
Sunrise from the Debris: Mansarovar Model of Slum People's Participatory Emancipation

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Abstract: *Urbanization and fleeing from villages to cities are very high in India. Urban population and economy are mixed one where we meet richest and poorest, people highly accessed to all the facilities and people extremely neglected even for their primary needs, some living in luxuries and others striving for the survival. Urban slums are also in some extent neglected face of urban life. There are around 6.5 crore people living in urban slums in India. If we look at the top ten states having high rate of slum population Maharashtra comes first and Delhi comes at 10th rank. This research study is based on the works done by an NGO in a slum called Mansarovar Park, Delhi. This paper is dealing with the issues and problems that slum people had undergone in relation to their health and hygiene, education transportation etc and how the NGO could intervene on the issues and problems. This is a qualitative study based on the focused group discussion conducted on 14th November 2021 at Mansarovar Park Slum, Dilshad Garden, Delhi. There were seven participants in the focused group discussion among them four were representing the slum, then social worker and two researchers. The data recorded and it presented in verbatim form and it is analyzed and presented here thematically. The major findings of the study are that: There were health and hygienic issues which led to malaria and other diseases; people were aware of the need of awakening from the current situation to build up a healthy environment for their survival and this particular NGO played a vital role for the empowerment and sensitization of the people and enhancing people participation in the slum by supportive systems.*

Key Words: *People Participation, Slum Development, Empowerment, Sensitization*

1. Introduction

This paper is focusing on the influence of a NGO's work in a slum called Mansarovar Park, Delhi. It brings out issues and problems that may lead to

malaria and dengue in this slum and constructive efforts under the leadership of *Sunshine Project* by *Prachodana Social Service Society Gurgaon and New Delhi*, a NGO, working for the empowerment of the slum dwellers in Delhi and other 12 States in India. There are around 2500 to 3000 people living in this slum. They are living in tents like domicile. The study by Abhijit Banerjee, Rohini Pande and Michael Walton states that slum-dwellers face a wide range of problems in their daily lives, notably with water and sanitation, drainage, garbage collection, rations and, to a lesser extent, electricity (where almost all are connected, but suffer outages in some cases). Health problems are very common: most respondents go to private clinics or doctors for small problems and to government hospitals for major concerns (Banerjee et al, 2012). Here also we find the same issues and problems that are mostly common in every slum in India. *Prachodana* is doing an excellent work to empower people in dealing with the above-mentioned issues and problems.

This paper aims to percolate the awareness among the people regarding cleanliness and need for keeping surroundings clean to prevent from epidemics like malaria and dengue and also to safeguard themselves from other illness and to keep more hygiene and healthy practices for the sustainable development in the slum. This study also evaluates the works done by the social workers in this area and how it influenced in their thoughts, daily life and practices. Social workers started their work with meeting the basic needs of the slum dwellers such as food and education. They are providing mid day meal and education for the children in a center which constructed inside the slum. There were four people from the slum participated in the focused group discussion. One among them was the leader of the slum and one young person who supports leader in all the matters. These four people were the leaders in the slum. The younger one was totally dependent on the elder one.

2. Review of Literature

Slums are mostly neglected parts of city where housing and living conditions are appallingly poor. These may differ in origin and nature in the developed and developing countries but the broad patterns of slum life are common all over the world. The increasing migration from rural areas has led to growth of slums in every city, not only in India, but elsewhere in the world (Kumar, 2014).

Analytical study done by Jitendra Kumar (2014) briefs the idea that slumming in metropolitan cities reveals that the slum proportion decreases with the decrease in population size as well as industrial status of a city. Highly industrialized cities have highest area of slum localities. Neither slums can be removed or shifted completely from the cities. However, full utilization of the meager efforts and state welfare policies can give them some relief or make their living condition slightly better if honestly implanted. There is an urgent need to tackle this situation for long term sustainable development as well as for city prosperity (Kumar, 2014).

The lives of hundreds of millions of slum dwellers are threatened by the lack of access to the most basic human requirements: water, sanitation, shelter, health, and education. The nature and extent of the daily challenges posed by existing slums are not just daunting; they are life threatening (Mehta and Dastur, 2008).

There is no need to underscore the magnitude of the challenge or the dire implications of ignoring it. Ironically, the solutions to slums are well known and are not difficult. What is required is political will and ongoing commitment. Slums themselves are the physical manifestation of several overlapping forces. On the one hand, they are the manifestation of deep poverty, unrealistic regulatory frameworks, ill-conceived policies, inadequate urban planning, weak institutional capacity, and larger macroeconomic factors. But on the other hand, slums are a manifestation of the ingenuity and resilience with which extremely disadvantaged populations have organized them in the face of these very challenges. What slum dwellers really need is a chance to improve their own lives, and to make a positive contribution to the city. Plenty of evidence shows that resources spent on improving the lives of the poor are investments that will yield global economic and social returns. Affordable and successful adaptive measures for existing slums have, and can, increase the well-being of millions of slum dwellers. These measures also further unlock the productivity of the urban poor, creating a powerful upward spiral that strengthens both urban and national economies (Mehta et al, 2008).

The study by Abhijit Banerjee, Rohini Pande and Michael Walton brings the analysis that problems which are facing by slum dwellers are mostly common in nature and it is common to everyone who lives in the same slum and is not necessarily escaped with an increase in wealth. The study also finds the variation in private wealth and incomes which exist in slums itself. The

majority of the variation was within, rather than between, slums (Banerjee et al, 2012). The problems are common and it needs collective steps to resolve. The NGOs are working here as a motivational factor to take up collective responsibilities. People in the slum should feel the need of cleanliness and healthy environment. Then only they will come up to take these collective responsibilities. Slums are heterogeneous in certain dimensions like personal incomes, beliefs and certain practices but they are mostly homogenous to the availability of public services (Banerjee et al, 2012). The NSSO defines slums as declared and undeclared slums. The declared slums are those which have been formally declared as slums by the respective governing bodies and the undeclared slums is defined as “an aerial part having twenty-five or more kutchra houses mostly of temporary nature, or inhabited by persons with practically no private latrine and inadequate public latrine and safe water supply.

Slums themselves are the physical manifestation of several overlapping forces. On the one hand, they are the manifestation of deep poverty, unrealistic regulatory frameworks, ill-conceived policies, inadequate urban planning, weak institutional capacity, and larger macroeconomic factors. But on the other hand, slums are a manifestation of the ingenuity and resilience with which extremely disadvantaged populations have organized them in the face of these very challenges. The list of challenges faced by slum dwellers is long, and many of these disadvantages reinforce each other in a vicious cycle. Still, the resourcefulness often demonstrated by slum dwellers in the face of such adverse circumstances is remarkable. Evidence demonstrates that slum dwellers collectively make a substantial contribution to urban and national economies, and that many towns and cities would cease to function effectively without the people who live in slums. What slum dwellers really need is a chance to improve their own lives, and to make a positive contribution to the city. Plenty of evidence shows that resources spent on improving the lives of the poor are investments that will yield global economic and social returns (Mehta et al, 2008).

Affordable and successful adaptive measures for existing slums have, and can, increase the well-being of millions of slum dwellers. These measures also further unlock the productivity of the urban poor, creating a powerful upward spiral that strengthens both urban and national economies. At the same time, effective proactive measures—measures that create conditions

that allow the future urban poor to find affordable housing and not be forced to settle in slums - have proved extremely beneficial to cities, national governments, and the urban poor. These measures are cost-effective, affordable, and implementable (Mehta et al, 2008).

3. Methodology and Research Design

The researchers conducted a focused group discussion at the center in the slum to collect the data. There were seven participants in the focused group discussion among them four people were from the slum itself who were the leaders and representatives from different parts of the slum; the chief social worker who are in the field for people's approach; and also, the people who conducted this study. At first the group leader introduced the relevance, objectives and methods of this group discussion and then all the participants introduced each one. The researchers were asking certain questions to start the discussions and based on those questions representatives of the slum responded. The social workers who are engaged with them all the times were translating the questions when some clarifications required. The proceedings of the discussions are captured as audio clips. The entire section is captured in audio clip. It was around half an hour discussion. All the discussions were in Hindi and social worker was the mediator for wherever translation required. The entire voice clip went to verbatim translation in English. The study used percolate theory model which looks at the knowledge and awareness among the people about the need and current situations of cleanliness and healthy environment. Exploratory research design is used in this study.

4. Data Analysis

The data collected through focused group discussion are analyzed here. The data is analyzed thematically. The themes are developed based on the important discussions happened in focused group discussion.

4.1 Major Reasons for Malaria and Dengue in the Slums

The first question in the focused group discussion was *to eradicate Malaria Virus, what activities have been done or what has been achieved by the community?* Members of the slum responded that Vinod sir had come to their place and taught the slum dwellers the following: 1) Slum should keep its area very clean 2) Nala or sewage has too much of overflowing with

dirty water. It is because of the dirty stagnant water there is lot of mosquitoes and other insects which penetrate to the water. This is the one major reason which spread malaria and dengue. People in the slum became aware of the major cause of malaria and dengue. Social workers could create awareness about the need of cleanliness and hygiene. Here the social worker plays the role of a motivator (Participants, 2021).

Another person in the group responded that there are very limited toilets, most of the people defecate in the open space and that is also one of the reasons why there are so many illness issues and so that closed toilets can be made. If there is access to clean water, a lot of the problems will be solved, and there will be limited health issues and limited chance to malaria and dengue. This is one of the major issues to cause malaria and dengue.

4.2 Various Steps to Keep Healthy Atmosphere

In continuation to the first question the researcher asked the group: What are the actions that has been decided to be taken? Leader of the group responded to that question. Then Vinod sir told him to do the following that the community has to assure that they are keeping their area and their respective area clean that would keep them healthy and happy. Second is the source of sewage water, dirty water and also the toilet water. Toilet water is also stagnant at different areas. They will be cleaning all the dirt and would be taken away to the sewage and dirty water would be washed off. Third point is that medicine to be used to clear mosquitoes that is spreading across this area just to ensure that there is no breeding of mosquitoes in this area. These were the major steps that social worker has proposed to them and recommended by the leader of the group to create a healthy atmosphere. The leader of the community expresses the feeling that if these things would be done, then the entire community will remain happy and the atmosphere will be healthy.

4.3 Leadership and Sharing of Responsibility

Harindar Ji, the leader of the group, contributed to the major part of the discussion. He was in the *Party Karya Kartha* which means that he will be the person who gets all the work done. So as per the slum dwellers, Harindar ji would be ensuring that all the sewages and all the dirty water to be cleared, medicines would be spread and also medicinal smog will lead out in this area just to ensure that there are no instances of infestations or

mosquito infestation and would be cleared off. He also requested other slum dwellers to listen to the request and ensure that their area is kept clean and he added that whatever they do is for their own children, that was not a mandate or compulsion for the party workers. It is just a responsibility for party workers but whereas for all the slum dwellers the responsibility is to ensure that nobody in the slum fall sick because of all these problems. Harindar ji as a leader took collective responsibility in all the activities and he demanded personal responsibility to maintain this cleanliness and hygiene from all the slum dwellers.

4.5 Need for Regularity in Keeping Cleanliness

The first speaker, leader of the community said that he will see that it is important for the entire slum to keep their dwellings clean because if cleaning is not done regularly then dirt and garbage will accumulate over time and when the cleaning vehicle arrives it will end up in destroying the slums because the slums are built not in good structure. It is of light weight, and not necessarily strong. So he was insisting that it is important to keep the slum regularly clean so that the slums also remain safe.

The second representative narrated how cleaning is important, only then their lives will be saved. He sounded more distressed on account of lack of faith because he believes that everything is possible if everybody joins hands together. The community, including all the slum dwellers who should carry out the activities together, and it makes a difference in the very slum culture. Are only two of you or everybody comes for the activity? The question was asked to the respondents. Then the speaker responded that this is not in our hand and it can be done only by Prathan, the Slum leader. If the leader says only then 100 or 150 people will come otherwise ten or twelve people will turn out. That is why Prathan's involvement is very important and if he says everybody will come together and work together. Until everyone works together the problem will not be resolved. So, the responsibility is highly held on the leader and it will work out if all slum dwellers consider responsibility as personal matter and a practice in their daily life.

4.6 Requirement for One Time Action

Have you made some small groups to ensure that cleaning happens time to time? The researcher enquired among the respondents. At this point the second speaker said that once a proper cleaning is done and all the garbage

taken away, and medicine spraying is done and then everyday maintenance would be easy and everybody will follow it. Right now, there is so much garbage accumulated over there and nobody wants to take the responsibility. There the researcher added that it is not necessary that everybody would want to maintain because within one month everything can go back into the same situation, the waste and garbage will be accumulated in the same way.

Then both speakers, speaker one and two ensured that once a total cleaning happens, then only the members will see the difference. Right then, everybody was falling sick. There are major problems and major cleaning issues and health issues in the slum that nobody has the faith that it can change or it can make a difference. Both the speakers really felt that if a major cleaning is done once and for all that will restore the faith of the community, and they will ensure that the cleanliness is maintained. They also wished maximum participation to generate an impact among people.

4.7 Education of Children - a Major Task being Achieved

Researcher asked the respondents about how do the education programs bring difference in the lives of the of children. The first speaker answered that it is massive change that non-formal education has brought to this community. Earlier all the children had to go very far away to go to the school now he opened nonformal education center inside the slum. And mid-day meal was a problem when they were going to government school because of the irregularity of providing mid-day meal. Now this center has arranged very good mid-day meals, activity books, resource of different nature are also provided. The security given to kids is also very good. Another responded added to the previous comments that: all these initiatives were helpful in bringing together most of the children and made them to give up some of the bad habits like pick pocketing and begging.

The second speaker member added that there are many centers in different slums; this is the one of the best centers because all facilities are very well taken care. The first speaker also added that the thought process among slum dwellers is finally changing most of them now to believe that education is the only way forward. If they do not educate the children then their current status will barely change. He was making very realistic aspiration, not making any unrealistic ambition to make the children doctor, or engineer but to look at people around them that there are individuals who had become

house guards, home nurses, and got job as police in their nearby vicinity. These are very inspirational and realistic roles for slum dwellers. It was his understanding and his personal experience. They are not talking things for the sake of it but are very realistic. These professions also need basic education, basic literacy and it is attainable from this center and this is the thought that is finally changing and finally the mindset of the slum dwellers and he is hopeful that these facilities would take advantages at all cost.

4.8 Higher Education, Influence of Education and Future Aspirations

Is there any slum child who completed 12th? The researcher asked and speaker no. 2 from the slum said that at present community center is only till 8th, there is no 11th or 12th, B.A or above. Only education that students completed is 8th and not beyond. Can the children of the slum take the responsibility of keeping their slum clean? Can they ensure that no health hazards are there because of cleanliness or dengue malaria? They replied in a philosophical way not exactly to the point. He paused a while and whispered, *'we believe that education is very important; education can make or lead change in children'*. Then he demonstrated the example of Narendra Modi and Kejariwal. He said, *'they were also from poor background. Achievement through education, can ensure behavioral change in our children and only then they become leaders. More access to education will make them more good citizens of our country and who knows, why not a Prime Minister could come from this slum?'*. The sigh of hope and determination was expressive in their glittering eyes.

4.9 A Point of Appraisal to the Social Worker

The local leader appreciated Prachodana social worker and said that he is very good resource who identified himself personally attached to the slum, many people may not even want to come to slums but he personally comes to the slum and finds out what are the needs and requirements to make necessary changes, necessary contributions to ensure the slum is taken care. He also added that there are few slum dwellers who feel that all of that he does is for his personal vested interests like vote but at majority slum dwellers have the opinion that they are in right direction and beneficial to the slum.

Another speaker said that if an individual does good only then he will get good. This is that God wish that we should do good for everybody, only then

the good will come back. He said that the leader is the God sent person and he would get good from all of us and then he continued his expression that if child from the slum becomes employable, reached high position in life, that is the best remuneration our leader can claim. The entire slum would enjoy blessing with the very presence and contribution of this man.

4.10 Sustainability of Healthy Practices and Hygiene

Researcher asked a question: How they can practice the health and hygiene which are taught in the class rooms, at their home and personal life? Will they be able to follow this hygiene pattern at their houses and make them healthier? For example, use of common toilets, keeping wastes in the dustbins, avoid throwing culture etc. Leader of the group responded, *'we fathers go for work to earn livelihood and others stay back home and it's their responsibility to look after the children like exhorting "dear son, it's not hygiene, and you will be ill or don't play in the rain; don't beg or wander in the streets, wearing dirty clothes or wander in the market places to beg etc. Send them to school, educate them; tell them to go to the school and acquire knowledge and job and stand on your own in front of the parents; we repeat it again and again'*. Then the researcher put forward the idea to form Self Help Groups (SHGs) comprising 5 or 6 families. They were asked to make life style changes with those SHGs and NGO assured its support. It was decided to conduct meeting of SHG once in a week. If they make a group of 5 or 6 families and it would help in discussions and deliberations to examine their activities and to be a witness to others in all good works they initiate. The respondents welcomed the challenge to create a slum with difference.

5. Discussions

There were health issues in the slum because of the unhygienic practices, carelessness of the people and unavailability of resources. Social worker could sensitize them the need of healthy atmosphere for a healthy life and sustainable development. Ritesh Dwivedi (2015) had done a study at Tughlakabad slum in Delhi and he found that many diseases and illnesses are prevalent here due to gross unhygienic practices. Awareness programs or mere activities may not be effective to bring the change (Dwivedi, 2015). There needs to be strong conviction for the people to change their life style and behavior and they need to be educated for the same to keep good habits

and practices. Here the social worker could win in his attempt to certain extent.

Ritesh Dwivedi (2015) study narrates that: Most of the people defecate in the open or use unsanitary facilities, with a serious risk of exposure to sanitation-related diseases. India's performance on providing proper sanitation facilities, one of the major goals of Millennium Development Goals, has been very weak and if the MDG sanitation target is to be achieved, innovative approaches need to be developed to reduce the time span from policy making to services delivery (Dwivedi, 2015). They could establish mobile toilets there in the slum and in that way, they could bring change in their certain behaviors and practices even though there are people who needs to be changed a lot even in open defecation and other healthy practices.

Gulnawaz Usmani and Nighat Ahmad (2018) mention in their study that: the existing health infrastructure in urban areas is insufficient to meet the basic needs of growing urban population. The municipalities, state government, and the central government have tried to build up urban healthcare infrastructure. Thus, in many urban areas the primary health care facilities are not available; some of them are underutilized while there are over crowding in secondary and tertiary care services (Usmani et al, 2018). Multi-specialty hospitals which are mushrooming in urban areas are keeping aloof the slum poor. They are not affordable for the slum people and there is some fear in the mind of the slum people to go to Multi-specialty hospitals because of the organ kidnapping. Education and personal convictions only can bring changes in their life style, behavior and practices. Governmental intervention is through municipal or corporation is highly required to provide sanitation facilities to the people in the slum. They should not be exploited because of their lack of knowledge and their powerlessness by the multi-business corporate. Here NGO comes in picture to stand for their rights and to educate them the needs of healthy environment.

The NGOs intervention is exemplary. First, they were supporting to fulfill primary needs with mid day meal and still it continues there. They also provided uniform dress to school children. We remember the slogan 'roti, kapada, makan' is the primary need of everyone. So, people will be thinking of their primary needs before health and hygiene. People may prioritize their needs according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Once their primary needs are met with the intervention of NGO, they were ready to move for achieving

higher goals. The attitudinal change and behavioral changes happen when people are being educated. The sustainability of the project is in the hands of the people and it will be continuing through SHGs. It is important that having a formal system to maintain the sustainability and SHGs can perform this role. NGO works as a mediator and motivator to stand for them.

6. Conclusion

This study is summarizing the issues and challenges that people faced in a particular slum and how an NGO could intervene to their problems and how it succeeded. We can replicate it as a model of NGOs work in the slum area. The people are sensitized and they have taken the responsibility to keep healthy atmosphere and they were ready to join hands for the common good. The awareness among the leadership is spreading to the community and it supports the members to work together for improving their life standards and facilities. The study also brings models of good social worker. A good social worker is living in the heart of the people and he/she will be the hero for them. A good social worker is one who is always with the people to motivate them, guide them, support them, correct them empower them and stand for them.

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