

Case 2: Shahabad Dairy

Shahabad Dairy is an ‘informal settlement’ located in Rohini, Prahaldpur, in west Delhi. The area consists of about 200 houses, with families living in the area for varying periods of time. Over the years, families have been reportedly pressurized by government authorities to move and settle in different areas in the settlement. In effect, this has prevented them from having documentation of a single address in the settlement, which then deems them to be ‘ineligible’ under state policy for alternative housing in resettlement sites. The *pradhan* (headman) stressed the fact that this was a strategy adopted by the state to discriminate against them.

Even prior to the demolition of their homes, the community used to live in highly inadequate conditions, without access to drinking water, healthcare, and sanitation facilities.

Forced Eviction in Shahabad Dairy

Despite a call by the Delhi government to halt evictions during the winter, central government authorities carried out several demolitions in the city during the winter months. One such authority, the Delhi Development Authority demolished 200 homes in Shahabad Dairy, in November 2018 without due process, including prior notice, time to remove their personal belongings from their homes, and resettlement. This resulted in the widespread loss of cash savings, vital documents, school books, uniforms, food supplies, including food grains, and utensils.

In the aftermath of the demolition, a 24-year old man succumbed to the cold, as a result of being forced to live in the open during the city’s harsh winter. A month later, another man lost his life as a result of living without any shelter. In the absence of any compensation or resettlement, affected families continue to live in the same area, in highly inadequate conditions.

The loss of housing, cash, and personal goods resulted in women being forced to borrow money from informal sources at very high rates of interest, which has resulted in high levels of indebtedness. Focus Group Discussions with the women revealed how the responsibility of providing for the family becomes more challenging for them in a post-eviction situation. As the community was not given any prior notice, many women were also injured when they tried to save their belongings during the demolition drive. At least two women reportedly, had to be admitted to hospital after receiving severe physical injuries. In the aftermath of the eviction, many women were also forced to leave their jobs for close to two-three months, which led to their further impoverishment. The women also spoke about the effect of the inclement weather on their families. They were forced to spend several nights in the open in the bitter cold, and had to cook food for their families on *chullas* (stoves) made out of wood for close to 15 days.

Of the 200 houses demolished in the settlement, only 50 houses have been reconstructed by the families. There is an acute lack of sanitation facilities with the nearest public toilet located almost a kilometre away. Women and adolescent girls are thus forced to relieve themselves in the forests nearby and mostly when it is dark. This is not only a violation of their human rights to sanitation and health, but also of their human rights to dignity and privacy. The community receives water only once a day from a tanker provided by the Delhi Jal Board. Close to 65 children in the settlement do not attend school anymore, as they are not permitted by school authorities to enter the premises without uniforms, shoes, and books – which they lost during the demolition of their homes and cannot afford to replace.

Given the serious impacts of the demolition on the residents of Shahabad Dairy, HLRN plans to undertake an EvIA in the settlement, focusing on the special concerns, needs, and demands of the affected women.