

Right to Primary Education and Disadvantaged Children in Urban Slums: Context and Concerns

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Abstract

Urban slums are a widespread phenomenon and appear in almost all cities worldwide. Slum-dwellers are underprivileged sections of urban society and are deprived of basic livelihood, health, and education. Education is a fundamental human right and a key indicator of a country's overall development. Societal progress and nations' socio-economic development depend upon their citizens' educational status. The Right to Education Act 2009 provides free and compulsory education to all with no discrimination. Children in slums were found to be more silently excluded, regularly irregular, and dropouts in elementary school stages than children in non-slum areas. Mostly, these issues are left unaddressed, but considering the value of education to society, they need to be addressed immediately. Hence, the current study focuses on urban slum children's rights to education and the challenges they face in their living conditions, homes, and social environments in the context of education. Also, an effort was made to cover the role of the non-formal education centre (under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) and intervention in promoting education. Besides, the study underlines the implications for the upcoming research and practice interventions for deprived slum children.

Keywords: Disadvantaged Children, Primary Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Urban Slum.

Introduction

In post-modern times, rural people's central focus is entering urban spaces. Gathering and land sharing in urban spaces ultimately give birth to slums in cities worldwide. The wave of growing industrialisation, urbanisation, social changes, employment opportunities, and easy access to health and education has changed the urban population's size (Lewis, 2010; Laing, 2014; Sumangala,

2022). Education is one of the most important indicators of the socio-economic development of any nation. Studies (Husain, 2005; Nambissan, 2014; Bose, 2016) found that children in urban slums are the most deprived and often leave basic education. Due to a lack of awareness, concerns about the importance of education, and the need to transform their lives, the educational status of urban slums is very low. According to the quality index, the social lives of slum children

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are also deplorable. Living in the city in slum areas, each family has to buy everything, especially bread and butter. As a result of their poor living conditions, family members engage in economic activity at all ages. The environment in which they live is mostly unsanitary and serves as a storage facility (Laing, 2014; Herman, 1966). Dwellers in urban slums face a difficult situation regarding providing adequate education for their children. Concerning the importance of education in human life, the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India, enacted in 2002, under Part III, inserted Article 21A, "Right to Education," as a fundamental right to offer free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6-14 years in such a manner as the state may, by law, determine. In connection to that, Jyoti Kendra Centers in Assam are one of the significant supportive non-formal educational programmes under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA); considering the value of education to society, the government implemented the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, concerning educational safeguards for deprived slum children of the unreached area.

Right to Education: Child Rights Perspectives

Education is and will always be a significant indicator of establishing a solid foundation in a person's life. It contributes to the socioeconomic development of any society. Education is a route to learning or gaining knowledge, skills, beliefs, morals, and behaviour (Dutta & Dey, 2019; Sumangala, 2022). Since it is considered a factor in social development, slum communities are still educationally backward. Low educational attainment and high dropout rates are common in slum areas. Also, the educational backwardness of slum children makes them vulnerable to different problems that affect their personal and social environments (Nambissan, 2014; Tsujita, 2009; Herman, 1966). Literacy has been discussed as one of the crucial features of a nation's social

development, economic growth, social mobility, and political stability. In contrast, illiteracy rates have quickly been related to increased poverty, economic stagnation, and underdevelopment (Khasnabis & Chatterjee, 2007; Dutta & Dey, 2019). The actual responsibility of education is to modify behaviour and bring all-around progress to society. Indeed, it is deliberately planned to train, refine, and culture a child to lead a group life and effectively adjust to their environment. As a result, children receive an education due to the needs and requirements of the society in which they live. Besides, the child of today is the citizen of tomorrow, and so it is the main function of education to shape a child's life and the future of a country.

In the Indian context, the total literacy rate is 74.04 per cent for males, 82.2 per cent for females, and 65.5 per cent for both. According to the 2011 Indian census, primary school enrollment is 93 per cent, secondary school enrollment is 69 per cent, and post-secondary enrollment is 25 per cent. In reality, the literacy rate still needs to reach the goal of universalizing elementary education in the 6–14 years of age range in order to achieve 100 per cent enrollment and retention in all habitats. The Right to Education Act of 2009 (Article 21A of the Indian Constitution) mandates free and compulsory education for all children aged 6 to 14 years. Further, the nationwide Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan programme was started in 2002 to universalize elementary education by 2010. Other significant education regulations or programmes, such as Directive Principles of State Policy, indicate that children up to 14 years old are expected to receive free and compulsory education, UNCRC-survival, protection, participation, and development rights, Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan, and New Education Policy 2020. If implemented in spirit, these provisions could bring significant educational transformation to the slums. Presently, India ranks 92 in education among the 145 countries worldwide. It has directed many efforts

required in the field of education in India (India Today, 2015). In the context of Assam, the literacy rate scenario is unfavourably placed a little below (73.2%) as compared to the national average of 74.04 per cent. As per census data from 2011, Assam has the seventh-highest literacy rate in the North East, ranking seventh out of eight states. The average literacy rate of Silchar city is 90.93 per cent, with male and female literacy rates of 93.25 and 88.99 per cent, respectively, as per the 2011 census. Furthermore, there are still significant disparities between male-female, community, tribe, caste, class, religion, rural-urban, and urban slums.

Urban Slum Children: An Indian Context

Urban slums are a worldwide phenomenon found in almost all cities. Slum dwellers are underprivileged sections of urban areas and are unaware of the importance of education. The government of India has defined slum areas as those where the buildings are unfit for human habitation (The Slum Areas Improvement and Clearance Act, 1956). In general, slum dwellers live in small rooms with inadequate ventilation, use common and unclean toilets, prepare foods in unsanitary conditions, lack a proper environment for a child to prepare his or her lessons, and drains remain unclean—a common scenario (Bose, 2016; Laing, 2014). The physical environment and socioeconomic conditions in slums are both hazardous to one's health. Increasing health hazards in slums, such as skin problems, common colds, malnutrition, health issues, and seasonal and non-seasonal migration, are more frequent and largely affect a child's education (Khan & Azid, 2011; Phukan, 2014; Nambissan, 2020). Besides, studies (Aggarwal & Chugh, 2003; Husain, 2005) have pointed out that, along with educational backwardness, most of the children in the slums are dropping out of school in the preliminary stage of schooling. In 2011, approximately 1.37

crore houses, or 17.4 per cent of urban houses, existed in India (Shrinivasan, 2013). According to the 2011 Census of India, the child population aged 0-14 is estimated to be 29.5 per cent. In general, the universal goal of education, as it relates to children living in slums, must be included in education for national advantage. In Assam, nearly two lakh people reside in slums across 31 towns. The total slum population stood at 1,97,266. The figure of slum dwellers in Assam is the highest in the North East states. In the state of Assam, there are 1,17,124 slum dwellers, 70,979 recognised slum dwellers, and 9,163 notified slum dwellers (Bhuyan, 2013). Silchar city and its expansion have a total of 4,746 slums, with a population of 22,749. It is around 12.37 per cent of the population of Silchar city and its outgrowth, which is 178,865 (Silchar City Population, 2011). In India, the SSA and the government of Assam have launched various educational incentive programmes, such as the Jyoti Kendra education centre, Mid Day Meal, free textbooks, uniforms, copies, school bags, and teaching-learning materials, to promote better education in novel ways in slums. It is claimed that various learning opportunities are available for urban-deprived children living in slum areas, but only with a pen and paper. However, the reality of child education rates in slums is unfortunate, and most are deprived of the multifaceted issues of urban society.

Objectives

- To understand the socio-economic circumstances of Silchar Kalibari Char's slum dwellers
- To explore the challenges faced by disadvantaged slum children in achieving primary education
- To know the role of non-formal education centres (under SSA) and interventions to promote slum education

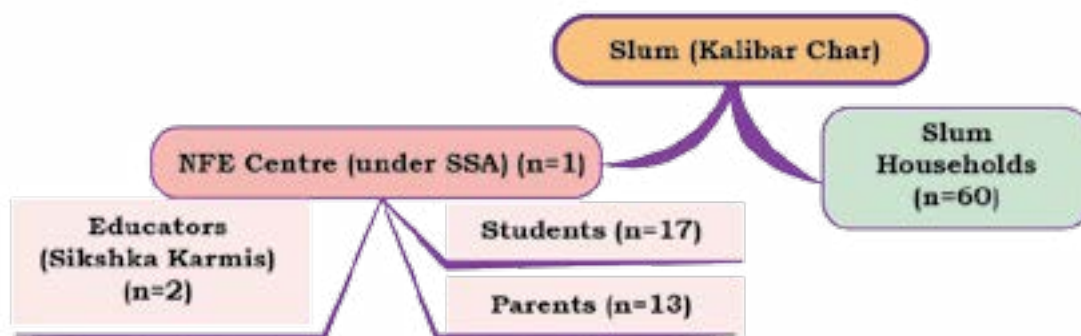


Diagram 1 : Illustration of Sample Size and Selection Procedure for Data Collection

Methodology

The current study utilised an exploratory research design to incorporate empirical data and secondary sources. For the study, the researchers employed a mixed (quantitative and qualitative) approach to gain an in-depth understanding of disadvantaged children's challenges and initiatives that have been taken by non-formal education centre for urban slum children's education.

Study Area: Geographically, the study was conducted in the urban slum of Silchar city, the second-largest city in Assam and the largest in the Barak valley, and has 26 notified slums as per the record of the Town and Country Planning Office and Silchar Municipal Board, 2018. Also, it is the city in Assam with the fastest population growth. This study is being conducted in a slum, namely the Kalibar Char slum of Silchar, because it is the city's oldest and most densely populated slum and has a non-formal education centre, namely the Sanjoy Gandhi Special Training Centre (Jyoti Kendra under SSA). The researcher selected purposively to have a fair idea of disadvantaged children's education in urban slums.

Sampling: The non-probability purposive sampling technique was adopted for the present studies. Sixty households (n=60) were selected from the Kalibari Char slum as a sample. Information about socioeconomic conditions and challenges to obtaining a primary education was gathered from households interviewed using an interview

schedule, informal discussions, and direct observation. Also, a non-formal education (NFE) centre (n=1), namely Jyoti Kendra (under SSA), located within the slum, where mostly deprived Kalibari Char slum children attend, is being studied. Apart from this, data related to the facilities and NEF centre was collected by conducting key informant interviews (KIIs) with educational workers known as Shiksha Karmis (n=2), students (n=17) and parents (n=13) of the centre, with the help of an interview guide and through informal discussions.

Data Collection and Analysis: An interviewing method was adopted to gather data for the study. Focused observations, self-reviews, and field diaries have been contentiously used as data. Statistical data regarded as secondary data sources are also used in this study. The study used unstructured and semi-structured interviews with an interview schedule and interview guide as data collection tools during the fieldwork. The quantitative data analysis was done using MS Excel and a simple mean calculation. At the same time, qualitative data collection and analysis are carried out simultaneously by presenting thematic discussions and narrative quotes and using MindMaster software for diagramming ideas that impart an understanding of the themes.

Findings and Discussion

In the following sections, the study digs into the themes of socio-economic conditions and

the challenges faced by disadvantaged slum children in obtaining an education. Also, explore the role of non-formal education centres (Jyoti Kendra under SSA) and education workers' interventions to promote slum education and children's rights to education.

Socio-Economic Status of the Slum Dwellers

Socio-economic conditions are an important indicator of a community's living standard. It reflects the overall picture of a particular community and its social surroundings. The study found that almost 65 per cent of families are nuclear and 35 per cent are joint families. Nuclear families have an average size of 4 to 6 members, whereas joint families consist of 10 to 12 members. Furthermore, the majority of the families (80%) have migrated from neighbouring districts and different parts of India, particularly from neighbouring districts, including Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Barak Valley, Indian states like Uttar Pradesh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Tripura, as well as from other countries such as Bangladesh. In contrast, 20 percent of slum dwellers migrated from the Cachar district's rural villages to the city. It was found that 85 per cent are Hindus, and 15 per cent stay around the Muslim minority. According to data from the 2011 Census, 12.72 per cent of Silchar's population lives in slums. The Kalibari Char slum comprises 2500 families with almost 21000 inhabitants, and 80 per cent of families live in rented houses. The study discovered that 43 per cent of the population was between 6 and 14 years old.

Data has brought to light that slum dwellers with inadequate, unsafe, and unsecured housing are the bigger problems that remain among the slums. Similar results have been found in the study conducted by (Choudhury, 2006; Tsujita, 2009; Laing, 2014) on slums. Besides, two types of houses are mostly found, i.e., bamboo walls with a tin roof and brick walls with a concrete roof. There is no separate kitchen for cooking, one

common latrine, and a mostly unclean and unhygienic bathroom. There are no drains, so dirty water flows over the space, and garbage is found throughout the locality, spreading odours around it. The street dogs and cats catch the garbage, spreading the foul odour throughout the slum. Slum dwellers are mostly employed in daily labour, such as daily wage labourers, domestic helpers, rickshaw pullers, hawkers, drivers, delivery men, porters, sweepers, and footpath sellers. Around 12 per cent of heads of families (male or female) are not engaged in any economic work because of ill health, old age, or being addicted to alcohol or drugs. For this study, the slum dwellers' monthly household income was divided into three categories: (a) less than 3000, (b) between 3001 and 6000, and (c) 6000 and above. The study found that approximately 65 per cent belonged to the first group, nearly 26 per cent to the second, and 9 per cent to the third. Most parents are illiterate, and the mother's illiteracy rate (58%) is higher than the father's (42%). The literacy status among parents is lower. In this study, no single parent was found after the 10th grade. Simultaneously, studies (Choudhury, 2006; Tsujita, 2009; Khasnabis & Chatterjee, 2007) also found that low parental education levels in the slums reflect the most adverse attitude toward the importance of children's education. Furthermore, 11 per cent of children aged 6 to 14 are not enrolled, 23 per cent are enrolled but do not attend school regularly, 8 per cent are dropouts, and 58 per cent are continuing their education. Respondents highlighted that children are silently excluded from education because they attend school on an irregular, non-regular basis and mostly drop out between and after the upper and lower primary levels of schooling.

Challenges Faced by Children in Urban Slums in Obtaining Primary Education: Some Reflections

Slums are the hub of most societal problems. Children who live in slums are more likely

to become victims of prostitution, beggarly, child trafficking, child labour, and child marriage. It has been claimed that crime rates are higher even in the slums. There are numerous disadvantages or issues that urban slum children encounter, with the right to primary education being one of the most important indicators of human development (World Bank, 2006; UNESCO, 2011; Bose, 2016). The studies found that most of the children in the slums are irregular or drop out of education in the elementary school stage (Mugisha, 2006; Tsujita, 2009; Sumangala, 2022). They are deprived due to inadequate living conditions, large family size, terrible health, unsuitable home and social surroundings, seasonal migration, multilingual problems, their parents' illiteracy or low educational level, uncertain occupation and income, and an inadequate educational environment (Thapan, 1997; Bhan & Rodricks, 2012; Nambissan, 2020). For example, when the researcher interacted with a literate senior (63 years) slum dweller about why slum children do not attend school or dropouts. He highlighted—

"I observed that when a child is in class three and has not learned his or her lesson or is unable to read, he or she becomes disinterested in class four lessons. Once s/he is unable to complete the class three lessons. He/she failed to adjust to class four. . . unable to cope with other learned children. In fifth grade, he will not be able to read or write anything in front of his other friends. To save his/her minimum self-respect, the child stops going to school and becomes a dropout.

"Data also revealed that slum dwellers describe their children as being out of school because of the education system, teachers, parents, and, largely, our community. Furthermore, most families (95%) in slums are housed in single or double dark wet rooms with no proper ventilation and a bed for sleeping. They frequently use a single room for cooking, storing, washing, bathing, and other activities. For large

families 'accommodation,' most houses had bunk beds. They carried out activities like preparing vegetables, cooking food, watching TV, listening to music, and chatting in their single room. As a result, the home and surrounding environment are unsuitable for studying. Most families have three or four school-age children, with fathers or mothers being the sole earners. Furthermore, their occupation is insecure, and the family members rely solely on their earnings. In that context, the basic amenities of a family—three meals a day, health, and quality education, are tough to meet. It was discovered that water provided by the Silchar municipality was commonly used twice daily, in the morning and evening, for one hour in routine practice. They have to stand in long queues for water and store it for washing, bathing, cooking, and other purposes. Female children in their families are mostly responsible for standing in long lines and waiting for water. Besides, this is the noisiest time in slum areas during the water supply. The data found that the most common issues among children and adults in the slum are malnutrition and a lack of health and hygiene awareness. Diseases like tuberculosis, polio, anaemia, low pressure, skin disease, malaria, and deficiency of various vitamins and minerals are common in slums (Herman, 1966; UN-Habitat, 2007; Khan & Azid, 2011). Also, an NFE centre education worker (37 years old) observed,

"Among adult males, drugs and alcohol are consumed publicly. They spend most of their earnings on alcohol, drugs, or gambling instead of the family's basic requirements or their children's education. Addiction causes quarrels, slang language, physical violence with wives, and beating children . . . daily matters in slum households."

Thus, it badly impacts not only the child's socialisation process but also the child's behaviour in future activities. As a result, the home and surrounding environment in an urban slum are not conducive to a child's education. Even if he wants to, he is

distracted by personal and social issues and is unable to focus on his studies. Most urban slum families have migrated from rural villages, neighbouring districts, and other states. They used to visit their relatives for days and months for different ceremonies, like marriages, rituals, and festivals. However, visiting relatives interferes with their children's education and attendance, leading to poor academic performance. Moreover, the mother tongue of urban slum children mostly varies with the school's medium of instruction. The slum area is mixed with migrants from multi-lingual communities, i.e., Bangla, Baschpuri, Hindi, and wrongly pronounced English. As a result, children from urban slums frequently struggle to cope with the school's medium of instruction. Lack of interest in studying has resulted in school irregularities and silent school dropouts. Why are they dropouts? In the slums, the major problem is substance abuse. They have a massive impact on substances, being mostly drug addicts. They get into all addictions, whether in bidi, cigarettes, alcohol or any substance they get into and need money. When they needed money, they left school or education and insisted on trying to earn money differently. It can be bagging, rag picking, or child labour. Besides, an educated woman (33 years old) highlighted the spending culture in the slum. She quoted,

"I have closely observed some slum dwellers who earn more than 1,000 rupees daily but do not spend five rupees on a newspaper because they think buying a newspaper is a waste of money. At the same time, the same slum dwellers spend 300 rupees on foreign wine. I have seen the money they spend or give priority primarily to wine, mobile bills, and gambling."

Data also brought to light that slum cultures differ in terms of expenditure and the way they prioritise. Urban slum dwellers quickly get access to earning sources in the city. However, giving their time and money for children's education is worthless. They

have different types of amusement, but they are unaware of some basic facilities of human life, like health, education, and pure water, and they are not willing to know. Also, a lack of parental literacy and economic instability are the major causes of children's low educational status. For example, a parent of slum children expressed—

"I have five children, and I cannot guide . . . because I am not literate and do not know how to read or write. I have seen that schools alone cannot provide education without private tuition. Even if I wished to send my children to private tutors for proper education, I would not be able to do so because of our adverse economic position."

Simultaneously, data from slum parents described that, due to low-income family conditions, they engaged their children in many economic activities instead of schooling, like tea stalls, domestic work, and ragpicker activities, to support the family's livelihood. Overall, slum children's quality primary education is far from the child's right-based perspective, as mentioned in Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 of quality and universal primary education. Although the government has taken some steps to encourage children at the micro-level to return to school and participate in the school education system in order to minimise the problems, to a large extent, the government, non-governmental organisations, and other like-minded individuals must come forward to provide special initiatives for deprived children in urban slums. Likely, the NFE centre under SSA, Assam, was also launched in slums to address the challenges of disadvantaged children for the educational upliftment of slum-deprived children.

Non-Formal Education Centre (Jyoti Kendra under SSA): Initiatives towards Disadvantaged Slum Children

The Non-formal Education Centre (Jyoti Kendra under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan) is a specially run education training

centre in urban slums to include deprived slum children in the mainstream of the formal education system. The centres are established in urban slum areas for deprived slum children aged 6 to 14 years. With the goal of educating deprived children, such as, out-of-school children, working children, street children from various parts of the city (railway platforms, bus stands, market areas), juvenile delinquents, and children of commercial sex workers in urban slum areas, the main attention is to ensure their protection and educational rights, as they are the most vulnerable and excluded children in the existing education system.

Additionally, the role of the education centre is to promote the right to education for deprived urban slum children. Data reflected that every year, education workers from the centre conduct door-to-door surveys in urban slum areas to identify deprived urban children, such as out-of-school children, child labourers, and never enrolled children, among others, in the 6–14 age group, in order to provide them with an education through the non-formal education centre. The motive is to educate every urban slum child from 6-14 to improve and protect their right to education by mainstreaming them into nearby formal schools. According to an interview with an education worker for slum-deprived children, the role is the most challenging. She underlined—

“To identify or find out who is completely detached from school or has no relation to building schools or education. Pick those (excluded) children and motivate their parents most difficult task. . . request the family to send their child to the centre and set the class timing with the connivance of the child’s parents so that parents can send and the child can attend the centre. Again, a few parents do not send their children, so as education workers, we call or search for children and bring them into the centre to educate them before the classes begin each day.”

Simultaneously, education workers expressed that the NFE centre is a surprise gift for many slum-deprived children. They found that many students had touched books, copies, and pens and read and wrote at nine or ten years of age for the first time in their lives at this supportive education centre. Parents, on the other hand, disregard their children's education. The centre provides combined activity-based basic education for children up to 14 years of age. As the centre is primarily for deprived urban slum children and working children, class times are determined by student and parent cooperation. Again, this is determined after a door-to-door survey and parent opinion, with the approval of Jyoti Kendras, District Mission Coordinator, SSA, regarding their children's availability for the three-hour class per day. The slum's education centre class is in the early evening, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., on all working days. The medium of instruction is local language (Bengali), mostly activity and Teaching Learning Materials (TLM) based education. The teachers evaluated them every three months to promote the children to the next class. The total period of training or education is one year, during which they prepare the children for mainstreaming into nearby formal schools, either lower primary or upper primary, depending on the child's eligibility, age, and performance.

In light of its significant contribution, as per the (Times of India, 2014) records, the number of children enrolled in Jyoti Kendras in January 2011, and 2012 was 35,651. Until January 2011, about 13,213 children had been brought to the mainstream through the Jyoti Kendras in Assam. However, due to a lack of adequate teachers and the low pay of education workers (Shiksha Karmis), the lack of timely supply of school kits for children hampered the functioning of NFE centres. Thus, many young children and their parents in urban slums are demotivated in the NFE centres. Furthermore, interviews with centre volunteers about the challenges they face in providing education revealed that the main issues are parent illiteracy

and a lack of awareness of the importance of education. Besides that, an education worker strongly expressed that I had experienced and observed this slum very closely. She commented–

“I used to hear slum parents say that sending our children to a tea stall is preferable rather than sending them to school. Because he could earn money from a tea stall, not at school, some parents argue that if our children can earn Rs 4000-8000 per month from various sources, what is the point of education? Also, some educated people with higher education are earning the same. So, why should we spend so much time and money on education?”

Additionally, education workers also criticised and commented that, in today's society, they are, to some extent, correct. However, the issues of attitudes towards the quality of life, ways of talking, and the importance of education and health remain. Therefore, the education centre has taken the initiative to hold monthly parent-education volunteer meetings to raise awareness of education and its importance, despite parental participation is typically limited. In addition, the centre celebrates observational days, co-curricular activities, and competition programmes and offers chocolate to motivate children to attend school. In addition, one of the most important motivational efforts for children is the Mid Day Meal (MDM), offered previously but currently needs to be provided by the government in non-formal centres. Because MDM is not given, it is difficult to reintegrate urban slum children into the educational system. An education worker from an NFE centre shared experiences,

“Once, on my birthday, I distributed some biscuits and chocolates among the centre children, and suddenly a child came to me and kissed my hand. When I asked what had happened then, the child replied that she was hungry and had not eaten anything since the morning. I asked her if

your mother did not make anything for you in the morning. She said that her mother went to work in the early morning, and my father went with his rickshaw. Then, when I asked all the children in our centre if they had anything eaten in the morning, most said, No, madam.”

Data thus brought to light that MDM is the most significant motivator for disadvantaged slum children. According to an education volunteer, on average, 60–70 per cent of students used to attend NFE centre classes regularly. Educators also stated, “if any pocket food or light food can be provided to those children on the day after class, it may attract more deprived urban slum children to the education centre.” On the other hand, in slums, boys are more irregular in class than girls because, as previously stated, boys are more engaged in earning and playing activities. Girls, on the other hand, are sometimes absent from class for play and other times because it depends on them and their mode. Furthermore, if any child drops out during the one-year training period, in that case, they will be re-enrolled in the course classes the following year, and the children will be mainstreamed into the nearby formal schooling system after training.

Interventions to Promote Slum Children's Education: Education Workers' Perspectives
In the context of slum children's education, education workers of the NFE centre play the role of a facilitator with “dignity to the people,” working with slum dwellers (disadvantaged children, parents, and families) not sympathetically but rather empathetically (Dutta & Dey, 2019; Patil, 2016). Slum children, in general, grow up in a typical environment and are vulnerable to challenges posed by their living circumstances. They, like all children, have a childhood. Therefore, educators and practitioners have become crucial in defining and interpreting the lives of children in and out of school. They can play a dynamic role in repairing deprived children's challenges in urban slums. Education and training



Diagram 2: Intervention in dealing with Slum Children for Education

can be used to intervene in social problems in the field. The experiment consists of the professional application of teaching values and techniques to one or more people to help them gain genuine services, providing counselling and psychotherapy for individuals, families, groups, and communities to be aware of and participate in relevant legislative processes and human rights. Thus, intervention approaches developed specifically from the perspectives of education workers (Shiksha Karmis) can employ multi-disciplinary interventions to improve the education and overall conditions of slum children (see Diagram 2).

Additionally, multi-disciplinary education workers (Shiksha Karmis) can provide direct services like counselling, family therapy, and group work. They can provide counselling to redress their psychological problems, family therapy to address the specific issues that affect slum children, and group work can be used for entertaining and joyful educational purposes. Shiksha Karmis can help to

maintain NFE centre-home-community linkage and, thus, try to prevent behavioural and scholastic problems. They can use their efficacy in the education sector and assist educators with innovative ways of handling children. The approach focuses on the individual child, which helps to care for each child's overall development. Volunteer educators can investigate the causes of school dropouts and provide individualised assistance to children who drop out for specific reasons, attempting to mitigate the situation. They can help these children by linking with government and NGO facilities available for children, school equipment such as books, uniforms, and financial assistance. Many children in India are forced to work for survival; thus, Shiksha Karmis can arrange evening classes for those deprived of an education. Also, arrange classes for slum children's education to provide special education, vocational education, informal education, and life skills so that people can use their knowledge and skills to improve

their living standards. They can conduct non-formal education to bring children up to 14 years of age into the fold of education, even if they never attend formal school. The primary goal of the NFE Centre (under SSA) is to facilitate interaction between schools, communities, teachers, parents, and students to improve learning opportunities and ensure that all children have access to at least their basic social and material needs. Thus, the emphasis is on promoting social justice, gender equality, inclusion, citizen awareness, empowerment, and quality of life advancement.

Concluding Remarks

Data highlighted the challenges faced by slum dwellers due to poverty, lack of awareness, education, and existing government facilities. There are demands for appropriate government action, and NGOs should arrange awareness programmes and implement income-generation activities to improve slum living and help residents fulfil their necessities. More so, to control health issues, regular health check-up camps can be organised in slum schools, and medicine should be provided for free. Studies (Bose, 2016; Khan & Azid, 2011) also found that health awareness about various communicable diseases and the importance of health and hygiene maintenance can also be organised. It has been recorded that low school attendance and irregularities among slum children are due to relative visits and migration. The appropriate authorities and education workers need to take steps regarding the issues. They can suggest migration and relative visits during holidays and school vacations, so their children's education is not jeopardised. Data emphasises that the school environment should be attractive and joyful to inspire the education of slum children. Also, awareness programmes on the importance of education, free and compulsory education, the Right to Education Act of 2009, and other government policies and services must be

organised in slum areas. Also, for parents of slum children, adult literacy programmes should be arranged. GO-NGOs should organise social, cultural, and educational programmes for slum dwellers to motivate them towards education and its values in life. The government should lead the overall development of slum education and provide appropriate facilities for slum communities and a supportive non-formal education centre. Also, providing regular and timely books and other materials, such as uniforms, copies, pens, bags, pocket food, or MDM, helps to attract more deprived slum children and slum dwellers towards the NFE centre for education and learning.

Well, education is important for human development and a nation's progress. Hence, illiteracy and ignorance of disadvantaged groups especially deprived children in urban slums, hamper the development of society. The circumstances demand conscious minds, educators, professionals, education workers, and a multi-disciplinary team to come forward to work with deprived children in urban slums to strengthen children's education. The role and importance of education workers (Shiksha Karmis) in slum educational settings are very substantial. Education workers are trained in dealing with disadvantaged children and founded on values, equity, cultural competence, privacy, knowledge, intervention, empowerment, communication, and crisis management, all of which are essential components of educational and student-friendly education care practices. School irregularities and dropouts are caused by various factors, necessitating an intersectional approach to preventive and control measures. Thus, along with education workers (Shiksha Karmis), slum-deprived children need immediate attention and intervention from multi-professional teams, including counsellors, social workers, child psychiatrists, and health professionals. An integrated approach includes the micro, mezzo, and macro levels of intervention, which can lead to a better hope.

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