



Socio-Economic Profile of Women in Slums of Chennai City

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Abstract

Women can persevere and achieve their ambition if they work hard. Having aim in life is indeed essential for their personal and community growth. Slum dwellers are employed in unorganized sectors with menial jobs such as cleaning, washing, sweeping, cooking, selling or working in construction site etc where they are paid low wages. The poor women in slums and their households are denied of urban advantages like medical facilities, quality education, nutritious food, clean drinking water, sanitation and healthy environmental facilities. This paper speaks of the Socio-Economic profile of women in slums of Chennai city.

Keywords: Slums, Poverty alleviation programmes, Urban benefits.

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Introduction

Asha Roy doesn't get two square meals a day, lives in a mud house and helps her father, a vegetable seller, and make out a meager living. But despite these odds, Asha Roy is the fastest woman in India today, having clocked 11.85 seconds at the 51st National Open Athletic Championships in Kolkata. The national record is 11.38 seconds – set by Rachita Mistry in Thiruvananthapuram in 2000.¹ Women can persevere and achieve their ambition if they work hard. Having aim in life is indeed essential for their personal and community growth.

The contributing factors towards the growth of slums in the cities are low wage level, poverty, unplanned city growth and its planning, lack of all basic facilities, lack of maintenance of existing facilities at the appropriate time, misuse of existing facilities by a limited group of persons etc. These in turn will give rise to number of problems such as environmental problems, especially pollution in air and water, congestion, various social disorders, ignorance, unhygienic living conditions.¹ Poverty alleviation programmes have to be implemented. After the implementation there should be an evaluation to study the effectiveness of the programmes. From the evaluation the positive and the negative points should be taken into consideration, So that the consecutive programmes will be fruitful.

Education

According to census Report the overall percentage

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of literacy has increased from 41.8 percent in 1971 to 76 percent in 2011. Female literacy has increased from 29.7 percent in 1971 to 72 percent in 2011. As education is one of the factors which measures the empowerment of women, the improvement in the sector of women's education confirms desirable.

Income

Statistics prove that women who are hailing from slums of Chennai city suffer from Asthma (1643 women), Goiter (3183), and Diabetes (3901). Their economic status does not allow them for sufficient, nutritious and balanced intake. Their poor and unplanned food does not provide them resistance. They lack immunity. As a result they are prone to encounter different types of diseases. Accessibility and availability of physical and economic resources of food and health, poor indoor and outdoor socio-physical environment which resulted in low consumption and utilization of the food and health resources to the slum population.²

Slum dwellers are employed in unorganized sectors with menial jobs such as cleaning, washing, sweeping, cooking, selling or working in construction site etc where they are paid low wages. However both rich and the poor have to pay the same prices for the commodities they buy from the market. The poor women cannot afford to buy quality products for the family as their wages are low. There are even chances for the sudden price hike of food products. The living status of any family depends much on their economic wellbeing. If they lack financial fitness then they have to face all the possible disadvantages in the society.

The deprived and disadvantaged populations are deprived of all the urban benefits with respect to health, wealth, quality education, nutritious food, employment,

fair wages, public benefits, and above all a meaningful life in a good neighborhood. They do not have either job security or job satisfaction. They regularly face disadvantages. The poor women in slums and their households are denied of urban advantages like medical facilities, quality education, nutritious food, clean drinking water, sanitation and healthy environmental facilities. Especially women in slums remain deprived of essential elements in life.

Participation in decision making

Women generally lack confidence in their own capabilities. Having their own capabilities they are accepted a subordinate status for long. Society in general lacks confidence in women's strength, traits and competence. In society, importance is given to educating the male child as compared to the female child. This results in lack of schooling and vocational training of women, lack of attaining technical skills and thereby lack of awareness of opportunities available.³ Among women in slums of Chennai 83% expressed that they have drastic change in social awareness and respected much in society. After availing the loan, 76% women shared in decision making. This shows that the status of women is respected, when they are able to contribute financially to the family's needs. 48% of women rarely participated in outdoor activities in the pre-loan period, but in the post loan period it rose to 89%. The impact of saving credit programmes has a positive impact on the society.³

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