**Homelessness in** [**India**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India) has been a problem for centuries; causing the average [family](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family) to have an average of five [generations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Generation) being homeless. Homeless people can either be described as living on the [streets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Street), in [jail](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jail), in an [institution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Institution), or sleeping in other places not meant to be adequate nighttime residences.

At least 78 million people are homeless in India despite the country growing in global [economic](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy) stature.

However, it still ranks as the 124th wealthiest country in the world as of 2003. More than 90 million people in India make less than $1 USD per day, thus setting them below the global [poverty threshold](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty_threshold). The ability of the [Government of India](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_India) to tackle urban homelessness and [poverty](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poverty) may be affected in the future by both external and internal factors. The number of people living in slums in India has more than doubled in the past two decades and now exceeds the entire population of Britain, the Indian Government has announced. The number of people living in slums is projected to rise to 93 million in 2011 or 7.75 percent of the total population almost double the population of Britain.

Some of the problems leading to homelessness include: [disability](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disability) (either mentally, physically, or both), lack of affordable [housing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_housing) (considering that a basic apartment in India costs approximately $177 USD per month), [unemployment](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Unemployment) (either seasonal or through economic hardships), and changes in [industry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Industry).

Jobs involving [heavy industry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heavy_industry) and [manufacturing](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manufacturing) (that require only a high school level of education) are being replaced by [service industry](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tertiary_sector_of_the_economy) jobs (which may or may not require a high level of education). Since university is less affordable for the average Indian than it is for the average North American or European citizen due to their lower [per capita income](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Per_capita_income) level, more people in India are becoming unemployable for the jobs of the 21st century. The average per capita income for a citizen of India is barely more than $1,200 USD; compared to $54,510 USD in Canada and more than $64,800 USD in Switzerland.

Homeless children under the age of 18 are subject to [child abuse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_abuse), [forced labor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Child_labor) (often involving picking up [rags](http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/rag) and sifting through [garbage](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Waste) for recyclable materials), [illness](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Illness), and [drug addiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Drug_addiction) while being stripped of their right to [education](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Education) and [recreation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recreation).

The total population of Delhi was counted as 1, 67, 53,235 in the 2011 census. Taking this as referent the homeless population in Delhi constitutes 0.33% of the total population. This high number should be reason for concern. The majority of homeless people are working and are productive citizens of the city. The motivation to migrate is a result of the poor state of the rural economy Most of the homeless sleep on the pavements and at workplaces, cook their own food and depend on water from unsafe sources a large number of homeless are children.

**Number of homeless population in all 9 districts of Delhi**

**Districts Total Percent**

North 7967 14.2

Centra l 13988 25.0

East 4983 8.9

West 1781 3.2

South 9427 16.8

New Delhi 894 1.6

North East 2747 4.9

North West 10827 19.3

South West 3341 6.0

**Total 55955 100**

Some facts:

(1) Majority of homeless are men and young adults: Over 85% homeless are men. The average age of Homeless is 28.4 year with highest number being in the age bracket of 21 to 30 years.

(2) The majority of homeless people are productive citizens of city: The overwhelming majority of homeless provide crucial service to the city. They are daily wage workers (40%), Rickshaw pullers (21%), construction workers (8%) etc. The city has a duty to provide its servants a life of dignity, ensure the protection of their human rights and provide security and welfare.

(3) The homelessness is a result of the poor state of the rural economy: 46.9% of migrants come from farmers’ families. They migrate to the city because the land in the village does not sustain the whole family. A total of 40175 out of 55955 homeless (71%) came from only three BIMARU states – Bihar, UP, Madhya Pradesh. 92.5 % of all the homeless became homeless either because of poverty or came to Delhi in search of job.

(4) Most of the homeless sleep on the pavements and at workplaces cook their own food and depend on water from unsafe sources: Pavements are the most common place for homeless to sleep. Majority of them cook their food. A sizeable population of homeless has to depend on broken pipelines for water.

(5) A large number of homeless are children: Over 20% homeless are of under the age of 18 years. Majority of children work and live in hazardous conditions. Large proportion of children does not have facilities for education.

(6) The ratio of homeless girls sharply falls as they enter puberty and adulthood : The streets seem to be quite unsafe for homeless girls and women of reproductive age group. The reason for sharp decline in the sex ratio needs to be studied.

(7) Harassment from Police is the major problem homeless face besides facing other difficulties: The homeless face several difficulties while on the street. However, harassment from police is cited as one of the most common difficulties by the homeless.

Recommendation 1: There is a need for more affordable shelter all the districts of Delhi . The homeless population is concentrated in the following three districts: Central (25.0%), North West (19.3%), South (16.8%). It is clear that these locations while offering work opportunities provide insufficient shelter for the labour and service class. It is a concern that majority of of homeless are forced to sleep without roof, where they are exposed to all kinds of extreme weather conditions.

A large proportion of homeless are construction workers and rickshaw pullers. Many of those who mentioned ‘Daily Wage Worker’ as their occupation would be doing construction linked activities.

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**3. The proposed approach and services provided by organization**

The proposed approach decided mutually by implementing agency, community members and other stakeholders are:

1. Setting up of homeless shelter homes.
2. Providing comfortable sleeping solution to homeless
3. Provide free food twice a day to help homeless people save their income and start their own small businesses.
4. Form self help groups amongst the inhabitants and provide them the market aligned skill development and training.
5. Work with homeless to develop the sense of respect in them and make them feel that services provided to them are not obligatory on anyone’s part but their right.