

*Application Form submitted by the initiative to participate in the Transformative Cities People's Choice Award*

<b>GENERAL INFORMATION</b>	
<b>Location:</b>	Solapur, Maharashtra, India.
<b>Title of the Transformative Initiative:</b>	Cooperative Mass Housing Project to construct affordable housing for workers and others belonging to economically weaker sections.
<b>Name of organization:</b>	Society for Knowledge Commons (on behalf of the cooperative movement which should get the award)
<b>Type of organization:</b>	Not for Profit Organization
<b>Website:</b>	<a href="http://www.knowledgecommons.in/">http://www.knowledgecommons.in/</a>
<b>Category and Edition:</b>	HOUSING Transformative Cities Award 1 <sup>st</sup> edition (2018).
<b>STORYTELLING</b>	
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>Housing initiative by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) in Solapur, Maharashtra, in order to provide affordable housing to workers and others belonging to economically weaker sections. Cooperative societies were formed to drive the initiative, and prolonged struggles forced the state and central governments to fund the projects.</p>	
<b>Context and problem definition</b>	
<p>The women beedi (thin cigarette) workers of Solapur, many of them the sole bread-winners of their families, were low-paid and used to live in tiny shanties on rent in slums. The closing of the textile mills in Solapur and the handloom industry working below capacity led to high unemployment, which adversely affected the wages of beedi workers as well. The workers include those from Dalit, backward and minority sections.</p>	

There are about 65,000 beedi workers in Solapur, and their dismal living conditions prompted the CITU to take up the issue of providing them affordable and decent housing. Beginning with housing for beedi workers, the housing initiative has expanded to include textile workers and other unorganized sector workers.

An earlier housing project for 3,000 people resulted in the families incurring heavy debt, and it had to be ensured that this would not be repeated.

### **Design and Initiation**

The struggle began in 1992, with the workers in Solapur under the leadership of CITU demanding affordable housing. But the government refused to pay heed to the demands of the workers.

The workers got together and waged a long-drawn-out struggle to win their demands. They formed cooperative housing societies and purchased land on their own. Through mass mobilisations, protest actions and campaigns, they forced the central and state governments to allot funds for the construction of houses.

Narsayya Adam, trade union leader and three-time Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) from Solapur city (North) played a key role in initiating and leading the entire campaign.

### **Implementation**

CITU took the lead in forming workers' cooperative housing societies.

Three housing schemes have been formulated so far, out of which two have been completed and one is underway.

The first one was the Comrade Godutai Parulekar Housing Scheme. The women beedi workers formed the Comrade Godutai Parulekar Mahila Beedi Kamgar Sahakari Grih Nirman Sanstha Maryadit (Comrade Godutai Parulekar Women Beedi Workers Cooperative Housing Society Limited) for the purpose.

The project was hailed as the biggest cooperative housing project for workers in Asia. The construction for this project for 10,000 houses started in 2001 and was completed in 2006. The project cost was Rs 62 crore. The workers, the central government and state government contributed Rs. 20 crore each. The contribution of the governments was made from the collections of welfare cess on each bundle of the beedis from the consumers. The contribution of each worker was taken by way of direct contribution from them as well as through withdrawals from their Provident Fund balances. In addition to the above, both the governments contributed to the construction of water tank, electricity lines, electric sub-station etc.

The workers were organised into three cooperative housing societies named after Comrade Godavari Parulekar. A typical house unit consists of a land area of 555 sq. ft, and the project is spread across 450 acres, at Kumbhari, about 8 km from Solapur city. The houses are organised in 25 clusters.

The women also took part in designing the homes and made some changes. The whole project has been designed and built by local construction firm.

The second scheme – the Comrade Meenakshitali Sane Housing Scheme – involved building 1600 houses for women beedi workers. It was inaugurated in 2015.

The third scheme is by far the biggest, and aims to construct 30,000 affordable houses for beedi workers, textile workers and other unorganised sector workers at a cost of Rs 1811 crore. Workers have been organised into five cooperative societies – Shaheed Kurban Husain minority women workers cooperative housing development society, Jambhuni cobbler community backward class cooperative housing development society, Comrade M K Pandhe powerloom workers cooperative housing development society, Comrade Meenakshitali Sane women bidi workers cooperative housing development society, and Hutatma Readymade and Tailored Clothes Workers' Cooperative housing society. These five cooperatives joined together to form the RAY Nagar Cooperative Housing Federation for the execution of the project. The central and state governments gave the sanction for the project in 2016.

### **Results achieved and Evaluation**

The Comrade Godutai Parulekar Housing Scheme was completed in 2006 and was inaugurated at a one lakh-strong public meeting at Kumbhari by the then prime minister Dr Manmohan Singh. The project took care of all the required open spaces as well as the land required for community services, schools, hospitals etc. Each worker was able to buy a house for Rs. 20,000, which was one-third of the total cost.

On August 18, 2015, a smaller scheme, called Comrade Meenakshitali Sane Housing Scheme, consisting of 1600 houses for women beedi workers was inaugurated.

The latest project, under the banner of the RAY Nagar Cooperative Housing Federation, Solapur is to be built at Kumbhari near the earlier completed housing projects, and it will include all basic infrastructure and amenities like schools, college, hospital, market, places of worship, roads, water and electricity. The cost of each dwelling unit would be Rs 6,03,777, and with central and state assistance, the members of the cooperatives would have to be pay only Rs 3,53,777 per house.

### **Political Strategies**

Mass agitations had to be waged to force the hand of the state and central governments to agree to fund the housing projects.

There were attempts by vested interests to prevent the third project from taking off, for instance. Mass mobilisations to win the demand included a march of more than 40,000 people on 24 December 2014 in Solapur. The march demanded that the Maharashtra state government immediately sanction the proposed housing projects for the poor, along with the necessary budgetary allocations. A huge number of the participants were women. The state government refused to clear the scheme for over four years. The delay led to a massive escalation of costs to the tune of Rs 750 crore. After a prolonged struggle, the sanction for building 30,000 affordable permanent houses for unorganised sector workers came in July 2016. It is now planned to complete the scheme by 2018.

### Related legislations

The Government sanction for the projects were specific responses to the agitations by the workers.

### Lessons learned

In Solapur, various sections of the unorganised sector workers and the poor, including bidi workers, domestic workers, powerloom workers, garment workers, workers of closed mills, came together under the banner of the working class movement, and organised into cooperatives, to unitedly fight for houses that they would own. This resulted in a remarkable shift away from their earlier, insecure lives in rented homes.

The housing initiatives of the CITU in Solapur have become landmarks in the history of (i) low cost mass housing; (ii) working class movement; (iii) cooperative movement and (iv) the role of the government in the creation of social security with people's participation. This mass housing project has given an indication that workers can achieve their dream of house on the strength of their movement and cooperation from the governments.

### EXTRA INFO

### Supporting documents

1. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/affordable-housing-30000-beedi-textile-workers-to-benefit-from-centres-decision-4765771/>
2. <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/a-dream-come-true-for-beedi-workers-of-solapur/article3122218.ece>
3. [http://archives.peoplesdemocracy.in/2006/0910/09102006\\_maha.htm](http://archives.peoplesdemocracy.in/2006/0910/09102006_maha.htm)
4. [http://peoplesdemocracy.in/2015/0111\\_pd/maharashtra-massive-cpim-march-solapur-housing-issue](http://peoplesdemocracy.in/2015/0111_pd/maharashtra-massive-cpim-march-solapur-housing-issue)
5. [http://peoplesdemocracy.in/2016/0807\\_pd/massive-victory-rally-solapur-celebrates-sanction-scheme-30000-houses-unorganised](http://peoplesdemocracy.in/2016/0807_pd/massive-victory-rally-solapur-celebrates-sanction-scheme-30000-houses-unorganised)