The Increasing Urban Homelessness in Metropolitans, A challenge to all the stakeholders in Bangalore, Karnataka, India

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Received: 10 May  Revised: 18 May  Accepted: 26 May

Abstract
India is a fast growing economy and despite this growing economic stature, the number of homeless people in India is increasing day by day. The migration of people from rural to urban areas, particularly to metropolitan cities, in search of employment had contributed to the increase in number of homeless people in urban areas. Bangalore (Bengaluru), the silicon valley and garden city of India, the capital of Karnataka, is now also well known for the increasing rate of homelessness in the city. The policies and programmes and even the night shelter schemes, though initiated, are not answering the purpose. The reasons may be many to state, but ultimately what can be concluded is that none of the government projects or non-government projects are facilitating to the issues and concerns of urban homeless when it comes to reality. The issue of homelessness is not restricted to the concept of having a roof over the head. Lack of sanitation facilities, lack of potable water, the problems created by the police and the public and the problems due to unpredictable weather are their gifts for being homeless. Most of these people sleep under the flyovers and bridges, some on the pavement and a few in bus stands, railway stations and courtyard of worship places. Their problems can be predicted from their place of stay. This study gives special reference to the issues and problems faced by the urban homeless in Bangalore South. The inability of government to protect them and also provide them the necessary facilities and the challenges faced by social workers in convincing the government departments to address these problems are stated in this paper.

Keywords: Homeless, Migration, Challenges, Inefficient programmes.

1. Introduction

In rapidly urbanising India, urban homelessness is a growing concern. The fast growing economic stature of the country or it’s improvement in ranking when it comes to the wealth has not helped in acknowledging the problem of homeless people in the country. There is a usual tendency to brand rural areas as poverty stricken while considering the urban areas as the heaven on earth, but when it comes to reality, the level of urban poverty is increasing with the increasing density of population in the urban areas. This poverty leads the people to street, that is when they are
unable to afford housing in the city and they end up sleeping in the streets. Urban homelessness is a major issue that must be tackled if the so called sustainable development is to be achieved by the country.

According to the Census of 2011, India has more than 1.7 million homeless residents, of which 938,384 are located in urban areas. As per the latest NSSO survey reports 2011-2012, there are over 52.8 million poor people living in the cities and towns of India. The Slum population is also increasing and as per Census 2011, over 65 million people were living in slums. These figures however grossly underestimate the real numbers of homeless. It is estimated that at least 1 percent of the population of cities is homeless. So based on this it can be extrapolated as nearly 3 million of the people living in urban areas are homeless.

The migration of people from rural to urban areas in search of employment had contributed to the increase in number of urban poor and homeless people. The city sustains with their cheap labour, but they remains invisible in the eyes of government and the other organizations that are said to be working for them. The urban homeless people live desperately hard lives with no shelter or social protection (the tent houses or make shift houses in slums can hardly be considered as a safe roof). The majority of homeless people in the cities were found to sleep on pavements, bus stands and railway stations, and then courtyards of places of worship. The bridges and flyovers seem to be a blessing to them. They are vulnerable to the threats like rash and drunken drivers, police and also general public. Homeless women, particularly young women, suffer the worst kinds of violence and insecurity, and are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and trafficking. Instances of rape, molestation, and women spending sleepless nights guarding their young adolescent girls are a common feature among homeless women. Most homeless, survive through casual, unprotected, uncertain and hard labour in a range of occupations like construction labour, pulling rickshaws, carrying and pushing loads, domestic work and street vending. Most of these people, including the homeless, contribute to our nation’s economic growth. But still they remain invisible to our eyes and we close our eyes towards their miseries and are forever marginalized by us.

Bangalore, undoubtedly one of the most advanced districts of Karnataka, the showpiece of India’s Information Technology industry, is also known for its growing rate of urban poverty and homelessness. Poverty lurks just behind the glass facade of hi-tech office complexes, exclusive shopping malls and entertainment facilities that rival the best in the country. In the city’s densely populated squatter settlements which house the urban poor, even basic civic facilities such as housing, water, roads, etc are not available. As per the government surveys completed in August 2010, there are 7429 urban homeless persons in the 8 City Municipal Corporations of Karnataka. While on 9th and 10th of March 2010, about 29 NGOs have carried out a rapid survey of urban homeless in Bangalore city alone and found that there are at least 17,141 urban homeless people. Independent surveys conducted by organizations working for urban homeless states that there are around 40000 to 50000 homeless people in Bangalore city. These variations in the figures indicate the incapability of the stakeholders, government and the organizations working for urban homeless, even in finding the number of people who are in need of help.

The National Housing and Habitat Policy (1988) laid greater emphasis on providing housing to the vulnerable sections of the society. Later, the National Agenda of Governance (NAG) Habitat Policy, National Slum Development Program, Indira AwasYojana, 10th Plan Approach, VAMBAY &
Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan, Night Shelter Scheme for Footpath Dwellers etc. were announced. But the urban homeless have still not been given the rightful attention and some schemes have not been implemented even in the major cities of India.

Bangalore alone have 10 night shelters. But these account to only 17 percent of the necessary number, 57, as suggested in the National Report on Homeless December 2011. But this number is again based on the unreliable Census conducted by the State Government. So the real necessary number is much more than this 57 and the current number is negligible.

While we people consider that poverty alleviation and providing shelters to the homeless as strictly the duty of the government, the government place the responsibility on the NGOs. But if the NGOs, people and government work together, invisible will become visible and can end the miseries of the urban homeless.

2. Literature review

The issue of homelessness is a great challenge that all the countries, especially developing countries, around the globe are facing. Being homeless means the people are unable to have a permanent roof over their head. So the temporary tents and slum dwelling also accounts to be homeless. Slums are a clear manifestation of a poorly planned and managed urban sector and, in particular, a malfunctioning housing sector. So far, the failure of urban planning and the construction sector in matching demand for homes has resulted in a huge housing backlog that has led to the development of slums in a variety of contexts globally. Due to constraints in formal housing and land delivery systems, more and more people who would otherwise qualify for housing programmes are resorting to slum settlements (unhabitat.org).

Lack of human capital, social alienation, psychiatric pathology, and exposure to stressful life events have all been offered as theoretical explanations for chronic homelessness (Robert J. Calsyn, 2014). Homelessness is a social issue faced by not only developing countries but also developed countries. Though various strategies are taken to control the same, it remains as a problem especially in developing nations (Gary A Morse, 2014). Poor educational attainment and the lack of a high school diploma severely limit opportunities for employment and social mobility (Kasarda and Ting, 1996; Kasarda, 1993).

2.1. Context of homelessness in India

Among the most dispossessed and disenfranchised of all populations in the country are the urban homeless. They are deprived of the elementary protection and minimal human dignity of a roof over their heads. They are forced therefore to suffer the extremes of climates, lack even place to cook and bathe, are denied the most basic citizenship rights like ration cards, election cards and social security. They typically suffer both grave neglect and hostility of state authorities. Until recently they were at the periphery of public policy. A decisive turning point for the rights of homeless persons has been the interventions of the highest court in the country, which responded to our reports of homeless people grappling against the severe Delhi winter two years ago, resulting in avoidable deaths and intense suffering. Since then, the Supreme Court has passed a series of important orders to all state governments to establish permanent shelters with basic
services for homeless people in all major cities, including special shelters for most vulnerable categories among the homeless, such as single women and the disabled and aged.

2.1.1. Who are homeless- defining homelessness

The Census of India defines ‘houseless population’ as the persons who are not living in ‘census houses’. A ‘census house’ is referred to as a ‘structure with roof’. Census enumerators are instructed ‘to take note of the possible places where the houseless population is likely to live such as ‘on the roadside, pavements, in hume pipes, under staircases or in the open, temples, mandaps, platforms and the like’ (Census of India, 1991:64).

Going beyond the Census definition of ‘homeless’ which defines houseless population as persons not living in ‘census houses’, we argue that the benefits of the SC orders shall prevail and be applicable for all categories of people listed below. They are: Persons who do not have a house, either self-owned or rented, but instead:

i. Live and sleep at pavements, parks, railway stations, bus stations and places of worship, outside shops and factories, at constructions sites, under bridges, in hume pipes and so on;

ii. Spend their nights at night shelters, transit homes, short stay homes, beggar’s homes and childrens’ homes;

iii. Live in temporary structures without full walls and roof, such as under plastic sheets, tarpaulins or thatch roofs on pavements, parks, nallah beds and other common spaces.

They are described variously as homeless, houseless, roofless, shelter less people, and pavement dwellers. ‘Invisibility’ of homeless groups renders them a difficult group to work with, although many may have lived several years, sometimes even a generation or two on the streets, they are seldom noticed by officials. They lack a formal address, and also are rendered anonymous because they usually lack even the elementary markers of citizenship of poor people in India, like ration cards and voters’ identity cards. Even many civil society programs for the urban poor have tended to overlook homeless persons on the streets, though they work within slums or with sex workers or vendors in urban areas (The National Report on Homelessness, 2011).

2.2. The reasons behind increasing homelessness

Poverty stays as the major reason behind homelessness. The people are unable to afford a permanent roof due to the increase in the cost of living without any tremendous changes in their wages. Rapid urbanisation and industrialization had attracted people in rural areas to urban areas. They flee to urban cities with a hope to find a decent livelihood, but a very few finds a better life and the others ends up in slums or streets.

The economic motive remains the main reason for migration among male interstate migrants. Economically backward states keep losing people to developed states. The relationship between poverty and migration is not clearly established and it was observed that middle and higher income groups show higher propensity to move. Poverty incidence was found less among migrants as compared to non-migrants but it was higher among rural to urban migrants. The most
successful group of migrants is urban to urban migrants in terms of type of occupation they have and their income levels due to better education and skills they possessed. Influx of migration towards metropolitan cities indicates that economic reforms have not been able to create much employment opportunities in small and medium towns and in rural areas. Hence migration will continue towards large and metropolitan cities (D P Singh, Indian Urban poverty report, chapter 3, 2009).

2.3. **Urban homelessness in Karnataka**

The attitude of the State government of Karnataka towards the urban homeless was clearly mentioned in the report submitted by the Advisory Commissioner to the Supreme Court of India.

“It is pertinent to note that Honorable Supreme Court in its Order dated 17/01/2011 had directed the State of Karnataka, as also other States, to facilitate the joint inspection of the shelter homes in the State from 28/01/2011 onwards at State expenses, and the report thereafter to be submitted to the Honorable Court on or before 05/03/2011. However, there was no action taken by the State of Karnataka, and no joint inspection has been carried out in Karnataka despite numerous telephonic and written reminders vide letters dated 03/02/2011 and 13/03/2011. This failure on the part of the State of Karnataka is unacceptable and undermines the honor and efforts of the Honorable Supreme Court.”

“There is another aspect that needs to be considered. The information on urban homeless provided by the Government pertains to 9 Municipal Corporations only. In addition to these 9 Municipal Corporations, there are 210 City Municipal Councils, Town Municipal Councils, and Town Panchayats. It appears that the State has failed to carry out any survey of urban homeless in these urban local bodies. In conclusion, it can be safely stated that the survey carried out by the Government is unreliable. It is a sorry matter that the State of Karnataka has not demonstrated any real intent and desire in this process” (Adv.Clifton D Rozario, The Advisory Commissioner's Report to the Supreme Court, April 2011).

2.4. **Urban homeless in Bangalore**

National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) operational guidelines issued in December 2013 speaks about establishing all-weather shelters for the urban homeless in cities and towns with over 1 lakh population. For every 1 lakh urban population, provisions should be made for permanent community shelters that can accommodate minimum of 100 persons. The guidelines underline the need for establishing separate shelters for men, women, families and special shelters for mentally challenged persons and their families. They make it mandatory to provide ventilated rooms, water arrangements, bathing and toilet facilities, standard lighting, fire protection measures, first aid kit, regular cleaning of blankets, mattresses, common kitchen/cooking space, facilitation for convergence with other government services (obtaining ID proof, EPIC etc). The NULM guidelines also describe in length about the location, design, operation and maintenance of shelters. Accordingly, Municipal Corporation is required to identify land for constructing permanent shelters and submit proposal to the nodal agency (Directorate of Municipal Administration in Karnataka). If the project proposal is approved, fund is sanctioned to
Bangalore has an estimated number of 17,141 numbers of homeless in the city according to a survey conducted by 29 NGOs and 2458 number of homeless according to the Census of State government and nearly 50000 homeless according to Housing and Land Rights Network, India. But still the Bangalore city, with an estimated population of 10 million (World Population Review, 2014), has only 10 functional night shelters with a total capacity of 350 beds. According the reports by Citizen Matters, the night shelters are under the threat of closure as BBMP (Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike) is not properly settling the bills of the NGOs who were being assigned to function these shelters (outsourced).

### 3. Objectives of study
- To understand the living conditions of the homeless in Bangalore
- To assess the efficiency of the stakeholders in reaching out to the homeless in Bangalore

### 4. Methodology
To answer the study objectives the target population is identified as all those who live in Bangalore without a proper shelter. The sample was limited to Bangalore South Region. This would include native Bangalorians and migrants from various geographical regions residing in Bangalore South, that is areas near Mahatma Gandhi Road, Electronics City, Koramangala, Hosur Road, BTM Layout and Jaya Nagar, without a home to live.

A questionnaire was prepared to collect the required information and the data was collected through interview schedule. Data was collected from a sample of 100 adult respondents. The responses are tabulated and analysed to draw conclusions about the objectives.

### 5. Analysis

**Table 1: Location and Occupation profile of respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Begging</td>
<td>Rag picking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi Road</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic City</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosur Road</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM Layout</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaya Nagar</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 shows there is equal percentage of urban homeless individuals in Bangalore South Region are laborers who work in either construction sites, road laying, chemical companies based on the availability and those who occupy themselves by street vending. Generally they are either involved in begging and a marginally less number are involved in rag picking.

**Table 2: Location and Amenities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Water facility</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Type of house</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>Available</td>
<td>Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for drinking</td>
<td>for washing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi Road</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic City</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosur Road</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM Layout</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JayaNagar</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koramangala</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

# Footpath includes bus waiting shelters, bus stands etc.

Table 2 shows the details of Water facility, Education and type of house of respondents. 84 members out of 100 have no access to water, 10 members from Koramanagala, 2 from Electronic City and 2 from BTM Layout have access to drinking water and 2 members from Koramangala have access to water for washing purposes. This clearly indicates the lack of basic needs in case of urban homeless.

Marginally high percentage of urban homeless is uneducated. Out of 100 individuals included in the study, 30 are school dropouts and the major reason stated by them were the poverty which made them to work from their childhood. A few stated the reason of corporal punishment in schools.
This indicates that, the free primary education and mid-day-meal schemes by government are still not able to motivate individuals and also it is high time to implement child friendly environment in schools.

### Table 3: Location and Social Security facilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Voter's ID card</th>
<th>Ration card</th>
<th>Aadhar card</th>
<th>Contacted (by) any Agency (Govt. Or Non Govt.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Available</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
<td>Available</td>
<td>Not Available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mahatma Gandhi Road</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronic City</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hosur Road</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTM Layout</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JayaNagar</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koramangala</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>73</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 shows that, majority of urban homeless families do not have social security facilities provided by government. About 31% individuals have Voter’s identity card, 27% have Ration card and 35% have Aadhar card.

There are many schemes like *yashashwini, Thayi madilu, Bhagya jyoti and Kuteera yojana* promoted by the government for the homeless. Facilities like Voter’s identity card, which allows
an individual to exercise his/her franchise, Aadhar card which provides unique identity number to every Indian for all practical purposes, and the most important living support, the Ration card, which supports lower economical strata of the population with subsidized food supply are not available for the majority of urban homeless, which in turn add to their invisibility. For applying for any of the schemes or policies, these are required and the people who don’t have these are unable to access any of the benefits of government policies.

The next point to be noted is that though these individuals live in the busy metropolitan region, in front of the government and non government agencies that are to provide them with help, they are not contacted by these agencies. Only 19% is contacted by non governmental agencies and a big 0% by government agencies. The invisibility or the purposeful closing of eyes towards them is clear from the table.

6. Conclusion

Metropolitan cities like Bangalore attract individuals in search of employment and earning. Poverty, natural calamities, unemployment etc add to the rate of migration to the cities. The higher cost of living, inadequate wages or income, scarcity of places to stay push the people to street. Though many policies exist in India to address to the problems of rural unemployment, the influx of people from rural to urban area in search of jobs has not decreased. This shows the inadequacy of the policy itself or its inadequate implementation. For instance the night shelter scheme is implemented properly can address majority of the problems faced by the urban homeless.

The inefficiency of government programs are common in India and that is where the non governmental agencies play a role. When it comes to Bangalore there are various non governmental agencies that are working for the urban homeless. And it is a surprising fact that only few of the agencies had actually contacted or tried to contact these people. While the government and other agencies complain about the lack of proper identity of the urban homeless, it must be noted that in technological era like this, it will become easier to provide a proof of identity to these people using the technology. For instance, the eye scanner that we use in airports is the best way to recognize the individual even though they move from one place to another in search of jobs. Techniques are many, it is high time to use those effectively and provide an answer to this ever growing rate of homelessness.

7. References