A CONTEMPORARY ANALYSIS ON URBAN SLUMS AND THEIR PROBLEMS OF HALDIA MUNICIPAL AREA IN WEST BENGAL, INDIA

Anirban Baitalik*

Raghupati Pramanik**

Sankha Jana***

Abstract: *A slum is a heavily populated urban informal settlement characterized by substandard housing and squalor. More recently slums have been predominantly found in urban regions of developing and undeveloped parts of the world, but are also found in developed economies. According to UN-HABITAT, around 33% of the urban population in the developing world in 2012, or about 863 million people, lived in slums. Slums sprout and continue for a combination of demographic, social, economic, and political reasons. Common causes include rapid rural-to-urban migration, poor planning, economic stagnation and depression, poverty, high unemployment, informal economy, colonialism and segregation, politics, natural disasters and social conflicts. Slums and squatters are the informal settlements of Haldia Municipal Area that accommodate the low-income group of people. The population of this low-income group is still increasing in the study area, in spite of the number of limitations in the slums and squatters. Present study shows the problems of the urban slums of the study area.*

Keywords: *Slum, Squatters, Informal Settlement, Developed Economics, Low-income group*

*Research Scholar, Institute of Rural Reconstruction, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India.

**Student, Master of Social Work, Netaji Subhas Open University, Kolkata, West Bengal, India.

***Student, Master of Education, University of Calcutta, West Bengal, India.

1. INTRODUCTION:

A slum is a heavily populated urban informal settlement characterized by substandard housing and squalor. More recently slums have been predominantly found in urban regions of developing and undeveloped parts of the world, but are also found in developed economies. Roughly 1.37 crore households, or 17.4% of urban Indian households lived in a slum in 2011. The rapid urbanization in conjunction with industrialization and lack of infrastructural and employment opportunities in rural areas has led to mass rural-urban migration and this has resulted in the growth of slums. The proliferation of slums occurs due to many factors such as the shortage of developed land for housing. The high prices of land beyond the reach of urban poor.

2. STUDY AREA:

Haldia is a city and a municipality in Purba Medinipore in the Indian state of West Bengal. It is a major seaport and industrial belt located approximately 50 Kilometres southwest of Calcutta near the mouth of the Hoogly river, one of the distributaries of the Ganges. The latitudinal extension of the study area is 21°55' N to 22°5' N and longitudinal extension is 88°3' E to 88°40' E and height of the place from mean sea level is only 4 meters.
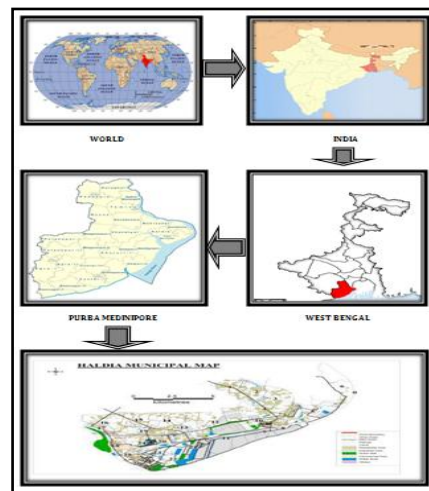

Figure – 1: Location map of the study area

3. OBJECTIVES:

1. To know the slum population and their socio-economic conditions of the study area.

2. To know the slum environment.

4. METHODOLOGY:

This study is based on both primary and secondary data. Data collected through observation, interview, research related articles, research paper, reports etc. Data also collected from different website related to the slum area studies.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Slums and squatters are the informal settlements of Haldia Municipal Area that accommodate the low-income group of people. The population of this low-income group is still increasing in the study area, in spite of the number of limitations in the slums and squatters.

Over 10000 - 15000 people live in slums and squatters of Haldia Municipal Area with very little utility service. Water supply has improved a bit, but sanitation service is still very poor and does not meet the requirements of this huge population. Only 55% of the poor households currently receive tap water. On the other hand, none of the slums get proper sewerage services and only 9% of this population manages to get solid waste management services. As a result, both household waste and human generated wastes go directly or indirectly into the low-lying lands, open spaces or water bodies of the study area and causes a number of problems. Moreover, inadequate safe drinking water in slums and squatters causes many problems, which are as follows.

- Unsanitary lifestyle.
- Inadequate access to safe drinking water.
- Increased health risks.

The Haldia Municipality, NGOs and community participation together cannot meet the required supply of water and sanitation services in the slums due to the following reasons.

- Excessive continuous growth of slum population.
- Limitation of resources.
- Excessive demand of water within service area.

The slum area suffers extreme inequality in terms of land use practices. It has been reported that only 30% people of this study shares 80% of the total residential area and the rest 70% of the people shares only 20% of residential area.

It is assumed that most of them constructed slums and squatters wherever they found suitable open space (near rail line, bus stops, and parks) to live in. However, both slum settlement and population are increasing and open space is being reduced due to the following factors.

- Rural to urban migration.
- Low paid jobs.
- Increasing living cost in Haldia town.

All slums and squatters are made of bamboo, straw, low quality wood and tin sheets. Most of them hold a single room for the whole family that makes the slums of Dhaka very congested. According to a recent report, population density in slums and squatters ranges from 700 to 4,210 per acre, and a minimum of four and maximum of ten people share a room, which is highly congested and unhealthy (HAD annual report, 2010 - 2011). This poor housing and lifestyle cause a number of problems for the environment of study area, which are given below.

- Indoor pollution.
- Degradation of air quality with frequent slum fires.
- Increase incidence of communicable disease that may spread to city dwellers from the workplace.

However, proper housing is a very important factor for social and psychological development of children, but the practical situation of all these in formal settlements indicates a dreadful life with poor lighting, ventilation, high crowding and living and cooking either close to or at the same place.

Due to lack of energy supply, most of the slums and squatters burn biomass fuel for domestic cooking. If it assumes that at least 10000 - 15000 people residing in the slums and squatters of the study area burn biomass at a rate of 0.25 kg/day/person, this results in 500 tons of fuel burning in a day. The reality may be a little more or less than the assumption, but the amount is still high. Burning of this huge amount of biomass creates several problems for city environment key of which are as follows.

- Deterioration of outdoor air quality.
- Reduction of vegetation coverage.
- Indoor air pollution.

- Deterioration of health.
- Slum fire.

There exists no hospital, clinic or any kind of healthcare facilities in the area. This makes the dwellers vulnerable to high risk of illnesses and emergence of natural disasters.

Conflict (quarrel, clash, fight) in the slums and squatters is a regular phenomenon. This creates noise and violence that disturbs the city dwellers, particularly the nearby residents, office workers, and school children. Besides, many of the slum residents are involved in prostitution, drug trafficking, hijacking, mugging etc. These activities threaten the social and cultural environments of the study area. The government should enforce law and order to improve the overall environment of the study area through the reduction of anti-social activities.

6. CONCLUSION:

Slums are a clear manifestation of a poorly planned and managed urban sector and, in particular, a malfunctioning housing sector. Each day a further 120,000 people are added to the populations of Asian cities, requiring the construction of at least 20,000 new dwellings and supporting infrastructure. Slum upgrading projects or schemes should be properly organized for the improvement of the slums of the study area.

REFERENCES:

1. Alamgir, M., Jabbar, M., & Islam, M. (2010). Assessing the livelihood of slum dwellers in Dhaka city. Journal of the Bangladesh Journal of Business Management & Social Sciences Research (JBM&SSR) ISSN No: 2319-5614 Volume 2, No.6, June 2013 www.borjournals.com Blue Ocean Research Journals 61 Agricultural University, 7(2), 373-380. doi:10.3329/jbau.v7i2.4749

2. Bose, K., Bisai, S., Das, P., Dikshit, S., & Pradhan, S. (2007). Relationship of income with anthropometric indicators of chronic energy deficiency among adult female slum dwellers of Midnapore town. J. Hum. Ecol, 22(2), 171-176

3. Chandna, R.C. (2008) Geography of Population: Concept, Determinants and Patterns, Kalayani Publishers.

4. Government of India (1996) India- National Report-Habitat Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation, New Delhi

5. Government of India (2001) India Report on Urban Indicators State of Indian Cities Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation, New Delhi

6. Mahadevia, Darshini (1991) Emerging Process of Residential Segregation in Metropolitan Cities - Case Study of Mumbai and Madras Doctoral Thesis, Centre for Regional Development, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

7. Naik, Ranjit (1997) "Development Controls and Private Sector" Lecture delivered in the refresher course of ' Integrated Local Development' Organised by IHS, Rotterdam

8. Pandey G. (1983) "Juvenilles in Slums: A Study of Six Slums in Mumbai" in Sehgal (ed) (1998) Slum Upgradation, Emerging Issues and Policy Implications Bookwell Publications, New Delhi

9. Panwalkar, V.G. and Pratima (1989), "Slum Upgradation : A policy Alternative to Management of Spontaneous Settlements : Mumbai Experience" IHSP Research Report No.22, HSMI, New Delhi

10. Patel, Sheela, Celine d' Cruz and Sunder Burra, (2002)"Beyond evictions in a global city: People Managed Resettlement in Mumbai" Environment and Urbanisation Vol.14 no1 April

11. Perspective plan for Haldia Planning Area: 2025, (2011) Haldia Development Authority.