

Levels of Some Basic Amenities in the Slums and Their Impacts on Ecology: A Case Study of Jorhat City, Assam

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Abstract: *The phenomenon of slum is regarded as a challenge for the Jorhat City of Assam, India where seven slum areas have already been emerged. This study was conducted in all the slums to investigate the level of some basic amenities such as housing, sanitation system and water facilities etc. In the study it was found that these aspects of their livelihood are poor which generates several problems especially it degrades urban ecology.*

Keywords: Basic amenities, slum, ecology, city

1. Introduction

In most of the world's urban spheres, the phenomenon of slum is standing as a challenge that caused various problems. Gradually, the population of slum dwellers along with the number of the slums is increasing in almost all the countries. A slum is residential area which gets inhabited primarily by poor, often demoralized families and characterized by sub-standard, unsanitary conditions, overcrowding and usually social disorganization [1]. Thus, a slum means an area where poor people are living in a sub-standard condition with the lacks of infrastructure facilities and some time social disorganization is originated and inadequate of basic amenities and infrastructural resources make living conditions in these slums highly unhygienic and disease prone.

Over 90 per cent of slum dwellers today are in developing world. South Asia has the largest share, followed by Eastern Asia, sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America. China and India together have 37 per cent of the world's slums. In sub-Saharan Africa, urbanization has become virtually synonymous with slum growth; 72 per cent of the region's urban population lives under slum conditions, compared to 56 per cent in South Asia. The slum population of sub-Saharan Africa almost doubled in 15 years, reaching nearly 200 million in 2005[2].

In India slums stand as a vital problem for the cities in particular and for the nation in general which is known differently in different cities such as *Ahats* in Kanpur, *Basties* in Delhi, *Chawls* in Mumbai, *Cheries* in Chennai, *Kolegeri* in Bangalore, *Bustees* in Kolkata etc. Day-by-day the number of slum and number of slum dwellers are increasing in the country's urban areas. According to Census of India, 2001 in India total population of the slum areas was 42,578,150 where 22,697,218 were male and 19,880,932 were female. In Assam in 2001, it was 82,289 where 43,472 were male and 38,817 were female lived in slum areas and both in national and state level the total slum population has been increased [3].

The Jorhat City - the second largest urban area of Assam, has seven slum areas viz., Raja Maidam New Colony, Fancy

Ali Area, Pujadubi Area, Horizon Colony Area, Tarajan Smashan Area, Bishnupur Banchbari Area with about 5000 households. It is a fact that most of the slums are situated nearby the *Bhogdoi* – a major tributary of the great river Brahmaputra passing through the Jorhat City.

Since, housing, sanitation and water supply are basic requirements of livelihood and without a minimum standard of those amenities, many problems may be caused. Therefore, this study was designed to find out their housing conditions, level of sanitation system and water facilities. Besides, it was also tried to find out that if the standard of these three aspects are poor, what the impacts laid on the ecology the Jorhat City.

2. Methods

This study was conducted on the basis of both primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected through field study in all the slum areas of the Jorhat City. During this, the researcher interviewed some slum dwellers along with personal observation. Besides, a number of secondary data about the area were gathered from different sources.

3. Results

The findings are presented in the following.

3.1 Housing Condition

It has already been stated that most of the slum sites of the Jorhat city have emerged at the riverbank of the *Bhogdoi* which is passing through the Jorhat Town. Most of the households are residing in a poor housing pattern constructed with bamboo, cane, straw, plastic cover where as only a small number of households use wood, tin for roofing. Most of the houses are constructed in lower level with *kacha* type floor. In most of the houses only except a narrow door there is not a single ventilation or window which causes darkness and air pollution. On the other hand such poor housing conditions affect people's financial aspect. Because they have to repair their houses frequently and especially during the summer season their houses are

partially or completely damaged. Once it is damaged it becomes a financial matter as it is to be repaired.

It was observed that most of the houses are like a hut where sometimes a large family or a joint family is being resided. It causes lack of spaces or sometimes the matter of privacy is raised for the spouses or for the women during their menstruation period. Sometimes no visible spacious area among the residential houses are found causing lack of privacy among the households. Again in most cases only a narrow entry is seen in between the houses causing problem in movement. Especially during emergency time such as serious diseases, death or any other emergency situation it stands as a hindrance. In many cases it was observed that the directions of the houses are not uniform. These results undisciplined housings. It was also seen that due to the huge garbage or waste materials of the households water pollution is being occurred. More importantly the water of the *Bhogdoi* is being affected to great extent by those waste materials. Besides, the rotten and stinking garbage create a hellish atmosphere in and around the slums.

This result is in line with the study of Borbora Verma *et. al*(2012). They stated that most houses are of *katcha* type while 54.2 per cent are single room houses and 50.00 per cent houses have the size of 8 ft X 10 ft which clearly indicates the congested overcrowded condition [4]. The housing pattern in the *bustees* (slums of Calcutta) that 60 per cent of the structures were *katcha* with roofs of tile or tin with bamboo rafter, about 67 per cent of the huts were with poor window, poorly ventilated causing darkness [5].

3.2. Water Facility

Water is one of the basic requirements for livelihood. But scarcity of water stands as a vital problem for many people all over the world. A third of the world's population lives in water-stressed countries [6]. In this regard, dwellers of many urban areas throughout the world are having serious water problem, which is in Indian urban centres too. In the whole nation there is no big city in which water supply is assured all the 24 hours a day. Cities like Chennai, Hyderabad, Rajkot, Ajmer and Udaipur get water from municipal sources for less than an hour a day. But, it is quite evident that the poorer areas and the slum areas this is quite pathetic that most people are under the serious problem of lack of water [7].

In the areas under study, that most of the dwellers are having the water scarcity. Though, the municipal sources distributed water through pipe line system to some extent but most of the people could not get. Due to deprivation of water facilities, they have to use water of the *Bhogdoi* for household purpose like for taking bath, defecation etc. But it pollutes the *Bhogdoi's* water to great extend and causes many water born diseases among the users. Therefore, lack of potable water is a vulnerable problem among the slum dwellers of the Jorhat City due to which in and around the slums the ecology is greatly hampered.

In such a study as reported by Sing and Souza (1980) the most common diseases in the slums and the high rate of morbidity appear to be directly related to environmental

factor. The inadequate supply of potable water results in gastro-intestinal diseases in the slum areas [8].

3.3. The Level of Sanitation System

For a better livelihood, proper sanitation system is one of the basic requirements. Sanitation is in broad term refers to disposal and management of solid wastes, wastewater, human and cattle excreta etc. in such a way that it does not adversely affect domestic personal hygiene. It is important for human health which contributes to clean and improved environment, social development and generates significant economic benefits [9]. But in the areas under study it is very poor where only a few households have toilet that are made of bamboo, polythene etc. which are totally uncomfortable for defecation. But due to the poor system for defecation air pollution or water pollution are occurred in many cases. Besides, there is a need to repair them time to time that needs time, money and labour consuming. But more importantly many people have to use open sites at the bank of the *Bhogdoi* River for defecation that creates hellish atmosphere and becomes another reason of the water pollution of this river. Besides, for other solid waste or water waste no systems are found at all. This poor sanitation system creates environmental degradation that generates unhygienic living condition in and around the slum area which leads to various harmful diseases. Thus, ecology of the Jorhat City is affected by the poor sanitation of the slums to a great extend.

The diseases that sanitation has brought to Indian slums are: diarrhoea, water diseases, parasitic worms/infestation and orals diseases. In India it is extremely dirty and it is known to be the second worst sanitation country in the world according to Briefing Paper. Children are the most affected ones and because of these epidemics, there is a huge mortality rate on children. Sanitation has also caused children to get parasitic worms. In Indian slum areas, a child is known to be carrying 1,000 parasitic worms within their bodies. This is due to the conditions they live in are not so great and they cannot do anything about it [10].

4. Conclusion

Above discussion has revealed that the housing, water facility and sanitation system in the slums of the Jorhat City are poor for which the slum dwellers have to face various problems, even such pathetic condition harms many dwellers outside the slums. The most important fact is that the ecology of the Jorhat City is being greatly affected by such poor amenities. Besides, such miserable condition affects their financial aspect. Since, the governmental efforts are not effective. Therefore, there is a great need of a special slum improvement programme in all the slums of the Jorhat City. In this regard, along with governmental agencies, N.G.Os. can adopt effective paths.

This study may also enhance scope for further research on various problems of the slums, levels of infrastructures, health status, levels of education, effectiveness of the slum improvement programmes provided by the governments, N.G.Os., level of awareness of the slum dwellers towards the ecological problems, about different pollutions in and around the slums etc.

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Author Profile



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