



Living Condition of Slum Dwellers in Small Town: A Case Study of Katwa Municipality, Purba Bardhaman, West Bengal

Mampi Dey

M.A in Geography, University of Burdwan, West Bengal, India

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70798/tgjct/010400019>

Abstract

Slums are urban areas where a large number of people live in congested conditions with substandard housing and insufficient access to essential amenities, reflecting a low level of socioeconomic development. Rapid urbanization and population growth in developing countries have led to the expansion of slums. The present study examines the living condition of slum dwellers in small town with special reference to Katwa Municipality. Slum areas are gradually expanding. Therefore, slums studies at local scale in one of the crucial aspects of a town for the sustainable and overall development of a city. It is essential to ensure improved housing conditions in slum areas and to enhance the living standards of slum dwellers. To assess the living conditions of slum dwellers, several parameters have been considered in this study, including housing infrastructure, health facilities, education, latrine facilities, cooking fuel, drinking water, health, occupational structure. Katwa Municipality consist of 20 wards. Out of the total 20 wards of this Municipality, 54 slums are distributed across all wards except ward no 18. The total of 8817 households are found in the slum areas. This study is based on primary data collected through field survey and secondary data obtained from various sources. Primary data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire following a random sampling technique. The overall condition is moderately poor. Sustainable improvement is possible only with the active involvement of local government bodies, enhanced support from NGOs, and greater awareness among slum dwellers.

Keywords: Urbanization, Slum, Slum Dwellers, Katwa Town, Basic Amenities, Living Condition

Introduction

Urbanization indicates the growth of cities and towns but various studies disclose that in developed countries urbanization resulted in industrialization and economic development of the countries. In developing countries like India urbanization has resulted in higher growth of population compared to economic development. In these countries which led to the growth of slums. The growth of the cities and urban areas amenities attracts the people from rural and less development areas. The peoples those who migrate to the cities or urban area are mostly little educated or uneducated and economically weak. They get employed in the informal sector with low Wages. Due to low income, the migrants to the cities can afford to settle in the slums because the cost of land is high in the cities, they are never able to bear this expense. Urbanization is one of the most significant processes shaping modern Indian society. India as a developing country rapid population growth and rural-urban migration have contributed to the unplanned expansion of urban areas. However, unplanned growth has resulted arise of slum characterized by poor living conditions and lack of basic amenities. The word 'slum' means a densely or overcrowded inhabited area in the city (Hossain, 2013). In the early stages of the Industrial revolution slums generally emerged near the factory entrances, situated close to the urban center. In contrast, in the present era

many slums are increasingly developing and expanding within the central zones of cities. Most slum dwellers belong to economically disadvantaged groups living at or below the poverty line and they are often associated with illiteracy and poor health condition and a low socio-economic standard of living (Jargaskym, 2014).

Factors leading to Slum formation

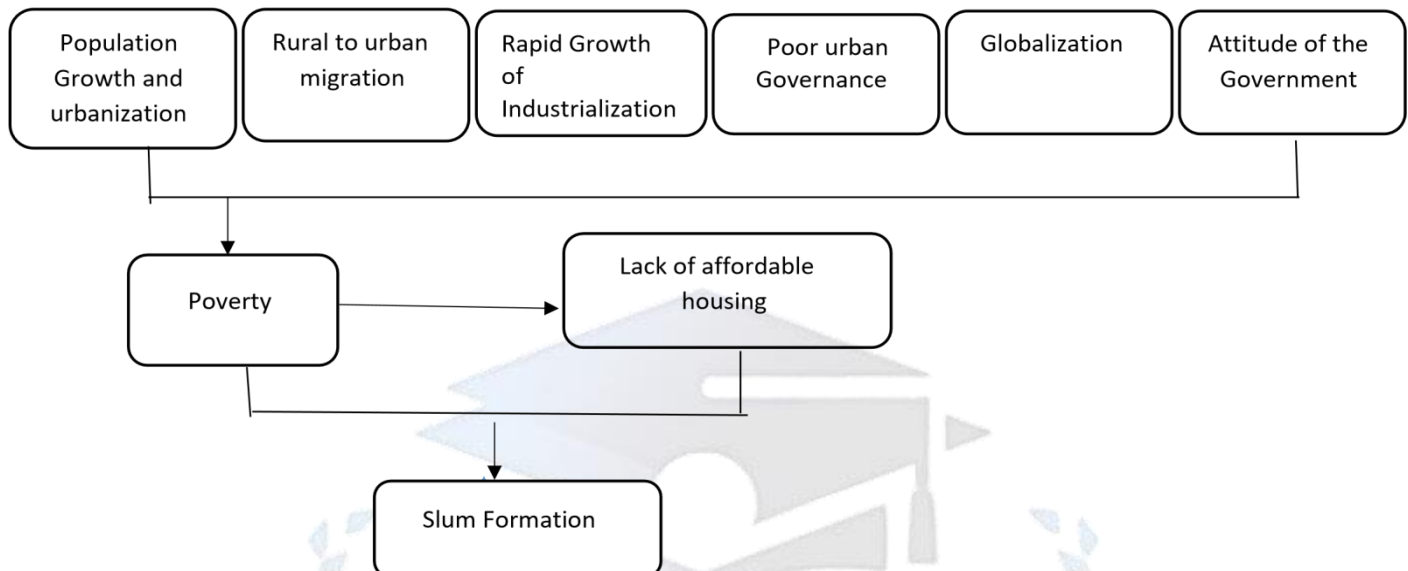


Fig 1: Factors of slum Formation “Source: Adapted from Panday (2020)”

They suffer from in-adequate availability of formal educational and limited employment prospects. For this reason, slum dwellers are largely engaged in informal sector occupation which restrict their opportunities to earn higher and good incomes. Their low socio-economic status compels them to lead a marginalized and economically vulnerable life. As a result, the living conditions of slum dwellers are often poorer than those of rural inhabitants. Furthermore, slum populations are highly susceptible to various health issues including communicable diseases. They frequently suffer from malnutrition due to inadequate access to nutritious food and proper healthcare facilities. (Ameratunga et al., 2006, and Kamruzzaman & Hakim, 2015). The roadways are narrow and inadequately surfaced, reflecting poor infrastructural development. During the rainy season, slum areas often suffer from severe waterlogging, causing significant difficulties for the slum dwellers. This condition is too much unhygienic and causes a various number of contagious diseases (Kaviarasu and Xavier, 2015). Insecure land ownership remains a critical challenge for slum dwellers. Slum housing is typically located on encroached public or government land especially in marginal areas including roads, railway corridors, setback spaces and poorly drained wetlands. They are frequently exposed to waterlogging and reside in environmentally insecure and vulnerable locations. (Siegel et al, 1997). Katwa Municipality is an important urban centre in the district of Purba Bardhaman district in West Bengal. Due to economic opportunities and migration from surrounding rural areas, several slum settlements have developed within the municipality. Studying the living conditions of slum dwellers is therefore essential for understanding urban poverty and planning sustainable development strategies.

Location of study area

Geographical location of Katwa Municipality is situated in the eastern part of Purba Bardhaman district. The geographical location of it is between 23° 37' N to 23° 39' N and 88° 6' E to 88° 8' E longitude with an average elevation of about 21 meters above sea level. Administratively, Katwa Municipality is an urban local body under the government of West Bengal. It is located within the Katwa subdivision of Purba Bardhaman. The town serves as the head quarter of the Katwa subdivision. The eastern part of the district, this municipality renders services and connectivity to the surrounding rural area. This municipality comprises 20 wards distributed over an area of approximately 9.5 square kms. "As per the census of India, Katwa had a total population of 81,615. The

slum population is distributed across each of the 19 wards out of 20 wards and except 18 No ward of Katwa Municipality. A total of 8,817 slum household have been identified with in this municipality. Katwa is located about 150 km north of Kolkata and nearly 56 km from Bardhaman town making it a crucial urban Centre in the region. The physical setting of Katwa Municipality is characterized by is riverine location between the Ajay and Bhagirathi rivers. Flat alluvial plains, Fertile soil which supports intensive agriculture in the surrounding rural areas. The terrain is generally flat and low lying if makes the area susceptible to seasonal waterlogging and flooding in some places.

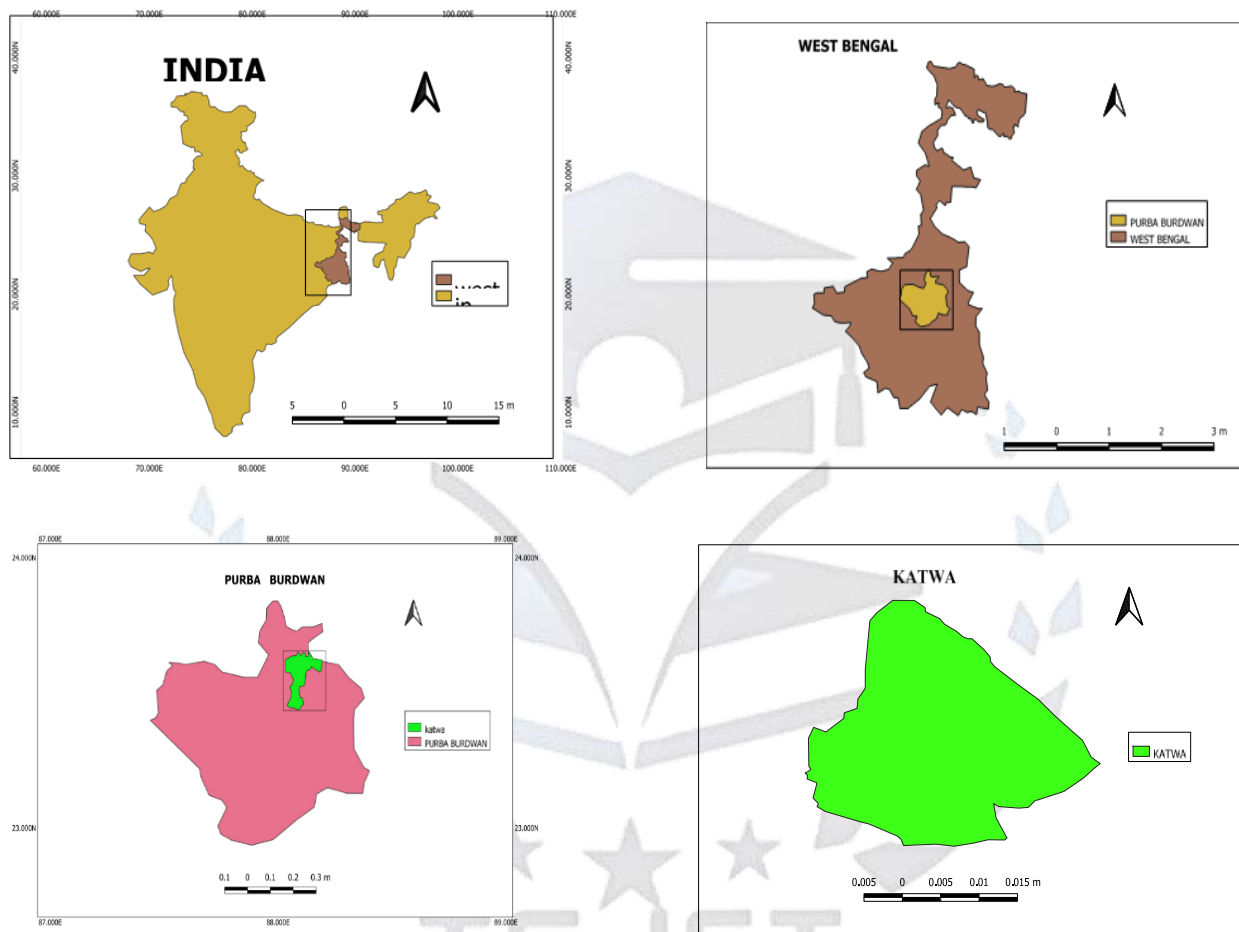


Fig 2 : Location Map the study Area

Literature Review

Rahman et al., (2016) have explained slums play crucial role in shaping and transforming urban landscape and its built environment. The paper examines the economic status and housing conditions of slum dwellers with in Kalyani town by assessing selected indicators, including income level, occupational structure, work participation rate, dependency ratio, house condition, sanitation, electricity and other basic facilities. The study based on primary data from the selected slum areas. The paper also focuses to identify the problems arising housing conditions and weak economy status of slum dwellers in the town. It also provided several recommendations for the improvement and better life of slum dwellers.

Dutta (2017) in his work mainly focuses on basic infrastructures of slum settlements and critically analyses the availability of various civic amenities. It highlighting and compares the infrastructural condition of these slums with the overall scenario of slum infrastructure in India. The finding of the survey suggest that the slum dwellers experience severely inadequate living conditions and remain socio-economically disadvantage with large proportion living in unhygienic surrounding.

Mandal et al., (2018) have mainly aimed to show that generally the slum residents live in highly deprived social and physical environment. The living standard are of them very poor, majority belonging to Below Poverty Line (BPL). Most of the residents are engaged in informal sector resulting in low and irregular wage earning. Generally slum dwellers suffer

from various diseases but in the case of Purulia Municipality's slum dwellers, they are enjoying better form various serious diseases. In Purulia Municipality the slum population density is very low. The slums are situated away from the water body or marshy area, so they are safe from different types of disease like Malaria.

Singh and et al., (2018) in their work discusses the physical environment of slum settlements and analyses the availability of basic facilities for the slum dwellers and their basic facilities slum residents. The study reveals that habits such as alcohol consumption and smoking are more common among residents of slum area than other sections of the urban population. This investigation focuses on the social structure and living standard of slum residents seeking to reveal the underlying causes of their low quality of life to mitigate the challenges faced by slum residents, proposes solutions.

Zaman et al., (2018) in their study have explained that the number of slum in Guwahati city in increasing day by day. In this context the Author has considered several important element such as, Sanitation, drinking, water, electricity, education, food habits and health as key components affecting their living condition. Furthermore, due to frequent floods in Assam the slum areas of Guwahati city often become flood prone which leads to the spread of various infectious and serious disease. The study also point out that although both government and NGOs and private health services exists, they are neither equally distributed nor equally accessible to all people. Through this article has attempted to mainly analyse the health status of slum dwellers, their seeking behaviour, health awareness, health development measures and their impact.

Kulasekhar and Dasaratharamaiah (2020) in their study on urbanization in India show a significant growth of the urban population over time, which has contributed to the expansion of slum areas. This paper indicates that many slum dwellers migrate from rural region to cities mainly in search of employment, education and better livelihood opportunities. This paper suggest that if local bodies, NGOs and the government pay more attention to these issues they can help solve these problems and improve the living conditions.

Das (2022) focuses on the study of living condition of the slum residents of the Siliguri Municipal Corporation. In this study, she categorized the slum areas of this municipal corporation into two groups— inner slums and outer slums on the basis of their spatial distribution. The study find out that the living condition of inner slum dwellers are comparatively worse than that of outer slum residents of this municipal corporation.

Objectives of the study

1. To investigate the living condition and life style of the slum dwellers.
2. To explore the socio-economic profile of slum-dwellers.

Methodology

The present field survey was conducted in the notified slum areas of Katwa Municipality. Primary and secondary data were collected for this study. The methodology has been organized into three stages:

Pre-field: Prior to primary survey, the slum areas were subjected to a pilot survey to ensure data reliability. For this study, secondary data were gathered from multiple sources, including the Katwa Municipality office, District statistical Handbook, Bardhaman. Websites, Books and Journals, Census of Bardhaman district (2011), Records from Katwa Municipality Office. The secondary data such as area of the slum, no. of household and size of the population of slum collected before primary survey.

Field: Primary data were collected through semi-structure questionnaires, observation method, and face to face interviews with slum dwellers. The survey was done by random sampling method. For the study, 190 samples were collected from 19 wards, excluding ward no. 18. From each ward, 10 households were considered as samples.

Post Field: Following the collection of primary and secondary data, the data were systematically processed and analysed diagrams to fulfil the study's objectives and generate the study findings.

Statistical Analysis

To collected data were processed and subjected to statistical analysis using software such as Microsoft power point 2013, Microsoft Excel 2013, Microsoft Word 2013 and QGIS 3.16 software. Analytical techniques including percentages (%), maximum and minimum values, mean, standard deviation, variable correlation etc. use for data accuracy and effectiveness.

Findings

Family size: The survey reveals that the majority of households are composed of 3 to 5 members. In such cases, the size of the family other become a significant burden for the earning person as head of the household. Although a family may have more than one earning member, but low income condition frequently weakens their overall living standard. Households were classified into 3 group from the shows Fig-1 Majority (64%) of households consist 3-5 member, 5-7 members account for 30% household and more than 7 members constitute households only small proportion of the total sample.

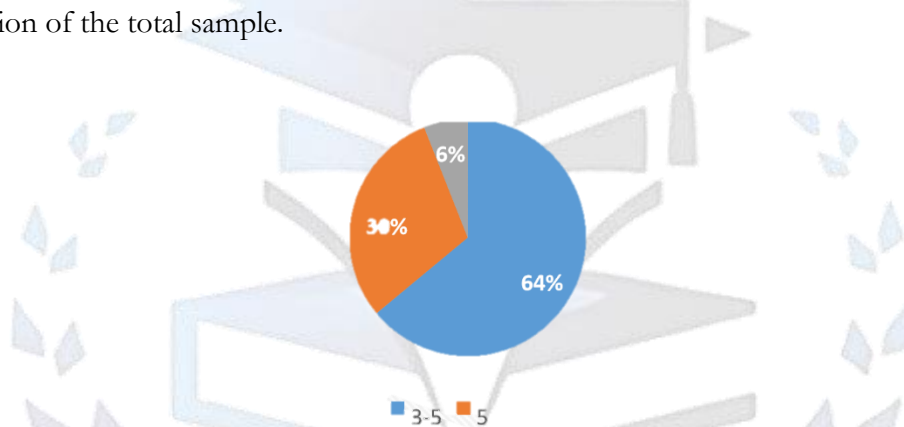


Fig 3: Family size

Sex-Ratio: The sex-ratio in the slum area shows that about 55% of the population are male, while 45% are female. This Fig: 2 Sex Ratio indicates that the male population is relatively higher than the female population in the slum area.

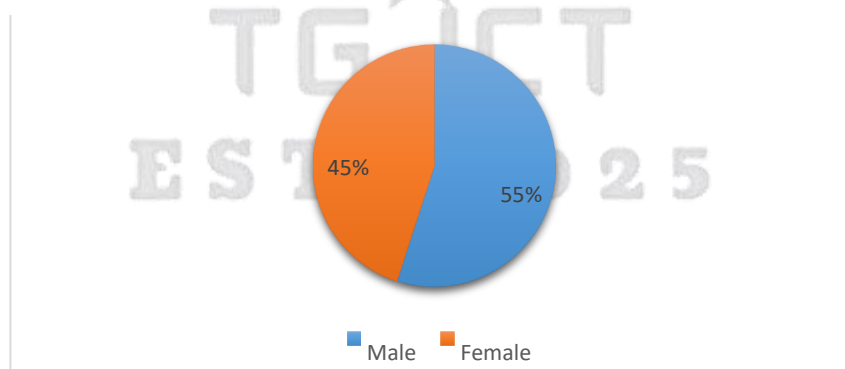


Fig 4: Sex Ratio

Caste: The survey findings indicates that a large proportion of the population in the study area belongs to scheduled caste (SC). Scheduled Tribes, and other economically and social backward groups. The presence of the general caste population in the study area is very limited and almost negligible compared to the others caste groups. This communities are generally marginalized and economically disadvantaged.

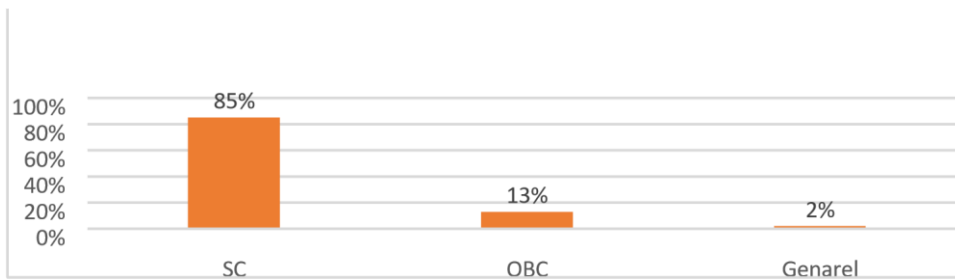


Fig 5: Caste

Housing Infrastructure

Types of House: In study area 60% household are semi-pucca, 30% are kutcha remaining 10% are pucca structure.

Materials and conditions of Houses: The housing condition in the study area indicate the predominance of low quality construction materials. Most houses are built with bamboo and tin, mud and bricks, while only a few household have pacca houses made cement and bricks.

Education: Education is an important indicator through which the social condition of an individual or his or her family can be understood. It reflect the level of awareness, social development and economic status of the household. Therefore, the education status of slum dwellers plays a significant role in determining their overall socio-economic condition. The finding indicate that 25% of the slum population is illiterate comprising about 10% male illiterate and 15% female illiterate. In the study area around 75% of the population is literate.

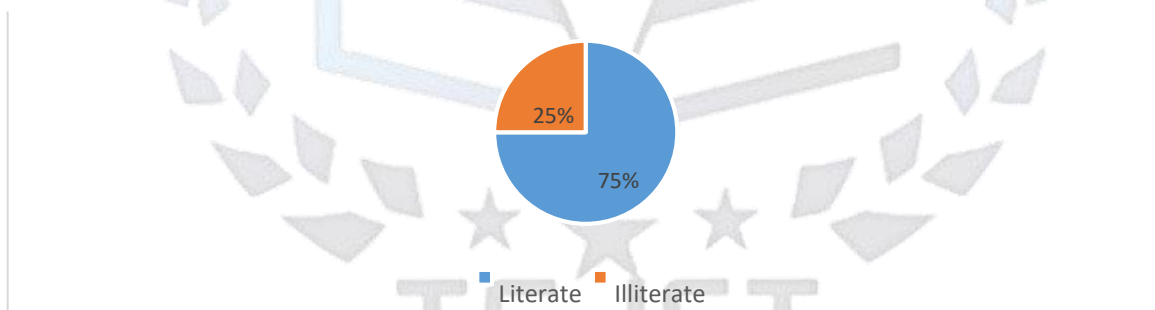


Fig 6: Education

The survey finding reveal that the educational participation of girls is comparatively higher than that of boys in study area. A significant number of boys have discontinued their education due to economic pressure. Many of them engage in various income generating activities at an early age in order to contribute to family expenses, which ultimately affects their educational attainment discontinued their education due to economic pressure.

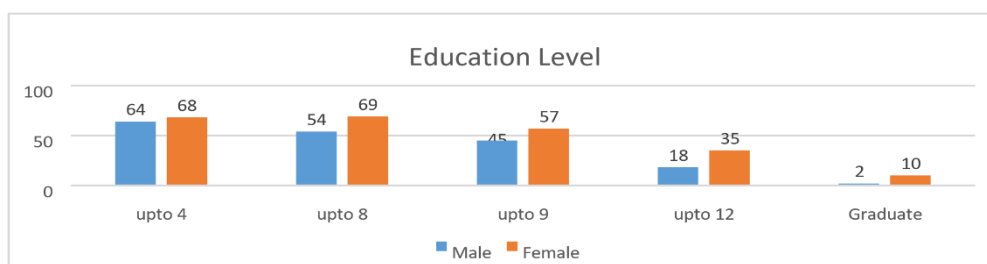


Fig 7: Level of the Education

Latrine Facility: The information obtain from the field survey and observation reveals that the availability of proper latrine facilities varies among households in the slum areas. Some families have access to private household latrines, while a section of residents depend on public or community toilets. It has been observed that in ward such as 4, 9 and 10 individual household toilets are almost absent and the residents are entirely depend on community latrines. On the other hand, ward no. 3, 5, 6, 7, 19 and 20 show the absent of community toilet. Household rely on their own individual toilets. However a large proportion of these toilets are semi-pucca or kutchra in nature. In few households still practis open defecation. They do not maintain hygiene. Therefore, it can be concluded that the overall latrine facilities in the slum areas are poor.

vi) Fuel for cooking in slum Area: In the slum areas of Katwa Municipality, households use different types of fuels for cooking depending on their income level and availability of resources. The survey result express the pattern of cooking fuel consumption among slum dwellers. The information presented in Table 1 indicates that slum household's se various types of cooking fuels. Above 60% of the slum dwellers use LPG gas, reflecting a notable improvement over the past few years. This shift largely influenced by government subsidy schemes aimed at supporting lower income groups. The remaining household in the slum area rely mainly on firewood and kerosene to meet their daily cooking needs.

Table: 1 Types of cooking fuel used by slum dwellers

Fuel types	No of household	Percentage (%)
LPG Gas	120	63.15
Fire Wood	60	31.56
Kerosene	10	5.268
Electricity	0	0
Other	0	0

Drinking Water: The availability of drinking water sources significantly influences the quality of life of the slum dwellers. Limited access to safe water often indicates poor economic condition and inadequate urban infrastructure.

Table 2: Source of Drinking Water

Source of Drinking Water	No of household	Percentage
Municipal Tap Water	150	78.94
Tube Well / Hand pump	40	21.06

Others	0	0
--------	---	---

Table 2 show that municipal tap water is the major source of drinking water for slum dwellers. A considerable proportion of household also depend on tube wells or hand pump (21.06%) for their daily water needs. This indicates that although municipal water supply play an important role, but slum dwellers often have to collect water from long queues. This situation frequently leads to conflicts, disputes and social tension among the residents.

Occupational Structure: The bar diagram shows that the majority of households fall within the income range of Rs.3000 to Rs.6000 per month in the study area, followed by households having income between Rs below Rs.3000. Only 13.15% households have monthly Income between 6001 - 9000 and 20 households have income more than 9000. Most of the residents are engaged in low income informal occupations such as sweepers, rickshaw pullers, van pullers, sanitation worker, carpenters, Cobblers, own small scale business, tea stalls etc. In the slum area many women are engaged income generating activities to contribute to support their family financially.

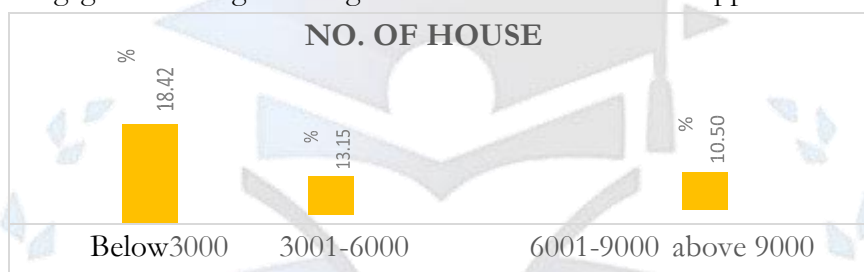


Fig 8: Monthly Income of selected household

Health: The lack of basic services, open sewage drains, inadequate sanitation facilities and uncontrolled dumping of water all these factors together have created a polluted environment in the slum area of this municipality. From the survey slum residents generally consume meals two to four times a day. The majority of households follow a three-meal pattern per day which is the most prevalent dietary practice in the study area. The dietary pattern of slum dwellers indicates that rice and pulses. They consume meat or fish once or twice a month, depending on their economic condition. Besides the staple diet, they also include various leafy vegetables like potato, tomato in their regular meals. They are often experience health issues such as diarrhoea, fever, cold and cough, typhoid, malaria, jaundice. However, the incidence of these diseases rises considerably during the rainy season mainly waterlogging and unhygienic environmental condition in the slum areas. They are visiting Katwa Govt. Hospital for their medical treatment. In many cases they take medical medicines from nearby pharmacies without proper doctor consultation. A large proportion of both male and female both have to consuming alcohol and tobacco related products which has negative effects on their health and overall socio well-being.

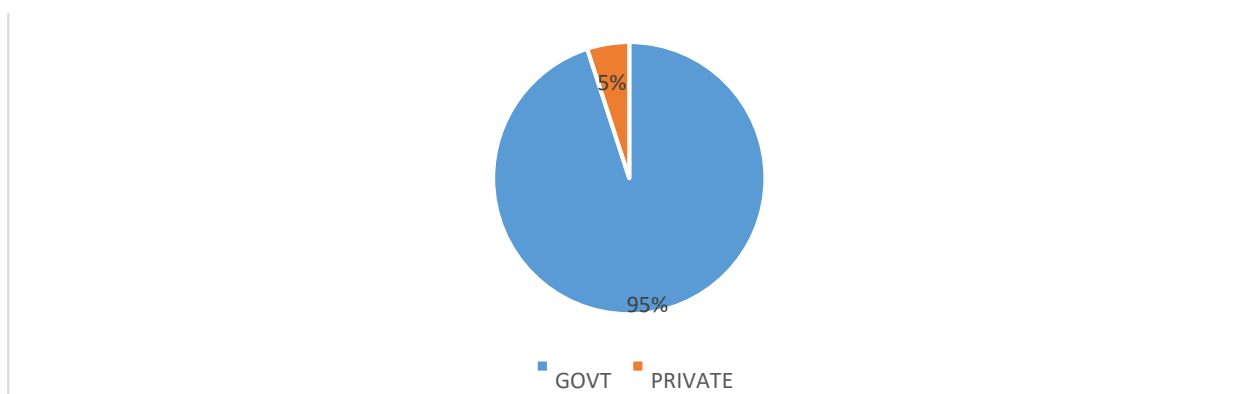


Fig 9: Type of Health centre

Suggestions

The study suggests improving the living conditions of slum dwellers through-

- Vocational education, vocational training and skill development programs should be introduced to improve employment opportunities and economic stability among slum residents.
- Local body should take initiative to make them aware of various welfare schemes and development programmes.
- Effective solid waste management including regular collection and proper disposal in slum areas is essential to reduce unhygienic practices and safeguard the surrounding environment.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the family sizes in slums of this municipality are small. The sex ratio in this area is imbalanced and considered unfavourable. These slums have relatively high SC population. Housing condition of slum dwellers is moderately poor. There is electricity not good. Most of the houses are kuccha and semi-pacca which indicating generally poor housing condition in the study area. The electricity supply in the area is good. Although literacy rate is relatively high level of education of qualification low. Most of the slum population completed only primary school education. However, at present, it is observed that the new generation parents are increasingly keen to send their children to school. Overall, latrine facilities in the slums are substandard, and hygiene is largely neglected. In these wards, households lack private latrines, forcing women to rely on communal latrine facilities. They face significant safety risks particularly at night, including the potential for sexual harassment or assault. At present, due to government assistance, the majority of households use LPG gas for cooking, while some continue to use firewood and other fuels for their daily cooking. Overall, the accessibility and utilization of cooking fuel in the area are satisfactory. Most of residents in the area rely primarily on municipal tap water for their daily needs and source of the drinking water. Although tube wells are present, their number is very limited. The water drawn from the municipal tap is used for routine household activities such as washing clothes, cleaning and using sanitation. However, their some water is consumed as drinking water without treatment indicating low awareness of drinking water purification practices among the population. Slum dwellers in the area predominantly belong to the low income group and are mostly employed in the informal sector. Despite the overall low income profile of the all wards but ward number 4, certain households are relatively better. Because they employed in the municipal services, including street sweeping, hospital sweeping, drainage management, sanitation work etc. No specific diseases were reported in the area, however, when they fall ill are serious disease the majority seek treatment at the Katwa subdivision Hospital. The Active participation of local government authorities, engagement of slum residents, and the support of NGOs, can be significantly improved.

References

- Dutta, B. (2017). Lack of basic infrastructures among the slums of Midnapore Municipality, West Bengal: A Compare to India Scenario. *International Journal of Creative Research Thoughts*, 5(4), 3525-3536.
- Hossain, S. (2013). Migration, urbanization and Poverty in Dhaka, Bangladesh. *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh (Hum.)*, 58(2), 369-382.
- Jargoskym, P. (2014). *The spatial dimension of inequality*. The Cities Paper. Retrieved from <https://citiespapers.ssrc.org/the-spatial-dimensions-of-inequality>.
- Jha, D., & Tripathi, V. (2014). Quality of life in slums of Varanasi city: A comparative study. *Transactions*, 36(2).
- Kamruzzaman, M., & Hakim, M. A. (2015). Socio-economic status of child beggars in Dhaka city. *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 1(15), 516-520.
- Kaviarasu, S. J. & Xavier, G. G. (2015). The status of living place and the health condition of women in the slum of Chennai city, Tamil Nadu.

- Kulasekhar, M., & Dasaratharamaiah, K.(2020). The socio-economic and other living condition of slum dwellers: A study. *Scholars Journal of Economics, Business and Management*, 7(4), 1-7.
<https://doi.org/10.36347/sjebm.2020.v07i04.001>
- Kumar, P. (2010). Declining number of slums: Nature of urban growth. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45(41) 75-77.
- Mandal, P. P., & Kumari, U. (2018). Quality of Life in Urban Slums: A Geographical Appraisal from Purulia Municipality, West Bengal, India. *International Journal of Research in Humanities, ART and Literature*, 6(10), 105-116.
- Rahaman, M. (2018). Economic Status and Housing Conditions of Slum in Kalyani Town, West Bengal, India. *Journal of Landscape Systems and Ecological Studies*,41(2), 112-121
- Rahaman, M. (2018). Demographic Structure and Educational Status of Slum Population in Kalyani. *Indian Journal of Landscape System and Ecological Studies*, 9(10), 146-152.
- Panthi, J., Aryal, S., Dahal, P., Bhandari, P., Krakauer, N. Y., & Pandey, V. P. (2016). Livelihood vulnerability approach to assessing climate change impacts on mixed agro-livestock smallholders around the Gandaki River Basin in Nepal. *Regional Environmental Change*, 16, 1121 -1132.
- Singh, B. N. (2016). Socio-economic conditions of slums dwellers: A theoretical study. *Kaav International Journal of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 3(3), 5-20.
- Zaman, T. U., & Dutta, S. K. (2018). Struggle of slum dwellers for maintaining their health status and behaviour in a slum pocket of Guwahati city. *International Journal of Medical Research and Health Sciences*, 7(7), 63-71.

