



## PRESS NOTE

New Delhi, 10 September 2024

### Headcount of Homeless Persons in Delhi Conducted by SAM:BKS; Reveals that Nearly 3 Lakh People Forced to Live in the Open Without Shelter Even During the Rainy Season

A headcount enumeration of homeless persons in Delhi conducted between 27 August 2024 to 31 August 2024, to understand the extent and magnitude of homelessness in the city, has revealed that around **300,000 (3 lakh) people**, including, families, women, children, and older persons are forced to live in the open without shelter even during the rainy season.

The headcount was conducted under the aegis of *Shahri Adhikar Manch: Begharon Ke Saath* (SAM:BKS) [Urban Rights Forum: With the Homeless], a forum of organizations established in 2008 to work collectively with homeless persons in Delhi.

#### Alarming Figures

Through the headcount exercise conducted over five nights, **154,369 persons** living on the streets of Delhi were enumerated. While this figure is alarming on its own, only a section of Delhi's homeless population could be counted through this process, due to the ongoing rains and barriers/restrictions on entering all the lanes and by lanes where homeless people sleep at night. Moreover, a significant number of homeless persons who work until dawn at prominent trading centres in the city, for example, in Old Delhi, could not be counted. Thus, it can be stipulated that for every person counted, there was one missed. Consequently, the actual number of homeless persons living on the streets in Delhi can be estimated to be twice the headcount or **over 300,000 (3 lakh)**. An additional 5,108 homeless persons were recorded in over 190 shelters operated by Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB), during the nights of the headcount. Thus, nearly **1.58 per cent** of the total population of Delhi, as enumerated in Census 2011, can be said to be living in homelessness.

Previous enumeration exercises had placed the number of homeless persons in Delhi as 100,000 (conducted by Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan in 2000), 24,966 (as per Census 2001), 150,000 (conducted by civil society organizations in 2008), and 46,724 (as per Census 2011). The latest figure, therefore, highlights a drastic increase in the incidence of homelessness in the city, driven by the increasing demolition of homes of the poor by state agencies, continued neglect of the issues of the homeless, and the failure of housing schemes in benefitting the most vulnerable populations.

"My family has been living in Delhi for over two decades and we have faced many evictions. We are unable to afford a room on rent which costs Rs 3,000 to 5,000, so we live on the footpath. When it rains, we seek shelter under some shop or shed."

- **Woman living in homelessness in Raghbir Nagar, Delhi (During the Headcount Exercise)**

Prominent sites where high number of homeless persons were identified include Chandni Chowk, Delhi Gate, Kamla Market, Azadpur Mandi, Yamuna Pushta, Ghazipur Paper Market, Ghazipur

Mandi, Murga Mandi, Madipur, Keshavpur Mandi, near All India Institute for Medical Sciences (AIIMS) and Safdarjung Hospitals, and Okhla Mandi, among several locations. The highest concentration of homeless persons was found in Old City near markets and sources of employment.

## Methodology

As part of SAM:BKS, more than 300 volunteers joined the survey over the course of five nights and conducted the headcount from 10 p.m. – 05:30 a.m. each night. A training for the volunteers was organized on 23 August 2024 to ensure accuracy and uniformity in the headcount exercise.

“During the headcount, I saw women, children, and families sleeping on the streets in areas with no toilets nearby. As a volunteer, I struggled to find a toilet for my own use in some areas, during the headcount. Imagine the situation of homeless women who need to use a toilet in the middle of the night, or when they are menstruating. We found so many families sleeping in dark places (behind bushes) where they are exposed to insects and snakes.”

- **Manju, Volunteer, Homeless Headcount 2024**

For the purpose of the headcount, the entire city was divided into five zones and 33 sub-zones. Over 657 hotspots, with high concentration of homeless persons, were visited. Homeless persons on the streets, pavements, on and under flyovers and foot over bridges, subways, outside metro stations, marketplaces, bus stops, cycle rickshaws, under tarpaulin sheets or precarious structures, were included in the survey. People residing in permanent or semi-permanent hutments/*jhuggis* in informal settlements/*bastis*, even though not considered adequate, were excluded from the purview of the survey. The number of homeless women, children, persons with disabilities, trans persons, and families were also documented, where information was available.

The State Level Shelter Monitoring Committee (SLSMC), set up by the Honourable Supreme Court of India under Writ Petition No. (C) 55 and 572/2003, extended its support for the headcount and monitored the exercise.

"After meticulous planning of over three months, we were able to do the Headcount of the City Makers (homeless residents). The figures that have emerged is huge. The current figures of 300,000 homeless people in Delhi make it incumbent on the government to provide shelters to all, to begin with under the rubric of housing continuum. There has to be an embargo on housing demolitions/shelter demolitions/arbitrary closure, in Delhi, or anywhere in the country. The reality is grim in Delhi but, we, civil society members will use the data here to call for more 24-hours shelters in Delhi, so that no one has to be home/sleep deprived in Delhi. And all can live as per the mandate of the Constitution of India and the UDHR (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)."

- **Dr. indu prakash singh, Member, SLSMC Delhi**

Based on the preliminary findings of the headcount, SAM:BKS urges the government to:

- Increase the number of shelters (permanent and temporary) and facilities for all homeless persons, including families, women, and children, commensurate to the increased population of homeless in Delhi, and provide a continuum of housing options.
- Issue a moratorium on all acts of arbitrary demolitions of informal settlements and shelters by state agencies to prevent the increase in homelessness.
- Conduct a census of people living in homelessness in Delhi to inform policies and provisions.

The headcount process will be repeated during the forthcoming winter and summer seasons to document the actual number of homeless persons in Delhi during the year. A detailed report with the findings of the headcount will be published soon.

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