

## **Regional Disparities of Slums, 2013 –An Overview with special emphasis to Kolkata**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The slums of Kolkata represent a contrasting picture that is reflected in terms of poverty and disorganization surrounding the communities. The slum dwellers of Kolkata live in conditions that are not actually fit for their rehabilitation. To alleviate such chronic problems several initiatives have been undertaken by government as well as by Kolkata Municipal Corporation. Various slums have been portrayed in this paper as case studies to draw transparent picture of slum diversity. The historical background analysis along with recent developmental plans for their amelioration has helped in drawing current plight in the slums of Kolkata.*

**Keywords:** *Slums, rehabilitation, chronic problems, diversities and developmental plans.*

Slums were a fixture of colonial Kolkata prior to industrialization, but their sustaining pattern of permanent existence and growth took shape as industries of Kolkata demanded for labor. After the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century, the slum population rapidly accelerated as rural migrants flocked to Kolkata to work with new industries. The Factories did not provide housing which inevitably led to the establishment of slums as close as possible to the factories.

One third of the population of Kolkata lives in registered slums and rest unregistered slum. These people live in without inadequate amenities, overpopulated and unhygienic conditions. Slums generally refer to *bustees* and squatter settlements. *Bustees* are legally recognized settlements that the Kolkata municipal corporation supplies with services such as water, latrines, trash removal and electricity (occasional). They are basically permanent in structures which are not under any demolition allowing *bustee* communities to develop a sense of permanency and focus on issues of poverty beyond shelter availability. Squatters on the other hand are illegal clusters of impermanent residency located along canal and railways and are not provided with any vital living amenities like water, latrines toilets and have to depend on other source on this issues. However distinction between these two does not embody the diversity of slum life.

The 100 year old Tangra slum described originated because of proximity to chemical and rubber industries but it has expanded largely due to employment opportunities in nearby tanning and shoe making industries as well as *pilkhana* or the slaughter house.

Bibi Bagan one of the oldest slums near *pilkhana* situated in ward number 56 resembles the proximity of plastic making industries and mostly composed of Muslims who are engaged in plastic chappal making industries and slaughter house. Similarly the Tiljala *bustee* was formed after Indian independence. Factory owners imported *Chamars* from Bihar province and they developed their own slum around the periphery of the factory. Approximately 95% of the Tiljala Shibtala lanes ward number 65 is engaged in leatherworks as well as straps of chappal making, their traditional occupation. This slum provides evidences that industries can create unique, long term social pattern in a slum. The Christopher Slum area located in ward no 58, reveals a different picture where most residents are involved in small private jobs, manual workers as well as in their own small business.

**Role of Industries in shaping a Slum:** The Tiljala *Bustee* was just a small section that developed in within the sprawling slums of Tiljala. Tangra slum proves industries other than that which acted as a slum's economic foundation may flourish nearby and result in significant growth of the slums. Job opportunity is the major motivation for rural and urban migrations. These slums continue growing as long as there is enough housing space, labor demand and interlink ages between rural and urban population. The industries inspire slums also introduced greater social variability to the slum landscape.

**Socio Economic Spectrum of Slums:** The religious, linguistic and caste diversity amongst the slum dwellers of Kolkata is reflected largely in wide arena of slum's social and economic features. Many of the leather work shop owners employ their relatives which gives solidarity in slum's atmosphere. The gender composition and employment in leather work indicates the effect that caste can have on the development of slum-specific social relationship and economic support networks. Economically occupations vary largely within the various slums. Generally Muslim women are typically confined earning wages in homes while Hindu

women are generally domestic servants or vegetable vendors. Another significant point which distinguishes Hindu Slum population from Muslim slum are that Kolkata's Muslims slums are likely to accept less family planning measures while Hindu slums accepts modern contraceptive methods. This inequality affects the population structure and composition of slum which creates financial, social burden on the already impoverished families. The Christopher slum is basically composed of Hindu population who follow the modern family planning measures while Bibi Bagan does not reflect the same. Migration patterns directly affect slum growth which has an influence on access to resources and housing, employment scenario's for both existing and new slum dwellers. Most of the inhabitants living inside the slum of Christopher Road are purely Hindu Habitants by nature. Maximum of them are living in this slum since their Birth. The interior of the area is basically connected with the main road that is Christopher Road where Champamoni Maternity Hospital is located and the same merges with the Topsia Road. The slum comprises of primarily Bengali community. The area exhibits mostly a Hindu community area where people are both engaged in business as well as services. Approximately there is 380 HH in this slum. Most of the residents here are involved private jobs as well as business while the female members are mainly housewives.

Language and religion have more vibrant affect on social life of slum dwellers. The Tangra slum population mostly consists of Hindi Speakers whose particular language and culture have isolated them in a Bengali city while Paikpara *bustee* population comprises of mostly permanent migrant Bengalis from rural West Bengal and Bangladesh, assimilating to live in an urban slum Bengali environment.

Post Independence Policies for Slum Improvement: After Indian Independence in 1947 slum policies have gradually shifted towards slum improvement. In 1949 the city passed the first *Calcutta Thika Tenancy Act* to prevent landowners from evicting tenants. Amendment of *Calcutta Improvement Trust* in 1954 and *Calcutta Slum Clearance Bill* of 1957 was followed by the *Bustee Improvement Programme* in late 1960's. The *Bustee Improvement Programme (BIP)* was Kolkata's most expensive slum improvement scheme. At the urging of the World Health Organization, the city created the *Calcutta Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMPO)* in 1961. The CMPO developed the (BIP) in 1964, but the programme made progress only when the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority was created in 1972. Major corrective measures were immediate implementation of the plan covering 400,000 slum dwellers within next five years and also establishment of a strong administrative arrangement functions essential to their improvement. The total acquisition of all *bustee* lands outside the central city.

Role of KEIP in Slum Improvement: The Kolkata Environmental Improvement Project was created by the Kolkata Municipal Corporation had taken major initiative to improve the slums of Kolkata. The project has addressed environmental conditions of 85 slums in the core KMC areas from ward 1 to100 respectively. KEIP took a crisis management approach to address the urgent need for sanitation in these low income settlements through repairing and restoring neighborhood access lanes; setting up electric lights to illuminate the lanes and open spaces; widening and relaying and lining drains; constructing sewerage and drainage lines and water supply lines; constructing, repair and renovation of toilets; baths and urinals and improving public spaces.

**Slum Improvement work done under KEIP.**

No. of Slums	No. of Toilets	No. of Baths	No. of Urinals	No. of Electric Poles	Electric Cable lines (km)	Sewer Line (km)	Water Pipelines (km)	Pavement (km <sup>2</sup> )
<b>85</b>	<b>6128</b>	<b>1848</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>1488</b>	<b>70.68</b>	<b>39.00</b>	<b>21.75</b>	<b>0.188</b>

(Source: KEIP Booklet)

The overall guiding strategy for improvement of the quality of life in slums combined infrastructure enhance income and behavior change. The project has engaged its own Social Development Unit and NGO's to facilitate consultation , community mobilization, planning and rescheduling of community works through formation of Self Help Groups (SHG) , opening of Bank Account etc . More than 500 women members of SHG's have been trained in embroidery, beauty care etc for additional family income.

The project has benefitted around 0.6 million slum dwellers by improving their living environment and overall sanitation and hygiene.

Accordingly a case study is portrayed in the paper to highlight the works of Kolkata Environment Improvement Project in order to analyze the effective implications of the project various focus group discussions were conducted in certain areas of Kolkata. It was found that some or the other important amenities were missing there.

Accordingly Bibi Bagan, a Pre existing slum area located in the central part of the Kolkata has been chosen for the case study in this paper. Documented with facts, Interviews of the local urban slum dwellers and photos it presents a vivid picture of the entire work phase of KEIP phase 1.

## **CASE STUDY**

**Slum Bibi Bagan Lane Borough: VII/ Ward: 56 Venues: Bibi Bagan Lane Slum**



### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Most of the inhabitants living inside the slum of Bibi Bagan Lane are purely Muslims by nature. Maximum of them are living in this slum since their Birth. The interior of the area is basically connected with the main road that merges with the Topsia Road. The slum comprises of primarily Bengali as well as non Bengali community in some parts. There are on an average nearly 10-90 rooms in the small gullies of the slum. The rooms are habited by 15-20 people. The Bibi Bagan lane is just opposite to the Topsia Pilkhana (The Slaughter House). Mostly people started living here since post 1970 and presently there are about 500- 600 families living here. Among the residents most of the women are involved in plastic and chap pal makings along with vegetable and fish selling. Some of the residents are also involved in the manual jobs like security guards and Raj Mistri Jobs. The female participants are primarily housewives.

In this locality there are Schools, markets available. The nearby station is park circus railway station. They visit Chittaranjan Hospital for their regular treatment however there is a small homeopathic clinic located nearby. Residents of this area belong mainly from the lower middle class and their tiles rooftops reflect that.

In the Bibi Bagan lane, there are approximately 550- 600 households. KEIP started the slum improvement project work in the year 2008 and finished the work during the first half of 2011. The FGD on the Slum Improvement Work was conducted with the help of the community mobilizers and local residents' participation to assess the social impact of the development undertaken in their society as a result of the works done by KEIP (Phase 1). In the FGD, total numbers of the participants were 21 respectively. Out of them 13 were female. Maximum of them are residing here since birth. The age of the participants were ranging from 18- 55 years. KEIP Mobilizer, Mr.Imran organized the FGD in the Bibi Bagan Slum for the sake of our survey. On the day of the FGD, he contacted a local resident Md. Akhter who is local resident of the area, settled a place of discussion and made them aware of the program me. The FGD was conducted in the morning. The participants were helpful, cooperative and enthusiastic and very eager to provide the information about their area and were interested to show the actual KEIP work outcome. The major initiative regarding the same has been noticed by the female respondents too who were very enthusiastic and positive in saying the outcomes of the KEIP project phase 1.

### **Analysis of the response on the Slum Development**

Awareness about the work carried out under the KEIP in the area.

The maximum people residing in this area were not aware of the works to be initiated by KEIP in their locality. They were actually to some extent confused whether the works were done by KEIP or KMC or by some government organization. However when the pavement construction slabs had on them written KEIP made them clear that the works were being done by KEIP. The basic problems faced here were Water logging to some extent. Miserable road condition, lack of street lights, absence of mass toilets for slum dwellers, lack of bath facility and urinals for the local people. The KEIP started their development project in the year 2008 and completed during 1<sup>st</sup> half of 2011 respectively.

*“The mass people could not understand who were doing the works of development of the slums , the KEIP or the KMC and came to know about their onsets through the displaying of the boards of KEIP while they were working in the area and also through the structure format of the toilets undertaken by KEIP in the places of the existing toilets . Maximum residents came to know through that way. ” (A male participant)*

There were no meetings conducted with the local residents of the slums before the initiation of the works. Accordingly people were not informed about the procedure of the development project phase 1.

### **The situation before the KEIP work was initiated**

According to the slum dwellers, the Toilet conditions before KEIP was very pathetic and dwellers used to go to the share toilets. No urinal was provided. Bath facility was not provided before the initiation of the project KEIP (Phase 1) and the local slum dwellers and the ladies had to face a lot of problem for that. They were taking bath inside of their rooms or outside in the open area. The concept of sharing toilets existed before hand for 5-15 room people. Overall sanitation development was very less before the project. The facility of tap water was very less and not available in some parts also. The sewerage and drainage facility was also poor. All the drains were open and poor. There were unorganized vat inside the slum and people was habituated to throw garbage here and there . The people were less concern about their area and threw garbage in the open drains. The problem of inadequate toilets existed during that time and also that which existed were not sufficient to the slum dwellers living there.

*“The toilet condition was extremely miserable before KEIP project .We ladies had to face such amount of humiliation and problem for using the sharing toilets which were also been used by the male members. The toilets were poor and we had to use them as we had no other alternatives other than to clean them on our own in spite of several tantrums” (Nasima Begum – one of the urban slum dweller interviewed)*

Residents used to live a very irregular lifestyle before the KEIP (Phase1). The children and the women used to lead a very sedentary life confined to their homes. They were less focused in their own self development.

The lighting facility of the area was very poor before the KEIP project and residents were scared to get out of their houses after evening. The pavements were not constructed before the KEIP works and roads were Kuccha and the gullies 5-13 had kuccha pathways.

The facilities provided under the KEIP.

The KEIP came to this slum in the year 2008 and finished their work by the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 2011. Firstly they made Pavements and sewerage lines. The house connection of the sewer lines with individual pits has been done in most of the Khupris. The major work done by them is the construction of Community Toilets on share basis in the existing toilet area. The Toilet conditions have improved marginally and the current numbers of

completed toilet by KEIP in Bibi Bagan is 75. Condition of toilets is far better than earlier. There are good doors in the toilet and pits are also improved and modern.

Garbage litters along the pavements of Bibi Bagan (Ward no 56) and newly constructed KEIP Toilets for Community Slum Dwellers by KEIP body.



One Vat has been provided for dumping the wastes of the locality. The roads have been concreted inside the slums and installed electric light posts.

Whether the situation has improved after facilities are provided.

The bath facility has improved marginally from 20/25 to 78 at present which provides a much better facility for bathing. Now the women can take bath inside of a specific room. But it's still not favorable for the present population. It has been replaced by common bathroom supporting the same amount of population. Situation is currently very much towards development process of the Slum area and dwellers. The residents are now more or less happy with the toilet and bath facility. The toilets and urinals constructed by KEIP have made their life very easy. In addition the pavement construction has made communication very easy within the lanes of Bibi Bagan. Water logging conditions have improved marginally.

Any change in the quality of life after intervention.

Quality of life has changed a lot due to the implementation of different developments in Bibi Bagan lane 5-13 gullies. People living here are mainly manual workers dependent on daily wages for their livelihood. The lives of residents have become now much easier and hassle free as compared to the earlier situation. Now there are 4/5 vats in the slum and dwellers have also changed their habit to put the garbage inside the vat only. Only some of them are still not changed but according to the dwellers they will also realize the importance of cleanliness soon.

The Drains which are covered with Mesh are a breeding ground of Mosquitoes during Monsoons.



*“The sewerage and drainage has improved to 453 mt respectively. Most of the drains are covered and the flow is also very clear. Dwellers are really satisfied with the covered drains. They said “now nobody can throw any plastic or other garbage inside the drain”*

#### **Satisfaction Level.**

When they were asked about their desired level of satisfaction about the works carried out under KEIP, the maximum number of the participants responded that they were satisfied with the works of KEIP. The toilets numbers have increased and the garbage dump facilities have also increased greatly. There are still problems of inadequate toilet cleaning facilities and the water problems still exist that of the drinking water since the taps are sufficient to the desired level. Other relevant issue that came up during the discussion.

The major problems of the residents of the Bibi Bagan is that they have the problem of the overflowing of the KEIP toilets and also that the ladies feel that the amount is inadequate for the present slum population. The slum dwellers have complained about the less availability of tap waters in the area which is a major problem for the people residing here.

#### **Suggestion for Improvement**

The slum dwellers have been demanding for more amounts of common toilets for their purpose and also more numbers of baths for the existing number of them is very less to the current population of the slums. The slum dwellers especially the ladies are facing a great problem since the toilets are not cleaned regularly and overflows sometimes by mass number of uses. Provision of tap waters should also be kept in mind since there are rare tap water facilities in the studied area. Suggestion for Improvement-

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#### **Field Observation.**

- ❖ The common toilets constructed by KEIP in gullies 5-13 are observed (photo attached) shows the irregular cleaning of them and also the deficiency of taps within them.



- ❖ The lanes have been visited and the house type has been observed too where 5- 15 people stay in a single room.



- ❖ The pavement constructed by the KEIP has been visited.



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