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Suggestions to the Housing Task Force

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1. **Making land available for the urban poor:** Non-reservation of land for the urban poor's needs, both for housing and for informal sector activities, in Master Plans and in housing projects has created the short supply of land for them.
2. **Earmarking land/houses for EWS/LIG:** 99% of the housing shortage of 24.7 million at the end of the 10th Plan pertains to the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) and Low Income Groups (LIG) sectors. During the 11th Plan, it is estimated that the total housing requirement (including backlog) will be to the tune of 26.53 million units for 75.01 million households. **If this backlog has to be overcome, 99% of housing in all land development and housing projects should be earmarked for the EWS and LIG over a period of time until the backlog is wiped out.** Otherwise this backlog will only keep mounting.
3. **Fair R&R makes more land available:** The terms of acquisition of land, if it had been fairer and the resettlement and rehabilitation effectively carried out, there would have been more land available. Non-involvement of the losers of land in the benefits that accrue to the new owners after the land acquisition is a great disincentive for the voluntary giving up of land.
4. **Losers of land to be made partners:** More land would be available in urban areas if the original owners were made partners/shareholders in the development of the land and its future use. Another successful innovation has been for the land-owners to themselves form a company, develop the land and continue to be the owners of the land.
5. **Non-distribution of Ceiling Surplus Land:** The non-distribution of land identified as surplus under the Urban Land Ceiling Act to the urban poor has caused the backlog in the supply of developed land for them. The land that

was identified as excess under the Urban Land Ceiling Act should have been distributed to the poor as intensioned.

6. **Repeal of the Urban Land Ceiling Acts** has enabled the affluent and corporate sectors to grab land in urban areas to the detriment of the urban poor's need for land.
7. **'Eminent Domain' principle for private good:** State-level authorities are acquiring land under the Land Acquisition Act using 'eminent domain' principle for purposes which are purely private. 'Public purpose' has not been defined and the public purpose behind these acquisitions is never explained. State-level authorities as well as the Industrial Areas Development Boards are hand-in-glove with land mafias, vested interests, the urban affluent and powerful corporates in acquiring land in vast quantities to serve private purposes.
8. **Why not "Informal Sector" corridors?** The needs of the informal sector have to be addressed by earmarking land in every Master Plan and land development project for informal sector activities. State-level authorities need to show the same alacrity to acquire land under Land Acquisition Act for the purpose of housing the urban poor or for creating "informal sector corridors", the same way they acquire land to create "IT and BT corridors" and layouts for the rich.
9. **Agricultural land to be spared:** The acquisition of fertile land for urban expansion should be stopped. Instead, wasteland, scrub and rocky land should be identified for setting up new urban townships and industrial zones.
10. **Workers' colonies in each ward:** Slums are a result of the failure of employers who employ casual and contract workers to provide temporary housing for them as foreseen under various laws, such as the Inter-State Migrant Workmen's Act. This can be addressed by constructing workers' colonies in each ward which the companies can rent to provide housing for their casual workers.
11. **Earmarking land for rental housing:** A certain percentage of land should also be earmarked in the Master Plan, and under all housing projects, for the creation of adequate affordable rental housing for the urban poor. Availability of affordable rental housing should be more than ownership housing.
12. **The poor can build own houses:** As far as possible, sites and services should be made available to the poor to allow them to build houses of their own choice instead of the government or private builders building for them.

13. **Security of tenure and land share:** Many urban poor are refusing to accept the JnNURM model of ground + three multi-storied housing because these are not providing them a share in the land. If the houses were to fall due to poor construction, which the poor have experienced often, they would be left with nothing. Security of tenure too needs to be ensured through deed of ownership and not merely a lease of land for a particular number of years.
14. **Demonstration houses** designed by experts, offering a choice of good designs and using low-cost appropriate technologies, should be built to serve as models for the urban poor before the start of every housing project for them.
15. **Education for informed choice:** The urban poor should be explained the advantages and disadvantages of the various designs so that they can make the best choice for themselves, for instance, between opting for an independent single dwelling and opting for a multi-storied, multiple dwelling unit.
16. **Minimum norms for healthy living:** While allotting space for housing, minimum requirements for healthy and wholesome living for a standard family should be considered. A minimum of approx. 100 sq.ft. per person may be taken as the norm and the least area for a house allotted may be 500 sq.ft. taking average family size to be five persons. Government should subsidise the cost appropriately if this size of the house works out unaffordable for the poor. A house less than this standard minimum will lead automatically to unhealthy living.
17. **Backyard to be mandatory:** The design of a house for the urban poor should allow space for a backyard where activities such as washing dishes, storage of water, washing and hanging clothes, storing lumber and fuel, etc. can be carried out. Lack of a back-yard forces the urban poor to hang clothes festooning the entrance façade, wash clothes, store water and lumber at the door-step which continues to give a squalid look to the surroundings.
18. **Space for greenery at entrance:** The entrance to the house should have at least 3 feet of space for planting a small tree and a few flowering shrubs and plants, which would at once alter the ambience of the whole house / neighbourhood and give it a wholesome atmosphere.
19. **Workspace for economic activities:** Houses should provide exclusive workspace or work niches for carrying on home-based economic activities, such as agarbatti rolling, sewing, etc. and also for the storage of required raw material and finished goods.

20. **Worksheds for hazardous activities:** Common worksheds should be provided in the housing project for carrying out economic activities that cause unhealthy surroundings if carried on at home, such as beedi rolling.
21. **Parking space for push-carts:** Space should also be provided for the parking of push-carts, etc., which are used for informal sector activities.
22. **Park and play-ground:** Every housing project for the urban poor should include plans for a children's playground and a small park, next to the community hall, if possible.
23. **Separate rooms for crèches, health centre,** vocational training, adult literacy or evening classes, etc., should be earmarked for each activity. The practice of using the same space of a community hall for carrying on all these separate activities should be done away with.
24. **Sustainable use of water and power:** All housing projects should incorporate measures for sustainable use of water and power, such as rainwater-harvesting, a percolation tank/lake which can also serve as a recreation center, solar water heaters, solar street lights, sewage treatment plants which recycle water for non-potable use, etc.
25. **Garbage to bio-gas:** Space should be allocated in all housing projects for solid waste management which converts garbage to bio-gas for pumping the water and for cooking.
26. **Mini water supply schemes for 24/7 running water:** All housing projects should have mini-water supply schemes (with common sump, pump and overhead tank) and taps in each dwelling unit to make available 24/7 **running** water so that the practice of storing water in pots and spending enormous amount of time collecting it can be done away with. The time saved can be used by a woman productively to earn more. It would enable girl children to attend school.
27. **Mini water supply schemes for 24/7 running water:** All housing projects should have mini-water supply schemes (with common sump, pump and overhead tank for every group of 8 to 10 houses or in a centralised manner for about 100 houses together) with taps in each dwelling unit to make available 24/7 **running** water so that the practice of storing water in pots and spending enormous amount of time collecting it can be done away with. The benefits to hygiene and health by this one single measure cannot be costed only in monetary terms. The time saved in collecting water can be used by a woman productively to earn more. It would enable girl children to attend school.

