

Research and Documentation

Shelter Associates work doing research and documentation feeds directly into its field projects and impacts policies regarding service delivery to the urban poor. Connecting research with needs-based interventions leads to more effective solutions and the possibility for large-scale projects.

Research has been an important part of SA and Baandhani activities. Through the wide term of “research”, studies of poor people and the way they live in the urban setting is carried out. This is no academic research but the study of existing situations for the urban poor carried out by the poor themselves. The need for such studies is in keeping with the SA/Baandhani philosophy of validating the existence of the poor living in cities. Documenting all activities, particularly processes, are parts of Baandhani activities that include making photo-stories and processing documents in Marathi, the native language of Maharashtra. All study material directly feeds into existing SA/Baandhani projects.

Shelter Associates Research and Documentation ranges from film documentaries, photographs and one-page flyers, to in-depth analysis and documentation of settlements, which cover current slum physical land use and socio-economic factors in great detail. Extensive primary research and accessible reporting of the findings heightens awareness about slum areas and their residents, which in turn heightens participation in and sustainability of SA projects. The SA information about the urban poor/slums is available to various involved stakeholders for the purpose of planning projects and impacting policy.

The Sangli Sanitation Project provides an example of how SA R&D successfully feed actual field projects. Also, the Thane Poverty-mapping and Redevelopment Project illustrates how research and documentation are used to investigate what kinds of policies need framing to upgrade slum communities, so that outreach to the slum communities increases and leads to a menu from which the various stakeholders can choose. Through the available research and documentation, governments, NGO-CBOs, and communities can together look at options according to their interests, and weigh possible outcomes.