

Case Study - Dharavi, Mumbai, India.

Two news articles and links to various websites related to Dharavi can be found on:
http://www.geographyalltheway.com/igcse_geography/population_settlement/settlement/squatter_settlements.htm

Where in the world is Dharavi?

It is in Mumbai, India, located extremely close to the CBD on a very valuable 175 hectares of land.

Describe the location of Dharavi?

Dharavi is one of the largest slums in the world, with a population of about 800,000 spread over 0.67 square miles. It is sandwiched between two of Mumbai's suburban railway lines, the Western and Central Railways, it is also extremely close to Mumbai's CBD making it very valuable.

Briefly describe the history of Dharavi?

Dharavi was once an island in the 18th century, which was made up of mangrove swamp where fishermen lived, but in the 19th century the swamps began to vanish and consequently so did the fishing industry. Soon after several other separate islands in the region began joining together to form one big island, this was helped by a big dam at Sion which significantly slowed water flow down.

These now dry marshes were perfectly suited for residential use and migrants soon established a colony, first the Gujarat, followed by many others. In the 1920s the area had a large influx in migrants. Dharavi's first ever school was built in 1924 and was the only school there for 40 years.

Since then Dharavi has grown rapidly and became less and less spacious and more compact, there have been recent ideas to renovate Dharavi.

What is the current population of Dharavi?

Modern Dharavi has between 600,000 and 1 million people living there.

Describe the industry and economic activities that can be found in Dharavi?

The most prominent industries are traditional pottery and textile industries, but the biggest industry is a rapidly developing recycling industry which recycles 80% of all plastic from all over Mumbai, compared to the 23% of plastic recycled in London, it employs 200,000 people and was set up by Mr. Mobin Sheikh, a Dharavi born self made millionaire. Dharavi has roughly 5000 businesses and 15,000 "single-room" factories.

Using actual quotes and examples – describe what it is like to live in Dharavi?

From photos and videos that you may find on the internet, people are said to be disgusted by the appalling condition: "The living conditions look terrible - they are terrible, but when you go inside the homes, they are spotless," says Professor Vicziany.

In 1997 toilet facilities in Dharavi were surveyed and this survey revealed that per every 1448 people there was only one toilet. Although 80 per cent of these toilets, of which the majority are public, are unusable due to blockages, filth and disrepair.

"Dharavi looks like a hellhole, disease is rife, the water is contaminated and sanitation is rudimentary." Kevin McCloud's first thoughts after seeing pictures of Dharavi. However

once Kevin McCloud spent 2 weeks in Dharavi he said the following: "People here are happy, welcoming and hugely proud of where they live. I never thought I'd say it, but I've enjoyed my time here." which shows how contented the locals are and just how unneeded the redevelopment plan is.

Why do some people want to redevelop in Dharavi?

People want to redevelop in Dharavi as it is situated in the heart of Mumbai, very close to the CBD on extremely valuable ground. Which in their eyes is being "wasted" by using it as a slum.

Describe the planned redevelopment of Dharavi?

The current scheme is managed by Mukesh Mehta, and involved schools, park and roads to serve the 57,000 families of Dharavi, 30,000,000 square feet of housing, and 40,000,000 square feet of residential and commercial space available for sale. However there's been a lot of opposition from residents, largely due to the fact that each resident is only allocated 223 square feet of land each, and families who lived in the area only before the year 2000 will be resettled, and only 63% of Dharavi's residents are eligible to be resettled. Many informal businesses are concerned that their industries may be destroyed and the government has responded by saying that it will only legalize and relocate industries that are not "polluting", unfortunately Dharavi's recycling scheme is not one of these and Mumbai's recycling will be drawn to a halt.

What criticisms have there been of the planned redevelopment of Dharavi?

That it will ruin the community sense of Dharavi by relocating everyone into separate, alienated rooms.

To rebuild all of Dharavi will also take an approximated 5-7 years, 5-7 years in which Dharavi's residents will have to be relocated out of their homes and try to scrape a living. 63% of residents are not eligible for housing after the development and will most likely become homeless, or perhaps form another slum elsewhere.

It will destroy Dharavi's recycling scheme, and consequently destroy all of Mumbai's recycling.

Dharavi's residents who are used to working and living in the same place, or at least very close places will have to travel miles on foot, or if they're fortunate by bicycle every day to even reach their workplace.

What alternative projects have been suggested to improve Dharavi, other than its complete destruction?

Suggested projects include simply trying to improve the water supply, which is the source of so many deadly diseases such as TB and cholera, in doing this you would prevent many deaths.

HOK have also come up with a redevelopment scheme entitled Dharavi Evolution, it is a lot less "harsh" than Mehta's scheme and aims to preserve Dharavi's businesses and community feel, but at the same time building more sanitary water systems, toilets and housing.

Which proposed project – the building of a new town on the site or the improvement of

the current shanty town – do you think is the best and why?

In my opinion I believe that improving the current shanty town would be the best project to follow. Firstly I think it's better as the entire sense of community which Dharavi's residents experience would be lost forever if you build a new town, as due to the lack of land space, large highrise buildings will have to be built with very small separate rooms. This affectively alienates everyone as they would rarely see each other, whereas now everyone in Dharavi has houses with open doors, open to any visitors who care to drop by.

The building of a completely new town will also destroy Dharavi's recycling system which is key to Mumbai's growth as a city, as all illegal or polluting businesses are not to be legalized or relocated.