NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF CHILDREN LIVING IN SLUMS OF MADURAI CITY

V. KRISHNA JOTHI

Abstract: Urbanization marked a tremendous change in our society. Rural communities rapidly migrated towards metropolis of our nation. This has resulted in the growth and proliferation of slums in the developing world. Urban poverty crucially affected the people living in slums. Conditions of children in slums are really pathetic .The whole life cycle of a child is full of deprivation and oppression. Children of slums have extremely limited opportunities for a decent standard of living and they lack a source for vigorous and satisfying lives. The present paper on the basis of both secondary and primary data attempts to identify the Needs and priorities of children living in slums of Madurai city - Tamil Nadu. Focus group discussions were held to gather data from the respondent's of the study. There is an urgent need to look in to the rights of the children and provide a safe environment they can overcome the challenges of their vulnerabilities.

Introduction: In traditional India no family unit considered complete without children and the feeling of cooperate responsibility of family members towards dependants of all types ensures that care and protection is extended to youngsters in need. Millions of children the world over are growing up in circumstances under which they will never able to fulfill the mental and physical potential with which they are born. The child's physical, psychological social and cognitive development was assured by the resources and in the surrounding of the family. Reporting on children's issues must be undertaken with sensitivity and understanding the dignity and rights of every child are to be respected in every circumstance. This study is an attempt to analyze the Needs and Priorities of slum children living in sakkiliyar Mattu Street and Manjalmedu – Park Nagar of Madurai city.

Review of Literature

Sudeshna Chatterjee, Gurgaon, (2012)studied children growing up in Indian Slums: challenges and opportunities for New Urban Imaginations. **This article looks at the reality of growing up in slums in Delhi and explores how well-intentioned slum improvement efforts can fail children. They critically examined the policy environment in India,** deals with slums and clearly portray the gaps in the policy environment of India especially in securing the slum children.

Chinmayee Satvery, Child Welfare Policies and Programmes in India this paper author clearly portray rights of the children, He marked that the physical, mental and social well being of a child depends upon the family to which she/ he belongs. He comprehensively explained the Constitutional Safeguards for Indian Children such as Legislations related to Children Institutional Frameworks for Child Welfare**.**

Rationale of the study: In general and simple terms, urban is synonymous with luxurious way of life this is one side of the fact whereas the other side is definitely formation of slums. Urbanization is like a coin – Here there are an abundance of opportunities and facilities available for the absolute and speedy growth of children in one side of coin and There are Needy children with full of deprivation in another side of coin. Slum is highly densely populated area where unfortunate and poor people of different culture and localities reside in non durable houses without having basic amenities of life. Children living in these areas are really disadvantaged and needy. Considering the above mentioned issues, I decided to conduct a comprehensive study in order to find out needs and priorities of children living in urban slums

Objective: The specific objective of the study is to examine Needs and priorities of children living in slums of Madurai city. The study therefore sought to find out what are all the needs are desired as per children's perspective.

Study area: Madurai Corporation has about 331 slums in all the four zones of Municipal Corporation. Out of 331 slums, 126 slums are well developed and 5 slums are evicted by Madurai Corporation & TNSCB. Hence, Madurai Corporation has about 200slums having population of about 1.47 Lakhs and 39,523 households. On an average 4 persons are living in each household in the slums of Madurai Corporation. Among the four zones the researcher randomly selected two slums. The details of the slums are given as under:

Slum Name: Sakkiliar Methu Street

Ward No   : 95

House hold : 93

Population : 325

Slum Name: Manjalmedu Park Nagar

Ward No   : 10

House hold : 86

Population : 328

Methods: Children with the age group from 11 to 15 years old were selected by using purposive sampling method. Four focus groups were convened with the total participants of 58 members. In each slum respectively one boys group and one girls group were formed for FGD with the help of local leaders in those two slums of Madurai city. The details of groups are given as under:

Group No	Constitution	No.of participants	Slum Name
1	Boys	10	Sakkiliarmetu
2	Girls	13	Street
3	Boys	12	Manjal Medu
4	Girls	13	Park Nagar

Tools of Research: Both primary and secondary data were used in this study. Focused Group Discussions were conduced to gather primary resources. Focus group research is a qualitative research method. The term "focus group" is often used to describe many types of group discussions. Focus group research, however, is a true research method. As such, it uses a fairly standard methodology. Purpose of the methodology is to make sure that the information that is collected is not biased by the researcher, is a true representation of participant's feelings and beliefs. Researcher also collected secondary data from the books, articles published in journals, E-journals, Newspapers, reports and Internet sources.

Findings of the study: During the introduction, with the unfamiliarity of children with focus groups, Researcher clearly explained the purpose, format and nature of the group discussion.

Required needs expressed by children during FGD

- A house with separate kitchen and toilet facility
- Purified drinking water
- Clean environment to live
- Care and love from parents
- Care and motivation from teachers
- A play ground
- Healthy nutritious food
- Alcoholic free home and residing area
- Underground covered drainage system
- A library
- Free from caste and class discrimination
- Free from unwanted suspicion by others

Priorities of needs by Boys Group: Discussions with boys groups indicated that "Recreational needs" on first priority. They need a play ground to play without any disturbances from the dwelling people because all the participants in boys groups reflected that every day they are face lot of yelling by neighbours due to playing in the street. A 14 year old boy expressed that "we have no place to play in our home and in our area so we need an exclusive play ground for children". Secondly, Most of the participants prioritized "Need of small house without any leakage and damage". Because out of 10 boys 6 are living in substandard housing and rest of them are also not satisfied with their physical conditions of the house which they are living. Thirdly, they focused more on "clean environment" mainly closed drainage system. A glaring problem faced by the males group was "unnecessary battering and rebuking by parents". All of the participants expressed that they need "care and love form parents". Few of the participants expressed that they are sometimes facing "discriminations on the basis of caste" in the nearby areas. Especially, the parents from other community residing within and on the outside area were restricted their children to play with them and if there was any theft in their area they suspected them and indirectly yell at them.

Priorities of needs by Girls Group: Discussions with girls groups articulated that the first and foremost need is "Bath room and Toilet facility" because in both slum areas there are no such facilities. In sakiliyar metu street they use open defecation and in park street they use paid community toilet nearby area. A 15 year old girl expressed that "it was very hard time when standing in queue especially in the menstrual period". A girl from skkiliyar theru said that "open defecation is too terrible especially in night times". So both groups are very in need of toilet and bathroom facility within their house. Secondly, Most of the participants from both groups prioritized that "Need of peaceful environment to study" because most of the times they skip studying due noise pollution in the area. Thirdly, they focused more on "clean environment" mainly free from open dumping of garbage by the dwelling people and open drainage system. Fourthly, they are in need of "home with proper ventilation" because more than half of the participants hove no window in their homes. Fifthly, they pointed out that they need to live in an "alcohol free home and also area" because most of participant's fathers and few of their mothers, siblings and friends are alcoholics which create problems in their area as well as in their homes.

Conclusion: Maslow's Hierarchy of physical, emotional and intellectual needs believed that a child cannot move from one level to the next if they do not satisfy even the basic needs. According to him, our actions are motivated in order achieve certain needs. This hierarchy suggests that people are motivated to fulfill basic needs before moving on to other, more advanced needs. As a humanist, Maslow believed that people have an inborn desire to be self-actualized, to be all they can be. In order to achieve these ultimate

goals, however, a number of more basic needs must be met first such as the need for food, safety, love, and self-esteem. But in the case of India, The National Institute of Urban Affairs study reveals that women and children account for over 70% of India's population below the poverty line. Children under 15 years old make up the majority of the urban poor population. A child born into a poor urban family, living in a slum or squatter colony, is surrounded by conditions that challenge its survival from the first breath. The children of today are the future of tomorrow; this powerful statement assumes special significance of children in our society. The state has an onerous responsibility to mould and shape their present conditions in the best possible way. The journey in the life cycle involves the critical components of child survival, child development and child protection. Realising the deprived and vulnerable conditions of children living in urban slums, the law makers of the country have always accorded a privileged status of those children. The number of rights and privileges given to the children in the constitution of India, duly supported by legal protection, bears a testimony to this. Several provisions in the constitution of India impose on the state the primary responsibility of ensuring that all needs of children are met and that their basic human rights are fully protected. So, new policies must be introduced to fulfill their basic familial, social and environmental needs to make them as good citizens of the nation.

References

1. Kothari.C.R "Research methodology", Second edition 1990
2. Sudeshna Chatterjee "children growing up in Indian Slums: challenges and opportunities s ":Early Childhood Matters, Bernard van Leer Foundation, June 2012 p.17 -23
3. Chinmayee Satvery, Child Welfare Policies and Programmes in India, YOJANA November 2012
4. Shanti Ghosh ,Dheeraj Shah "Nutritional Problems in Urban" Indian Pediatrics; Volume 41,2004
5. Tord Kjellstrom et al, Urban Environmental Health Hazards and Health Equity ; Journal of Urban Health: Vol. 84, 2007
6. Draft report Slum Free City Plan of action, Madurai corporation 2013
7. http://www.envisionsoftware.com/articles/Maslows_Needs_Hierarchy.html
8. UNICEF report on the state of the world's children 2012. source: www.unicef.org

V. Krishna Jothi, Ph.D
Research Scholar, Department of sociology,
Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai,
Email: jokrish2002@yahoo.co.in Mob: 8760777707