

Metropolitan Conglomerates in Developing Countries: The Mumbai Well-being Challenge

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Abstract

The United Nation predicts acceleration of urbanization of world population which will grow from the current (2021) 55% to a staggering 68% by 2050. India will add 416 million urban dwellers in the next three decades. Mumbai is a magnet for rural to urban migrants who congregate in one of the world's largest slums and contribute to a sharp Social-Economical discrepancy. They live in close proximity to a large group of Billionaires.

A large Muslim minority (20%) is subject to occasional violent conflicts. Individual conflicts might be amplified by a polyglot population (up to 16 different languages), high density, transportation load and challenges of adaptation.

Mental and Physical Health Services are challenged. Problems and solutions may serve as a model for other Indian as well as other rapidly developing cities.

Keywords: Metropolitan; United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA); Transportation

Background

The United Nation Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) reports that as of 2018 55% of the world population lives in cities. The UN-DESA predicts that by the year 2050 the urban population will grow to be 68% of the total people of the planet. 35% of urbanization will occur in three emerging economies-India, China and Nigeria. India will add 416 million urban dwellers. Currently (2021) three of the 20 largest world metropolitan areas are in India-Delhi (second, after Tokyo), Mumbai-seventh in the world, and Calcutta [1].

An initial assessment of Mumbai's demographics and development may suggest that it may serve as a model for other fast developing Metropolitan conglomerates.

An overall perspective of Mumbai

Mumbai Metropolitan area is home to over 23,000,000 people and it is rapidly growing. It is a magnet for migration from rural areas of India to the Urban center. Poor rural people are seeking opportunities for economic improvement in Mumbai because it is "the financial, commercial and entertainment capital of India. It is also one of the world's top 10 centers of commerce in terms of Global financial flow, generating 6.16% of India's GDP and accounting for 25% of Industrial output" [2].

The general economic statistics actually expose severe social disparities. Mumbai has the eighth largest number of Billionaires in any city of the world [3] and Mumbai's Billionaires had the highest average wealth of any city of the world in 2008 [4]. However,

the city is home to Asia's second largest slum-Dharavi, which is located in central Mumbai and is one of the most densely populated areas on earth [5] - up to 1,000,000 people per 2,39 square kilometer: over 330,000 persons/SqKm.

Central Mumbai employs many manual workers in thousands of one room workshops. Many workers have to commute far from their residences, a situation that creates a load on Public transportation.

The influx of migrants from various multiple rural regions of India creates a polyglot population who speaks at least 16 different languages and dialects and may contribute to communication issues and slower adaptation.

Ethnic and Religious diversity is being complicated by a relatively large Muslim minority-21% of the population. Occasional conflicts between the 66% Hindu majority and the Muslim minority erupt quite frequently even though most of the time they are under the surface.

The diversified population and the rampant poverty create multiple complex challenges to health services especially to Mental Health services. The multiple aspects of Well-Being [6] need to be considered. According to the UN-DESA [1] "Policies to manage Urban growth need to ensure access to infrastructure and social Services for all, focusing on the needs of the urban poor and other vulnerable groups for housing, education, health care, decent work and safe environment".

Well-being of current and future residents of Mumbai will be enhanced by detailed determination of vulnerable populations and their overall needs. Neuropsychiatric interventions should be tailored-to-measure to the specific populations in need considering the complex context of Bio-Psycho-Social-Economic-Political-spiritual sphere of individuals and communities.

Indeed, a massive government support is needed to move such an endeavor forward. It might be considered as a preventative measure ahead of a possible future crisis-conflict.

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