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Slumdog Millionaire actor's home demolished, highlighting the risks of poverty

Last week the [New York Times](#) reported on the demolition of the home of one the child stars from Slumdog Millionaire:

"In a scene reminiscent of the gritty landscape from the hit movie "Slumdog Millionaire," municipal workers on Thursday [demolished](#) the home of one of the young children who starred in the rags-to-riches tale.

[Local authorities told reporters](#) that they did not know the row of shanties they demolished was home to the family of [Azharuddin Mohammed Ismail](#), the 10-year-old who played the character Salim as a child.

They said they were following orders to clear illegally built shanties ahead of the monsoon season. Such demolitions are common in Mumbai, which has a chronic housing shortage and where ramshackle dwellings can spring up virtually overnight on sidewalks and other empty scraps of land."

Slumdog Millionaire brought new attention to urban poverty in India. Sadly, though, the kind of disaster highlighted by the NY Times is a common occurrence for urban poor families living in slums around the world. A new book, [Portfolios of the Poor: How the World's Poor Live on \\$2 a Day](#), describes a similar situation in Bangladesh:

"Many of the property losses in Bangladesh were caused when slum environments were cleared by police or by contractors doing infrastructure work. Because Dhaka's urban slum dwellers are aware of these risks, they tend to invest less in housing that has an insecure tenure. Homes may be huts that are quickly packed up and shifted on a handcart to another location. When we revisited our Bangladeshi households in 2005, all three of our urban research sites had been wholly or partly destroyed since we were there in 1999-2000."

Losing a home to demolition or natural disaster is just one of the emergencies that poor families face in Portfolios of the Poor. The book looks at how these incidents can easily develop into crises that push families deeper into poverty when they lack proper access to basic financial tools that can help mitigate risk.

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