



EDUCATION IN SLUMS-CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

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Abstract: Slums are overcrowded, densely packed residential areas in cities that lack basic amenities of life. Education is one of the most serious issues in slums as the literacy rate is extremely low. As a part of the NGO Sodari Niveditha Prathisthana, I participated in education awareness programs carried out in the Uttarahalli slum in Bengaluru since 2017. From my observation, children living in these areas usually do not attend school because of financial issues. Most children who attend government school discontinue after a few years as they have siblings to take care of since their parents need to work, and the drop rate increasingly high. The importance of education has been explained repeatedly and stories of great men and women who became successful in spite of their struggles were given as examples. Topics such as the importance of hygiene, nutrition and sanitation, their duties towards society and the nation have been brought up and discussed to push the children to make an effort towards building a healthy society. Parents were advised to admit their wards to schools through door-to-door campaigns. It was observed that many children have habits like smoking, chewing of tobacco and gambling. The ill effects of smoking, tobacco chewing and alcoholism were explained in these awareness programs. Many classes were held on topics in basic science, mathematics, English, Hindi and environmental science. Children were enthusiastic and eager to learn from us apart from school, as our coaching would help them to understand complex concepts easily. For the development of these areas, educational institutions could extend their activities such as street dramas and disease awareness programs. Slum development boards must implement the schemes of the government for the welfare of slums.

INTRODUCTION

Education is an opportunity through which society and its people are empowered. It is a tool for economic advancements. Education aids in the social, emotional, and psychological growth of individuals and hence, the community as a whole. Education is a process of nation building, which moulds our personality, build future citizen, and removes all barriers, disparities, superstitions from the mind of the people of the society. However, not all have been able to reap the benefits of the existing education system.

Education plays an important role in uplifting the socioeconomic status of a society. Lack of education accompanied with extreme poverty often leads to pathetic conditions of the people which can be commonly seen in the urban neighbourhoods in the form of slums. Significant proportions of urban poor population in India live in slums.

Slums are neglected parts of cities where housing and living conditions are appallingly lacking. Slums are overcrowded, densely packed residential areas in cities that lack basic amenities of life. Education is one of the most serious issues in slums as the literacy rate is extremely low.

Sodari Niveditha Prathishtana, is an NGO which works towards the development of many aspects of society. Many women and girls go to slums and try to create awareness on education, hygiene and good habits. I am working for Sodari Niveditha Prathishtana, since, 2017 I am going to slums and creating awareness on hygiene, nutrition and teaching the children basic maths and science, and English.

Before finishing school, one out of every three students end up dropping out before finishing school., who start primary school in India. For registration in schools, many children in slums are lacking birth certificates, girls are encouraged by parents to drop out, to help at home, to look after their younger siblings, or to get married early. It was observed that many children have habits like smoking, chewing of tobacco and gambling.

Awareness was created in slums, basically by visiting each house there. As the people keep moving from place to place, since their parents have to work for daily wages, and though they have lands, due to scarcity of water due to less rains, the people come to Bengaluru in search of jobs.

Objectives

- The objectives of this study are to examine the educational condition of the slum children,
- figure out the causes of drop out at the primary level of schooling,
- and explore the environmental conditions hampering the academic development of children.
- To motivate them to go to schools regularly

- Make them realize the importance of education.
- To support them to contribute to nation as good citizens of the country.

METHODOLOGY

Stories of Swami Vivekananda, Dr. Ambedkar and many National leaders who fought for independence, who faced many adversities such as poverty, and achieved greater heights, to make them understand how they overcame all the adversities in life, by showing videos of great leaders, and to make them strong mentally and to motivate them to do well in their studies, and to achieve greater heights. They were advised about career opportunities and entrepreneurship. Importance of general knowledge was explained.

Children were explained about the importance of eating vegetables, fruits, nuts and cereals, and to play well, not to eat junk foods, for the good health and frequently asked to play and enjoy games in between, to make them understand that physical strength is very important.

Importance of National festivals were explained to help them understand the unity in diversity, national integration, importance of constitution, democracy, significance of casting vote, and to inspire them to work towards the development of nation.

Festivities on Diwali, Dasera, Sitha Jayanthi, Ramanavami, and on **National Days**, for instance, Gandhi Jayanti, Independence Day and Republic Day, help the children understand the importance of our culture and national history.

Importance of education was stressed, by explaining about the employment rate for literates, that they will not be cheated for taxes. Workshops are conducted for baskets making, bags making, sewing.

Children were made to pray, play, sing and dance and talk about the topics of their choices. Children were taught to draw the drawings, made to write the basic letters of English, solve the mathematical problems. Basic concepts in science and ecology were made to understand, by showing videos. Children are made to practice and write whatever is taught to them. Parents of children were told to send the children regularly to school, not to stress them for household work and to work outside, or not to care of their siblings.

Children were advised to take bath daily. Suggested to keep their homes and surroundings free of water-logged areas to prevent the transmission of mosquitoes, to prevent viral diseases like dengue, chikungunya. Suggested to keep the good ventilation and to drink clean water.

They were advised not to get addicted to bad habits like alcoholism, as alcohol may hamper the functioning of liver, kidney, children of alcohol addicts face difficulties financially to go to school, and it may also severely lead to malnutrition among their children. Chewing tobacco can affect lungs, cause cancer, etc. Smoking can seriously affect the functioning of lungs, cause difficulty in breathing.

After considerable research and experimentation during the past decade, educators have now come to the conclusion that major changes in policies and programming are necessary to make the public school a place of learning for the slum child. Blueprints for radical overhaul of city schools have been drawn up, and some of the proposed changes have already been put into practice.

One out of every three students who start primary school in India ends up dropping out before finishing school. Even when they continue school, many don't demonstrate learning commensurate with their grade. Roughly 30-40% of students in Class IV-VI in government schools do not have the basic ability to read and write. With no one to guide and mentor, these students from poor families turn away from school and find refuge in crime, drugs, and child labour. Attendance levels in the schools where we worked increased by 10%.

We were able to help the children by ensuring that the child and his education is adequately supported. There was a marked improvement in the teacher's effectiveness, resulting in improved attendance and performance of students in academics. Apart from this, hygiene and cleanliness of students and student's interpersonal relationship saw a positive transformation.

Members of Sodari Niveditha Prathishtana are committed to give education to various slums, and, they are inspired by great leaders like Swami Vivekananda.

We conducted the following programs as a part of this project:

Programs were aimed at helping them tap into their full potential, by improving the intellectual and emotional faculties of students. Effective online workshops were conducted for members to bring self-awareness to values and how to nurture these values in the children they teach, and about mentoring and guiding the children, devising a relevant curriculum for urban slum children may also be necessary. Many barriers prevent slum children accessing good quality education, although Indian law guarantees free education for children from 6 to 14 years of age.

Enrolling in school itself becomes the first barrier, as many lack birth certificates and proper registration documents. Girls are encouraged by parents to drop out in order to help at home, to take care of their siblings, or to get married early. Parents do not see the value of letting girls complete their education, and to get employed. This leaves children vulnerable to child labour, abuse and violence. Without Skills and self-confidence. These children are trapped into lives of low paid manual work.

The most common reasons given for dropping out are lack of interest in their studies, cost of education and family pressures. Many parents have little education themselves. Learning taken home can enlighten families about the wider world, as well as preventive health, rights under the law.

Education is regarded as the right of every child in the nation from six to fourteen years as per the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan. These dropouts also have resulted in some dangerous life choices such as alcoholism, substance abuse, and stealing.

Music, dancing, painting and craft work – which combine learning with fun – form a vital part of the curriculum. They are taught and encouraged. Needless to say, our students enjoy these classes immensely. **Religious Festivals and National Days are celebrated in all our Pre Schools.**

Slum children's education in India in this context remains a burning issue. A lot of factors combine together, in keeping more than half of India's school-going children out of school.

Slum Children in India

According to the Census 2011, there are 13.7 million slum households across 63% of India's towns. The residents of these households include migrants, half of them being among the poorest of the poor. More than eight million children under 6 years live in approximately 49,000 slums. There are 22.72 million children (age group 5-18) living in urban slums who are out of school.

The migrant population in India is mostly illiterate and constantly on the move, in search of new livelihood opportunities. Migrant children move with their parents and often lose out on age-appropriate educational opportunities. Often they engage in labor to escape poverty and support their parents.

Access to early childhood care, balanced nutrition, education, health, and recreational facilities are keys to the positive development of children. However, in places where clean drinking water and two square meals are a struggle, slum children's education, health and other contributing factors for development will always take a backseat.

Problems in Education of Slum Children

The Right to Education Act 2009 was expected to bring a huge surge of enrolment in urban and rural schools. However, after more than a decade there are millions of children who are out of school in India, most live in urban slums and remote rural areas. A higher proportion of girl children (3.23%) are out of school than boys (2.77%). Girls in slums and rural areas are out of school as they are engaged in domestic work or do not go to school to take care of the younger siblings. Boys drop out of school to supplement household incomes. Lack of healthcare facilities, absence of toilets in schools, and lack of proper nutrition also lead to an increase in drop-out rates.

Focusing on Girl Child and Women Education

The cycle of illiteracy will continue if proper steps are not taken in time to reduce drop-out rates, increase enrolment and encourage girl child education and slum children's education. Mother is a child's first teacher. When mothers remain uneducated, they cannot fully comprehend the value of education for their children. Children of educated mothers have better access to education, proper nutrition, and timely healthcare needs like timely immunization against various diseases.

Health, Education, and Empowerment

Training for Employment and Empowerment

The children who succeed in getting into a school must often walk long distances in environments characterized by violence and health hazards, and sustain daily discrimination when they get to the school.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- Percentage of admissions in schools enhanced.
- Children's interest in studies was observed to be improved after conducting these programs.
- For registration in schools, birth certificates are necessary, which many slum children are lacking.
- Girls are encouraged by parents to drop out to help at home, or to get married early.
- With no one to guide and mentor, these students from poor families turn away from school and find refuge in crime, drugs, and child labour.
- Lack of interest and cost of education are also the reasons for dropping out.

- Boosting free education, establishing more schools, adding social service in the curriculum and bringing innovative teaching methods would help improve the education rate in slums. As per Census 2011 [1], approximately 17% of urban population reside in slum areas in India Mishra and Banerjee [2] reiterate that poor educational development in slums is both the result and consequence of poverty and low income”

Slums are the “areas of housing built on government or private land characterised by low quality housing, overcrowding, poverty, poor environmental conditions, and limited access to services” [3, Cameron]

According to Seetharamu [4] slums have become the inevitable by products of the process of urbanisation. Our vision is to elevate education and learning as the foundation of all aspects of human development and world progress. Specifically, our ultimate goal is to ensure quality education is available to all children.

Teacher training should be strengthened with special emphasis on methods and strategies adopted to deal with students belonging to marginalized communities. Parents should be sensitized regarding education of girls. Scholarships and incentives should be strengthened to motivate students belonging to marginalized sections.

Parental perception about education and poverty were seen to be the major constraints. Lack of awareness related to educational provisions and incentives lead to high dropout rates. Parents were often unable to pay school fees and children in slums were more likely to attend government schools than low paying private schools.

Yuko, Tsujita (2009) points a spread of awareness regarding girl’s education, improved roads and provision of transport and good infrastructure was recommended for better inclusion of poor children within the schools.

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Mother’s illiteracy amounted to negligent, overprotective and strict parenting which often caused behavioral problems (Naik and Jogdand, (2013)

Furthermore, it has been argued that their low economic standing and general lack of education forces them to accept low-paying jobs that may not be readily accepted by middle- and upper-class people (Pawar & Mane, 2013).

Some slum dwellers are of the belief that places outside of slums are out of their reach This suggests that any efforts to address the issue of slums must also consider their surroundings and their social structures. (e.g., Ahmed, Brookins, & Ali, 2011). A common problem of home violence (verbal/physical) affects student’s academic performance. Commonly, it is from alcoholic father. Such situation becomes more complex when the frustrated mother leaves the family temporarily. Physical punishment is common in home and school. In slum usually both parents work, typically male as daily wagers (artisan, labor, driver) or street vendor and female as domestic helper.

The most significant finding of the study is that regarding higher education the attainment rate is very low. Only 1% women have been able to complete higher education and only 2% women are pursuing their higher education. This indicates a very poor picture of educational status of urban slum women at the stage of higher education.

First of all the government must implement strict rules and regulations for the parents to send their child to school for receiving education inspite of sending them to work for earning. In this regard, a door to door investigation must be conducted frequently by the school authority or directly by the government to find out whether children are compelled to engage in house hold activities by their parents inspite of going to school. [Abinash Neog, EDUCATIONAL STATUS AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN OF URBAN SLUM- A STUDY IN RANGIA TOWN OF KAMRUP DISTRICT, PJAEE, 16 (6) (2020)Pal Arch’s journal of Archeology of Egypt]

Awareness campaign among the parents of such areas on the importance of girl’s education, adult education, vocational educational etc. should be organised by the government, NGOs, Schools [Das, Lakhahira.(2005).]

For this along with the government, each and every educated and responsible individual should try to make this section of people aware about the importance of education in their life and making proper arrangement for their education as far as possible. Then only we will be able to establish a balanced and well-developed society in all the aspects. Thus it may be conclude that women of urban slum should be encouraged for being a part of the umbrella of education for the progress of their own self, their children, family Das, [Mahanta, Adhikary.(2013).]

CONCLUSION

The term “slum development” further refers to investments in basic infrastructure like roads, public transportation, electricity, and to some extent, health facilities. For the development of these areas, educational institutions could extend their activities such as street dramas and disease awareness programs.

Slum development boards must implement the schemes of the government for the welfare of slums. Mentoring and Guidance is very important for the children, devising a relevant curriculum very essential.

Volunteer Programs are an effective tool for ensuring access to education for the children living in slums.



Leadership Development and Vocational Training, National integration has to be a reality through action and not through lessons in the curriculum by cultural programs, group activities.

Develop workshops which take care of schools' supplies and needs, especially the bulk ones, such as carpentry for school furniture, doors and windows, chalk making, sewing uniforms and school bags, book-binding, wiring and electrical work and plumbing, chappal making and repairing.

Sponsor a Child, Teacher or Education Project, Volunteer or Donate Your Time

Data collected from the parents through Structured Interview Schedule indicates that 43.06% children between the age group of 6-14 years have never enrolled in schools while 33.57% of total children dropped out due to varied reasons. (B. Razia,2021)

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