



## ELEMENTARY EDUCATION OF SLUM CHILDREN'S IN GULBARGA CITY

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### INTRODUCTION:

The concept of slum and its definition may slightly vary depending upon the socio- economic condition or local perception prevailing in the society but the general physical characteristics of most of the slums are found to be essentially same world-wide. Slums are usually a cluster of hutments with dilapidated and unstable structures having common toilet, lack of basic amenities, inadequate arrangement of drainage and disposal of solid waste and garbage (GOI report on Slum Population, 2005). Slums are highly unhygienic and disease prone. These areas are also breeding ground for various anti-social activities like crime, theft, burglary, drug-addiction and so on. When urban area on one hand is characterized by modern life-style, having access to latest technologies, higher level of educational attainment, high income, more opportunities, fashion and health conscious, better communication facilities on the other hand the urban poor and marginalized group suffers from adequate standard of living and access to health, education and meaningful and well paid employment opportunities.



Education plays a pivotal role in laying a proper foundation for the over-all socio- economic development of any region. Education is considered as one of the principal means to foster deeper and more harmonious form of human development and thereby to reduce poverty, exclusion, ignorance, oppression and war (Dellor Commission, 1996). In India since Independence (1947) several initiatives have been taken for qualitative and quantitative expansion of elementary education like operation black-board, DPEP, SSA, mid-day meal scheme and many others , one of the latest being RTE. The RTE Act 2009, provides a justifiable legal frame work that entitles all children between the ages of 6-14 years to an education of reasonable quality, based on the principles of equity and non-discrimination. It provides children right to free and compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education. Standing at this juncture it is absolutely necessary to understand and evaluate the present scenario of slum children in regard to access, retention and completion of elementary education of satisfactory quality. In this context the researcher would like to study the prevalent problems of non-enrolment, drop-out and irregular attendance of slum children of 6-14 years age group of Gulbarga city.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Acharya, Prasanta Kumar and Behera, Manoranjan. (2004), pointed out that that by the end of November 2003, the progress on civil works had been very slow especially due to late release of funds, inadequate monitoring and lack of district level convergence of SSA with other allied development schemes. But remarkable progress was made by Orissa Primary Education Programme Authority (OPEPA) in organizing teachers training programmes both at state and district level. Nearly 70% EGS (Education Guarantee Scheme) centres had been made operational by OPEPA which was a remarkable achievement. But progress in the opening of Alternate and Innovative Education Centres (AIE) was very unsatisfactory.

Aggarwal, and Chugh, Sunita. (2003) in "Learning achievement of slum children in Delhi. New Delhi:" highlighted that basic education is a fundamental right and recently 86th Constitutional Amendment was enacted so that all children can receive good quality basic education. The main objective of the study was to identify the social, economic and organizational factors that are associated with education and achievement level of the learner in slums. The performance of the slum children was much below the expected levels in both the subjects and in both the grades.

Indian Institute of Education, Pune. (2006), investigated the problem of school dropout which has been continually troubling the primary education system not only in India but in other developing countries too were highlighted. In this article various factors affecting fewer attendances were explained. It was also suggested that local teachers should be made available for teaching in schools so as to reduce the problem of teacher absenteeism and improve punctuality; incentives should be provided to encourage women teachers; and the cultural gap between parents and teachers should be bridged through more elaborate form of participation in the school management and control system.

Juneja, Nalini and Nandi, Nabanita. (2000) highlighted educational profile of the city of Indore. The problem of street children is the inevitable consequence of Education for All/ Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. According to authors identifying the role of educational authorities at the city level is the first step towards the setting up of mechanisms for periodic diagnosis of the situation. The present „shot in the dark“ strategies cannot hold much hope for purposeful change for the future.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio-economic condition of the slum Children dwellers. It includes demographic characteristics like type and family size, whether migrated or not, gender, age; income, education and occupation of the family.
2. To find out the problems of the slum children in achieving elementary education.

### METHODS

Purposive sampling technique was adopted. Altogether 100 households were selected from 5 slums, 10 each from two wards 35 under Gulbarga Municipal Corporation were taken as sample. In addition 18 schools situated mostly within these two wards or adjoining wards which were mostly attended by the slum children were also taken. Information regarding economic condition, occupation, education level of the family, home environment and living condition of home were collected from household survey by using socio-economic schedule and data about physical facilities in primary schools were collected from teachers and headmaster/headmistress through schedule on physical facilities. Secondary data like Census report, reports on various commissions and committees, related literature were also used. Percentage, mean, chi-square and ANOVA were used for quantitative analysis of data. Qualitative analysis was made on the basis of observation and discussion carried out during household survey and school visits. The study is delimited to slum children of 6-14 years age group in Gulbarga City

### FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

#### Demographic structure

It was found that almost 80% families were nuclear with an average family size consisting of six members. Out of the total number of households taken for the study it was found that almost 24.36% families were migrated from different parts of India specially from neighbouring states like Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand, Chattisgarh or even from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. It was also found that greater percentage of fathers (17.25%) than mothers (5.75%) were absent in the families either due to death or because they have left families (separated/divorced) and settled elsewhere. Widow and separated women mostly of young age usually returns back to her maiden home and lives there along with their children. It was found that 40.28% population belonged to 6-14 years age group and total 58.96% (male 694, female 723) population belonged to below 18 years age group.

The earlier as well as present studies have recognized that adequate, safe and secured housing is another important problem area that still persists among the slum dwellers. Two types of houses were mostly found during this study, brick wall with concrete roof or asbestos roof, no separate kitchen or closed bathroom but one common latrine which is mostly dirty and unhygienic. Dirty water over flowing through broken or cracked pipes spreads foul smell all around. These are the breeding place for diseases. None of the slum dwellers owned any house. At the entrance of each room utensils, cooking materials, buckets and drums (either filled or empty) are kept. Used utensils with stale left over foods and even garbage are found to be heaped here and there which gets scattered by street dogs and cats and also spreads foul rotten smell.

### Occupation, income and education of the slum dwellers

For classification of occupation, "Revised Indian National Classification of Occupation 2004 was followed in this study and it was found that majority of the head of the families were engaged in elementary occupation where income is not only poor but also uncertain and depends upon availability of work. They were hawker, delivery man, porter, sweeper, van puller, rickshaw puller, daily wage labourer, domestic helper, cobbler, people engaged in stitching and embroidery work and so on. Near about 10% head of the families were not engaged in any economic activities either due to old age, illness, laziness or because of drug/ alcohol addiction.

Monthly income of the total number of households taken for study were broadly classified into three groups as i) not more than Rs. 2000 ii) between Rs. 2001 and Rs. 4000 and iii) more than Rs. 4000 and it was found that almost 57% belonged to the first category, near about 33% belonged to the second group and only about 10% belonged to the third group.

Problems faced by the slum children in achieving elementary education Among various problems faced by the slum children of 6-14 years age group in achieving elementary education most significant are large family size, poor living condition, poor health, unfavourable home condition, and surrounding environment, migration, language problem, unstable occupation and economic condition, poor parental educational background and school environment. A large family size implies higher dependency ratio. In a family consisting of father, mother and three or four children of school going age where father is the only earning member, working in an unorganized sector with poor and unstable income and where all other family members are economically dependent on him then meeting the bare basic necessities becomes quite a tough job. In such situation the chance of providing quality education to their children or even helping them to continue their studies gets affected. The higher the birth order, the lower is the percentage of children not being enrolled or dropped out as also reflected in the study conducted by Debi (2001).

Majority of the families (98.75%) were found to occupy small single dark, damp, room without proper ventilation provision which serves them for multi-purpose activities i.e. living, dining, sleeping, storing, bathing, washing, cleaning, cooking etc. Bunk system is often used to accommodate all family members and their varied activities. A peaceful environment for concentrating and studying at home is almost missing. The entire surrounding environment was found to be dirty, filthy, unhygienic and susceptible to various diseases like malaria, jaundice, dysentery, tuberculosis, asthma, respiratory infection and so on.

For demarcating poverty line help of 61 st Round National Sample Survey (NSS) 2004- 05 was taken. According to it, in urban areas of West-Bengal monthly per capita income/ person were considered as Rs. 449.32. It was found that near about 73.29% households fall below poverty line. Of the remaining almost 27% households who were seen to be above poverty line almost about 16.45% were marginal cases where per-capita income per month fluctuates between Rs. 451 to Rs. 550. Not even 10% families were found whose monthly per-capita income was more than Rs. 750. Of the total 968 children of 6-14 years age group it was found that 27.27% were non- enrolled (NE), 24.17% were drop-out (DO) while 48.56 were reading (R) or continuing education. Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at elementary education level was found to be 72.73%. Regarding parental educational status of these children it was found that more mothers (55.97%) than fathers (44.71%) were illiterate. Almost an equal percentage of parents approximately 26% reported that

they can only write their names and failed to recall how far or till which class they had exactly studied in formal school. Not a single mother was found who had studied after class X.

### **Problems faced by the slum children in achieving elementary education :**

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Each category of houses usually had a tap connected with Kolkata corporation water supply on ground floor, mainly under the staircase in case of pucca building or in a centrally located common place in case of clustered rooms which all the inhabitants of that premises uses for washing, cleaning, bathing and for all other purposes. Since corporation water is not supplied throughout the day but only for a fixed time it is a routine practice for the residents to stand in long queue and wait for their chance to use or collect tap water. Regularly it becomes the most noisiest part of the building/premises during the water supply. Usually most household have a tendency to collect drinking water from nearby tube well. Everyday collecting water or standing in long queue are usually done by the children or especially by the female members of the family. depicting small room without any window where bunk like arrangement has been made to accommodate all family members and their belonging - bedding, clothes, utensils buckets, drums, cooking ingredients and whatever else they possess. In these small rooms on an average six people resides. Different activities are carried on simultaneously in the room like chatting, cooking, listening to music, watching television, cutting vegetables, grinding spices and so on. Such condition is not at all favourable for studying at home.

Most of the children were found to be under nourished and suffered from various diseases due to malnutrition and because of parental unawareness regarding health and hygiene and importance of vaccination. It was found that polio, anaemia, low pressure, tuberculosis, skin disease, lung infection and various other diseases due to deficiency of different vitamins and minerals are very common among children and even adults in slums.

Most of the adult male members are addicted to alcohol or drug or gambling thus spending most of the money from whatever little they earn thus depriving the basic necessities of other family members. Drugs and alcohol are consumed openly. Under the feasts of alcohol, quarrelling using abusive and slang language, beating wife and children is a common daily affair in almost every household. Children very naturally and spontaneously get accustomed with, learn and start using such language and develop a violent and hostile attitude towards others which are often reflected in their behavior with their siblings, playmates or classmates. Under any pre-text be it any festival, marriage or any other social ceremony, football or cricket match or any cultural programme organized by the local club it was found that a very common practice in these slum is that people hire a stereo box and install it on footpath or even on road side and almost throughout the day popular film songs are played at quite a high volume and once installed it goes on for

days at a stretch. Children and youths usually found to gather around these boxes and idly spending time chatting, singing, dancing, teasing passer-by. It is a sort of community entertainment programme. This is a typical slum culture that was observed during the survey. Thus, in such noisy and disturbed surrounding at home and outside even if a child wish to study it becomes almost impossible for him/her to concentrate and study.

Regarding teachers opinion altogether 42 teachers including head teachers of 18 schools taken for study were interviewed. Major reasons identified as cause for drop-out and irregular attendance were economic, domestic activities, migration, lack of suitable home environment and health related problems. From the discussion with the teacher and head teacher it was also found that because of Sarva Sikshya Abhiyan schools are getting financial assistance under various heads but these funds were mostly not properly utilized because of lack of planning and genuine initiative at all level leading to utter wastage of resources. Thus, mere allocation of funds is not enough. Emphasis has to be given on planning and proper utilization of resources within stipulated time period.

Though it took about sixty three years after independence of India to make elementary education a fundamental right but on the other hand it is absolutely true that mere passing of an act will not change the existing scenario of elementary education overnight. What is required more is micro level need based planning, proper implementation of plans under strict monitoring system, evaluating its progress at regular interval and on its basis modifying and updating the strategies if required so that ultimately the very purpose for which it has been made is fulfilled as early as possible. Genuine initiative has to be taken at all levels to overcome the problems and to provide quality elementary education to all children of 6-14 years age group.

#### CONCLUSION:

The basic problem from which all other problems crop up in these slums is acute poverty. Therefore, more and more income generation and poverty alleviation programmes should be properly implemented under strict monitoring system so that the economic condition of these vulnerable sections of the society could be improved by providing loans for self-employment. More job opportunities to be provided for wage earners. Their working hours and minimum wage have to be fixed in such a manner so that on one hand they will not be exploited and on the other hand they can meet their bare minimum necessities and lead a healthy life. To meet the problem of acute shortage of urban housing, lack of adequate infra-structure and basic services, attempt should be made by the Govt. To provide more shelter/housing to these people at low affordable prices so that they can have a decent living condition. To combat with the health and hygiene related problem children in school should be trained about the basic principles of health, hygiene and cleanliness so that they can in turn at least to some extent make other family members aware of these basic facts. Another important thing is that regular health check-up for the children should be conducted and various pathological tests, x-rays, medicine at subsidized rate or absolutely free of cost should be provided. Parents should be aware about the causes, prevention and treatment of common diseases. The problem of irregular attendance due to migration can be taken care of if the teachers and school authorities make the parents aware about the importance of sending children regularly to schools and to encourage them to visit their native place during vacations/holidays only so that their children's studies at school will remain unhampered. To overcome the problems related to acute shortage of teacher can be overcome through recruitment of new teachers as early as possible to fill the vacant posts. Attempt could be made to link primary schools area or locality and medium wise and faculty exchange programme can be undertaken within these groups of schools.

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