

Press Release: For immediate release

In-Situ Redevelopment of Sanjaynagar Informal Settlement Wins Silver World Habitat Award.

Leicester, UK – Today, a community-driven housing initiative that has **transformed lives in one of India's informal settlements** has been awarded Silver in the 2026 World Habitat Awards, in partnership with UN-Habitat.

Although communities living in India's informal settlements are resourceful and rich in culture, their lives are blighted by unsafe and undignified housing. **Around 29 million people live in self-built neighbourhoods that lack proper infrastructure**, security, and protection from disease and extreme weather.

But in Ahmednagar, the non-profit Community Design Agency (CDA) along with NGO partner Snehalaya has been working with residents of the Sanjaynagar Informal Settlement to build an alternative way of life. **In partnership with families, the Ahilyanagar Municipal Corporation, the government's Housing For All programme (PMAY), Curry Stone Foundation, and local NGOs, CDA has co-designed a truly collaborative project - aspirational, climate-resilient and spacious homes, bringing tangible and far-reaching benefits for residents.**

Unlike typical projects that relocate residents to high-rise buildings on city outskirts, this in-situ approach ensured that **residents were able to keep vital connections to their community, livelihoods, land, and culture.**

For the 33 families living in the completed building – which residents named "Swapnapurti" or "dream fulfilled" – life has changed for the better. Not only are they safer and healthier, their social status has improved, **opening up new opportunities for work and education.**

Each home includes a living room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom and balcony. Sustainable design keeps homes up to 6°C cooler than outside temperatures. **Women benefit from having private toilets and running water, enhancing their dignity and safety. Children now have study spaces in cooler homes, and some families have started home-based businesses. The second building within this project is currently under construction.**

Residents were involved in decision-making, from design to financing and governance. To make homes affordable, the project combined government funding, philanthropic support, and resident contributions of just 10% through low-interest loans.

Sandhya Naidu, Managing Director of CDA said: "The question we (CDA) are trying to solve is 'how do we enhance social cohesion, how do we use design and building to make sure that social capital flourishes, so that the communities can strengthen even more.'"

"It is now more critical than ever to collectivise and innovate if we are to increase access to affordable housing in India. At every step, our work is based around one key question - what does it take to build thousands of communities and not millions of homes?"

David Ireland, CEO of World Habitat said “This project highlights why in-situ upgrading should be a tenant of housing policy. Involving residents throughout the regeneration process delivers so much more than just improved living conditions. It strengthens and empowers communities.”

Francesca Lionetti, Associate Expert on housing rights at UN-Habitat and member of the World Habitat Awards advisory group praised the initiative, saying “The fact it is community led means there is a lot of attention on communal areas and social services... It's showing a path for other communities in India and in other parts of the world.”

ENDS

About



- The World Habitat Awards recognise housing initiatives from around the world that provide practical and sustainable solutions to housing need.
- Established in 1985, the awards are run by World Habitat in partnership with UN-Habitat.
- Each year, they highlight projects that improve access to safe, affordable housing and strengthen communities.
- Projects are assessed by an independent panel of housing and development experts, with Gold, Silver, and Bronze awards presented.
- The awards aim to share learning and promote housing approaches that can be adapted and used in other places.

Website: <https://world-habitat.org>

Contact: Patricia Latorre or Andy Day

Contact email: patricia.latorre@world-habitat.org / andy.day@world-habitat.org

Contact phone number: +44 7951 784684