initiative. This is key to strengthening the ULB as well as the 4th tier of governance, promoting devolution of power in the spirit of the 74th Amendment Act of the Constitution.

• Performance Monitoring and evaluation: Regular, continuous monitoring and evaluation to improve the programme implementation and functioning of ULBs in the way they deal with the OUWEI implementing partners (Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Slum Dwellers Association (SDAs)) and wage seekers. The use of Whatsapp in communication-enabled timely interventions and resolution. Feedback from the field also enabled upgrading the

Challenges

• Absence of information about the labour force enrolled in this programme made it challenging for local agencies, self-help groups (SHGs), and slum development agencies (SDAs) to hire the right resources and match jobs with the skills. Furthermore, beneficiaries were to be paid by DBT weekly, but most of them lacked bank accounts. The community organisers played a key role in mitigating these challenges by creating a robust database of migrants, quickly mapping the skills with the jobs, and organizing drives for bank account opening.

• Wage and bill payments are not streamlined yet, resulting in the delay of wage payment and bill payment for works to the IPs

SOPs and guidelines and strengthening other operating parameters of the initiative. This was key to scaling up the initiative.

4. Conclusion/ Way forward

OUWEI is both evolutionary and revolutionary. Evolutionary because it integrated with and built upon the resources of ongoing welfare schemes to provide a very rapid response to the livelihood crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Revolutionary, because in responding to a unique crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it used existing resources to create approaches, solutions, and methods to create a model, which was so radical that it is now not only being scaled up as a statewide scheme but is also being emulated by the national government and other state/regional governments in India[6].

The government of India, while welcoming Odisha's Urban Wage Employment Initiative (OUWEI), had written to states across the country for suitable adaptation of the same. States like Himachal Pradesh (Chief Minister's Urban Livelihood Guarantee Programme) and Jharkhand (Chief Minister's Workers Programme) have also launched programmes supporting urban livelihoods ensuring job security for the urban poor. Such adoption by states /geographies that accounts for high interstate migration reiterates the importance of such wage employment schemes in urban areas to ensure resilience amongst its poorest.

The initiative has now been converted to a full-fledged wage employment programme at scale for the state-Mukhyamantri Karma Tatapara Abhiyan (MUKTA). MUKTA was formally notified in April 2021. However, before the conversion from OUWEI to MUKTA,

several discussions were held to deliberate on the different aspects of the process and protocols of OUWEI. Jobseekers were required to contact the Mission Shakti groups and SDAs and initially relied on word of mouth during the OUWEI, but in MUKTA, the enrolment processes were further streamlined. Deliberations with implementation partners, including NGOs, think tanks, executive officers (EOs), from several ULBs across the state, field workers, funding agencies, etc., included discussions around streamlining beneficiary eligibility, payment processes, the introduction of an MIS system to include a database of workers' details, payments, documentation, work orders, etc., along with more channels for grievance redressal. Case studies on similar types of initiatives in other states of India, and other countries like Argentina and South Africa, also added some perspective to these discussions. Following are some of the key recommendations that emerged from the extensive stakeholder consultations and are now part and parcel of the MUKTA scheme for the state. These have contributed to inclusive planning, execution, monitoring, and feedback mechanism, enhancing the accountability and transparency of the scheme.

- ***Vulnerable population central to the scheme:*** The scheme further detailed the eligibility to be available to all adult wage seekers, residents of the state and desirous of working in the urban areas, with preference given to local wage seekers and vulnerable groups like women, transgenders, persons with disabilities, etc.

[6] Guangzhouaward.org. 2021. The Urban Wage Employment Initiative – reducing vulnerabilities and enhancing urban resilience. [online] Available at: <http://www.guangzhouaward.org/a/1277.html?lang=en>

residing in the ULB area. The scheme also has a registration process that would include the creation of a workers database with each worker having a unique identification number maintained in the ICT solution, MUKTA-Soft. All details of the beneficiaries, including the Bank A/c and Aadhaar details of workers before starting the work to be included in the database, post verification and validation by the ULBs functionaries/resource persons.

- **Enhanced trust in the implementation partners (IPs)**: The work threshold of IPs was increased to INR 10 Lakhs (GBP 9868).

- **Expansion of permissible work:** The scope of permissible work was expanded to include development and renovation of water bodies, development and maintenance of public parks and playgrounds, and various labor-intensive urban infrastructure development projects taken up by ULBs.

- **Enhanced use of technology** – use of one central software MUKTA Soft for project planning, implementation, and monitoring:

Work Identification and Finalization: The final list of sanctioned public works with plan and estimates will have a unique identification number electronically generated by the ICT solution, MUKTA-Soft, and updated with all necessary details.

  - Work Measurement and Payment to wage seekers process were further streamlined so that approval and payment of wages were made within T+4 days, all payments updated on MUKTA Soft, and published on ULB website.

- Bill Payments to IPs: The process was made simple, where the payments to be made in these works through running bills would not require the approval of the Countersigning Authority, i.e., PD, DUDA. However, during submission of the final bill, the approval of Countersigning authority is mandatory for clearance of the bill. The detailed measurement and calculations of the work done, total wages to be paid based on the work done, the volume of materials used on the work are all to be recorded in the e-Measurement book generated electronically by MUKTA-Soft.

- Grievance Redressal Mechanism: This mechanism was further strengthened to include multiple modes for registering a complaint such as a dedicated helpline number, website, email id, complaint boxes installed at conspicuous places in the ULB offices, ward offices, worksites, etc. Furthermore, the Mo Sarkar citizen feedback initiative will be leveraged to collect, record, and document citizen feedback on the scheme's implementation. Complaints received from multiple modes will be uploaded in MUKTA Soft along with the action taken report and will be available for public viewing.

- Execution of Work: IPs being selected based on their capacity to execute and supervise the work, financial capacity, track record, consent to abide by the Guidelines, etc. Further, an e-Work Order in English and Odia having a unique identification number will be generated by MUKTA-Soft by the Municipal Commissioner (MC)/EO and issued to the IP directly on a job-work basis.

The pandemic has exacerbated existing spatial inequalities and exposed new vulnerabilities. OUWEI addresses this by supporting cities to create social and financial resilience. OUWEI's approach endorses investment in low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure while promoting multilevel coordination.

Transformative actions[1] that enhance resilience and sustainability in cities through the OUWEI /MUKTA Scheme

Action1: Designing, improving, and maintaining municipal infrastructure to ensure access to services for the under-served: Special emphasis is being given to creating climate-resilient community assets in low-income neighbourhoods, including slums. This provides sustainable livelihood opportunities to the urban poor, informal and migrant labourers, and creating and maintaining community assets critical to ensure inclusive, sustainable, and equitable growth.

Action 2: Service Provision Models— Partnering with Community Groups: Engagement with community groups regularly to implement and manage shared services at the slum level, incentivizing joint delivery of services based on clearly defined standard operating procedures. Pursued innovative partnerships (contractor-free implementation of infrastructure projects) with communities to finance and provide core services to under-served areas and populations.

Action3: Informal Urban Employment— Recognizing and Supporting Informal Workers: Recognition of the challenges of different types of informal workers and the value they generate in the urban economy across sectors and promoting increased development and access of informal workers to public spaces, services, procurement opportunities, and wage employment programmes.

Action 4: Increasing Investment and Targeting Funds Innovatively in urban services to ensure service coverage and affordability for all by targeting investments to close gaps in services slums while ensuring a longer, wider financial planning horizon factoring in broader social benefits and costs and engaging the community through MUKTA▪

Action 5: Community Resilience through socio-economic empowerment to create the 4th tier of governance.

[1] Mahendra, A. R. (2021). Seven Transformations for More Equitable and Sustainable Cities, World Resources Report, Towards a More Equal City. Washington DC: World Resources Institute.

Annexure

Specific Activities defined under OUWEI

Under OUWEI, works will be identified in Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) that provide temporary employment for the urban poor and simultaneously support monsoon-preparedness and the creation of public assets and maintenance in ULBs.

Odisha receives high-intensity rainfall for a short spell, and the idea is to conserve rainwater, prevent flooding and beautify urban areas in the state. To retain rainwater, water harvesting structures must be constructed to minimize runoffs through stormwater drains. The conserved water will then recharge groundwater sources like natural ponds and reservoirs. Additionally, de-silting and repair of stormwater drains will be carried out to redirect the maximum quantum of runoff water without causing localized flooding. Similarly, efforts will be taken to increase green cover by plantation drives in public lands, roadside, parks, near banks of rivers/water bodies.

Jobseekers will be identified and provided employment opportunities based on their skills for all of these activities. Specific activities to be carried out are as follows:

1. **Storm Water Drainage:** Solid refuse passing into drainage reduces runoff capacity as well as has environmental impacts downstream, increasing the frequency of flooding in cities.

Activities to be undertaken:

a. Pre–monsoon de-silting of drains, removal of silt and deposits in low-lying areas.

b. Installing steel grills/screen/mesh at the confluence/outfall points of the drainage channels to filter out solid waste.

c. Ensuring drains with covers without any gaps to avoid accidents.

2. **RainwaterRainwater Harvesting:** There is a need for systematic rainwater harvesting to minimize runoff and recharge groundwater in cities.

Activities to be undertaken:

• Construction of rainwater harvesting structures/percolation tanks in public premises, parks, playgrounds, and other locations as the ULBs may deem appropriate.

• Development of new water bodies, public parks/playgrounds based on local needs, and availability of vacant government lands either in the books of ULBs/Development/Planning Authorities or any other Government Department/Agency with due approval of District Collectors concerned without transferring/alienating the land. Water bodies, parks, and playgrounds would be designed as public spaces. Additional features like walking tracks, street furniture, and arrangements for lighting, drinking water, toilets, garbage bins, and adequate greenery would be planned. No machinery will be used for digging the new water bodies.

• Manual clearing of water hyacinths in existing ponds.

3. **Increase in green cover and beautification**: Monsoons are conducive to increasing the green cover due to plenty of water.

Activities to be undertaken:

a. Plantations to be done at medians, road dividers, parks, open spaces, near water bodies, etc. Nurseries of the Forest Department & other Government agencies may be leveraged for sourcing plants and seedlings.

4. Sanitation Activities to be undertaken:

a. Clearance of construction and demolition (C&D) waste and processing through SHGs for recycling and reuse.
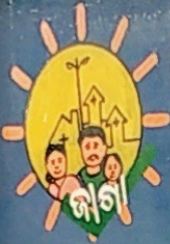
b. Construction of public urinals at high footfall zones.

5. Community centres & Open Space development:

Creating workspace and space-based development is necessary for revitalizing neighbourhoods and retaining the socio-cultural character of a city/town. It eventually leads to an inclusive, engaged, and healthy community.

Activities to be undertaken:

a. Construction of micro-community centers or Self-Help Group (SHG) work centers in every ward to provide built-up space/ open space for community & SHG activities. ULBs could plan for one such center in each ward. SHGs will maintain the micro-community center.

b. Specifically, in slum settlements, the construction of micro-community centers or SHG work centers and the development of open space will serve as children's play areas and benefit the community as a whole.

c. Involve local artisans to beautify the city through wall paintings and murals. This will also generate employment opportunities for the painter and artists living in communities.

Source: https://use.metropolis.org/case-studies/urban-wage employment-initiative#casestudydetail'