

The Urban World

Quarterly Publication



Regional Centre for Urban and Environmental Studies
All India Institute of Local Self-Government, Mumbai





Regional Centre for Urban & Environmental Studies (RCUES), Mumbai (Fully supported by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, Government of India)

Established in 1926, the All India Institute of Local Self Government (AIILSG), India is a premier autonomous research and training institution in India. The Institute was recognized as an Educational Institution by Government of Maharashtra in the year 1971. The Institute offers several regular training courses in urban development management and municipal administration, which are recognized by the Government of India and several State Governments in India.

In the year 1968, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), earlier Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India (GoI) established the Regional Centre for Urban & Environmental Studies (RCUES) at AIILSG, Mumbai to undertake urban policy research, technical advisory services, and building work capabilities of municipal officials and elected members from the States of Goa, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and UTs of Diu, Daman, Dadra & Nagar Haveli. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), Government of India added States of Assam and Tripura from February, 2012 and Lakshadweep from August 2017 to the domain of RCUES of AIILSG, Mumbai. The RCUES is supported by the MoHUA, Government of India. The MoHUA, Government of India has formed National Review and Monitoring Committee for RCUES under the chairmanship of the Secretary, MoHUA, Government of India. The Principal Secretary, Urban Development Department, Government of Maharashtra is the ex-officio Chairperson of the Advisory Committee of the RCUES, Mumbai, which is constituted by MoHUA, Government of India.

The RCUES was recognized by the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India as a National Training Institute (NTI) to undertake capacity building of project functionary, municipal officials, and municipal elected members under the earlier urban poverty alleviation programme-UBSP. The RCUES was also recognized as a Nodal Resource Centre on SJSRY (NRCS) and Nodal Resource Centre (NRC) for RAY by Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India.

The AIILSG, Mumbai houses the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Cell backed by the Government of Maharashtra for capacity building of municipal bodies and provide technical advisory services to ULBs in the State. The Water Supply & Sanitation Department (WSSD), Government of Maharashtra (GoM) established Change Management Unit (CMU) in AIILSG, Mumbai from 13th January, 2010 to 30th June, 2014 and also selected AIILSG, Mumbai as a Nodal Agency in preparation of City Sanitation Plans for 19 Municipal Corporations and 15 A Class Municipal Councils in Maharashtra State, under the assistance of Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India. The WSSD, GoM also established Waste Management & Research Centre in AIILSG, Mumbai, supported by Government of Maharashtra and MMRDA.

In August, 2013 Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India empanelled the AIILSG, Mumbai as Agency for providing technical support to the Cities / Towns of States / Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in the field of Water Supply and Sanitation, Sewerage and Drainage systems.

In July 2015, Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India empanelled the RCUES & AIILSG, Mumbai an Agency for technical support in Municipal Solid Waste Management under Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) programmes.

In February, 2016, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India empanelled the RCUES of AIILSG, Mumbai for conducting training and capacity building programme for experts of SMMU, CMMUs, COs, Key Officials and other stakeholders of the State and Urban Local Bodies (ULB) level under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY – NULM).

In December, 2017, AIILSG has been empanelled as a training entity regarding implementation of new Integrated Capacity Building Programmes (ICBP) under Urban Missions, viz. Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), Smart Cities Mission (SCM), National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM), Housing for All (HFA), Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY) and Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY) for Elected Representatives and Municipal Functionaries.

At present, RCUES and AIILSG, Mumbai is involved in providing capacity building, research and technical support to number of State Governments and ULBs for implementing various urban development missions and programmes launched by the GoI.

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9. Gender Budgeting.
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11. Mapping of Basic Services in Urban Slums.
12. Basic Services to the Urban Poor.
13. Health.
14. Security of Tenure.
15. Resettlement and Rehabilitation.
16. Mumbai Human Development Report, 2009.
(UNDP / MOH & UPA, GOI / MCGM).
17. Resource Material on Urban Poverty Alleviation.
18. Laws of Meetings.
19. Resource Material on Preparation of City Sanitation Plan (CSP) & Capacity Building for Urban Local Bodies.
20. Implementation of 74th CAA, 1992 in Urban Local Bodies and Impact Assessment of Training of Women Elected Members.

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Editorial

Current issue of The Urban World tries to capture the pulse of complex unfolding reality by publishing well research articles by scholars with varied and interdisciplinary perspectives.

The article on 'Experiences of women during corona pandemic: Ethnography of domestic space' is based on telephonic interviews of 50 women from varied socio-cultural backgrounds and brings out crucial insights in terms of additional burden of unpaid work, economic hardships, domestic harassment, scarcity of food, health issues: physical health, mental health, social health., social discrimination, helplessness of elderly women and disabled women, painful existential crisis of migrant women, impact on education of school and college going students.

The article on 'Lived Experiences of Transgender Persons (Hijras) in Guwahati Metro, Assam' portrays marginalisation and exclusion of transgender community from socio-cultural-educational progress and opportunities for dignified livelihood and gainful employment.

Article providing critical evaluation of 'Policies for Manual Scavengers in India: Implementation and Gaps' which demands social accountability for deplorable and dehumanising condition of sanitary workers forced to do manual scavenging against the law of the land that prohibits it.

Based on primary data collection, the article on 'Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Domestic Workers' talks about ground reality of precarious existence of domestic workers and concludes that there is urgent need to implement comprehensive, widespread social protections to the poor and migrant workers who have lost their livelihoods due to the lockdown.

Book Reviews of 'Development Anchored in Community Intelligence: A Handbook for Community Mobilisation' and 'Development as Community-led Journey: Learnings from Community Mobilisation Processes' give glimpses of these valuable publications in public domain and can be freely downloaded clicking on this link <https://isibangalore.com/publication> and I would like to add that these publications are a MUST read for all development thinkers as well as practitioners.

The Urban World invites scholars, policy makers, practitioners to send their original research-based articles and book reviews with special focus on developmental concerns of the Urban India.

Experiences of Women During Corona Pandemic: An Ethnography of Domestic Space

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Abstract

Pandemic is the first-time experience for many of us. It is not just a health issue, but it has socio-psychological and economic impacts. It is experienced differently by different people. It is experienced differently by different gender. Gender is linked with other social structures, which predominantly include class, caste, age, marital status, and ability. This study aims to understand experiences of lockdown; that was announced due to pandemic; by different women living in urban area.

The ethnographic study was conducted by interviewing 50 women from different groups by conducting telephonic interviews during the period of April to July 2020. "Stay home, stay safe", was told again and again to remain away from 'COVID-19'. Presumption here is we all have home, and we all are safe inside our home.

The gathered data was thematically analysed. It was observed that for all women there is fear of uncertainty and worry of family members. Lockdown led everyone to be confined in home for all the time. Home was experienced differently when confined to it during lockdown. In conflicted families, there was experience of increased domestic violence. There was loss of job leading to economic stress. Education was also affected. There

was increase in losing opportunity to continue education for girls. Women had impact on their health and livelihood. Gendered stereotypes were reenforced during pandemic. Women movements had struggled for many years to abolish gender discrimination. This pandemic has reversed those gains.

The study has shown that, all women had an anxiety about the future due to uncertainty. All were worried about getting corona to themselves and/or their family members and hence there was constant fear of falling sick. This was disturbing them. The fear of being isolated after getting corona was much more than the physical suffering due to disease as no one would be allowed to meet the patient. Women particularly were worried about how their family can manage in case they get corona. It had an impact on their livelihood along with their health. Or some, there was reduction in family income. It was difficult to manage household expenses and there was increase in workload for all women. The lockdown has also impacted education and career opportunities for women. There is increase in tendency of getting daughters married at early age rather than continuing their education. There is a shadow pandemic. Some gains made by women movements over period of many years are reversed during pandemic.

Key Words: home, lockdown, women, pandemic.

Introduction and Research Methodology

This paper is based on a short study conducted in a city in the state of Maharashtra. I had experienced the difference in using my own domestic space during the pandemic as I was working from home. This triggered a thought in my mind to study to understand the experiences of different women during this situation. Therefore, the **Objective** of the study is to understand the experiences of different women; living in the city; about the lockdown in the pandemic. This is an ethnographic study to get to know how the home as a space is experienced by various women.

The **sample size** of the study was 50. The purposive and snowball sampling method was used. Data was collected by conducting telephonic interviews as personal interviews were not possible in the current situation. The respondents were either known to me or were referred by my known persons and this was very helpful in building rapport and getting an information and cooperation from the respondent. The oral consent as obtained from the respondents and the respondents were free to opt out at any stage of data collection. The respondents were interviewed 4 to 5 times and at their convenient time. The data was collected mainly by using open ended questions. The socioeconomic details were collected. The information about their experiences was asked. The data was collected in the four months, from April to July 2020.

Profile of the Respondents

Ten women	Homemakers; Age between 35 and 70 years.
Eight women	College students; Age between 20 and 28 years
Three women	Physically disabled; Age between 19 and 45 years
Two women	Mothers of disabled children; Age between 35 and 45 years
Ten women	Working from home and working at job place; Age between 35 and 45 years
Five women	Domestic workers; Age between 35 and 45 years
Ten women	Senior citizens; Age between 65 and 87 years
Two women	Migrants to city; Age between 30 and 45 years

The lockdown was announced suddenly by the government. The first lockdown was from 25th March to 14th April 2020. Then the second lockdown was from 15th April to 3rd May 2020. The third lockdown was from 4th May to 17th May 2020. The fourth lockdown was from 18th May to 31st May 2020. This was followed by unlock one from 8th June to 30th June 2020, second unlock from 1st July to 31st July 2020. The unlock was announced but in red zone areas lockdown continued as the incidences of COVID cases were still high. The sample covered homemakers, working women, students, aged women, and disabled women. The class and caste intersectionality are included.

The family income of the respondents ranged between Rs.10000 to 2 lacs. The respondents belonged to different castes from Hindu religion. Some of them were single by choice, some were unmarried, some were married, and some were widow.

“Stay home, stay safe”, was told again and again to remain away from 'COVID -19'. Presumption here is we all have home, and we all are safe inside our home.

Major Findings

The major observations can be classified in 10 groups. These are,

1. Additional burden of unpaid work
2. Economic issues
3. Domestic harassment
4. Scarcity of food
5. Health issues: Physical health, mental health, social health.
6. Social discrimination.
7. Aged women.
8. Disabled women.
9. Migrants.
10. Students: Impact on education.

The fast city life became suddenly standstill due to sudden lockdown that was declared by the Government in the end of month of March 2020. It was for the first time everyone was experiencing the total shutdown in the city. It was a break to daily fast life in city.

1. Additional Burden of Unpaid Work

The initial few days were enjoyed as holidays and being with the family as otherwise it was not possible to gather all family members. This was so by upper- and middle-class women, both working and homemakers and married. But as it got prolonged, these homemakers experienced being doubly burdened by care work, childcare and household work due to lack of support of domestic servants. The working women had to work from home, and it was difficult for them to adjust the office work along with household responsibilities again with no support from the servants, especially for married women. There was no support or assistance from the male family members for them in doing daily household work. The household work was solely women responsibility.

2. Economic Issues

Those who could not work from home lost their wages, a few lost their jobs too. Domestic servants were at home and many employers had asked them not to join their work due to fear of infection. Informal sectors had stopped working and so women workers lost their jobs. Railways were not running so for the Wenders their earnings were stopped suddenly. In Mumbai, most couples with visual impairment travel on local trains and sing some songs for their earnings, this was stopped as there were no trains. Except for essential goods, all shops were closed. The employees of these places lost their work. Thus, many have lost their income and worried about household expenses. The women in formal sectors continued working. Bank, Post offices and hospital were working. Sanitation workers were on duty. But women had difficulties in travelling to workplace. For many of them, their husband or son would drop them and pick up from workplace on two-wheeler. These women were worried about carrying the infection to their home. One bank employee had opted to take voluntary retirement as she had elderly in laws and husband at home and they insisted her to leave the job due to fear of getting infected.

3. Domestic Harassment

In cities, houses are small. There are many persons staying in that small house. Many times, some members are doing shift duties and hence at any given time not all are present in the house. But due to the lockdown, all were at home for 24 hours. This created lack of space and privacy. It was impossible for women in the house to take rest in daytime. Maintaining physical distance was not possible due to small houses. Also, there was the problem of getting adequate water for washing hands frequently. This has again increased the work of women in the families.

Children were at home and it was great task for mothers to keep them engaged all the time. Children could not go out for playing and had to remain inside the house all the time.

Male members had lost jobs and could not get alcohol to which they are addicted. This would lead to their aggressive behaviour. Women could not go out to escape from violence. Police were busy with corona work and hence no help was available for these women. Corona had become an issue of law and order instead of health. Families with conflicts had experienced more violence against women during the lockdown period.

Maternal families wanted their married daughters to be in their in-laws' place as they could not bear their expenses and hence were asked to be with in-laws no matter how much violence they may have to face.

4. Scarcity of Food

There was less food available in house and food would be served first to male members in the family and women would eat at the last and they did not get adequate food. It was difficult for women to manage cooking with available material.

5. Health Issues

Health includes physical, mental, and social health.

Physical Health -

Women feared getting infected and worried about how the family members can manage in case they fall sick. There was fear of corona and anxiety about uncertainty about getting bed in hospital and medical care if need arises.

The women who worked in health services, had constant fear of carrying infection to home. They

had experienced death of their peer workers due to corona.

Another issue was non availability of medical services for patients with diseases other than corona. Dialysis patients could not go to the hospital for daily treatment. Pregnant women were afraid of visiting hospital as the possibility of getting infected was high. Reproductive health services were not available so many could not get contraceptives and unwanted pregnancies happened and those could not be terminated due to lack of medical services.

Regular physiotherapy was stopped. Any dental problem needed to be kept on hold for treatment. Regular medical check-ups could not be attended.

Mental Health -

Uncertainty and feeling of helplessness. The fear of death was common. Anxiety was also common. The thoughts about uncertainty would lead to depression. There was mental disturbance and feeling of discomfort.

There were many Myths coming about corona. This led to confusion. Some used to do pooja as means of getting relief. Spiritual assistance was sought. Some started doing yoga and pranayama regularly. Alternative modes of treatment were tried.

Social Health -

As women could not go out of the house, social contacts were lessened. The daily travel either in bus or train had their groups who would share their activities and feelings. Now this had stopped suddenly. Office space was also having social exchanges, which had stopped now. Feeling of being isolated led to anxiety and depression.

Use of social media has increased. They made phone calls to all relatives and friends and started

following Facebook. The need of remaining connected was felt more.

The Teaching started online. Now parents allowed their children to use mobiles as it was required for online classes. Upper class women mentioned that they got mobile from their parents during the lockdown as it was essential. New skills were learnt. Many online webinars were attended.

6. Social Discrimination

The illness required physical or bodily distance; but the propaganda was for maintaining social distance. Hygiene was important and so many had preferred keeping the people from lower caste and class away from their families. For so many days these people were accepted for the work but suddenly now they were treated as untouchables.

Women and Social movements achievements of establishing equality had gone waste and we have moved backward. We needed social solidarity and not distancing.

7. Aged Women

It was difficult to get daily essentials during the lockdown: especially where they were staying alone. Elderly women could not clean house and clothes due to old age. And could not manage cooking work. They had starved for some days. Some NGOs had helped them in providing food. They were afraid of falling sick and non-availability of medical assistance. In other times, they had support from servants and people around would come and meet them regularly but now no one could visit them. There was feeling of isolation and insecurity.

8. Disabled Women

Problem was getting to know what has happening around. For persons who could not hear, no one was

explaining, and the news were not given by using sign language. For some, mobility was an issue. Caretakers could not come. Family members neglected them. Getting proper medical assistance was an issue. Regular treatment stopped. Felt isolated and dependent. This leads to depression. Getting appliances was a problem. Hearing aid batteries were not available.

Mothers of disabled children had a very hard time taking care of disabled child. It is difficult to explain the situation to such a child especially in cases of mentally challenged children. Autistic children had difficulty in adjusting with new circumstances. Therapy sessions were discontinued due to lockdown.

9. Migrants

Migrants from rural places decided to stay here as there is no work available at native place and used all their savings for survival. Now children may not be able to go to school due to financial problems. Somehow had paid rent so far but now the landlord will cut it from the deposit. Women had started making masks and selling it. Some had started selling Vegetables. But they fear the future.

10. Students: Impact on Education

Colleges were closed. The examinations were to happen in April. But there was no clarity on when and how exams will be conducted. Students graduating this year was afraid of losing one year or even if they get their degrees, there will be greater problems of employment. Being a girl, the parents would now get her marriage which otherwise she would have decided to continue her studies. The student staying in hostel had returned home and now must do all housework and hence not getting time for her readings and other activities. Many felt that they will have to discontinue their studies and try to earn for the family. Parents was afraid of their future and decided to get rid of their responsibility

of their daughter by fixing her marriage and get it done with less expenses during pandemic.

Conclusion

All women had an anxiety about the future due to uncertainty. All were worried about getting corona to their families and hence fear of falling sick. This was disturbing them. The fear of being isolated after getting corona was much more than the physical suffering due to disease as no one would be allowed to meet the patient. Women particularly were worried about how their family can manage in case they get corona.

All the Women are engaged in work for all the time. There is no demarcation of office and house space for those working from home. Women expressed that; male members would see all days as holidays, but women are overburdened. Women are affected physically, mentally, socially, and economically.

Again, the impact on women differed as per their age, marital status, caste, class, and ability.

The pandemic has reenforced the stereotypes of gender role assignment in the family and society. Women are doubly burdened to take care of the family, elderly and disabled during pandemic along with the paid work. This would lead to leaving the paid work by women and opt to be available at home to cater to household responsibilities. In general, the men are earners and women are to take care of house. This norm is likely to be re-established due to pandemic. The paid and unpaid work among men and women is unevenly distributed in the family and in society.

For all women it is fear of uncertainty and worry of family members. They tried to be extra cautious in all activities. They are not happy with the New normal and want to go back to earlier normal situations.

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Lived Experiences of Transgender Persons (Hijras) in Guwahati Metro, Assam

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Abstract

The term transgender is an umbrella term which is used for the people who transgress their gender. It refers to those who reject their socially assigned gender and refuse to place themselves in the men/women gender binary. The Hijras of India are identified in the transgender group, who has been the third gender in the socio religious milieu of Indian society. Unlike the rest of India, Assam does not have social and cultural rituals where the presence of 'Hijra' is required. However, there are groups of Hijras who are found in Guwahati city. The present paper tried to explore the lived experiences of this marginalized group in Guwahati Metro, which is the largest city in the state of Assam. The paper explored the lived experiences of the group in terms of their survival and being on the periphery due to their gender identity.

Key Words: Lived experiences. Transgender, Hijras, Marginalized, Psychosocial, Gender Identity.

Introduction

Transgender persons or Hijras have been a part of Indian society for centuries. However, till 2011 there was no census data or recognition of third gender in India. As per 2011 census there is 4.88 Lakh population of transgender persons in the country. In India, there have been many historical

evidences of recognition of 'third gender' or persons not conforming to male or female gender since the beginning of ancient period. The concept of 'tritiyaprakriti' had been an integral part of the Hindu mythology, folklore, epic and early vedic and puranic literature. The term 'napumsaka' has been used to denote the absence of procreative ability, presented by signifying difference from masculine and female markers. The Hijra which is also known as third gender or eunuch-transvestites, have existed for centuries in the Indian sub-continent. They do not conform to conventional notions of male or female gender but combine or move between the two. Namaste (1994) refers to transgender persons as diverse individuals who do not live inside the normative sex or gender relationship. The word Hijra, which has derived from Urdu, is usually rendered as either 'eunuch' or 'hermaphrodite' which is the common reference used for the transgender community in India. The term 'eunuch' is today seen as a derogatory reference to the transgender section of society known as the Hijra community. This community in India has a recorded history of more than 4000 years. Most hijras live in groups that are organized into seven gharanas (houses), situated mainly in Hyderabad, Pune, and Mumbai. Each house is headed by a nayak, who appoints gurus, spiritual leaders who train their chelas (wards) in badhai (dancing, singing, and blessing), and protect them within and outside the community. The system replicates matriarchy, creating interdependence

between the ageing guru and the chela that has been cast out of their family. The nayak and senior gurus acting as lawmakers decide any disputes that take place among the Hijras, and administer punishments such as imposing fines and expulsion from the community. The Hijras self-identify as 'neither men nor women' or as women but in Western terms they are normally classified as hermaphroditic, intersexed, impotent, or homosexual men who dress as women and are often castrated. Aravani on the other hand is the word used for the male to female transgender who has undergone the genital modification through Sex Reassignment Surgery (SRS) or performed which is the traditional mode of castration. Kothis on the other hand is the term used for those who have adopted feminine role in the same sex relationships but do not live-in communes like the Arvanis. Jogtas are the male to female transgender who devote to the services of a particular God. Shiv Shaktis are the males who are to be married to Gods and in particular Lord Siva and are found in the state of Andhra Pradesh. They generally play the role of spiritual healers and astrologers.

The term 'transgender people' in general is used to describe those who transgress social gender norms. 'Transgender' is often used as an umbrella term to signify individuals who defy rigid, binary gender constructions, and who express or present a breaking or blurring of culturally prevalent stereotypical gender roles. Transgender people may live full or part-time in the gender role 'opposite' to their biological sex. Generally, a Trans man refers to female to male (FtM) and trans woman means male to female (MtF). Some transgender individuals experience their gender identity as incongruent with their anatomical sex and may seek some degree of sex reassignment surgery, castration, take hormones or undergo other cosmetic procedures. According to the International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health (ICD), 'Trans-sexuality is a need that that certain individuals have to live and be acknowledged as a member of

the opposite sex, usually accompanied by a sense of discomfort with one's own current sex, and a desire to have hormonal and surgical treatment to make one's body conform as much as possible with one's preferred sex.' In Indian context everything preponderates toward the view that considering themselves neither heterosexual nor homosexual men, the Hijras may well wish to be regarded as women or at least as having a special affinity for the female sex. Among the transgender community the Hijras prefer to have their own distinct identity through their Gharanas and Guru- Chela tradition.

Transgenders Persons (Hijras) in India

Hijras played a prominent role in the royal courts of the Mughal rule in the Medieval India. They rose to well-known positions as political advisors, administrators, generals as well as guardians of the harems (in the past, the women in a Muslim home, including the wives and other family members, servants, and female partners of a man, or the part of a house in which these women live). However, the onset of colonial rule from the 18th century onwards, the situations changed drastically in India. Accounts of early European travellers showed that they were repulsed by the sight of Hijras, they could not comprehend why Hijras were given so much respect in the royal courts and other institutions. In the second half of the 19th century, the British colonial administration vigorously sought to criminalize the Hijras community and to deny them the civil rights. Hijras were treated as a separate caste or tribe in different parts of India by the colonial administration. The Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, included all Hijras who were associated with kidnapping and castrating children. This included people who dressed like women to dance in public places. In fact the government's broader agenda was to make sure that the Hijras "die out" (Choi & Jolly, 2014).

The famous study conducted by Constairs (1957) of upper caste Hindus in India described Hijras as

simply 'male prostitutes. In the glossary to his work Constairs defined Hijras as 'homosexuals'. The community of Hijras on his account, constituted a form of institutionalized homosexuality, however, this institution was apparently invisible. This view was challenged by anthropologist Morris Opler (1960) who claimed that Hijras were not thought of as homosexuals and further said that they engaged in any sexual activity claiming they did so, based on 'demands only'. Again A. M Shah has argued that the main business of the Hijras was to dance at births and marriages but he also mentioned that some Hijras who lived alone outside the organized Hijra communes might earn a living through homosexual prostitution (Nanda, 1999). Though contemporary accounts appear to display a consensus that increasing number of Hijras are turning to prostitution either to supplement their income or for personal gratification, Hijras vehemently deny that prostitution forms any fundamental part of their ethos.

In Assamese society the third gender is not mentioned in any of the Ahom history chronicles which is the longest serving monarchy in Assam. The Assamese mainstream society does not accept others beyond male female gender norm. The word like 'maikimuwa' (effeminate) has been used for individuals who do not fall in the gender binary in Assam. However, the 2011 Census indicates that Assam has 11,374 transgender persons with 53.69 per cent literacy rate. Swati Bidhan Baruah, who is the first transgender Judge, said that this census data may have increased in the last seven years '. The All-Assam Transgender Association (AATA) has nearly 20,000 Transgender members, of which 7,500 are registered with the organization. According to Swati Bidhan Baruah the Hijras (who are part of the larger transgender community and members of the AATA) registered in the organization are separated from their families soon after they are born 'largely due to social stigma'. The Hijras found in Guwahati city are mostly involved with illegal sex work, badhai functions of

Marwari and Punjabi families and singing and dancing in the trains and collecting money from the business establishments.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were as below.

1. To find out the reason behind the gender and profession chosen by the Hijras living in Guwahati city.
2. To find out their childhood experiences and its impact on them.
3. To find out their psychosocial coping mechanism to carry on their chosen profession and gender identity.

Methods

The study was exploratory and qualitative in nature. The sampling was snowball sampling. The researchers used narrative interview method. The interviews have been non-directive, non-standardized and descriptive based on unstructured/loosely formulated, open ended questions. The interviews lasted for 45 minutes to 1 hour. Interviews were conducted in a convenient place selected by the participants. Prior to the in-depth interviews, the participants were explained about the study purposes, goals, and objectives verbally. They were asked for their willingness to be a part of the study. The participants of the study gave verbal consent to be interviewed. The participants were also informed about confidentiality to be maintained during and after the study. The names given in the finding section are pseudonyms.

Findings

A total of 6 participants participated in the study. All of them participated voluntarily in the study. The first objective of the study was to find out the reason behind the gender and profession chosen by

the Hijras in Guwahati city. All the participants of the study preferred to be identified as Hijra. Majority of the participants ran away from the family and changed their identity through dressing, sex change operation and castration and became chelas of their gurus. In the words of Rekha “As a child, I always liked girl's materials. In fact, my relatives used to taunt me a lot. I could not finish my formal education due to the financial condition of my family. Therefore, I went away with one of my neighbours to Mumbai. In the initial period I worked as a maid so that no one could make out that I was not a girl and later when I had money I went for the operation as it was not that costly for people like us in Mumbai”.

Same was echoed by Rakhi who ran away from home to Mumbai and changed her gender later. As a child she was ill-treated because of her fascination with girls and mannerism. She said, “everyone used to laugh at me and make fun of me when I was growing up”.

Whereas Amina too ran away to live her chosen life. Though her mother always wanted her back in the family her father never accepted her. All the participants did not want to go back to their families as they were not accepted in their families and the village community they belonged to.

Sikha on the other hand due to her different looks and mannerism presented the same story. Her parents sent her away with her paternal uncle who took her to Delhi and sold her to a brothel where she was forced to prostitution. It was unbearable to her and once she managed to escape and joined a Hijra community who took her in. She said “One fine day I decided to come back to Assam and visit my family. However, they refused to accept me. Since then, I am living with my Hijra community and leading my own life where I can be of my preferred gender that is a female”.

The second objective of the study was to find out their childhood experiences and its impact on them.

Majority of the participants shared that they faced sexual abuse as a child (four out of six participants). All of them got forced into sex by the neighbors or people known to them when they were children. They did not know how to deal with it as already they were in turmoil concerning their own identity. Sharing her experiences, Salma said, “One of my neighbours forced me to establish a sexual relationship when I was only 15 years, I cried but I couldn't disclose it to anyone as no one is going to believe me.”

Sikha while sharing said that “I was violated by one of the neighbours I knew. I did not like it but did not know what to do as I was not sure of myself. My parents did not like me much as I did not behave like a boy.”

Meena shared that she was violated by police personnel and when she went to complain about her perpetrator to the police. In the police station, they asked her price per night, which was even more traumatic. While sharing that incident she said “I still feel so horrified as we are nobody...the police use us and make us feel inhuman. As being a Hijra I still face the abuse from the police, and I have seen my friends being used by police.”

The sexual abuse has had left a scar in them and when they talked about it, they were emotional and felt degraded and violated. The feeling of alienation and not being wanted were felt strongly by the participants. They shared that since childhood they were not accepted, and they anticipated that it would continue throughout their lives. They did miss their biological families but as they were not welcomed, they accepted that fact and lead their lives. In future, they would like to continue with their family of Hijras as it is their family and identity now.

The third objective of the study was to find out their psychosocial coping mechanism to carry on their chosen profession and gender identity. The

participants of the study had chosen the profession on their own triggered by the situations they had to endure. All of them felt the need of a strong identity in terms of gender from their childhood. In that process they faced the ridicules and taunts in the hands of their relatives and society. Except one of the participants, majority of them learnt that their own parents did not want them back in their families. As Shikha puts it when she came back from Delhi and went to her native place “My parents said I am not wanted in the family, they do not know me or understand me anymore”. One of the participants said, “I know my family loves me, but they never allowed me to return to them because of the fear of the society they live in. Since then, I have never even thought of returning, though I provide financial assistance to them on a regular basis.”

The participants of the study were happy with their new gender identity. All of them tried to establish a relationship with their family members, however, due to their new identity none were welcomed in their biological families. While talking about their present life and future-plans all of them shared that they would like to continue their present lives. They shared that finding their true gender identity was something particularly important to them and it brought happiness to them. They do miss their biological families and given a chance they would love to go back and live with them however, the attitude of their families towards them have changed and that keeps them away from their families. The newfound family of Hijra commune is especially important for them and they would like to live with them forever. While sharing this Rekha said “I found myself in this present body of mine...I feel alive and happy. My new family is keeping me happy which was not there when I was growing up. This is the family I belong to not my biological family”. Amina added that “I am living my life and happy with it. At times I miss my biological family but its fine without them as well.”

Conclusion

The transgender community of India have been deprived of social and cultural participation for nearly two centuries. They have limited access to education, health care and public facilities even today (Agoramoorthy & Hus, 2015). In the recent times the official recognition of transgender people is slowly taking shape for instance Aadhaar card (It is a 12-digit unique identification number issued by the Indian government to every individual resident of India irrespective of age and gender) has a column for marking the sex as transgender. The state government of Assam approved a draft policy for the welfare of the state's transgender community in the month of February 2020. The draft talked about giving equal rights to the transgender person in terms of their education, employment, housing, medical care, emergency services and ill treatment in the hands of the police and landlords. The draft talks about constituting a committee for the verification of the application for the issue of gender identity certificate, to set up and monitor Transgender Support and Crisis Intervention Centers on the model of Rape and Crisis Intervention Centers with its ability to undertake counselling programs and mental health issues that affect the transgender community, and others (Das, 2020).

Though traditionally Assam and its social system did not have the space for the Hijras in different ceremonies like pan Indian communities have, there is a presence of the term 'maikimuas', which indicates the presence of them. With the presence of transgender persons who are on the edge of Assamese society there is an urgent need to recognize them and make provision for their betterment. The presence of Hijra groups in various parts of Guwahati city as well as the population size in the state signifies that they are a part of the society. The transgenders feel safer and more secured in urban areas than their hometowns. It is quite common to find them in the market areas and

railway stations of the cities. In fact, all the participants of the study have migrated from rural areas to Guwahati Metro or other parts of India for a safer environment in their lifetime. The participants of the study are the testimonies that we have Hijra community who do not conform to the gender binaries and it is apparent that the Hijras are at the periphery of the society living in their own commune shunned by their own family. Though one of them is helping the family financially still she was not accepted. The sexual abuse of the participants of the study gave an account of child sexual abuse in the society which goes unrecognized and unreported. The neglect and abuse experienced by the participants of the study shows that most of them gone through traumatic experiences. At present the challenge to the Hijra community of Assam is to get their names

registered in the National Register of Citizens (NRC) with their preferred gender. This journey again will be a tedious one for them to create a space, the way it has been for them to assert their preferred gender. The approval by the state government with the draft policy means that Assam's transgender (Hijras) community will now have a platform to express their grievances. This will help to integrate the transgender community into the mainstream society, who had been forced to live on the edge. To conclude the lived experiences of the participants of the study poses an important issue of acceptance by their biological families and they are filling that void through their adopted families and finding a space by migrating to urban areas where they can have their own space and identity.

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Policies for Manual Scavengers in India: Implementation and Gaps

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Abstract

This paper seeks to understand the policies surrounding manual scavenging and the gaps in coverage and implementation of the same. For this purpose, the instrumentality of legislations like Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993 and Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 have been studied alongside the effectiveness of programmes like the Scheme for Rehabilitation for Manual Scavengers. Furthermore, pertinent data points from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Govt. of India, National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation, National Crime Records Bureau, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and the National Sample Survey 2017 have been analysed to assess the effectiveness of policies and the scope for improvement.

Introduction

Manual scavenging is a longstanding social evil widespread across both the urban and rural areas of India. The intersectionality of caste and gender about this occupation makes it exclusionary, discriminative, dehumanising at a generational level. Criminalising and abolishing this practice has been a longstanding struggle led by organisations like Safai Karamchhari Andolan (SKA) (Wilson, 2016). The government has also

brought forth many policies to this end, however, while some of them have alleviated the socio-economic standing of manual scavengers, the desired outcome of many others are yet to be seen.

Defining Manual Scavenging

After prolonged agitation and lobbying by sanitation workers led by the SKA, the employment of manual scavengers and the construction of dry latrines was prohibited by the Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993. Additionally, in December 1993, the Central Government enacted and enforced the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, which mandates that no person shall engage or employ another person for manual scavenging, nor allow them to construct or maintain a dry latrine (Baruah, 2014). It aims to eliminate insanitary latrines alongside tracking the rehabilitation of manual scavengers in other occupations, by conducting periodic surveys. For the purpose of eliminating manual scavenging, it also has provisions for stringent penalties, for direct or indirect employment of any person in hazardous cleaning of sewers or septic tanks by any person, local authority or agency. Furthermore, Section 9 of the said Act explicitly makes even the first instance of contravention of this statute punishable with imprisonment up to two years or fine up to 200,000 INR or both. If a worker died while performing such work, even with safety gear and other precautions,

the employer was required to pay compensation of Rs. 10 lakhs to the family (Baruah, 2014). As per the 57th Standing Committee of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2017-2018, despite such stringent provisions, not a single FIR was filed under the provisions of this Act in 2014. Two cases under the law were reported from Karnataka in the NCRB report of 2015, where only one went for trial. Karnataka has maintained its solo lead in its compliance with the law, by filing 55 FIRs.

Alongside operational inadequacies, there are some gaps regarding the coverage of the Act. Section 2(1)(g)(b) of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 states “a person engaged or employed to clean excreta with the help of such devices and using such protective gear, as the Central Government may notify in this behalf, shall not be deemed to be a 'manual scavenger.'” However, the clear explanation of the terms “devices” and “protective gear” is missing from the Act.

Furthermore, this segregation is paradoxical as any worker cleaning night soils/ sewers manually, with or without protective gear, is deemed a manual scavenger socially and in academic parlance, lest the process is mechanized in its entirety. In this

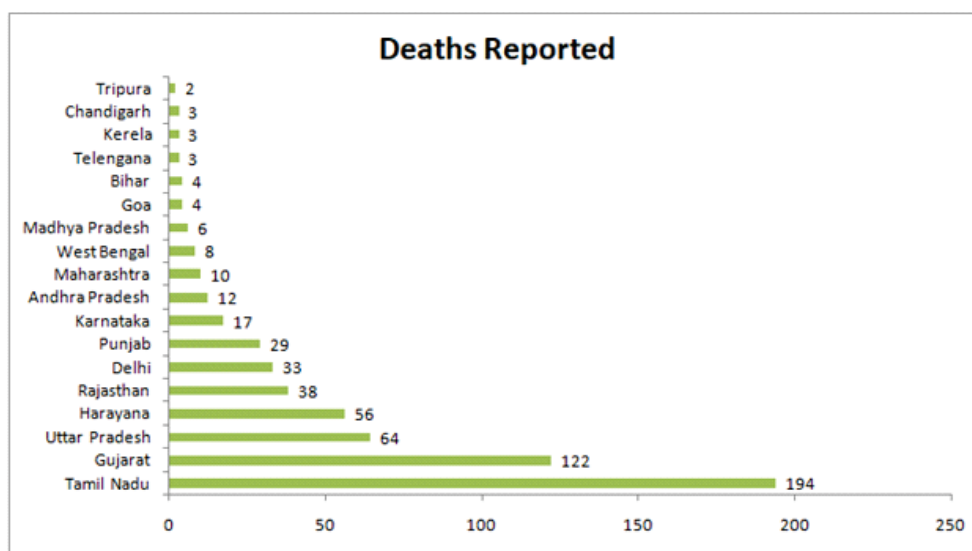
regard, an extensive survey done by Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai in 2014, categorised manual scavenging in eight categories (Kaur, 2014):

- Cleaning of water borne latrines
- Sewerage sweeping with or without night soil
- Sweeping night soil on the street
- Removal of bodies and dead animals
- Removal of night soil with bucket and carrying it on head
- Entering manholes without safety measures
- Removal of night soil by mechanised methods

Of the aforementioned eight divisions, the first seven could be categorised as manual scavengers as per the provisions of the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013.

Data Pertaining to Deaths and Registrations

As per the data base of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) (a statutory body set up by an Act of parliament), a total of 608 manual scavengers have died from 2013 to 2017 while cleaning septic tanks. The state wise distribution of deaths are as follows:

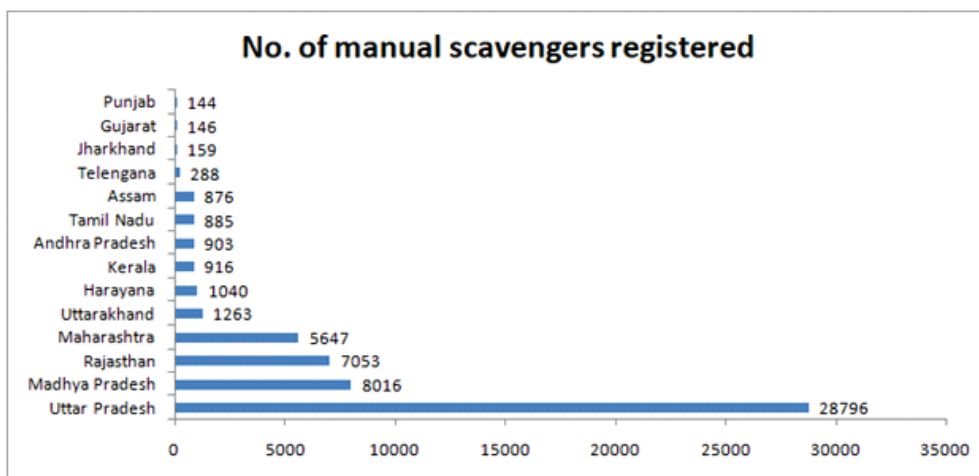


Source: National Commission for Safai Karamcharis, Sewer death cases from 2013 to 2017.

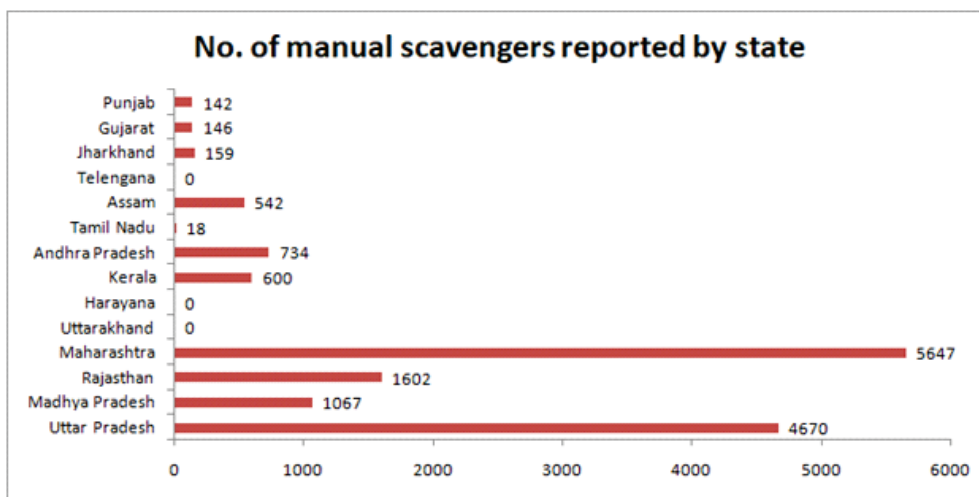
However, many advocacy groups have raised concern over the authenticity of this data claiming that it does not reflect the actual scale of the problem. The plausibility of this data was further dented when the NCK reported 123 deaths during January- August 2017, but the SKA reported 429 deaths in the same duration in the National Capital Region alone (Desai, 2020).

In 2018, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJ&E), Govt. of India mandated the National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) to conduct a survey across 14 states in India to assess the number of manual scavengers employed since 2013. For this purpose, NSKFDC collected data regarding the

total number of manual scavengers and the number of manual scavengers reported by the different state governments. The manual scavengers found in the survey were checked for their registration with the NSKFDC, and based on their status, their registration was renewed or completed. Upon the completion of the survey, a total of 56,132 manual scavengers were registered under NSKFDC of which only 15,327 were reported by the different state governments. The state governments of Telangana, Haryana and Uttarakhand did not report any manual scavengers. Whereas all the registered manual scavengers in the states of Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Gujarat, were reported by their state governments.



Source: NSKFDC Census of Manual Scavengers, 2018



Source: NSKFDC Census of Manual Scavengers, 2018

Of the 56,132 manual scavengers identified and registered by the NSKFDC, only 42,203 were recognised by the MSJE of which only 27,268 have been integrated into relevant schemes and have received any form of entitlements/benefits from the MSJ&E (Pradhan and Mittal, 2020).

There is a strong chance that the number of manual scavengers have been grossly underestimated by the NSKFDC and the MSJ&E based on the fact that the Socio-Economic Caste Census of 2011 identified 1,82,505 households with the primary occupation of manual scavenging. Whereas, the SKA estimated that the numbers of such scavengers were around 1.2 million, which seems more reasonable, given the fact that the Census of 2011 estimates the number of dry latrines in the country at around 2.6 million (Ghosh, 2019). Notwithstanding the implementation of the Swachh Bharat Mission since 2014, the assumption that the age old practice of manual scavenging has seen a drop of almost 98% in around 7 years (based on the estimations done by the SKA in 2011 and the NSKFDC Census, 2018) is irrational. The underreporting of manual scavenging can be partly attributed to the fact that the survey conducted under the aegis of MSJ&E were only conducted in areas where “there are reasons to believe the existence of manual scavengers”. This survey was eventually conducted only in certain areas of all the statutory towns in India, making it unrepresentative of the manual scavengers in rural areas and many of the census towns in India (Desai, 2020).

Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and Manual Scavenging

Under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA), the Govt. of India claims to have constructed approximately 100 million toilets since 2014, thereby providing approximately 95% households with access to toilets. The constructed toilets are either of the twin pit, septic tank, soak pit variety, or are connected to sewerage lines. National Annual

Rural Sanitation Survey 2017-2018 of 92,040 households in 6,136 villages estimates that 13% of the toilets constructed under SBA had twin pits, while 38% had septic tanks with soak pits and 20% had single pits. While the twin pit variety obviates the need for human handling of faecal matter, the septic tank and soak pit varieties require the faecal matter to be extracted manually or mechanically after a period. There is a great likelihood that most of the septic tank and soak pit varieties of toilets in rural India would be cleaned by hand since the proliferation and availability of suction pumps is very low (International Bank for Development, 2019). Even in India's urban areas, only around 56.4% homes are connected to proper sewage and drainage systems as per the National Sample Survey of 2017-2018 (76th Round).

While it is irrefutable that the SBA has made unprecedented and positive behavioral and infrastructural changes with regard to the usage of toilets, it has hardly alleviated the plight of people engaged in manual scavenging. Moreover, it can even be argued that the SBA has been counterproductive to the efforts of the SKA. While at an operational level, the SBA has diverted funds and resources from other programmes like the Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers (SRMS), and at the policy level it has also shifted the focus away from those cleaning the toilets to constructing toilets (Wilson and Singh, 2016).

Policy Instruments for Rehabilitating Manual Scavengers

The skilling of manual scavengers and supplementing their income as instruments towards rehabilitating them with alternate sources of livelihood is an important tenet of the Manual Scavengers Act. For this purpose, the Self Employment Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers (SRMS) was set up in January 2007 with the objective of rehabilitating the manual scavengers and their dependents with

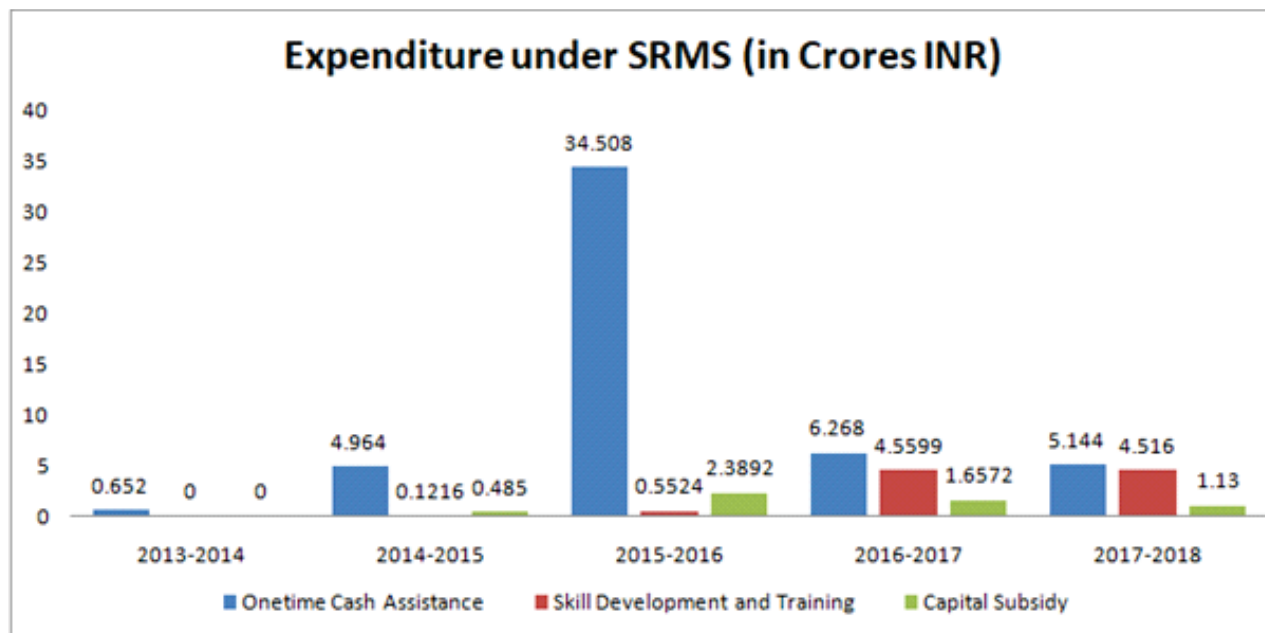
alternate livelihood sources by March 2009. However, since the target was not achieved by the set date, the scheme was extended upto March 2010, and eventually absorbed in the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, effective from November, 2013 (Desai, 2020).

The benefits and entitlements under the SRMS can be divided into the four following components:

- An immediate One Time Cash Assistance of 40,000 INR to one member of the family of the identified manual scavenger, which can be withdrawn at a maximum rate of 7,000 INR per month.
- A loan of upto 1,000, 000 INR for self-employment projects, which can be increased to 1,500,000 INR for sanitation related projects like vacuum loaders and pay and use toilets, The interest on these loans is capped at 5% for projects up to 25,000 INR and 6 % beyond that. For women beneficiaries, it is capped at 4% irrespective of the cost of the project.

- A monthly stipend of 3,000 INR for upto 2 years and access to skill training programmes for all manual scavengers and the dependents.
- A credit-linked back-ended capital subsidy of INR 325,000 against the aforementioned loan. Being backended, the subsidy is excluded from the calculation of interest and the principal amount to be repaid.

Upon analysis of the India Expenditure Budget (2018) Vol.2, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, the allocation under SRMS was found to have dropped from approximately 37.3 crores INR in 2015-2016 to approximately 10.7 crores INR in 2017-2018. The decrease in allocations can be attributed to the drop in provisions for the One Time Cash Assistance and the Capital Subsidy components, which dropped from 34.5 crore INR and 2.3 crore INR to 5.1 crore INR and 1.13 crore INR respectively from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018. However, the component of Skill Development and Training saw an increase from 0.5 crore INR to 4.5 crore INR from 2015-2016 to 2017-2018.



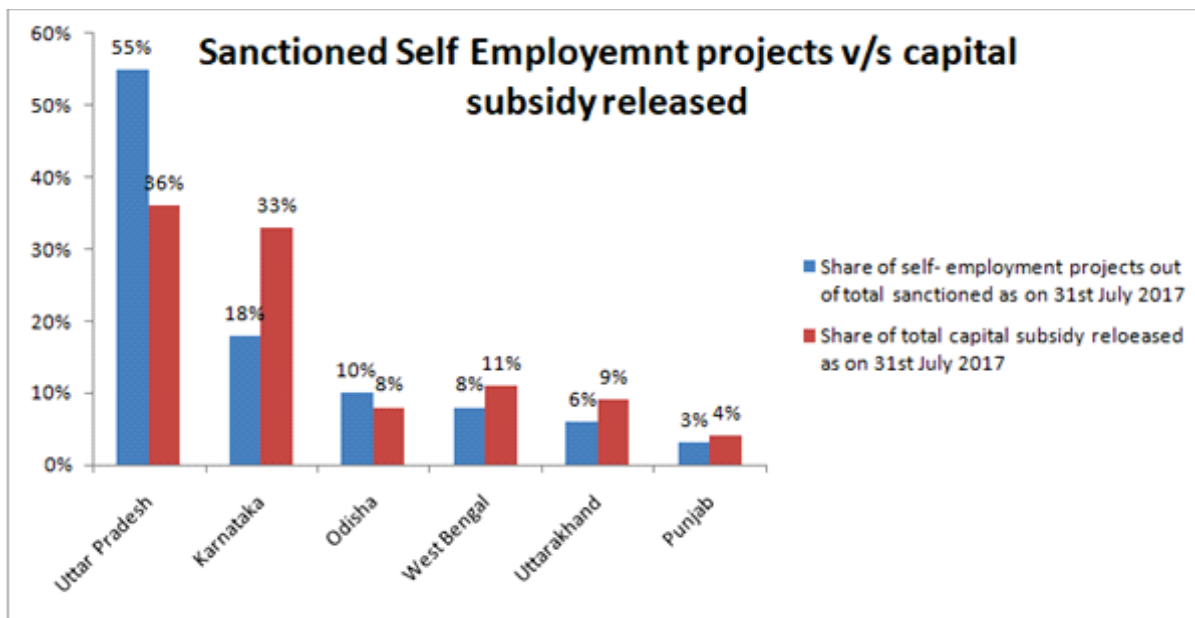
Source: India Expenditure Budget, Vol 2 (2018), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment

Notwithstanding, the drop in budgetary allocation to the SRMS, the implementation and coverage of the scheme leaves much to be desired. As per the reports of the 31 membered parliamentary standing committee on Social Justice and Empowerment chaired by Smt. Rama Devi (Lok Sabha) only 27,268 manual scavengers have been provided with the Onetime Cash Assistance of 40,000 INR yet. With regard to the provision of said monthly stipend of 3,000 INR for manual scavengers, only 1,682 in 2018-2019 and 978 in 2019-2020 received the benefit (Desai, 2020). Furthermore, regarding the provisions for promoting self-employment by offering concessional loans for undertaking self-employment ventures and the credit-linked back-ended capital subsidy. Only 1,233 manual scavengers have been provided with the said concessional loan. Additionally, 662 self-employment projects have been provided with the capital subsidy component, amounting to a total of 4.53 crore INR (with 7 of the 13 states with identified manual scavengers reporting no sanctioned projects), as mentioned in the response to the Unstarred Question No. 594 to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in the Lok Sabha on 19th December 2017.

The graph below illustrates the spatial distribution of sanctioned projects under the capital subsidy component of SRMS alongside the share of total capital subsidy released state wise. This highlights some glaring discrepancies across states. Notwithstanding the fact that 7 of the 13 states with identified manual scavengers have no sanctioned projects, the proportion of projects sanctioned across states vis a vis the subsidy released shows some inconsistencies. For instance, while Karnataka accounted for 18 percent of all projects sanctioned, it has released one third of the total subsidy amount given across states, as mentioned in the response to the Unstarred Question No. 594 to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in the Lok Sabha on 19th December 2017.

Conclusion

The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (Amendment) Bill, 2020, was slated to be passed in the 2020 Monsoon Session of the parliament. However, due to unforeseen circumstances, it could not be tabled. If amended, it would provide the existing Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers



Source: Lok Sabha, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Unstarred Question No. 594, 19 December 2017.

and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 with better provisions for protection at work and compensation in case of accidents. Furthermore, it would have mandated harsher penalties for any person or agency employing another person for manual scavenging, or construction/maintenance of dry latrines as well as decreeing a complete mechanisation of sewer cleaning. Whilst the policy climate around the issue of manual scavenging seems conclusive and progressive, the effective implementation of the same has many shortcomings as evidenced from the data analysed above.

Notwithstanding the deficiencies in the implementation of the policies and schemes

pertaining to manual scavengers, the judiciary has taken a proactive role in highlighting the issue. The aforementioned survey in 2018 to estimate the number of manual scavengers in India was conducted at the behest of the judgement passed by the Supreme Court in the matter of *Safai Karamchari Andolan and others versus the Union of India and others*. More recently, the Bombay High Court in response to a PIL filed in 2019, sought a response from the Maharashtra Government regarding the number of convictions in cases related to the employment of manual scavengers as well as the disbursement of compensations upon their death (Desai, 2020).

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Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Domestic Workers

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Introduction

On 24th March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic induced nation-wide lockdown dramatically changed the work life as well as the personal life of domestic workers. Due to the informality of their work agreements, in word only, many were no longer welcome to their workplaces and, as a result, were no longer compensated.

Domestic work is not included in GDP, even though this work is significant and compensated monetarily. Domestic labour is part of the informal sector, and as a result, regulations for domestic work are lacking in India, and domestic workers can be hired and fired at the whim of employers. This pre-existing predicament got worsened due to COVID-19 pandemic when for months together they had to face starvation and migrant domestic workers had to face homelessness.

As a collective, domestic workers provide a vital service. Mumbai is said to be home to 600,000 domestic workers (L. Rani & M. Roy, 2005). Domestic workers make significant contributions to the economy by relieving women and men of household duties so that their employers can perform their jobs in the formal sector.

The COVID-19 pandemic has been devastating for domestic workers, compounded by a lack of labour rights. Most are not compensated when they are not at their job site. During the COVID-19 pandemic,

domestic workers had to depend on altruistic citizens and social organizations to survive.

Regional Variations in Rights of Domestic Workers

While there are successes in the form of limited welfare benefits at the provincial level, notably in Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand, and Maharashtra, elsewhere, domestic workers are not granted legitimacy from the State as workers. A minimum wage has been established in a few states, but not yet implemented. Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu passed the Domestic Workers Welfare Board Act-2008 so that workers can register for benefits granted by the State, although there has been a rollback on benefits. Domestic workers have been included in the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act (2008) and the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act (2013). However, domestic workers have not yet been granted their full labour rights or even that which construction workers have secured. Domestic workers are not covered by the recently passed Code of Wages Act, 2019, or the Social Security Code Bill, 2019.

At the core, denial of labour rights for domestic workers is a human rights issue. Domestic workers are at risk of abuse, firing, and wage theft without consequence. The impact of the pandemic made them even more vulnerable. Hence, social security and social protections for domestic workers are urgently needed.

Profile of Domestic Workers in the Informal Sector

The workers who perform paid reproductive labour are overwhelmingly women. The 2011 National Sample Survey data on the informal sector was presented disaggregated by gender. From the survey, we know that upwards of 80% of domestic workers are women. There are wide ranges in estimates of domestic workers, due to their exclusion from the formal labour market. The percentage of female domestic workers in total female employment in the service sector increased from 11.8% in 2000 to 27.1% in 2005 (Neetha 2008).

Domestic work is characterized by low-wages, long working hours for full-time workers, low status, and the lack of comprehensive national labour protections that grants fair working conditions, mandated terms of agreement, social security and minimum wage (Barua et al 2016: 420). Researchers point out that there are few barriers to entry into domestic work (Neetha 2008), the work is low-skilled, resulting in recruitment of children, working instead of getting an education. Unfortunately, child domestic labour still goes on, violating child labour laws.

Domestic workers come from the socially backward and economically weaker sections of the society. There is awakening coming in many of them about sending their children to schools. Municipalities in India are mandated to provide primary education to children in their areas. It is also a fact that children in many families are not sent to schools or they drop out from schools due to poverty.

Domestic work can be divided into two types: part-time and full-time. Full-timers often live in the house of their employers. Hours and the amount of work for full-time workers exceed that of part-time, though part-timers often travel to 2-6 different houses daily.

Lockdown and Loss of Employment

The Government of India announced a nation-wide lockdown of the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 24, 2020, and after a month, the lockdown was extended to May 3, 2020. 1.3 billion residents of India were told to stay in their homes starting March 25, the largest lockdown in history and the largest in the world during the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic.

What this means for domestic workers and their job security depends on their accommodations. The domestic workers who live in the homes of employers would be asked to continue working. Heads of households who can telecommute would follow the order, working from home and continuing to receive their income. Domestic workers in these households would likely see an increase in their workload, as the family stays home. During the lockdown, the family now would be eating all meals at home, and they would not have as much time for rest since the family is always in the house.

Part-time domestic workers are particularly vulnerable to loss of employment during the COVID-19 lockdown. After the Prime Minister gave the March 24 speech imploring employers to remain at home and social distance, police were ordered to monitor the streets for any unnecessary assembly for any reason other than purchasing essentials. After the police order, part-time domestic workers were told not to come in by employers, or otherwise prevented by the police.

Internal migrants, who often work as domestic workers and day labourers, have fled to their villages on foot (Slater and Masih 2020) When these migrants lost their livelihood during the lockdown, they could not stay in their rented houses in the cities, and lack food or money to send home. In response to the lockdown, a massive crowd formed at Bandra Station in Mumbai, as migrants

attempted to board trains and buses homes to their villages (Joshi 2020). Migrations from major cities back to villages were documented by the media. Unfortunately, many of the trains were stopped, bus terminals closed. Thousands set out on foot to make the long journey back, with just their belongings on their back and whatever savings they had.

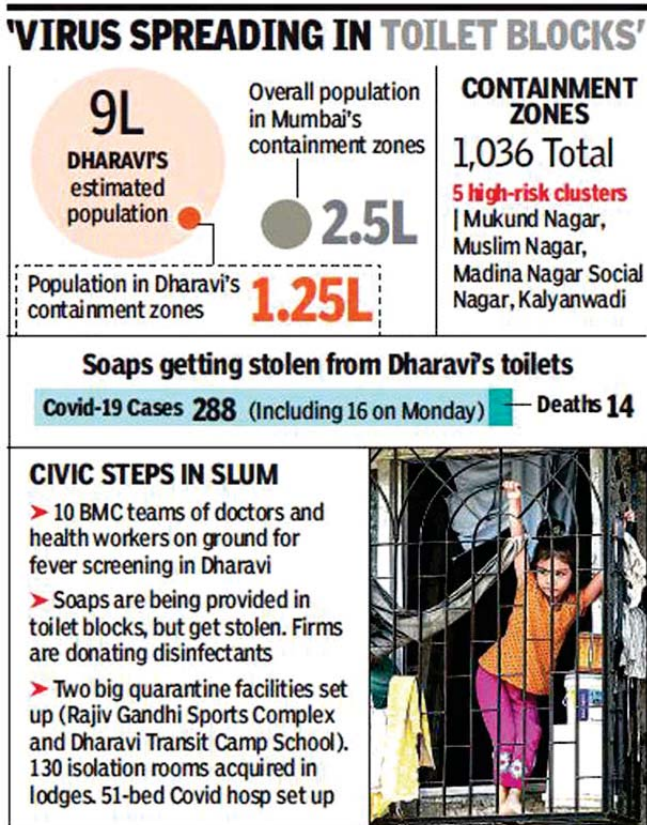
Migrants overseas face tremendous difficulties in returning back to their home countries. The Government of India chartered flights for middle- and upper-class Indians to return home. However there have been no reports on returning poor and migrant workers in Gulf States. The lockdown has exacerbated the dangerous living conditions for domestic workers, often migrating from Kerala to the Gulf States in order to send remittances back home (ILO 2015). The complete lack of protections in the Kafala system, a system that grants employers complete control over their migrant labour, essentially bonded labour, puts domestic workers and their families at home who depend on their income for survival at acute risk. Reports have shown how employers in Lebanon have withheld passports and documents, which consequently excludes them from accessing healthcare (Amnesty International 2020, Azhari 2020). United Nations data shows that there were almost 17 million Indians working overseas in 2017 (Torkington 2019).

Imposition of lockdown was unprecedented. It was all of a sudden. Migrant workers, daily wage earners, hawkers, etc. faced many hardships due to loss of income. Measures taken by Government were not sufficient to mitigate their sufferings. This brought out the insufficiency of social security measures.

Those who are lucky to have an affluent and altruistic employer may continue to be compensated. Those people working in the Gulf States who manage to retain their passport and work visa, are more economically secure during this pandemic.

Living Conditions and Requirements of Social Distancing

Domestic workers live in slum and shanty towns, in small rooms with several people, sharing public toilets with hundreds of other residents. In Mumbai, the poor live in slum areas found throughout the city.



Source: Lewis, Clara (2020) "50 percent of Mumbai's containment zone population now just in Dharavi", http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/75418688.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst, accessed on 28-4-2020.

Mumbai is home to one of Asia's largest slum, Dharavi, where there is a population of nearly 1 million people (Lewis 2020). The BMC has coordinated efforts to provide soaps and try to keep toilets clean, but the same toilet is used by hundreds of people (ibid). Social distancing is difficult in these conditions, and preventing illness is difficult due to lack of awareness about the cause of the

spread of disease, and lack of access to health care, clean water, and proper sanitation. There are containment zones set up in large buildings, and massive fever testing being done (Lewis 2020). Homes are often 100 square feet, one room where the women cook, elderly sleep, patients rest, and children play. COVID-19 could quickly spread through the slum without the privilege of social distancing to contain it.

Women face increasing discrimination as there may be an increase in misinformation about the role of women as spiritual beings to fend away disease and bad omens through rigorous and tiring rituals that put them at risk (Oxfam 2020).

People with disabilities depend on health care workers for care and survival, but these workers may find it challenging to get to them due to being stopped by the police, lack of transportation, sickness, or fear of sickness. (Catalina Devandas et al. 2020)

The Role of the National Domestic Workers Movement

The National Domestic Workers Movement is the largest organization for domestic workers in India, with a presence in 17 States. The organization uses advocacy and education to build worker consciousness among female domestic workers to demand their labour rights.

The organization has shifted priorities since the pandemic lockdown towards relief provision and cash transfers to their thousands of members and contacts. They have aided 4500 DW families so far with rations and provided direct cash transfer to 800 other families (National Domestic Workers' Movement 2020) They have sent letters and reached out to state representative to inquire about state relief provision, sensitizing them to the dire situation they have seen (ibid). Thousands of families have request support (ibid). NDWM

collaborates with other grass-roots organizations on the ground, such as Prayas Ek Koshish, Gurudwaras, Transgender Forum, food banks, Christian Forum, Jesuits Society, Helping Hands Charitable Trust-Mumbai, Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao Andolan (GBGBA) to distribute food relief (ibid). They use networks of community based organisations to reach domestic workers without ration cards, to deliver ration kits comprised of potatoes, lentils, oil, flour, milk, tea, soap, and over the counter medicines (ibid).

During COVID-19, the organization has focused its efforts towards relief work, handing out provisions to domestic workers to feed their families until government rations arrive. They have raised money to provide food and essentials to women, prioritizing those who are single heads of households, who have lost their incomes and have greater need.

Urgent Need for State Invention for Social Protection

Some scholars argue that the risk of the lockdown is too high, since it means that millions of people will go hungry (Dutt 2020). According to the World Bank indicators, there are 21.2% of population living below the poverty line in India, from the most recent data in 2011 (World Bank). Millions of people in India work in the informal sector, where output has slowed drastically since the global pandemic hit India.

Others argue that without the lockdown, the health system will become quickly overwhelmed by the volume of patients hospitalized. The bed to person ratio in India is one of the lowest worldwide due to the population 0.55 beds per 1000 population according to data from the National Health Profile - 2019 (Chakraborty 2020). In order to 'flatten the curve' drastic measures were taken. There are currently 31,365 confirmed cases in India as of April 28, 2020, which has been relatively contained since

March 24 when the government declared the lockdown (The Hindu 2020.). The lockdown has been extended until April 4, 2020. While the consequences for health are important, the economic effects and danger of poverty exacerbated by the lockdown need urgent intervention by the state as well.

There is urgent need to implement comprehensive, widespread social protections to the poor and migrant workers who have lost their livelihoods due to the lockdown. Below are six recommendations which will benefit domestic workers, and their families in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the post-pandemic phase.

1. Public Announcements

To implore employers to continue pay their domestic workers, drivers, watchmen, sanitary workers and other various service workers.

2. Cash Transfers & Electronic Fund Transfers

Efforts to transfer sums to domestic workers' bank accounts ought to be made by employers, with support to open new bank accounts in the domestic worker's name. These emergency bank accounts ought to be opened efficiently and quickly, eliminating previous hurdles. Police should be advised not to block people from the banks, but to organize social distancing protocols, which should remain open for regular business hours and offer phone services. Electronic funds transfer via SMS messaging must be implemented in order to facilitate relief dispersal for those without bank accounts.

3. Gender-Based Violence Response

Domestic violence call lines suspect an increase in call volume as people stay at home, and so these services must remain open as well as One-Stop Centers, shelter homes, women's only police cells,

and women's hotline and police desks (Oxfam 2020). There has already been an increase in sexual harassment as a result of these measures, so perpetrators should be met with swift consequences. (Oxfam 2020).

4. Food Relief

Reetika Khera, a professor at IIM Ahmedabad, argues that "The Central government ought to release enough food grains to the states for them to give food rations to anyone who needs them, not just those on the PDS [public distribution system] lists" (Staff 2020). The Government needs to ensure the Mid Day Meal scheme for children still goes on, with added social distancing measures. Economist Jean Dreze mentions that the food grains kept in stockpile should be released immediately to the public, disregarding the accounting cost (Dreze 2020).

5. Repatriation of Migrants Abroad and Relocation of Internal Migrants

During the lockdown period, measures must be taken to ensure the safety and well-being of people from all classes of society if they are in need while living abroad. The government should arrange a flight to return Indian citizens working overseas as informal labourers to return to India and undergo two-weeks quarantine. Migrants traveling home should be attended to at military checkpoints, where food, medicines, and water are distributed. Transportation should be arranged whenever possible.

6. Collaboration with Organizations

Recommended measures must be taken up swiftly and implemented immediately with the help of NGOs, community-based groups and local and municipal governments, religious organizations, civil society organizations, and welfare trusts, to facilitate quick implementation of the following policies.

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Development Anchored in Community Intelligence

A Handbook for Community Mobilisation¹

Book Review

Reviewed by Dr. Cicilia Chettiar, HOD, Dept. of Psychology,
MNW College, Mumbai.

A handbook refers to a manual, a guide, something that will walk you step-by-step through a process using very practical and measurable suggestions. There should be exercises, assessment tools and quantifiable metrics based on which evaluations can be made. Community mobilization on the other hand seems to be a topic so vast and differentiated, that arriving at a process using a measurable step-by-step process appears challenging. The author Dr. Joseph Xavier, in association with Ms. Srividhya Sainathan and Dr. Sadanand Bag, has successfully brought the measurable format to a topic resting on qualitative rather than quantitative metrics. It is common to read case studies and examples of Community Mobilisation over the years by various agencies. A training manual that seeks to share the know-how that can enable this process was much needed and this handbook has been well crafted to meet the need.

The title of the book speaks about community intelligence. That's a brave thought for those agencies working with poor and marginalized sections of societies who have themselves accepted their fate and resigned themselves to a life of struggle without rights and respect. Lifting such individuals to believe in themselves, trust their capacity and the intentions of those around them is by itself a challenging mission. This handbook talks about tapping into the intelligence of the community as a whole, a sort of collective consciousness being triggered, for their own well-

being. The activation of such rights-based movements can be quite explosive if not navigated with structure, calmness, planning and a great deal of motivation to bring out change through social action. Except for the last, the first three are usually in short supply. Dr. Xavier's handbook will fill this gap quite ably.

The 128-page book is divided into thirteen chapters, each chapter following the same format. All chapters, excluding the first one, are instructional in nature. The first chapter is an introduction to the concept of community-led development processes. It sketches the different theories and approaches that are used to understand this process and explains the different terms and concepts that form the vocabulary in this narrative of community building. A result-based management focuses solely on quantitative metrics without much assessment of the quality of the process, the level of interaction and participation. From thought to execution to outcome, the various parameters to be taken into consideration seem massive and for anyone not having a clear vision, the process of community led development can be an intensely frustrating process. This handbook creates a structured framework thereby bringing hope to those who would like to facilitate such development but are at sea when it comes to negotiating the steps. Dr. Xavier and his team have put together a twelve-step model with clear time-frames for each level. The focus on collective

reflection and intense listening is emphasized at various stages along with the warning that this is not a linear process but will be cyclical with a lot of going back and forth. The chapter also very practically provides a disclaimer about how the five centers that formed the database for the study were normal ones and when a facilitating agency should step away from the desire to bring about change.

The remaining twelve chapters elaborates on one each stage of the twelve-step model. The format remains the same for all the chapters. It starts by outlining the purpose of each stage, the time duration each stage is expected to take, ways to proceed, helpful tips, useful cautions, measurable indicators, tables to chart progress or assess the situation and ends with questions for reflections and sharing. Allowances are made to add and modify as per the context throughout this format.

The advantage of keeping the format the same across the twelve chapters is that the reader gets a chance to organize her thoughts and plan constructively. Each step has specific challenges and multiple obstacles. By highlighting the purpose of the step right at the start, the reader is given a big picture view of the step. Working her way through till the end is essentially stepping from macro to the micro. Gaining a larger view enables orientation and then taking the process apart under the heading ways to proceed provides the necessary first step initiation. There are multiple ways to start any project and this part of the chapter allows the reader to conceptualize the start in small specific steps. Very often we feel frustrated at the slow pace at which things happen, hence having an idea of the outer limit for each stage can allow the reader to be patient and expect things to happen at its own time. The last chapter speaks about design and implementation and not the time duration because essentially this is the stage when the facilitator moves out and the community takes over completely. This is also explained with a time factor to be considered.

Each chapter has measurable indicators further quantifying the process. Every indicator is either a count or an average both in terms of individuals and activities. Performances are usually better understood when appraised through numbers. It generates possibilities for funding and greater support from the various agencies and networks. It acts as a tool to compare past performance with the future. It also helps to compare across centers especially when there are visits or cross-learnings to be applied. For those who tend to feel overwhelmed by the sheer number of tasks and multiple micro factors involved, such indicators allow them to categorize their work under specific sections providing greater confidence in the bargain.

The do's and don'ts get covered in the tips and cautions sections. The authors don't intend to curb the enthusiasm of the facilitators but provide the cautions to prevent miscalculations and thwart any possibilities of large-scale damage due to lack of foresight. Hence this section should be read carefully and seriously. Considering the challenge of uniting individuals with diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, the possibilities of making errors which then get magnified and exaggerated into insurmountable challenges, is very high. Hence every precaution that can be provided in advance is most welcome.

The different tables and assessment tools are quite simple and friendly. They allow the facilitators and the participants to periodically review their work, understand where they have reached and how far they are yet to go. A final goal for most people is utopia with everything solved magically. But tools like this engage the critical mind and allow the facilitators and the participants to learn how to gauge the level of success reached. The ability to organize thoughts, keep records and then predict based on existing achievements and challenges is crucial to long term projects. This handbook covers 8-9 years of work across five different geographical

centers. The possibility of working in one center which may throw up challenges different from any faced in these centers is very high. Yet the author has tried to anticipate all angles in the tables and assessment tools provided. The last chapter requires a tabulation of the outcomes of phasing out. By labeling the outcomes into sustainable plans and identifying the people or groups responsible for them, the process ensures continuity and accountability. This is a very useful tool for those facilitators who don't understand how to ensure that growth continues with the same momentum after they leave.

Each chapter also ends with questions for reflection and sharing. This is an introspective report that nudges the facilitators to verbalize and objectify the gains, losses and learnings at every stage. As the title suggests, these questions also lead to sharing between all parties, further providing an opportunity to gain differing perspectives and to fill in gaps where they appear. It's appearance at the end

of every chapter is a reminder that blindly applying numbers and statistics without stepping back to look at the whole picture can be an incomplete process. Each step is a piece of the puzzle that is Community Mobilization, and each piece should be studied independently and to evaluate its place in the whole puzzle.

This handbook lays down simple steps and procedures to an otherwise complicated and diffuse process. The harvest is plentiful, and sometimes even the harvesters are plenty, but the lack of training and guidance prevents concrete change towards sustainable growth through social action. This handbook can fill the overwhelming need for guidance and should be referred to by all those who seek to bring about a rights-based change for the population by mobilizing the intelligence of the community. Caritas has partnered an excellent development manual, and many will reap the benefits of the efforts by Dr. Joseph Xavier and his team.



Development as Community-led Journey Learnings from Community Mobilisation Processes¹

Book Review

Reviewed by Dr. Cicilia Chettiar, HOD, Dept. of Psychology,
MNW College, Mumbai.

The book being reviewed is a study of how a community can be mobilized to lead development for itself. The idea of a community is one which is geographically proximal and may or may not be diverse. The centers studied include three urban and two rural ones across the Ujjain, Ahmedabad, Gorakhpur, Kolkata and New Delhi. It begins with an elaboration of why community mobilization as a process needs to be scientifically understood. Building nations is not merely the prerogative of political leaders. It remains with the hands of every individual to build herself and the nation. Working collectively as a community speeds up the process and is more sustainable in the long run. As such, knowledge that enables this process is required to ensure that many can benefit from such a venture.

This study sets out to empirically document the community led development process, where the focus is no longer on charity and instruction giving. The empowering of community members to identify their concerns and to also resolve them on their own is a more practical method and the study team has set out to document this process. The book is 196 pages long including the annexures and references. It has used five chapters to document the procedure followed across the five communities to become self-sustaining and independent.

The methodology of the study is mixed due to the qualitative and quantitative aspects. The

methodology mentions systematic sampling methods were used to identify respondents for the study and then again purposive sampling was used based on availability. Some confusion remains about how many community members were interviewed. In one place it's mentioned as 1250, then 90 and also finally as 125. Counting the names of the community members interviewed, that has been provided in the annexure does not come up to 90. A little clarity on that would have helped.

The honesty of the researchers in describing their discomfort with the community mobilization process and their lack of skills and knowledge about it are commendable. The desire to step beyond existing methodologies and religious groups was a courageous decision without which we may not have had the benefit of their learnings. The involvement of children and women in all the locations and the power they brought to the CM experience stands out as common to all the centers. Although challenges in the form of State Government SHG's are mentioned, a little more detail on how they were overcome would have been informative. These are challenges which other facilitators may face in different locations.

The description of the initial days of building relationships with community members and the time they took to bridge the gap is quite helpful and is an indication of how empowerment is also met with fear and suspicion. Patience and openness are key to connecting with the marginalized to help

them. The attempt to be apolitical in the narrative is visible, but the religious overtones cannot be eliminated completely. The detailed tabulation of the socio-demographic profile is quite informative and by itself forms an interesting narrative. However, using the term correlation (Table 2.4) to describe what is essentially the reporting of existing condition could have been avoided. Relationship between two variables is not usually calculated based on proportions only. The study identified six major approaches and strategies in the CM process. They were arrived at after detailed analyses of data collected from different sources and appear to produce a structured design for the scientific understanding of CM.

Asking the respondents to rate themselves or the process or the growth on a numerical scale is an accepted method of quantifying experiences. Hence asking the community and groups to express how much they have grown added to the study's quantitative metrics. Another question that may have helped would have been to identify which kind of facilitation was found most useful in the development of trust. Most communities tend to not unite together because of the lack of trust. So, recognizing how ably the facilitators were able to create trust in both rural and urban settings, it could have helped to pinpoint the activities that lead to specific outcomes. Of course, it is recognized that most, if not all, outcomes are the result of a combination of factors, not just any one.

Inclusion seems to be the key word here and the bonding between community members has decisively been impacted by the decision to be consciously inclusive. By providing an opportunity for reflection and self-assessment the facilitators provided a vocabulary to the members which they could always use. Understanding the role of reflection and how it can be harnessed to promote greater growth is crucial for all endeavours and to communicate this important step to the community members is indeed commendable.

Leadership is an aspect of personality development that engages every group, organization, category of individuals. Efforts taken to qualify leadership in individuals belonging to the marginalized strata is as important as qualifying leaders at the national and global level. It could in fact be more stimulating and trying at the same time. The facilitators not only managed to achieve this, but also evaluated their success by providing very specific instances of leadership that could be assessed and documented. The importance of self-confidence was recognized in mobilizing a community for if they don't believe in themselves, how will they be independent enough to work for themselves?

An important finding in terms of community gains (Table 2.17) was the importance given to education in urban areas as compared to rural areas. The rural areas still preferred paying more attention to farming and loan access as more important and that in itself tells a story. The facilitators believe that the spirit of volunteerism is most essential to giving the community its independence so that they can sustain the mobilization and continue to build and grow on their own.

An entire chapter has been devoted to fascinating narratives, success stories from the communities where the men, women and children have been able to save not just homes and livelihoods, but lives of the members. Such empowered communities would go a long way in doing away with the social ills of sexual abuse and assault and provide safety to the sexually vulnerable. These select experiences have then been put through a systematic process allowing the facilitators to draw up a road map for further this growth story and allow communities to do things better in future. This is an important step because once the facilitators step away from their hand holding roles, the community is largely left to its own devices.

The last chapter discusses the development of a 12-step model that can be used as a training tool for those who wish to facilitate community mobilization in any part of the country. The model is clarified with expected time-frames and is a quick guide. It can be considered the outcome of this study that can be applied to all CM efforts. There are annexures that provide details of centers, group members, interviewees and tabulated formats of all data collected.

They raise some concerns. For instance, SXSSS is the largest universe of the study with 7200 families as mentioned on page 25, but the community members interviewed are far less than even SKC. If the group is so large, more interviews would have provided a more proportional response. Ideally the number of individuals selected for the interview could have been a planned proportion of the population. But considering the practical realities of even conducting such a study, the discrepancy may be accepted.

There are different tables titled as relationship between variable A and variable B. For instance, relationship between caste and income, project area, caste and income. While we do understand that in India especially for the marginalized, caste does impact income, labelling these numbers as a relationship could be avoided. This study did not measure relationships between the variables. It was a measure of conditions as they exist in specific categories and hence the word relationship could have been replaced with proportion.

This book will be quite a boon for all those who choose to empower the weaker sections and not just hand out charity. It provides the blueprint for a concerted structured focused effort at making the weak strong using their own intelligence and collective consciousness. This is book is highly recommended and I congratulate the researchers, the publishers and everyone who supported this study and this publication.



ROUND & ABOUT

National Days and International Days of Significance during the Quarter January-March, 2021

Celebrations of National Girl Child Day, 2021

Started in 2008, the National Girl Child Day is celebrated in India every year on January 24th. Objective of the Day is to increase awareness among the people and offer girl child with new opportunities, to address girl child issues and to get rid of all the inequalities faced by women in society. This year National Girl Week is celebrated from 21-26 January 2021.

(Source: Portal of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment)

International Women's Day, 2021

The International Women's Day which was started by the UN in 1975 is celebrated on 8th March every year. This year, the theme for International Women's Day (8th March), *“Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world,”* celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights the gaps that remain.

Women's full and effective participation and leadership in of all areas of life drives progress for everyone. Yet, women are still underrepresented in public life and decision-making, as revealed in the UN Secretary-General's recent report. Women are Heads of State or Government in 22 countries, and only 24.9 per cent of national parliamentarians are women.

(Source: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/international-womens-day>)

World Water Day, 2021

Celebrated on 22nd March every year, the World Water Day celebrates water and raises awareness of the global **water crisis**, and a core focus of the observance is to support the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 6: water and sanitation for all by 2030. The theme of World Water Day 2021 is valuing water.

(Source: <https://www.worldwaterday.org>)

Allocation for Urban Sector in Budget 2020-21

In our economy, Union Budget is a crucial yearly document which, inter alia, contains a broad statement of Government's earning and expenditure in the ensuing year. It is a big size document. It is also a policy statement indicating the areas of thrust for the country. Every sector and even individual looks up to it with keen interest. Presentation of the budget is followed by its analysis by experts and by those who are in government. We at the RCUES are interested in what it provides for the urban sector. A brief mention of major items relating to urban sector during 2020-21 is as under:

Allocation of Funds: In the Union Budget 2020-21, total funds earmarked for urban development have gone up from Rs.50,040 crores from the previous year to Rs.54,581 crores this year. Similarly, an amount of Rs.24,845 crores is allocated for the centrally schemes.

Sanitation: Finance Minister announced launching of **Swachh Bharat 2.0** which will focus on complete faecal sludge management, wastewater treatment, segregation of garbage, reduction in single use plastics, reduction in air pollution by managing waste from construction sites and demolition activities along with bioremediation of all legacy dump sites. The mission 2.0 will be implemented with a total financial allocation of Rs.1.41 lakh crore over a period of 5 years from 2021.

Urban Pollution: In order to tackle the burdening problem of pollution, an amount of Rs.2,217 crore is allocated for 42 urban centres having a population of more than a million people.

Urban Mobility: In her speech, Finance Minister inter alia, mentioned that presently the country has a metro rail network of 702 kilometres and another 1,016 kilometres of the network is under construction in 27 Indian cities. It was announced in the budget that the Centre would provide counterpart funding for the extension of the metro rail networks of Kochi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Nagpur and Nasik.

Augmentation of city bus services was announced through an 'innovative' PPP (Public Private Partnership) mode. 20,000 new buses are proposed to be added and an outlay of Rs.18,000 crore is allocated for the purpose.

Allocations in the Housing & Urban Affairs Ministry (Rs. crore)

	2019-20 RE	2020-21 BE	Percentage change
Metro	18,890	20,000	6%
PMAY (Urban)	6,853	8,000	17%
AMRUT	6,392	7,300	14%
Smart Cities	3,450	6,450	87%
SBM (Urban)	1,300	2,300	77%
DAY-NULM	750	795	6%
Projects in North-Eastern Region	371	150	-60%
Others	4,260	5,045	18%

Source : (1) Media reports on budget.

(2) PRS Legislative Research (<https://prsindia.org/budgets/parliament/demand-for-grants-2020-21-analysis-housing-and-ur>)

Centre for Conservation of Wetlands Set up

World Wetlands Day is celebrated each year on 2nd February to raise global awareness about the vital role of wetlands for people and our planet. This day also marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2nd February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar in Iran. Importance of celebration of this day has assumed a high significance because India's first Centre for Wetland Conservation is set up on this day this year in Chennai. The Centre will assist the national and state governments in the design and implementation of policy and regulatory frameworks, management, planning, monitoring and research for conservation of wetlands.

(Source: Times of India, Mumbai, 3rd February, 2021)

Climate Change - A Probable Cause of COVID-19

You may feel that the heading is sensational and gives a surprise. Please wait till you read this. Findings of a new study done by scientists from University of Cambridge and University of Hawaii have found that climate driven shift may have pushed the emergence of Covid-19. The study says that over a century ago, the vast expanse across southern Chinese Yunnan province, Myanmar and Laos was covered with grass and shrubs. As carbon dioxide was built up in the air because of greenhouse gas emissions, temperatures shot up and sunlight increased and the landscape started changing. The tropical shrublands turned into tropical savannas and deciduous woodland, a gratifying home for swarms of bats. According to the study, in these 100 odd years between 1901 and 2019 climate change accounted for an increase of around 40 bat species in the region and subsequently a rise of about 100 local bat-borne coronaviruses. This global hotspot is where SARS-CoV-2, the virus which causes Covid-19, is thought to have originated. The paper published in Elsevier journal 'Science of the Total Environment, said that these regions also comprise the native habitat ofSunda pangolin which are assumed to have acted as intermediate hosts that eventually transmitted...SARS-CoV-2 to humans. They explain that when the dense forests and shrubland changes into tropical savanna/woodland it becomes inhabitable for bats. When these pathogen carrying bats move into a new area it can also create new ways in which virus spill-overs happen. Dr. Robert Beye, the lead author of the report, explained to the correspondent of Times of India that *“the expansion of species into new areas can create new viral sharing networks... a bat borne virus might not have been able to infect any species in one particular area, but as the bat's habitat shifts to anew areas, it suddenly overlaps the habitat of a new species that the virus can jump to... .. in this new species, the virus might have to evolve to better adapt to its new host environment and those adaptations, in turn, might allow it to spill over to yet another species such as humans... increased temperature can increase viral load in a species as well as the tolerance of viruses to heat, which can cause infection”*

(Source: Times of India, Mumbai, 6th February, 2021)

Launch of National Urban Digital Mission and other Significant Launches

Shri Hardeep S Puri, MoS, I/C, Housing and Urban Affairs and Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad, Union Minister for Electronics and IT launched the 'National Urban Digital Mission' (NUDM) on 23rd February, 2021 at a virtual event.

Other initiatives - India Urban Data Exchange (IUDX), SmartCode, Smart Cities 2.0 website, and Geospatial Management Information System (GMIS) -- were also launched at the event.

"The NUDM will create a shared digital infrastructure that can consolidate and cross-leverage the various digital initiatives of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, enabling cities and towns across India to benefit from holistic and diverse forms of support, in keeping with their needs and local challenges," the MoHUA said in statement.

It also stated that other initiative "India Urban Data Exchange (IUDX)" has been developed in partnership between the Smart Cities Mission and the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru.

"IUDX serves as a seamless interface for data providers and data users, including ULBs, to share, request, and access datasets related to cities, urban governance, and urban service delivery," it stated. IUDX is an open-source software platform which facilitates secure, authenticated, and managed exchange of data amongst various data platforms, third party authenticated and authorized applications, and other sources, it also stated.

On "SmartCode", the MoHUA said that it is a platform that enables all ecosystem stakeholders to contribute to a repository of open-source code for various solutions and applications for urban governance.

"It is designed to address the challenges that ULBs face in the development and deployment of digital applications to address urban challenges, by enabling cities to take advantage of existing codes and customizing them to suit local needs, rather than having to develop new solutions from scratch," it added.

(Source: Press Release - PIB dated 23rd February, 2021)

Incentive Grants to Eight States to Create One New City

In India, particularly after Independence, new towns/cities have come up on account of demographic and economic forces because of which adjoining areas of cities over the years become town and cities. This is the story played out over about 70 years. In 1901, India had 1830 towns, which figure went up to 6507 in 2011. New cities are also set up as conscious efforts of government for many objectives including decongesting a city, creating space for development and business activities. The 15th Finance Commission (2021-2026) has made a provision of Rs. 8,000 crore as incentive grant for setting up one new city in eight States. (Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs will work on this to identify the eight States)

(Source: The Times of India, Mumbai, 3rd March, 2021)

Ranking under Ease of Living Index 2020 & Municipal Index 2020

The Ease of Living Index developed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs is based on four categories as under:

- (i) *Economic Ability* which has parameters of level of economic development and economic opportunities.
- (ii) *Quality of Life* which takes into account education, health, housing and shelter, sanitation and solid waste management, mobility, safety and security, recreation.
- (iii) *Sustainability* which includes environment, green space and buildings, energy consumption and city resilience.
- (iv) *Citizen Perception* under which perception of the city by the citizens is taken note of.

We have read in the newspapers that **Bangaluru, Pune and Ahemadabad** have walked away with 1st, 2nd and 3rd ranks for 2020 as most liveable of mega Indian cities. **Simla, Bhubhaneshwar and Silvassa** are declared as the most liveable of small cities for 2020.

Similarly, under the category of Best Performing Municipalities Index (Population above 1 million category) Indore, **Surat and Bhopal** have achieved 1st, 2nd and 3rd ranks.

Under less than 1 million population category New Delhi Municipal Council, Tirupati and Gandhinagar are 1st, 2nd and 3rd rank holders.

(Source: Press Release - PIB dated 4th March 2021 Delhi).

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(Fully supported by Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs, Government of India)
undertakes**

- Urban Policy Research.
- ♦
- Tailored Training and Capacity Building Programmes in Urban Management and Urban Governance.
- ♦
- Capacity Building for Urban Poverty Alleviation.
- ♦
- Anchoring Innovative Urban Poverty Reduction Projects (Aadhar) for Municipal Corporations.
- ♦
- Project Management & Social Auditing.
- ♦
- Information, Education & Communication (IEC) in Urban Sector.
- ♦
- Training of Trainers (TOT) in Urban Management.
- ♦
- Technical Advisory Services in the Urban Development Urban Management Sector
- ♦
- Study Visits for ULBs for Experience Sharing and Cross Learning
- ♦
- Community Based Interventions.
- ♦
- Human Resources Development.
- ♦
- Interdisciplinary Programmes.
- ♦
- Knowledge Management.
- ♦
- Networking.

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