

# Sanitation for the urban poor: whose choice, theirs or ours?

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Gender issues in sanitation and hygiene amongst the urban poor: background to the research

The international human rights based commitment to the provision of basic services for all has yet to be realised in practice for a large percentage of the urban poor, especially in relation to access to safe and appropriate sanitation. This research assumed that underlying the reason for this disparity is the lack of clarity on 'who' constitutes the urban poor, what determines 'appropriate sanitation', and how access can be equitable and appropriate in relation to gender.

This report is an outcome of a two-year research study undertaken in India, Bangladesh and Kenya to analyse the above questions. The purpose of this report is to establish broad guidelines as a foundation for effective interventions in sanitation improvements for those living in urban poverty.

Several assessments have been made of people's sanitation needs and demands and quantitative data exist, in most cases, of the percentages of the urban (poor) population who lack access to safe sanitation. What is delivered as safe sanitation to a group of urban poor communities that is assumed to be homogeneous, is often based on the top-down opinions of expert others, who draw their perceptions mostly from an environmental health perspective, balanced by what is feasible to deliver within specific programme budgets and timeframes as well as in adherence to official norms relating to service delivery. There is little evidence that 'safe sanitation', as delivered, reflects the perceptions and needs of what is appropriate to those living in urban poverty.

Secondly, a review of sanitation services delivered through programmes and projects shows that these mostly cater to groups of the urban poor living in slum settlements. Yet, there is adequate evidence from both official statistics as well as a common view, that large groups of the urban poor are homeless, ie living on the streets.

Safe sanitation is identified in policy as access to safe and secluded spaces for defecation. In practice, this translates into the delivery of basic, low-cost latrines made available to select groups of the urban poor. Women living in congested urban settlements have often expressed their inability to defecate and urinate in public, given either the lack of latrines or the inappropriateness of available spaces for defecation. Countless stories exist of women being unable to perform these basic biological functions, except under the cover of darkness or at early dawn, when large numbers of the slum or city community are still asleep. Equally common are the findings concerning the biological impacts of holding back the need to release faeces and urine. In very crowded settlements, this problem affects men too and local solutions in the form of 'flying toilets', for example in Kenyan slums, are popular anecdotes. This basically means that one defecates in a plastic bag, which is tied shut and often in the cover of darkness, thrown as far away from one's house as possible. In this context, addressing gender issues in relation to sanitation for the urban poor is understood as addressing women's greater need for privacy in relieving themselves. This understanding is indeed drawn from an observation of real problems experienced by women; yet, one needs to ask whether the need for privacy while defecating takes into account all the relationships of gender inequality relating to poverty and sanitation. This is especially given that household responsibilities related to hygiene and sanitation are principally assigned to women, in the majority of cultures. The role of the housewife is in itself significantly responsible for women's exclusion from public domains, where decision-making relating to infrastructure

and implementation is mostly conducted. Yet it is clear that increasing poverty pushes men and equally women into urban migration, as well as pushing women to take on wage employment outside the household domain, in urban centres, given the absolute need for cash-income. So, what is gender in relation to sanitation and how is women's situation changing, if at all, in evolving political and economic conditions?

There is increasing consensus in the international development community that infrastructure delivery packages have not enabled sustainable access to basic services for the urban poor and have had little impact on the wider development agenda of poverty reduction. The current focus is on getting governance structures and processes right. This includes improving both accountability of agencies to citizens and consumers as well as improving the ability of users, as citizens and consumers, to demand their basic rights and fair practices. Developing responsible and accountable and transparent governments at local, national and regional levels, as well as just and equitable political and economic environments is considered to be critical in developing and sustaining pro-poor governance.

However, the wide-spread exclusion of the urban poor from basic services reveals both the exclusionary nature of the work of service-delivery agencies, as well as the poor capacity of different groups of the urban poor to 'participate in' and to 'manage' projects, or to 'take decisions' relating to access to basic needs. Such exclusion may be further impacted upon by inequality by gender, as well as by caste and class disparities. Finally, issues of exclusion and disparity in any particular sector exist beyond a specific institutional level. Given the universal observation that inequality by gender and/or poverty is repeated across various institutional levels, it follows here, that there are probably latent inequalities within the work culture and practice of the sanitation agencies themselves.

In order to overcome these gaps in information, this study was designed to find answers to the following primary questions:

- What determines 'appropriate sanitation' for a heterogeneous group of the urban poor?
- What are the different impacts of the lack of appropriate sanitation?
- What levels of 'appropriate sanitation' are accessible or not accessible to different groups of the urban poor and what factors determine differential access?
- What factors determine accessibility or lack of access to existing governance structures and processes both within and beyond the household level?

## **1.2 Research methodology and process**

The field research was carried out over 2 years in 10 slum settlements in three countries: two slums in Dhaka and one in Chittagong, in Bangladesh; two slums and several squatter colonies in Andhra Pradesh, in India; and 3 slums in Nairobi, in Kenya. In Bangladesh, the three slums - Beguntila<sup>1</sup>, Modherbosti<sup>2</sup> in Dhaka and New Shaheed Lane

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<sup>1</sup> Beguntila has about 241 households, all Muslim, out of which there are 56 households headed by/run solely by females. Fieldwork was carried out from June 2003 to April 2004, with contact maintained with key individuals in the slum until October 2004.

<sup>2</sup> The total number of households in Modherbosti is 406, of which 89 are landlords and 317 are tenants. In Modherbosti, there were also female-headed households, numbering about 46 [of which 3 are landlords and the rest are tenants]. Approximately 20-25 residents in Modherbosti are disabled and survive entirely by begging.

in Chittagong were selected in consultation with local NGOs working on a WaterAid Bangladesh, project funded by the UK Department for International Development in Bangladesh (DFID-B). The three slum settlements in Nairobi, Maili Saba and Mukuru kwa Reuben in Dandora and Kianda in Kibera were part of ongoing Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG – now renamed Practical Action) projects and a DFID-supported water vending research project. In India, a random selection of slum settlements was made, guided by the official ‘classification’ of urban poor settlements. Vajpai Nagar in Quthbullapur Municipality in Andhra Pradesh is a ‘notified’ slum and included in the ongoing DFID-supported Andhra Pradesh Urban Basic Services for the Poor (APUSP) programme. Banjara Colony in LB Nagar Municipality is a long-established ‘non-notified’ slum. Squatter settlements chosen for research in both the municipalities include Ravinarayan Reddy Nagar, Krishna Nagar, Balaiah Nagar, Subhash Nagar and Sanat Nagar. Additionally, research was carried out amongst the homeless, living on the streets in Hyderabad in India and in Dhaka and Chittagong in Bangladesh.

There was no unitary structure of a research team – the number of researchers in each country varied and the team size and composition varied from place to place. For example, ITDG, Kenya decided to set-up a research team of a lead researcher, two field researchers and two assistants, all supervised by an external (ITDG, UK) person. In India, the research programme was divided into specific research themes and the work was allotted to different groups of researchers. In Bangladesh, initially, a core research team was developed with one lead researcher, two research assistants and a field assistant, all supervised by an advisor. Later, the work was divided amongst different research teams, as in India.

Regardless of the difference in the design of the research team, several rounds of discussions were conducted with local researchers in each country to arrive at country-specific research strategies, which related to specific research questions. These strategy papers were then developed into detailed research methodologies, which included distinctly separate open-ended questionnaire formats and clearly defined research processes for analysing each specific research question. These research documents were included in the Inception Report and can be made available on request.

The strategies adopted and processes of conducting research varied for each particular research question. However, for all research thematic questions, several rounds of research piloting were conducted until researchers were confident that the methodologies adopted were practical to use. This also implied that the methodologies were not fixed, but were made flexible, to change according to local situations and conditions.

The methodology adopted was largely participatory and specific attention was paid to the fact that the research was conducted at the convenience of the respondents. The findings were discussed with the respondents and conclusions were drawn only after verification by relevant sources. Detailed research notes exist for all of these processes in each research country and once again, these data can be made available on request. This includes additional and approximated information on number of respondents, number of visits per respondent or group, number of discussions with individuals as well as number of focus group discussions for each particular research question in specific countries.

In tracing the lives and livelihoods of a group of men and women belonging to a Dalit caste group in India, historically assigned the task of cleaning other’s faeces, this research includes the analysis of the practice of providing sanitation services and illustrates why the caste-based link to sanitation continues in modern India.

The research also includes an institutional analysis of gender issues in the DFID funded ASEH project in Bangladesh. This considers the inherent assumptions made in relation to

sanitation in international policy; poverty and gender in host country policies and practice; the perceptions of gender and poverty among staff in various sanitation agencies; and finally the ability or the lack of it amongst a varied group of the urban poor to articulate and secure their sanitation needs.

In carrying out the research, the approach adopted aimed to move away from 'survey slavery' towards less rigid and less formal styles of information collection and collation as encouraged by Chambers (1983). If there are few official statistics relating to urban poverty, sanitation and gender in this report, this is because as realised, '...the available data were lousy...characterised by unreliability, gaps, mutual inconsistencies and inaccuracies ...' (Gill, 1993).

The information in this report is thus primarily qualitative and includes observing and talking to a select number of residents in a select number of urban settings over a period of time. This was possible largely due to the fact that in all the three research locales, the emphasis was on identifying researchers who spoke the local language and understood the local culture. However, as identified, ensuring this did not imply that there was a common identity between the researchers and the researched. Despite, best efforts, Chambers (1983) fears of not staying the night, of rushing in and out were evident in many cases. In Bangladesh, a particularly difficult situation arose, when a research assistant insisted that she drive in her new shiny, silver-grey Mercedes to the slum settlement. Yet, this was not the norm, several researchers formed deep personal bonds with several researched individuals and this friendship and alliance was identified to be mutually satisfying, even if it did not result in any particular outcome relating directly to the research goals. As identified by numerous others in similar situations, this research cannot therefore claim to be truly participatory. Indeed as is common in most such exercises, there was open dialogue and discussion with the researched individuals, but little of this translated into an equally beneficial exchange of knowledge between researchers and the researched. A stark realisation of the divide between research and activism was experienced by researchers in Bangladesh. Residents of Mazar Road slum settlement (or basti in Bangla), were forcibly evicted with just a day's notice, two weeks after the initiation of the research. The reason cited by the officials (with authorisation from the Home Ministry) was to make way for expansion of a road in the area. Evictions of urban poor settlements, considered 'illegal' officially, are a common phenomenon in Bangladesh, as in India and Kenya. The researchers spent some days agonising with the potential respondents, but in the spirit of academic research, then carried on work in a more 'permanent' settlement.

This experience, like several others, was deeply disturbing to some of the researchers and it is their suggestion that this incident be noted here for reflection.

The research process and outcome is also impacted, as observed in this case, by the type of agency and/or individuals who take on the research, as well as their perceptions and understanding of the research objectives. Although the research areas in all the three countries were selected in consultation with local agencies working on sanitation for the urban poor, a range of actors conducted the research in all three countries. In Bangladesh the research team was composed of a group of individual researchers; in Kenya the research was conducted by ITDG staff and consultants and in India, the work was carried out largely by a private not-for-profit consultancy as well as individual researchers. There are specific advantages and disadvantages of working with different agencies. Research conducted by agencies already working on the specific issue in the area has the most scope for influencing practice and/or policy, as was experienced in Kenya with ITDG and with ActionAid in Hyderabad and WaterAid in Bangladesh. However practitioners are often not the best researchers, given the heavy demands on their time and responsibilities. Individual researchers hold great potential for engaging in



and enriching the process of research; however, on their own, they have little ability to influence action, even when they belong to an institution. Once again, a senior researcher engaged in the research from Bangladesh, claimed to be on a sabbatical leave from his parent organisation. However this was later discovered to be not true at great cost to the research progress.

The reasons for outlining the above are that it is critical that the research team is well selected. The outcome of the research relies not only in the planning and the design of the research, but equally in finding the right mix of skills to both conduct the research and write the research findings. In this regard, it is important to match knowledge and skills with attitude and understanding. The ethics of conducting research should define that a brilliantly researched and written report, is as well appreciated as is the trust and camaraderie developed between the respondents and researcher. However, the latter rarely figure in reports nor are considered as good practice in research.

More specifically, the high need for nestling a research programme in local contexts implies that significant change is required in the style and management of DFID KAR (and most other research) programmes which are currently primarily conceived and planned by researchers living and working outside the host countries. It is imperative that local individuals and agencies in host countries are engaged in planning and designing the research and that substantial time is allotted to building a local ownership of research objectives and processes, including outcomes.

### **1.3 Report structure and content**

Setting the stage for a holistic overview of the practice of sanitation, Chapter 2 of this report traces the age-old practice of the task of manually handling faeces in India. The bulk of the work of handling faeces was undertaken by married women of the particular community, which is known by different names in different states. The practice of assigning productive roles to lower-caste women, in contrast to greater female seclusion for the upper caste women, was a common practice in India (Joshi, 2005). However, as the findings reveal amongst the migrant Valmiki community in Hyderabad, this was not empowering for the women, who struggled within a patriarchal community and with an abusive and exploitative clientele. Despite legislation that banned the practice after Independence, this caste-linked occupation continues in modern India evidenced by the presence of dry latrines still in use and in the continued engagement of this caste group in the cleaning and maintenance of latrines, drains and sewer lines, where handling faeces is inevitable, especially given deteriorating labour practices and conditions. In India's progressive history of activism, strangely, the only vocal and consistent advocates against this inhuman practice are a few members of the community themselves. A strange dilemma faces the majority of those who still continue to handle other's faeces. A failed effort at rehabilitation, the decreasing number of dry latrines and an effective media marketing of toilets and cleaning devices pushes large populations of this community, especially women, to the cross-roads of further poverty and unemployment in small and big cities and towns. Yet most recall with horror the days of carrying faeces in buckets and on their heads, all day long. This study articulates that planning and designing urban sanitation cannot overlook this basic reality.

Broadening the sectoral interpretation of the urban poor, Chapter 3 provides a detailed insight of the experiences of those living on the streets in Bangladesh and India. Adequate housing is a basic human right as defined by the United Nations, yet over 2 per cent of the urban population are reported to be homeless. This figure is at best an approximation. Undercounts, problems of mobility and the fears of being noticed (and

therefore reprimanded given their illegal status) makes counting those living on the streets very problematic. The homeless are not only vulnerable due to their lack of shelter, but represent a vulnerable group amongst the urban poor, often including individuals with fractured moral and social backgrounds, evidenced by the high number of women, girls and children living on their own in the streets. Many families, as well as individuals, who live on the streets, do so because increasing costs of housing, even in so-called illegal slums, operates to keep them on the streets, sometimes for as long as over 20 years. This chapter highlights that official programmes for the homeless are completely absent in Bangladesh, or are grossly inadequate, as in India. Similarly, sanitation programmes for the urban poor do not consider the needs of those living on the pavements. On the one hand, attention is desperately called for in including this group in urban poverty (and sanitation) programmes; yet many ask if the official intervention of providing night shelters for the homeless (as in India) is not itself an act of reiterating and glorifying state failures in meeting the basic human rights for all (Verma, 2003).

If the homeless, urban poor population are excluded from the profile of urban poverty programmes, research findings in Chapter 4 show that neither are all those living in the slums equally privileged. The slum poor, ie those living in urban slums, constitute a much larger percentage of the urban population (70%); however, beyond this basic definition, there is little that this group has in common. Discrepant and often vague official policies and vicious attitudes of exclusion by the social elite give rise to a chaotic micro-political and social environment in slums, where aggression and violence abounds. However, where the slum is located and how it is linked to local formal and informal politicians determines both its tenure as well as access to basic services, regardless of how the settlement might be acknowledged officially. In all the three researched countries, slum settlements were seen to have specific cultures which affected different individuals differently. Different households and different individuals are affected differently by the informal and often exploitative local politics in slum settlements. This affects day to day living as well as negotiating for work and business opportunities. Women appear particularly vulnerable and excluded from decision-making and planning in slum settlements, yet a generalisation cannot be made for all women. Caste, class and other issues of inequality determine that some women and equally some men are better connected and therefore better served than others. This study points out that the slum poor appear to be privileged in comparison to the non-slum poor. However, urban poverty programmes catering to the slum poor rarely recognise and respond to the root causes of why slums exist and proliferate, nor the obvious hierarchies between slum residents. Upgrading basic infrastructure in specific slums undoubtedly addresses the basic problems of many who live there. However, if done without an understanding of the disparities across settlements and households, it replicates inequality. More importantly, an urban planning process that still carries out slum development and upgrading, by identifying island habitats – crowded, congested settlements with low-incomes and often sub-standard infrastructure - for the urban poor, is comparable with treating cancer with a band-aid. Unfortunately that appears to be the current best practice.

Having provided a comprehensive overview of who constitute the urban poor, Chapter 5 provides a qualitative analysis of sanitation experiences and what is identified as appropriate sanitation by those living in urban poverty - both the homeless and the slum-poor. The findings are not a wish-list of what the respondents would like as sanitation, rather, they are expanded illustrations of the experiences resulting from a lack of appropriate or adequate sanitation and how this affects every day living.

Amongst the respondents, notions of appropriate sanitation are derived not only from basic human needs but equally individual beliefs, which are influenced by religious beliefs, local culture, and from what is seen and learnt from the media and from one another. What is practised is dependent on contextual realities – security (or usually the lack of it)

of tenure; the motivation and ability to make investments; access to service providers and/or facilitators; and finally prioritising long term and immediate household investments and expenses. That the urban poor, and especially the poorest among them, make do with the absence of some or all of what is perceived as basic is not indicative that they have different sanitation needs (than the not-poor) or have no or latent demands for these. It is indicative, rather, of the gross inequity in the provision of services - inadequate, low-cost services, which compromise basic human rights and human dignity.

At the start of the research, a decision was made not to focus on water, due to past experiences that sanitation issues often get obliterated in the process of analysing water and sanitation needs together. However, field analysis proved this assumption wrong: there can be no appropriate sanitation without access to adequate and appropriate amounts of water. Personal sanitation needs include defecation, bathing and washing clothes. All of these tasks require water and the responsibility of finding water falls largely on women. For all these activities, convenience, safety and privacy is desired by both women and men, but while men can choose to bathe, defecate and urinate in public, women experience a greater discomfort in doing so, given the conditioning that this behaviour is not socially acceptable.

Women not only deal with their own personal hygiene needs, which include maintaining menstrual hygiene, but also assist in the sanitation needs of men, children and the elderly. The latter includes washing clothes for the entire household, keeping children clean, as well as cleaning the inner household (sweeping, scrubbing floors, washing utensils). Women also identify the need to clean a certain diameter of the immediate household surroundings. This was common practice across research locales. Given these realities, addressing primary gender needs will require providing appropriate privacy to women, and adequate water for personal and household sanitation tasks, as well as periodic solid and liquid waste removal. However, there will be little change in unequal gender relations unless sanitation practices, defined as appropriate for women by religion and culture, are changed in keeping with changing realities. This will include, among other things, less rigid norms of social control exercised on women's bodies as well as encouraging a more equal distribution of sanitation tasks between women and men. A detailed summary of the gender issues relating to sanitation for the urban poor are outlined in Section 1 of Chapter 8.

Research findings in Chapter 5 show that basic sanitation needs are universal, regardless of income wealth and include:

- the need to stay and look clean, and therefore to have adequate water supplied through appropriate means,
- safety, privacy and convenience for defecating, bathing and washing needs, and
- regular disposal of solid and liquid wastes.

However, as illustrated in Chapter 6, there are differing expert views in this regard. Some claim that the definition of sanitation (especially in relation to the MDGs) for the poor must be limited to access to safe and secluded sites for defecation and that wide-scale and complete public investment in the development of basic sanitation services cannot be achieved for the poorest countries as was the practice in developed countries (Evans, 2005). While there are differing views on the package of services that constitutes appropriate sanitation, there is little disagreement, especially amongst sector experts, that the urban poor must indeed pay for the services provided to them. This is obviously disregarding the insecure tenure of many of the slum poor and of whether appropriate and sustained services can be provided. In fact, Evans calls for the need to divert public finances for sanitation away from (poorest) households to emerging markets of service providers. It is obvious that such policy directives do not take into account lessons learnt

from poverty studies which show that public investment in basic services has immediate and long-term gains for not only providing immediate safety nets of good health and improved productivity but equally, reducing poverty in the long run (CPRC, 2004).

From the research observations in Chapters 3 and 4, it is obvious that such international perspectives on sanitation do not include consultation with poor people in arriving at designs of basic minimum standards of living and the ways and means to achieve these.

In practice, national policies for sanitation for the urban poor appear more progressive than international guidelines. However, given the large amount of policy and resource evaporation, as plans move down the institutional ladder, what is delivered in practice, as in the case of India, comprises badly designed and badly built individual latrines for defecation to select groups of slum residents. This obviously does not address what is identified as appropriate sanitation by anyone, especially those living in urban poverty who are supposed to use them. The poorest continue to be excluded from benefits, both those living on the pavements and in slums.

Chapter 7 analyses a group of organisations engaged in delivering sanitation for the urban poor in the DFID-B funded (ASEH) water and sanitation project to assess how gender and poverty goals are written into project design and the ways and means by which these are understood by project staff. The findings reveal that despite good policy intentions, planning of infrastructure for the urban poor still happens in a top-down manner and that considerable evaporation occurs in the transfer of policy goals between different organisations and at different levels in the institutional hierarchies.

The ASEH project in Bangladesh is the most progressive amongst the researched case studies in attempting to address gender and poverty in sanitation delivery, even though it continues, as in earlier practices, to limit the project benefits to the urban poor living in selected slums. A high priority assigned to gender and poverty by the donor, together with WaterAid-Bangladesh's experience of having missed these goals in the past, resulted in a year-long research, for analysis and definition of issues relating to gender, poverty and equity in the project design. A positive outcome of this exercise was to restructure the financing arrangements for service delivery. The poorest households would no longer pay full costs for the infrastructure, as intended in the initial project design. The capital costs of service delivery would be subsidised by the project for the poorest slum residents, whereas operation and maintenance costs were to be cross-subsidised by the not-so-poor slum residents. The task appears difficult to achieve, given that a fair amount of strife would obviously result from the process of one group of the poor cross-subsidising another group. Additionally, staff engaged in this process had varied interpretations of urban poverty and little practical knowledge of how differences in poverty could be taken into account in implementing project strategies.

A process aimed at addressing gender issues has been initiated in the ASEH project, if one takes into account a conscious recruiting of women staff in both WaterAid-Bangladesh as well as in its main urban partner NGO, DSK. However, women continue to occupy posts in the lower and middle levels of the organisation. Additionally, there has been some progress in trying to promote women's practical needs within the organisation. In the absence of official rules and norms, there is a fair amount of confusion about what these privileges include, for different women as well as about whether gender benefits are applicable only to women. Men in both organisations do not appear particularly pleased with the practice of making special concessions for women. There is little resistance however to 'involving' women in the field which is still misunderstood as the project goal of 'addressing gender'. Additionally, it is hoped that women will be able to define specific sanitation improvements to the latrine design. Limited as it is in bridging the inequality in gender relationships, innovative gender-specific infrastructure may not be possible to

design and deliver within the project norms of financial efficiency (read economic austerity). The research did not analyse the implementation of the project, which has only just started.

Chapter 8, the concluding chapter of this report consists of three sections. The first is a detailed analysis of what is implied by gender in relation to sanitation practices amongst the urban poor. The second section assesses the agency and/or capability of the urban poor, especially women, to engage in planning and influencing sanitation policy and practice. Section 2 takes as a case study the sanitation service providers, looking at the attempts of social rehabilitation in the migrant Valmiki population in Metharwadi in Hyderabad city. The findings reveal the dismal records of the Government of India's official policy to rehabilitate those engaged in manual scavenging. Corruption, nepotism and a lack of equal opportunities for women has resulted in a rhetorical implementation of the intended policy. Changing service and labour conditions have not improved the situation. Yet changes in occupation and income-wealth have been achieved by a few members of this community, mostly men and a handful of women. These have been largely achieved through individual perseverance and initiative, proving that development for the poorest is rarely achieved by others than the poor themselves. However, the barriers to innovation and enterprise remain limited for a large proportion of the women in this community, who remain bound by the traditional practices of female seclusion and submission.

Section 3 looks at the practice of water supply and sanitation delivery in urban slums in Bangladesh to identify women's roles, if any, in influencing resource allocation and design. The findings prove that in the urban slums in Dhaka and Chittagong, it is not purdah or female seclusion, but the lack of social and human capital that restrains women and their ability to influence political and social decisions. Even though service delivery and provision is managed and pursued by men belonging to the local community, there are examples of some women having participated or benefited through these approaches. This includes women who are vocal and engaged with community leaders amongst men, and/or the wives and mothers of men who are known as the community leaders. This finding is also reported by Sultan (1999) in her assessment of women's political activism in Dhaka slums. Sultan identifies that the relationships of the urban poor, especially women, with leaders and/or other agencies, including NGOs are often exploitative and not to their mutual benefit. This research identifies the same; however, it differs from Sultan's findings in reporting the distinct difference in political and social activism amongst different women. There are a few women who are able to engage in and gain from political networks and connections and there are many women and men who are passive observers to the range of political changes in the community, even when they are impacted to their disadvantage. It is on these grounds that the research cautions the need to re-assess the claims that the urban poor can engage in governance processes.

This chapter and the report concludes with a list of (mostly untested) recommendations for practitioners and policy makers, which aim to address some of the iniquities described in the report.



## 2. MANUAL SCAVENGERS IN HYDERABAD

### 2.1 Introduction

*Scavenger: 'One who cleans the streets, a person or apparatus that removes waste... one who deals or delights in filth'* (Chambers' 20<sup>th</sup> Century Dictionary).

Sanitation is the act and process of removal of waste, and is an unavoidable part of human existence. Few delight in filth or want to be engaged in an occupation such as scavenging. In the West much of the process of handling sanitary waste is comparatively mechanised and protective clothing is available, where necessary. In contrast, in much of the developing South, this work is still performed manually for little pay and safe handling of human and other wastes is not assured.

Amongst the Hindu community in South Asia, this task was historically and permanently assigned to one social group, known by different names in different regions, but referred to here as Bhangis or Valmikis. This group belongs to the Sudra caste, the lowest tier of the hierarchical Hindu caste system.

#### **Manual scavenging**

Manual scavenging in modern India includes the lifting and removal of human excreta manually, both from private homes and from communal latrines maintained either privately or officially. This is from dry latrines where human excreta is deposited on stone, plate receptacles and/or on bare soil or in buckets, which are lifted manually, usually by women, but also by men of the Valmiki group. The waste is then disposed in designated spots, through human and/or mechanical transport.

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, of the Government of India<sup>3</sup> (2003) confirms that there are 676,000 scavengers in the country, spread over 21 states and union territories, working at cleaning 9,600,000 dry latrines. Cities in the north, such as Delhi (trans-Jamuna), Simla, Mathura, Agra, Bhopal, Delhi, Jaipur, Lucknow and Indore have higher concentrations of dry toilets than others (ibid).

In Europe, the links between human excreta and disease were made in the nineteenth century, only after plague and disease had been rampant for centuries. Until then, it was the common practice to empty night soil onto the streets. In much of South East Asia, there was widespread use of human faeces as a nutrient-rich manure. The practice exists to date in certain parts of China and amongst certain non-Hindu or mixed Mongolian groups in Nepal (Manandhar et al, 2004).

Assigning of the task of scavenging to the Valmikis reflects the way that Hindu culture perceives human faeces. In India, the term faeces denotes impurity and/or pollution, both of which devalue the ritual purification which is the very basis of Hindu religion and culture. This necessitated the removal of faeces as far as possible from the household environment, and also determined that this task was performed by those who were considered socially to be unsusceptible to impurity and/or pollution. The Valmikis, placed lowest in the caste hierarchy, were allotted this task according to the social rules. Despite legislation banning the practice of servicing dry latrines (where faeces are picked up and disposed of by hand, as opposed to pour-flush latrines where faeces are flushed away with water) as a specific caste occupation, the practice of manual scavenging continues.

<sup>3</sup> As quoted in the sworn affidavit of the SKA before the Supreme Court, 2003

This chapter traces the lives and living conditions of scavengers in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh in India, analysing how change, if any, has affected them. Meaningful, realistic change appears difficult and several factors influence this: the rhetoric of policy intentions; institutional entrenchment of apathy towards the practice and towards the plight of the scavengers; the search for low-cost sanitation options, especially for the currently unserved, which continues to require manual handling of faeces and waste; continued engagement of the Valmikis in scavenging as a result of historical conditioning and continued demand for their services; and, above all, an alarming silence on this human indignity by an otherwise active civil society. All of these factors mitigate against meaningful change.

While great emphasis has been put on the policy rhetoric that has stressed the conversion of dry latrines to pour-flush latrines, this study illustrates that sanitation interventions have been *misguided* by the policy emphasis on low-cost, locally-appropriate (on-plot, especially single pit) toilet-only technologies. These options, without the required investments in sewerage and sewage disposal are especially recommended for low-income settlements and are commonly found operating in most of India's low-income urban and peri-urban areas. This leads to continued demand and need for manual intervention in the removal and disposal of faeces. Such low-cost technology does not support the development of appropriate mechanisation in the handling of human faeces and/or other wastes.

This chapter is divided into the following sections:

Section 2 provides a historical background to the practice of scavenging and analyses political initiatives that have taken place in India to abolish the practice of dry latrine scavenging and to bring about the rehabilitation of scavengers.

Section 3 analyses the historical experiences of the Valmiki community in Metharwadi, a settlement of migrant Valmikis from north India, located in the old city of Hyderabad.

Section 4 assesses the practice of dry latrine scavenging in small towns and municipalities in Andhra Pradesh, through the dry latrine demolition agenda of the Safai Karmachari Andolan, an activist Valmiki group

Section 5 analyses why the practice continues and suggests recommendations for policy and practice.

<b>SUMMARY: MANUAL SCAVENGERS</b>	
<b>Task:</b>	Manual scavenging is the task of manually lifting and removing human excreta and disposing of it in designated spots through human or mechanical transport.
<b>Who:</b>	In Africa and most parts of Asia, manual scavenging was carried out, but there is no reference to it being assigned to one particular social group, except in South Asia, particularly India. In India, the task has been historically and permanently assigned to a specific sub-caste in the Sudra or Dalit caste, the lowest tier of the hierarchical Hindu caste system (see Section 2 of this chapter). In this report the sub-caste is referred to as the Bhangis or Valmikis.
<b>Gender:</b>	Manual scavenging is usually carried out by women but also by men. Women tend to collect the faeces from the households and the men tend to transport it to the dumping site.



Effect:	Faeces are considered highly impure and polluting. Ritual purification is the very basis of Hindu religion and culture. Just as faeces must be removed as far from the household environment as possible, so must those who perform manual scavenging, especially from the high caste Hindus at the top of the hierarchy.
Progress:	Despite legislation banning Manual Scavenging, it still takes place because of historical conditioning and apathy, the need for low-cost latrine options, and, the alarming silence on this human indignity by an otherwise active civil society.

## 2.2 The caste system in Hindu society

### 2.2.1 Caste-based social and occupational division

This section focuses on the age-old practice of handling and disposing of human faeces, known commonly in India as manual scavenging. Cairncross and Feachem (1993) identify that the manual emptying of latrines is prevalent in Africa and China. However, there is no reference to this task being assigned to members of any particular social group. In contrast, India's cultural and philosophical history illustrates significant social regulation in assigning 'traditionally defiling' tasks to a specific sub-caste amongst the Dalits, known commonly as Bhangis and/or Valmikis.

To trace the origin and history of this sanitation practice one must refer back to the development of Hindu philosophy and culture. Social hierarchy in Hindu society is organised around a four-fold caste system (Prabhu, 1939; Das, 1982; Murray, 1994). The origin of this divide can be traced to the hymn Purusa Sukta in the Rg Veda, the oldest relic of Vedic philosophy<sup>4</sup> and the structural basis of current day Hinduism, which describes the symbolic division of Purusa, or the Eternal Man, into four varnas or classes,

*'When they divided Man, how many did they make Him? The Brahman was his mouth; his arms were made the Rajanya (Kshatriya); his thighs were the Vaisya; from his feet the Sudra was born.'*

Historians argue that the varna system of the early Vedic period, traced to about four thousand years ago, was an 'open class system' of flexible membership based on a cosmic paradigm of hierarchy and a personal tendency and aptitude to type of occupation. The Rg Veda defines varnas and designated occupations, 'One to high sway (Brahmana), one to exalted glory (Kshatriya), one to pursue his gain (Vaisya) and one to his labour (Sudra)'. It is suggested that the construction of castes and the rigid caste system did not begin in the early Vedic period (Kane, 1974; Assayag, 1995) but there is little doubt that the system of social stratification was established then, even if it was flexible and not inherently binding at this time.

The social order is believed to have been re-interpreted and made more rigid two millennia later, during the Post Vedic Period<sup>5</sup>. The most informative text from this era,

<sup>4</sup> The term Vedic philosophy refers to the ethical concepts presented in Vedic literature written during the period 2500-600 BC. There is much conflict on the exact duration of the period. The literature consisted of two major bodies of literature, the Vedas and the later Brahmanas.

<sup>5</sup> 2000-600 BC though some trace the origin of this period to 2500 BC [Nicol MacNicol, The Religious Quest of India – Indian Theism From the Vedas to the Muhammadan Period (1915), Appendix A.]

which describes the practice of caste in societal functioning is the *Manusmṛiti*, or the 'Laws of Manu'<sup>6</sup> (Crawford, 1982). Manu is often blamed for creating a culture of caste order, but some argue that he may simply have recorded the system of social order that existed then (Kane, 1974). What is important is that Manu and other lawmakers of this period codified caste-based occupations and obligations, and, more importantly, legitimised social approval by identifying these practices as dharma or the moral legal code of the Hindu culture. Since then, caste-based disparity and rigid caste-based occupations have been tenaciously practised, and presumed by religiously inclined Hindus to be *morally appropriate* social behaviour. Self-regulated dharma persists steadfastly in Hindu society, despite the fact that there is no watchdog, like the Western Church, to enforce moral regulations (Nagarajan 1994).

The caste system is closely linked to the themes of ritual purity and pollution that are central to Hindu culture (Dumont, 1980, quoted by Murray, 1994). Impurity is symbolised by the peripheral extremities of the human body: 'all margins...and matter issuing from them are considered polluting... hair, nails...spittle, blood, semen, urine, faeces or even tears' (Das, 1982; Murray, 1994). Human bodies in the act and process of producing bodily secretions or associating with these matters are recognised as polluting. Impurity is also incurred during birth and death; however, while birth signifies 'auspicious impurity' death is considered as 'inauspicious impurity' (Das, 1982).

In the caste system, Brahmans are considered to be the purest as a result of their occupational involvement in ritual and religious activities. These tasks are considered to be the most superior and purest of all social activities. At the other end of the social continuum, the Sudras are identified as defiled. A mutual reinforcement of their defiled status is linked to the allocation of all defiling activities to Sudras, considered as eternally polluted and polluting (Murray, 1994; Dube, 1996). Sudras have historically been assigned the tasks of cremating the human dead, handling dead animals, handling human faeces, cutting hair and nails and washing and cleaning processes associated with bodily excrements. These tasks came to be fixed at birth and the early Vedic notion of aptitude and choice no longer applied.

Hindu ritualism prescribes that there are essentially two ways to bring about a condition of purity, one is to distance oneself from objects signifying impurity, and the other is to purify oneself by things recognised to have the ability to absorb and thus remove pollution directly.

The law books or *Dharmasastras* define clearly how to maintain purity. The Sudras, who were essentially bound to undertake polluting tasks, were excluded physically, socially and morally from the larger village commune. Fa Hein, a Chinese traveller to India explains that the Candalas or Sudras (different names exist for the Sudra caste; the Valmikis are a subcaste of the Sudras) had to give notice of their approach by striking a piece of wood to warn others to avoid contact with them (Kane, 1994). Purification of touch by a Sudra involved taking a cleansing bath; talking to a Sudra was purified by talking to a Brahman; and the sight of a Sudra was purified by looking at the sun, moon or stars and rinsing the mouth with water (acamana).

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<sup>6</sup> The Laws of Manu - also known as Manav Dharmashastra in Sanskrit - comprise 2684 couplets arranged in twelve chapters. It is the earliest of law books. The Laws of Manu form the foundation of the court of law in India under the name of Hindu law. Composition of this may have taken place between 200BC and 200AD by a sage named Bhṛigu.

According to the Dharmasastras, the Sudras were excluded from all religious ritualism, the very basis of Hindu existence. In post-Vedic literature, Sudras are contextually removed from the class of humans and assigned a status similar to that of animals. There are numerous parallels drawn in the Dharmasastras between socially belittled animals, like dogs and pigs, and the Sudras.

According to Manu, all persons became polluted and therefore 'untouchable' during birth and death in the house. Those who touched the mourners or the corpse or even carried the corpse to the cemetery were seen as polluted. He likens the Sudras to 'a living cemetery', such was their level of pollution. Women, on account of their bodily secretions during their menstrual cycle and immediately after childbirth, are identified as polluted during this time, regardless of their caste. Those touching menstruating women or touching women during the first ten days after childbirth are also considered as polluted. Defecating, urinating, sexual intercourse and to a lesser extent, cutting hair and nails are all acts of pollution, which require a ritualistic bath, prescribed especially for the upper castes. Water is the medium to purify all these forms of pollution.

Purification is not possible for the eternally polluted *Sudras* and impurity as a result of caste lineage is considered irreversible. Chakravarti (1993) identifies that the mixing of castes (*varnasamakara*) violates the fundamental principle of Hindu social organisation because 'caste blood is identified as bilateral, i.e. received from both parents'. Until very recently, the severest condemnation and legal punishment was applied for inter-caste contamination, especially that involving a *Sudra* with any of the upper castes (Chakravarti, 1998).

High value is accorded to water use and food preparation in higher-caste Hindu households (Dumont and Pocock, 1959) and the kitchen is a sacred place where food, contaminated in production [by other castes] is purified before being admitted to the body.

Numerous references are made in post-Vedic texts to the enhanced dharma of upper caste women who restrict themselves to the kitchen. The need to maintain caste-purity is served well by the social and ritual seclusion of higher-caste females in the kitchen. It is important to note that by contrast, productive roles are assigned to *Sudra* women, exemplified by reference to working couples such as the barber and the midwife, the washerman and the washerwoman, male and female scavengers etc (Krygier et al, 1990).

Murray (1994) lists some of the structural features of the caste system presented by Manu:

- A rigid caste status assigned solely on the basis of inheritance;
- The *Brahmans'* uncontested prominence in cultural and religious ritual;
- The *Sudras'* eternally polluting status;
- The centrality of a person's caste in his/her social life; prohibition of mobility across caste boundaries, maintained principally by the regulation of intra-caste marriage and, in practical terms, through water-use and eating arrangements;
- Extensive norms and elaborate rituals prescribed for regulating social stratification;
- Enormous social energy devoted to maintaining caste boundaries based on the concept of *Dharma*.

Analysing social relations in contemporary India, Dube (1996) declares that 'caste is not dead and its boundaries and hierarchies are articulated by gender'. Jaiswal (1998) similarly propounds that the institution of caste continues to pose serious problems in the restructuring of Indian society as traditional practices of discrimination are tenaciously maintained.

Constitutionally, the Dalits in India are referred to as the Scheduled Castes. Mahatma Gandhi, in an effort to break the caste barriers, termed the scheduled castes 'Harijans', or literally, the 'people of god.' This term is rejected by the scheduled castes, however, and they prefer to call themselves 'Dalits' or the 'oppressed'.

Gandhi raised the scavenging issue early on in his political career but he did not focus on abolishing it:

*'The Bhangi constitute the foundation of all services. A bhangi does for society what a mother does for her baby. A mother washes her baby of the dirt and ensures his health. Even so the bhangi protects and safeguards the health of the entire community by maintaining sanitation for it.'*<sup>7</sup>

After independence, the Government of India (Gol) recognised and attempted to correct the inherent disparities in the caste system and Article 17 of the Constitution states that: 'Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden.' This was defined even prior to the constitutional declaration of the guarantee of the Right to Life with Human Dignity (Article 21). The Harijan Act (1954) makes verbal, physical and social abuse of the Dalits punishable by law. Several acts and recommendations have been announced over time, relating to and aiming to correct the social disparity of the Dalits.

The Gol and state governments established various commissions and committees to look into the practice of manual scavenging. Most of these initiatives recommend upgrading services and working conditions of the Valmikis but do not suggest the required strategic de-linking of caste and the practice of scavenging.

In 1969 the Gol offered users and the line departments responsible for sanitation, an incentive to convert dry latrines into pour-flush latrines, by offering a 25 per cent subsidy and 75 per cent loan for the process.<sup>8</sup> The Sulabh Souchalaya (Sanitary Toilets) scheme took advantage of this and promoted the twin-pit pour-flush toilet. Supported by the Gol and various international agencies, pay-and-use communal Sulabh Souchalayas were established all over India in major towns, but as the findings below reveal the toilet cleaners in these communal toilets are still predominantly Valmikis.

The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, announced in 1993, aimed to convert dry latrines into pour-flush latrines as well as to rehabilitate scavengers. The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis was constituted in 1994 to monitor the situation and recommend specific programmes. The National Safai Karamchhari Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) was formed in 1997 as an apex institution for the socio-economic reform of manual scavengers. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) also has a mandate to track progress in the reform process. The 2001 NHRC meeting with the Gol led to an agreement to end manual scavenging by October 2, 2002 (the anniversary of Gandhi's birth).<sup>9</sup>

However, as is described below, there has been little success in the official conversion of dry latrines and/or rehabilitation of scavengers. The practice continues, despite the declaration in Section 14 of the 1993 Act, which states that:

*'Whoever fails to comply with or contravenes any of the provisions of this Act..... shall in respect of each failure or contravention be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year or with fine, which*

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<sup>7</sup> Vijay Prashad quoting Gandhi in 'The Untouchable Question' EPW, March 2, 1996

<sup>8</sup> Later, several other schemes came into vogue, all centrally-funded.

<sup>9</sup> The NHRC Annual Report 2001-2002 devotes a page to the issue.

*may extend to two thousand rupees or with both, and in case the failure or contravention continues, with additional fine which may extend to one hundred rupees every day....'*

Further, federal-state arrangements in India allow State Governments the opportunity not to comply with National Acts and agendas. The 1993 Act has yet to be adopted by the states of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, while Kerala, Nagaland and Pondicherry have asserted that there is no need to adopt the Act, due to the non-existence of dry toilets in these states. However, according to the 2002-2003 survey Kerala has 1,339 dry latrines, Nagaland has 1,800 dry latrines and Pondicherry has 476 dry latrines.

## **2.2.2 The origins of manual scavenging**

There is some contention concerning the initiation of the practice of manual scavenging and several authors, depending on their different political leanings, blame the *Manusmṛti*, the Mughals and/or the British for this.

B R Ambedkar, the author of India's constitution and himself a Dalit, traces the practice of scavenging and its implications of social abuse to 600 AD (Shyamlal, 1984). The *Narada Samhita*, a post-Vedic text defines cleaning tasks as unclean and also allocates the disposal of human faeces as one of the 15 duties for slaves. In the *Vajasaneyi Samhitas*, Candalas or Sudras, were referred to as slaves responsible for disposal of night soil, or human faeces.

Although the early Harappan civilisation had an extensive network of underground drainage and sewerage, subsequent urbanisation made the use of dry latrines more common. The ready availability of a specific group of people, traditionally allocated to the task of filth removal allowed this practice to flourish. There was neither the technical motivation nor the need to innovate for an appropriate sanitation technology.

A Government of India report (1992) identifies that the practice of manual scavenging was introduced by the Mughals. The need for female seclusion and privacy was emphasised in Muslim culture and this gave rise to the need to ensure somewhere private for women to defecate, and hence the need to dispose of this away from the home; but this view seems to neglect the history and culture of the Hindu caste system.

Gadgil (1952) and several others assert that the practice of manual scavenging was aggravated in India as a result of the large-scale urbanisation, primarily during the period of British and Mughal colonisation. The elderly of the Methar community (migrant Valmikis from the North) in Metharwadi settlement in the old city of Hyderabad support this theory. They assert that they had not historically handled human faeces:

*'We removed dead animals, skinned cows, announced the death of people in the village, cleaned and removed animal dung [although this honour is not allowed to Valmikis in many parts of India and Nepal, where animals, especially cows and their sheds, are considered sacred<sup>10</sup>]. We were usually not allowed within the habitations of the upper caste and there was widespread open-field defecation.'*

Thekkakare (1999) adds that the practice of scavenging did exist in rural India but was not wide-spread. She reports that prior to mass urbanisation, Bhangis were traditionally employed to clean the toilets of those too old to do it themselves, and the disabled and ill.

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<sup>10</sup> Personal observation and experience Joshi (2005).

Legitimising and systematising the practice of manual scavenging by Dalit groups, the British created official posts of manual scavengers in all the key institutions: the army (the thunder box), the railways, the civil courts and the industries and specifically hired Valmiki or Methars for this task. Ramaswamy (2004) mentions that one of the first areas to be provided with dry latrines and migrant Telegu scavengers (from Andhra Pradesh) was the Kolar Gold Fields in present day Karnataka. This also explains the migration of this Dalit community across colonised South Asia spreading from Sri Lanka to Bangladesh.

Whatever the reality of their origin, the very specific tasks of cleaning and removing animal and human faeces, sweeping roads and cleaning surface drains, removal of human and cattle corpses, and rearing of scavenger pigs continue to be performed by the Bhangis or Valmiki.

### 2.2.3 Social ostracism and ridicule

There is ample evidence of the social ridicule and abuse applied to the Bhangis. In Kerala, until relatively recently, Bhangis were not allowed to walk on the streets without an identifying mark. They had to tie a broom behind them to sweep away the imprints of their polluting feet and hang a mud pot under their chin to spit into, so that their *polluting* spit would not touch the ground. This was even the case while they cleaned up the spit and faeces of the supposedly upper castes. In Marwar (present day Rajasthan), they had to call out 'Payse' (keep distance) and wear a crow's feather on their turban (reported by Ayyankali, 1863-1914, a Harijan leader).

Social ostracism has persisted in many forms. In Metharwadi, a settlement of migrant Valmiki manual scavengers, the elderly hesitate to provide their names. When pursued, they retort painfully:

*'What do you want to know? We were told very categorically by the upper castes that our names were to be self-ridiculing. If any parent or grand-parent chose a fair name for the child, we were instantly abused for having lost sight of our aukath (social and moral value/position). Yes, write down the names, they are Jhamta (spade), Kaloo (black), Gobar (animal dung), Tawa (black girdle), Bhiku Ram (Beggar), Ghoo do (horse), Phullo, Matutva and Tatutva, Dhappo, Bhetari, Anguri (grapes). Our names were a first insight into our identity.'*

The men's names segregated them as lesser males and the women's often suggested sexual ridicule.

Apart from physical isolation and social and moral abuse, there was also significant economic disparity between the Sudras and other groups, legitimised by the Hindu religion. Hindu sacred law or dharma forbade Sudras (and women) from acquiring wealth and property. Additionally, the group remains the most under-represented politically and has not been able to gain a foothold in the revolutionary Dalit movement (Ramaswamy, 2004). This is important to consider, especially as Bhangis (the use of the term is banned constitutionally, but is used widely in practice both by the group as well as by other castes) and/or Valmiki reiterate that they have been largely excluded and socially isolated from other Sudras/Dalits (Navsarjan Trust, 1997).

<b>SUMMARY: THE CASTE SYSTEM IN HINDU SOCIETY</b>
Definition: Hereditary classes of Hindu society which define social status.

Origins:	The origins of the caste system can be traced back to between 2500 and 600 BC and is described in the Rg Veda. This example of Vedic philosophy and literature describes the symbolic division of the Eternal Man, into four classes (varnas) - Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. It is believed that the varna system was made more rigid in the post Vedic era and caste-based occupations were set.
Effect:	Caste-based disparity and caste-rigid occupations have been tenaciously practised in India since then as <i>morally appropriate</i> social behaviour. Different castes are accorded different levels of purity with the lowest caste (Sudra) have been assigned impure and eternally polluting tasks such as cremating the dead and disposing of faeces and have been given a status similar to animals. Brahmins are considered to be the purest as a result of their occupational involvement in ritual and religious activities and distance themselves from anything that can be considered polluting. Mobility across caste boundaries is prohibited to the extent that high caste Hindus will not eat the food produced by or drink from the same water source as low caste Hindus.
Legality:	Caste differentiation and social/physical abuse of Dalits has been made punishable by law in India (Article 17 of Constitution, The Harijan Act, 1954, The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act, 1993). However, the practice of caste discrimination is tenaciously maintained. Social ostracism has persisted in many forms. Manual scavenging continues.
Stigma:	In Kerala, the scavenger class had to tie a broom behind them to sweep away their polluting footprints and carry a cup in front of them so they did not spit on the ground. Their names were expected to be self ridiculing such as 'animal dung'. Often they are forbidden to use the same water sources as higher caste families or they are obliged to collect water after other castes.

### 2.3 Scavenging in Metharwadi, Chirala and Nandikotkur

The Dalit groups engaged in the task of manual scavenging in the state of Andhra Pradesh include *Methars* or *Mehtars*<sup>11</sup>, who were brought from Haryana by the Nizam's Government, as well as local groups which include the Madigas, Malas, Rellis (a sub-caste of the Madigas) and Yanadis. In rare cases, *Halalkhors* (a Muslim sect) also work.

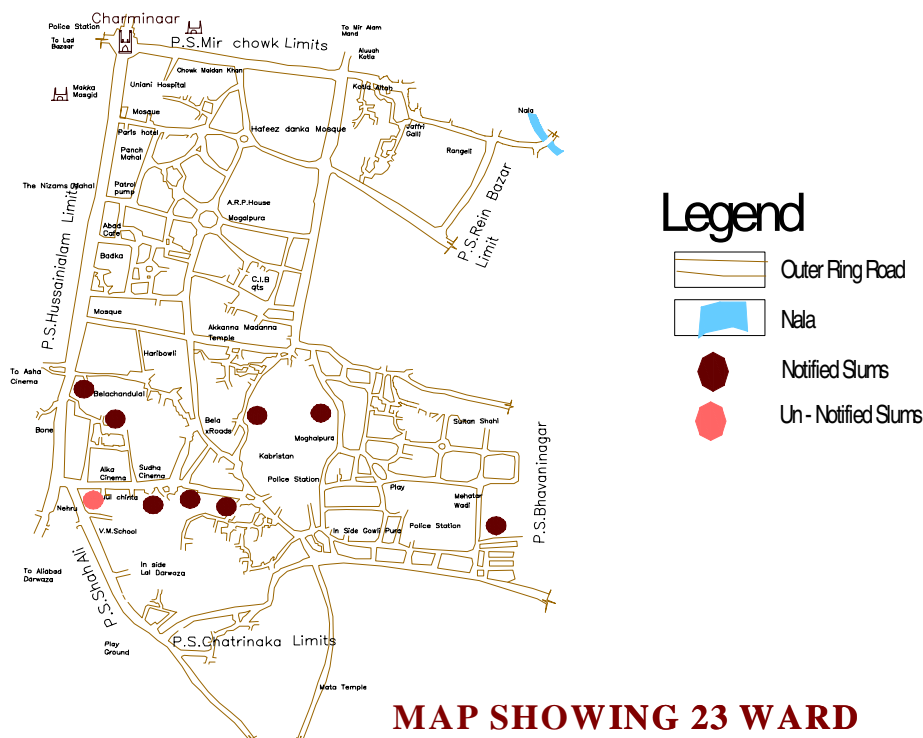
Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh is a bustling 400-year-old metropolis, with a population of 4.2 million. The city's history began with the establishment of the Qutb Shahi dynasty in 1591 CE. The famous landmark Charminar marks the centre of the old city from where growth spread along the Musi river. The map below shows Ward Number 23, Sultan Shahi, one of the older settlements of the city, where Metharwadi is located.

A coastal town municipality, Chirala, with a population of about 82,000 has been a centre for handloom weaving for centuries. Its *paki* workers (*paki* is the coastal Andhra term for

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<sup>11</sup> Mehtar literally means a prince or leader. Even today leaders of several caste panchayats in AP are called mehtars.

scavengers; in Telangana, they are called Methars) are largely Yanadis, a Scheduled Tribe, and a few Madigas.



Nandikotkur in Kurnool district is a block or mandal headquarter town, located some 250 kms from Hyderabad with a population of nearly 40,000. It is an obscure town; though various state government programmes run here, no government functionary stays here - they all commute from the district headquarter town, Kurnool. This is also an area of factions, where rival groups of landlords control the entire economy and local politics – contracts, government programmes, transfers of officials, etc. Until about four years ago, Nandikotkur had nearly 1,000 dry toilets (both public and individual), all serviced by the permanent employees of the Gram Panchayat.<sup>12</sup> The latter collected service charges of Rs15 once in 3 months, and the house-owners paid a little extra to the manual scavengers to encourage them to come every day to clean. There are presently 18 permanent (11 women, 7 men) and 26 temporary (12 women, 14 men) scavengers. The entire class of permanent sweepers in the Gram Panchayats are Madigas with a few Malas from Nellore district amongst the temporary workers. Of the 22 community dry latrines five were converted to pour-flush latrines about three years ago by the Executive Officer of the Gram Panchayat. This initiative was influenced by the Scheduled Castes Corporation and the SKA. Demolition of the other community dry latrines was stopped by users, who protested to the local politicians and the District Collector. 17 community dry latrines were functioning and serviced by the permanent employees of the Gram Panchayat until the day of the demolition in Nandikotkur, August 8, 2004.

A sewerage system was in place over 150 years ago in Hyderabad under the Shahi Dynasty. It is also claimed by some that *purdah* or female seclusion was practised amongst the social elite of both the Muslims and Hindus and this led to the demand for

<sup>12</sup> We are told that the community dry latrines in Kurnool town are cleaned by Halalkhors who are in turn paid by the permanent employees of the Corporation.



dry latrines in the backyards of households inhabited by the ruling classes. The Hindu population consisted of Kayasthas, Khattris, Rajputs and Deccans whilst the Muslim population were of Persian, Arab and Mughal descent.

The Nizam of Hyderabad is said to have sent one of his officials, Mohabbat Hyder Ali to Delhi to negotiate with officials in Delhi to facilitate the hiring of manual scavengers. Metharwadi residents claim that the first three migrants were Tukaram, Bakshiram and Chotelal, all from Haryana. Chotelal became the Chowdhary or headman and was also given the task of facilitating mass migration of other Valmikis.

The migrants were settled in the area now known as Metharwadi (place of stay of the Methars) which was located in the proximity of Sultan Shahi, the area of the social elite. It is from here that migrants moved to other areas in Andhra Pradesh and also to nearby states. Presently, there are at least 40 Methar population localities in Hyderabad<sup>13</sup>.

The migrant Methar community in Metharwadi claim that dry latrines in the old city were initially cleaned by a Muslim community, known as *Mosalli Mehtars* and/or by local Valmiki castes (Telugu-origin scavenging castes) known as *Dheds* and/or *Madigas*. Many Dalits embraced Islam in Hyderabad and were known as *Deccani* or *Mosalli Methars*. Conversion to Islam did not, however, overcome the caste-based restriction of their occupation.

#### **Migrating for work**

Baneer Singh insists that his family had never been involved in the disposal of human faeces in their ancestral village in AP. However, they were well aware of what lay ahead, when they heard of the opportunities for this work in Hyderabad, from neighbours whose family members had migrated. Baneer Singh's father decided to migrate with the entire family, where the whole family was put into performing this task. Baneer Singh eventually secured a scavenging job with the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad (MCH) and his wife continues to work as a scavenger with the Police Department. Of his 13 children, many sons are still working as private scavengers.

The elderly Valmikis in Metharwadi point out that they were treated more humanely by their Muslim clients than by Hindus: 'we are offered tea in the same cups; there is no restriction applied on our entering their homes; the money is paid in our hands and not placed on the ground'. However, as mentioned above, a class-based exclusion applied to all Methars whether converted or not, and this attitude still prevails.

Twenty-five year old Khadija Begum is one of the few Muslims who live in the Metharwadi area, even though her family, consisting of a widowed mother, 4 younger sisters and 3 brothers are conscious to name Sultan Shahi, and not Metharwadi, as their address. Severe economic compulsion forces this family to remain here. However the consequences can be grave: 'recently, my sister got a good proposal for marriage, but eventually the groom's family turned down their offer, when they heard she was a '*Methar Basti*' girl'.

#### **2.3.1 The task of manual scavenging**

Both men and women were engaged in scavenging; however, Valmiki women formed the great majority of individual household dry latrine cleaners, servicing the toilets of the social elite; there were no public latrines at that time, only private household latrines. The Nizam's state was annexed to the Indian Union in 1949 and from then public sanitation became the responsibility of the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad. This led to the

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<sup>13</sup> This information is based on discussions with the older generation in Metharwadi.

setting up of official posts for cleaning public latrines, streets and drains. It was Valmiki men, rather than their wives, who clamoured to fill these ranks. Better salaries, job security and benefits were considered to be the prerogative of men rather than women.

#### **Manual cleaning and emptying of latrines**

Rapuru Kotaiah, Chenchamma, Eluru Pedda Anjaiah and Potluri Subbamma, all in their mid-sixties, recall the days when they manually cleaned both private and community dry toilets. They had a piece of tin, which was used to lift the excrement into a woven basket lined with leaves to prevent leakage. They carried the basket on their heads and shoulders to the designated refuse dump. Though years have passed, their children and grandchildren are still in the same profession. Kotaiah's three adult sons (and his educated grandson) work at cleaning septic tanks. They work in a team of ten and use buckets, drums and rickshaws. The person who enters the septic tank is provided alcohol before the task, kerosene is poured onto the surface of the sludge when the lid is opened to absorb poisonous gases and the man enters with the bucket into the solid mass of excreta. Another lifts the bucket up, and this is passed by the human chain to the drums loaded in the rickshaw.

The work is done in the dark, *'everybody shits, but who wants to see and smell it? So we work at night.'* What do they think of a system which allows one human to clean another's excreta? They are bitter, *'we soil ourselves, so that the others can look clean'*. They complain that shopkeepers will not take money from their hands: the money is put on a counter, water is sprinkled on it and then it will be handled. Most members of the community are in the cleaning profession, cleaning latrines in public places like the bus stand and the railway station and in hospitals and nursing homes; cleaning up excreta, urine, blood and wastes.

The migrant Valmiki community complain that employment by the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad (MCH), with benefits of job security, pension and initially assurance of inter-generational employment, consciously benefited the local Madigas more than the Methars. Madigas, however claim that the Methars opted not to take the Baldia or MCH employment as the payment for this was initially just Rs5 to 7 per month. *'Each Methar family serviced at least 200-300 private (individual household) dry latrines and earned much more than what was paid through the MCH for cleaning public latrines.'*

Baneer Singh and the other men who worked as manual scavengers are reluctant to talk about their experiences, *"what is there to talk about? It is not something to be proud of. It is worth forgetting those days"*. He is keener to announce that he managed to retire as an MCH staff-person and that one of his sons is an officer in the Revenue Department. The initiative to move upward is immense. *"We worked hard. Even after I got an official job, I continued to service houses and worked day and night, so I could get a better life for my 13 children."*

Sixty-five year old Chandro is stoic when she speaks about her life. *"Everyone has to do what is destined. When I got married, I was also provided a broom and a bucket along with my husband. At home, I had never done this cleaning job, but I knew I had little choice here"*. A fiercely patriarchal society, the Valmikis do not allow their daughters to perform manual scavenging. *"Once they are wed, they become the property of their husband's families, who decide for them. While they are home, we make sure we don't allow them to do this work."* The situation is common across the states of India.

In Gujarat, the research by Navsarjan Trust (1997) reports a Valmiki man saying, *"When her father gave her to me, he gave me the right to make her do anything I want. Yes, initially, she refused to do the filthy work. So I wrote to her brother. He came here and told her that this was not her father's house and I was her husband. Then she came to her senses. And now she does everything. That's how it is, dear Sir."* The wife has little

to say, “It was difficult, I had never done this before. I don’t like it one bit. Is this my fate, I thought. But gradually I have got used to it.”

Chandro is amongst the few who seems bereft of any emotion related to disgust and discomfort in cleaning another’s faeces. She cleaned dry latrines for 40 years in households allocated to her by her mother-in-law and with time passed the job on to her daughters-in-law. Chandro’s eldest daughter-in-law, Kamala, explained that the practice was that mothers-in-law hand over client households, but do not allow them to receive or spend the money paid for the work. Kamala could gain access to what she earned only when she separated her kitchen from that of her mother-in-law.

#### **The daily routine**

*‘Despite the fact that I cleaned toilets day after day, all my hairs stand erect when I think of it. Every morning, we left home around 6am, on an empty stomach and filled bucket after bucket of stinking faeces. Each time the load filled, we would take the buckets to the designated dumping grounds. Where there were no open disposal sites, the faeces would be heaped in designated areas and would be carted away in bullock carts by Madiga men. In most places, water taps were provided for cleaning the bucket, the broom and the tin plates. When we cleaned these, the faeces would stick to our clothes and our bodies. This could be cleaned only after we came home. We had two pairs of clothes, one for cleaning the faeces and one for use at home and we never mixed these up. When we reached home late in the afternoon, we would ask one of the older children or our husband to heat some water to have a bath. We would also wash our clothes and hang them to dry for use for tomorrow. This was our routine day after day, year after year. The stench would stay in our minds and bodies and while the men often got rid of this by drinking alcohol, this was not readily possible for women. It was painful to eat the one meal in the evening. Men, especially those who were not doing this work, but were cleaning drains and sweeping streets, often drank tea and ate snacks when they could afford it, but we women did the whole day’s work on an empty stomach.’ [Shops on the roadside are a public domain frequented only by men.]*

Yet, the men who drank tea in the shops, did so in separate cracked cups, kept aside especially for them. Tea would be poured out from a height into these cups and the Bhangi men needed to wash the cups and put them away after use; all of this, for the same price for a cup of tea as other customers. This lesser human status is still true in many small towns across India (Navsarjan Trust, 1997).

It is important to note, that a culture of regular alcohol intake is common amongst Methar men, and possibly women too, but this is denied. This is pointed out as an occupational necessity, “when one came back each evening, steeped in the stench of shit, alcohol was used to dull away the reality of existence.”

#### **2.3.2 The price paid for carrying other people’s filth**

During the Nizam’s time, Methars were paid 6 paise (now US\$0.0013) per adult in the households from which they removed faeces. There was no money paid for removing children’s faeces. A random extra amount was provided for adult guests but many elderly Methar women and men claim that the exact number of guests was never mentioned. They were *compensated* by being given the left over food in the evenings. However, it was a common practice amongst scavenger women to go back to their client households and *beg* for left-over food. “We are never provided good food; it is always left-over, stale food, often turning bad. Why would be beg if we had good jobs and adequate incomes” (Navsarjan Trust, 1997). Methar families were also provided old clothes, sweets etc. during major festivals and occasions.

After independence the monthly payment was raised to 25 paise per adult in the household and reached a maximum of Rs20 to 25 per household for cleaning dry latrines. This remuneration plan continued as long as there were dry latrines.

Struggling to gain some worth from their task, Methars reiterate, “no matter how we were treated or what we were paid, there was no way that these houses could survive without us. If we didn’t go for a couple of days, the whole place would be stinking and crawling with worms. We were literally begged to come back to work.”

Madigas, some Methar men and a few women amongst both groups, are now employed in the MCH. A permanent job in the MCH is now a coveted position.

#### **Working for the MCH**

Seventy year old Ran Singh describes the changes that came his way. *“I was 20 years old, when I migrated from Delhi to join my brothers who were already working here. In the large joint family, we had around 150 houses to service and I was allocated around 40 households. When the MCH was established and I heard that there were job opportunities for those who were educated at least up to the 5<sup>th</sup> standard, I started attending night school. I was employed initially in the Railways, then the Road Transport Corporation, both times as a scavenger. Finally, I got a job with the MCH in 1972 on an initial salary of Rs1,005. When I retired, my salary had increased to Rs6,800 per month.”*

Madigas were primarily engaged for sweeping roads, cleaning surface drains and later, cleaning deep underground sewers. Sewerage systems, and therefore the cleaning of underground sewers, are now undertaken by the Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB).

Methars employed in the MCH were predominantly given the task of servicing either communal dry latrines or more recently pour-flush latrines. This task allocation between Madigas and Methars has grown to be an informal but established principle amongst the agencies providing sanitation services in Hyderabad. Whether the local Madigas have gained more than the Methars through this division of sanitation tasks is discussed below.

For the Methars, growth and expansion of the city opened new areas of work but the trade was the same. Methars were employed to clean up and dispose of faeces, blood, and toxic and infectious wastes in hospitals, toilets in cinema halls, schools, factories, shopping places etc. Compared to official work, private employment, both in households and in public and/or private institutions offers no job security, benefits or welfare scheme; in addition, protective clothing is rarely provided.

There is a difference in the salaries paid to women and men, both as permanent and temporary staff. Male temporary workers are paid not less than Rs1,200 per month, while women engaged temporarily are paid only Rs900 per month. Payments are commonly made only once in three months. Consequently, most scavengers are mired in debt, borrowing money at annual interest rates of 36 to 60 per cent. On the date of the interview, the Gram Panchayat in Nandikotkur still owed the scavengers two months wages. The Executive Officer says that the matter is not in his hands. However, staff in the upper cadre are paid regularly.

For a lifetime of carrying waste the Pakis in Ujilipet area of Chirala remain desperately poor, testified by their bare thatched-roof huts, their scant belongings, the lack of electricity and a single tap for about 23 households. Ironically, while they clean the faeces of others, only 3 households amongst the 23 have individual latrines. The rest defecate on a railway track, a kilometre away from the settlement. Ironically, most of them cannot

afford the Rs250 necessary to pay for an individual latrine, under the government scheme to end manual scavenging practices.

### 2.3.3 Living conditions and social status of the Valmikis

The Methars, well aware of their polluting status, settled at a reasonable distance from other communities. "In the Nizam's days there was not even a proper mud road. The area was full of potholes and sullage used to flow down the whole place if it rained, making it impossible to walk", says 70 year old Umed Singh.

Seventy year old migrant Anguri recollects, "Initially, we built small *kutcha* (temporary) huts. Over time, some local land-owners rented out cattle-sheds. A Bengali Nawab, Cartan Sahib, owned some cattle sheds in this area, which our families rented for 25 paise per month when we started living here. Eventually, the Nawab sold these sheds and the cost proposed was much higher than we could afford, so this put us in great difficulty. What you see today is our efforts to gradually convert the sheds into houses. Yet we have no paper deeds for these properties."

Despite the convenience of the services which the Methars provided, the others living in the nearby area, both Hindus and Muslims, deeply resented this intrusion; "It was better when just the Muslims were here. Impurity was not there. If anyone asks me where I live, I am ashamed to say Metharwadi and still prefer to say Sultan Shahi", says Padmashali Durgaiyah. The thread of resentment is much deeper amongst the Hindus. Most non-Dalit Hindu families aspire to leave Metharwadi as soon as their economic conditions permit.

After the establishment of the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad (Baldia), Methars and other Valmiki groups employed in the Baldia were provided with *pucca* (permanent) quarters; one room homes. This reiterated the 'Methar-specific' characteristic of the area that is reflected in the name Metharwadi. This also reflects the age-old practice of segregation that is both formally and informally institutionalised.

Some Methar families who are able to progress economically also leave Metharwadi for the newly developing city of Hyderabad. However, many are reported to have returned. Baneer Singh mentions: "There is a Methar family - the man is an officer and they bought a flat in one of these areas in the main city. But no one would interact with them. They were the only family not called to social gatherings. Other children would not play with their children. The family has come back to Metharwadi."

Almost repeating the same story, Bidla, a young Methar woman, a lecturer in a Graduate College says: "I live here because I want my children to know their roots." Yet she consciously tries to deny these roots: "I belong to the *Royalty* amongst Methars. My family never performed such tasks. I make sure that my children don't mix with the other Methar children. They are a bad influence. You are fortunate that I am granting you an audience to speak. Usually, you would need an appointment to do so." As if to test the researcher's own beliefs of caste disparity, she insists that the researcher drink the glass of water she offers: "The water is clean, it is filtered. If you want, I can give you some cold water from the fridge. You should drink the water. When you come next, let me know, I will prepare some food."

In 1957, under a poverty alleviation [*Garibi Hatao* (Remove Poverty)] programme, vacant land in and around Metharwadi was allocated to the poor. Some Methar families and other caste families in Metharwadi were able to benefit from this, but most of the recipients are the non-poor and are also from outside the area; they built houses which they rent out.

The elderly recall: "Water facilities, such as wells and tanks, existed, especially as this was the farming area for the Nizam's government." However, the Methar migrants competed for water with other social groups. For all of those formerly living here, excluding the Muslims, the Methars were polluted. This meant that the Methars had to keep a safe physical distance and *not pollute*, especially water sources. "We used to collect water only after other communities had ended filling their water pots. Even if we reached the stand-posts earlier, we would step down, if other community members came. They would then wash the taps first before use. They always carried a little water in their vessels to do this."

Baneer Singh recollects: "My grandmother and mother waited for hours near the upper castes' well, for a single bucket of water. Every day they were abused and ridiculed for this. Eventually, someone would reluctantly pour out some water into our buckets from way above, to avoid touching anything to do with them."

That the Methars later had their own well was not a privilege, but a compulsion. The problems with water were aggravated over time, which forced the Methars to once more *share* water with the other castes. Metharwadi faces a severe water problem today, where water supplied through the piped water system is provided only once in 3 or 4 days, and for only a limited number of hours. Tankers provide water once or twice a week. The resentment about sharing water has not lessened.

"The times have changed now", says 60 year old Yellama, belonging to the Besta community. "The elderly generation of Methars still wait at a distance while we fill our pots, but the youngsters bring their pots and push their way into our lines. What can we say?" There were initially no toilets here in this area, but there was a lot of open space. Later, the MCH built a communal dry latrine in Metharwadi, which was used largely by non-Methar families and cleaned by Methars employed in the MCH.

There is general consensus amongst upper caste Hindus that Methars are not only polluting but also dirty. Sushila Padmashali says, "Earlier, we used to take a bath, when we accidentally touched Methars. Their standards of hygiene are definitely lower than those of upper caste Hindus."

Sushila claims to bathe every day and rigidly clean the house, especially when children urinate or defecate. She mentions that faeces should not contaminate other things. However, during the course of several days of interaction, each time her grandson urinates on the floor, it is wiped off once with a cloth, which is not washed further but thrown into a corner. The child is also made to defecate in the place where the utensils are washed. The faeces are picked up and thrown into the drain. The place is rinsed just once with water.

Claiming strength from their polluted identity, the Methars often joke that they are extra-immune. "Others would die if they did this scavenging work every day. We are not affected; after all we are not quite human" (Navsarjan Trust, 1997).

#### **Maintaining hygiene**

*"During the dry toilet days, waste matter would regularly fall on our hands and bodies, so we used to come home and have a bath. Nowadays we clean flush toilets. I am careful enough though to not even let the wastewater fall on my hands and body at the girls' hostel where I work. I wash my arms, legs and face with soap after I finish my work and come home. My mother-in-law used to wear a different set of clothes when she came home, after cleaning the dry toilets in those days. I follow that procedure even now. I still have a bath after I come home from work every day. My daughter brings me a freshly washed set of clothes, because of course, toilet cleaning is a form of dirty work, after all,*

*since we clean up everybody's dirt and filth. To keep our house clean we don't allow anyone to walk in with dirty feet as these leave dirty footmarks that have to be cleaned with detergents. We celebrate festivals like Rakhi, Divali, dassera and holi. We whitewash the house for the Divali festival and we buy new clothes, sweets and perform puja. We spend at least Rs.500 to 600 and the house looks bright after being whitewashed."*

**Kamali, Age: 33; Occupation: Scavenger**

The relative notions of purity and pollution apart, non-Methar residents in Metharwadi are frustrated and angry with what they claim is an unjustifiable social, economic and political favouritism towards the Methars. "There is at least one government job in every Methar family." Given such privileges, the Methars are considered to have become arrogant. If anyone says anything objectionable to one Methar, the entire community retaliates. "We prefer to keep quiet nowadays", says Durgaiyah Padmashalli. "When I was a small girl, the Methars lived at a distance and were afraid of us. Our situation has worsened over time, but they are now the *dora* (lords)", says his 50 year old wife, Sushila.

However, the Methars have contradictory experiences. Arvind Bidla, aged 30 years old, is a local politician and works as a middle-man (known as pairaveekar) in the local municipality. Arvind wears freshly ironed trousers and shirts, smokes expensive cigarettes and drives a motorcycle. "I'm dressed like you folks (the researchers). I've completed my undergraduate education and have now entered politics. I move around with upper-caste Hindu leaders. They seem to accept me as one of them but I know that once I turn away they say: 'He's a Methar.' My caste identity will never leave me."

After several decades C Rajinder still experiences ostracism in the house where he cleans the pour flush latrine and the shop where he buys his groceries: "They now clean their own faeces, but would still not like to touch us. It is very clear that we are considered even dirtier than faeces and filth."

In the study by Navsarjan Trust (1997) young Valmiki in Gujarat remarked: "If they touch us by mistake, they abuse us thoroughly, and then they light a match and touch the fire, to purify themselves. If they touch us, they dunk their toe into any water, even dirty gutter water, to make themselves clean."

In Metharwadi the dynamics of social relationships are changing, but the situation is complex and tense.

"We never used to invite the Methars to any social functions, but their enhanced status today determines that we can no longer avoid this," says Kalavathi, from the Besta community. "The older generation are hesitant to come to our homes for marriages and other functions. If at all they do come, it is after everyone else has left and if we offer food, they prefer to take it away. But the younger generation are arrogant. They sit down with our relatives and eat. How can we ask them to come and then not to sit and eat? More importantly, if we did this, everyone would know that we are feeding with Methars. When someone asks, we simply say, they are our children's friends."

In return, Methar families invite the few socially friendly, supposedly upper caste families to their functions. However, they offer no food to their guests; doing so, would humiliate them. Dry items, like sweets and fruits are sent to such households, after the function. The guests graciously accept these but that they will never eat them is known to all. The Methars definitely understand their growing social status, but the others despair at what they consider their own declining social identities.

Traditionally, there has been a complete denial of access to any temples for the Methars which resulted in their own array of gods, temples and religious norms. It is interesting to note that Methars have surprisingly taken on the roles of faith healers. In every lane in Metharwadi, there are temples, or rather clinics of faith healers, promising to cure diseases, secure employment, find and destroy love, destroy enemies and the wish list is as long as one's desires. It is strangely disturbing to see the Methars attend to the very Hindu gods and goddesses so long denied to them and claim to invoke promise of their favours. In the crowded, faith-ruled old city, the line of clients is long and extends, as we are told, even as far as the Middle-East. What brings both Hindus and Muslims alike to the Methar faith-healers is not very clear; however, Methars have long been identified as having special healing powers. They have been known to cure snake-bites and to absorb other forms of evil and pollution. A few clients waiting outside these clinics suggest that the healing power is based on a potent combination of a polluted identity so entrenched that it can touch and scour evil and invoke long denied favours from the gods.

#### **An alternative occupation**

Nagin is the most famed and the richest amongst the faith-healers. Still employed on the rolls of the MCH as a scavenger, she has long sub-contracted this work to others. Her monthly gains run into several thousand rupees and her clients are spread out as far as Dubai and England, as we are told. A long line of mostly Burkha-clad Muslim women and a few Hindu-looking women sit outside the long terraces. Inside, there is fervent activity. Several employees are busy packing powders and flowers in leaves, tied with strings. Mirrors, black threads and the smoke of incense fogs the small room. Her hair flowing loose, eyes heavily lined with kohl and attenuated with a big red bindi (a dot, indicative of a married status amongst Hindu women) Nagin has suffered from chicken pox and the scars on her face add to giving her an arresting personality. Sitting beside a huge brass idol of the Goddess Durga, she does indeed look overwhelmingly full of power. Nagin, is now a big land owner in Metharwadi, renting out both houses and open spaces to new migrants in the area. She has indeed made a big break from cleaning latrines.

#### **2.3.4 The current vulnerable, 'New Methars'**

The aim of this research was to explore poverty and vulnerability amongst the Methars in Metharwadi, but they themselves identify that a new cycle of vulnerability is unfolding in front of their eyes. Baneer Singh points out: "What happened to us several years ago is being repeated with the Lambada tribals of the Telengana region of Andhra Pradesh. They are the new Methars of this area."

Thirty year-old Lambadi Rukmini is working as a daily-wage labourer and is originally from Mylaram village in Kondapur mandal of neighbouring Mahabubnagar district. The family own around 4 or 5 acres of land in the village. But successive failures of the monsoon in her district forced her family to migrate to Hyderabad in search of work. She lives in a small, low-lying hut, made of plastic sheeting and bamboo sticks in an area which is crammed with similar huts. There is no electricity, water connection or latrine. Make-shift latrines have been constructed and are shared by several families. "All of us share one common latrine, and there is a bathroom without a door. We women tie a *dupatta* (shawl) as a curtain and have our baths. With the men wandering about outside – this is so difficult. We try to bathe as quickly as possible. Our landlord is not responsible for ensuring anything apart from the land he rents for us to build huts. What can we do?"

Most Lambada families have been living in such conditions in Metharwadi for 3 to 5 years. Some have been here much longer.



The old city offers better work opportunities in the wholesale fruit and vegetable markets and in the locality Metharwadi is the least expensive area. Yet they recall with a degree of shame that historically they had never mingled with the local scavenging castes, Mala and Madiga.

Every morning, most adult men and women, and children in their teens throng the Bhavani Nagar *adda* (centre) to secure daily-wage labour in markets and on construction sites. Women are paid at most Rs 90 per day and men Rs 100 to 120 for the same work. But daily-wage labour is scarce and irregular. Over time, Lambadas, though they are reluctant to admit this, have also taken up private scavenging work.

Tall, fair and beautiful by race, and dressed mostly in their traditional attire, which is a skirt and embroidered blouse, open at the back, younger Lambadi women complain of sexual harassment at work, in the huts and on the streets but are unable to do anything about this situation.

Living spaces in Metharwadi do not come free. For each hut, measuring only a few square metres, rent is charged at a fixed rate of Rs 50 per adult per month. Some Lambadas consider themselves lucky. They have found rented accommodation in cattle sheds, which offer more shelter from the rain and heat. For those living in huts, dirty, stinking pools of water gather outside and even inside the huts with every rain. Around 50-60 Lambadas share one toilet and bathroom. In an effort to keep things clean, each Lambada hut contributes Rs2 per month for the purchase of brooms and 'acid' (bleach) and take turns in cleaning. At the bottom of the social order in Metharwadi, the Lambadas are the last to get water from tankers and communal taps. Due the scarcity of water and the constraints in securing access to water, both adults and children are able to bathe only once in 5 or 6 days. The task of fetching water and cleaning, as in all other communities is that of the Lambadi women. As migrants living a highly frugal existence, most households have very few material possessions, including clothes, and all of this adds to a visibly ragged existence.

Migrants in distress, the Lambadas from Mahabubnagar district are the most vulnerable community in the Metharwadi area. However, they still consider themselves higher in social order than the Methars. The Methars, on the other hand, dominate the Lambadas at every opportunity, intimidating their use of public toilets and the municipal water taps and pumps. By default, the Lambadas have become a punch bag for the long subdued Methar community to prove and express its dominance. The Metharwadi area presents an interesting case of evolving relationships in the caste-ridden Hindu society.

### **2.3.5 Rehabilitation?**

In 1993, the Government of India announced 'The Employment of Manual Scavengers and Construction of Dry Latrines (Prohibition) Act'. This followed several recommendations made since 1949, to abolish the practice of carrying night soil as a head-load (Navsarjan Trust, 1997). However, the practice, as this research has shown, continues. In smaller towns and cities in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere in India the act is blatantly ignored, not only by private households but also by government institutions such as local courts and local government bodies.

In Hyderabad, the Methars claim that a complete shift to pour flush latrines has been achieved, although there were some who claimed that there are still a few dry latrines in use. However, on trying to further explore this, there was a formidable silence.

The Methars have differing views on why the practice of using dry latrines stopped in Hyderabad. The elderly women remark: "It was all due to Indira Gandhi, may her soul rest

in peace. She managed to relieve us of this burden before she died.” They fail to explain why she did not do this elsewhere in Andhra Pradesh and the rest of India, but this demonstrates the strong affiliation to the Congress party amongst the Valmikis, and, in contrast, their exclusion from other Dalit political identities.

A National Rehabilitation Plan for Scavengers, linked to the Act abolishing dry latrines, was announced by the Government of India in 1991, and Rs800 crores were allocated for this work. Five years later a National Scheme for Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers was formulated. Progress is noted to be dismal. (See Annex: Section 1.2.) Of the 797,112 scavengers enumerated in India, to date, only 9.3 per cent were said to have been trained and 23.6 per cent rehabilitated completely in the first six years of the programme (Navsarjan Trust, 1997). The figures are not disaggregated by gender, but, as the findings below show, the rehabilitation process also exhibits a distinct male bias.

In Andhra Pradesh, a State Mission was set up in 2001 to rehabilitate scavengers. Theoretically, the National Rehabilitation Scheme is to be delivered to all scavengers. There are no location, age and/or sex limitations. The GoAP outlined a training-specific rehabilitation plan and in order to achieve effectiveness, restricted the scheme and rehabilitation to scavengers aged between 15 and 50 years. State Government Training Institutes were set up using the Rehabilitation Scheme funds. Alternative self-employment schemes were also identified and District Administrators were given the authority to finalise action plans worth around Rs100,000.

For any rehabilitation plan, 50 per cent of the total cost, up to a maximum of Rs10,000 is provided as a grant from the Scheduled Caste (SC) Corporation, 20 per cent of the plan budget is a state subsidy to the beneficiary and the balance a loan from the National *Safai Karmachari* (Sanitation Workers) Finance and Development Corporation, refundable by the recipient to the loaning bank. Scavengers were identified by the District Societies of the SC Corporation, under state development initiatives of the former AP government, known popularly as Janmabhoomi programmes. While no reservation target was set for women, the SC Corporation estimates that about 45 per cent of the identified beneficiaries were women.

In practice, the rehabilitation plan was completely different, as identified by Ramaswamy (2004) in discussion with scavenger women and men in Chirala and Nandikotkur towns.<sup>14</sup>

Buffalo-rearing, cloth shops, small shop businesses, vegetable vending and auto-driving, were some of the schemes outlined for rehabilitation, at total cost estimates of Rs.50,000 and above. In such cases, Rs 10,000 was provided as a grant from the SC Corporation, Rs 8,000 as a state grant component and the bank loan to the beneficiary was Rs 32,000.<sup>15</sup>

There was a huge resistance by banks to lend this money. The logic was the poor credit-worthiness of the scavengers, given their historic exclusion from enterprise. Banks, both private and government, are engaged in other government welfare programmes such as the DWCRA, disabled welfare, farmer’s loans etc. However, there is a clear tension between the banks’ interest of loan recovery irrespective of the success/failure of schemes and the welfare intent, which allows scope for risks.

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<sup>14</sup> Discussions at Chirala, Nandikotkur, and with manual scavengers who attended the dry latrine demolition rally on September 16 at Hyderabad, from different parts of the state.

<sup>15</sup> As the NSKFDC subsidy of 50% was only up to a maximum limit of Rs 10,000, and workable schemes needed more money, this was the plan worked out by the APSCCF Corporation.

Troubled with meeting targets, local officials of the SC Corporation devised a truly ingenious plan; each beneficiary was provided the state subsidy of Rs 8,000, of which Rs 2,000 went to the broker/agent and Rs 500-600 for paperwork. The loan component was written as recovered, and everybody was happy. The enterprise asset was simply absent, except on paper.

The elderly, illiterate and women less able to cope with the intricacies of this corruption are not the ones identified for rehabilitation. Younger male members of scavenging families and even other politically well-connected, non-scavenging communities from amongst the Dalits were the key beneficiaries (Ramaswamy, 2004). Navsarjan Trust (1997) identified this situation in Gujarat too. "Our benefits were taken away by Harijans and Chamars." The scavengers continued to scavenge.

In Metharwadi, accessing the rehabilitation loans is only possible through a self-selected group of local leaders. A culture of corruption has bred within the group, and every well-to-do Valmiki household seems to house a leader, whose intervention is a pre-requisite for the other, more vulnerable to secure the offered official benefits.

More realistically, it is for individual Methars to forge a change in their destinies and those who make it are mostly the younger men in the community. Even for the more successful, the options are limited and the task of scavenging persists.

Most of the younger generation of married women still follow in the footsteps of their mothers-in-law. Until now, every morning, between 7 and 8am, there is a stream of women from Metharwadi, their scarves drawn over their faces, moving out of the colony to perform toilet-cleaning tasks.

#### **Fighting the system**

Eighteen year-old Neeraj rears pigs for a living, together with his brother. He failed his secondary school exams, but the reasons for discontinuing school are more serious. "I wasn't able to make friends. The other students would look at me and greet me, but this was in a very different way and it used to make me feel very uncomfortable. After I failed my 10<sup>th</sup> standard, I decided not to continue."

Failed rehabilitation explains the insecurity amongst the migrant Methars in Metharwadi, who show extreme tenacity in holding on to what remains of their occupational rights. The inter-generational practice of providing sanitation services to private households continues, even though there are no longer dry latrines in Hyderabad. Methars reserve the sole right to sub-contract or temporarily assign their client households to others. This practice is referred to as *badili*. While the client household reserves the right to discontinue service, the decision to change service-providers does not lie with them. Should any conflict arise, the case is resolved by the local leadership.

The Methars in Metharwadi have conflicting views on the termination of dry latrine scavenging in Hyderabad. On the one hand, the burden of daily handling human faeces was certainly unpleasant and many sigh in relief that this no longer has to be done, yet they sense a loss of their place in a changing society with the termination of this age-old, socially-defined occupation.

*"When the dry latrines were converted to pour-flush toilets our services were really no longer required. However, the toilet was still considered dirty and no one really had ever cleaned their own latrines, and thus we continued to be employed. With time, toilets are now being built inside houses and they are as clean as the living rooms. All the new cleaning*

*equipment and the messages from the TV are signs that this might be the last of our work.”*

Ran Singh claims that, “in those days, if we didn’t go to work for 2 or 3 days, there would be people calling us at our doors. When we went in the early morning, with a broom and a bucket, the men folk of the houses would be standing there with an oil lamp and calling, ‘Please Methar, come and clean our toilets.’ Some would literally plead with us. They had no choice. If we didn’t clean, they could not defecate. Nowadays, they tell us that we are no longer needed. Of the 40 households my wife and I serviced, the number has decreased now to 15 or 16. My wife and I are both old and our sons have got other jobs. We have given these houses to others to clean and they pay us 50 per cent of what they are paid.”

“We are losing our employment. The government uses the TV and radio to tell people that they don’t need to employ us anymore.” This is in specific reference to a recent Harpic toilet cleaner advertisement, which specifically mentions that ‘*one can easily clean one’s own toilets*’. “If we presume this is to our benefit, then we do need to adopt other occupations. We do need a livelihood. What will we become – barbers, washermen – and will those traditionally engaged in this work, allow us this change? Do you note that this loss of occupation has not been brought about for anyone else, except us?”

It is obvious that there is little awareness of, nor faith in, the government’s rehabilitation plan and schemes. The task of cleaning latrines continues and the greatest losers are, as noted above, Methars employed privately, for whom the age-old server-household relationship and obligation is wearing thin.

There are a few exceptions. Kamala was standing with a long gunghat drawn over her face, throughout the time the researchers were talking to a self-acclaimed leader in the community. Finally, she came over and handed him a piece of paper and requested him to look at it. The leader asked her to wait. After much persuasion, Kamala agreed to sit and talk, a little away from the venue:

*“We women do not sit in front of other men. I am applying for a loan. I want to start a tailoring shop. I want to stop cleaning toilets. I did not know that I would be asked to do this work on my marriage. When my in-laws came to see me, they said, my husband has his own shop. My father worked as a scavenger in the army, but he educated us and brought us up well. When I came here, I realised it was all lies. My husband was unemployed; in fact he is the only unemployed person in the family, all the rest have scavenging jobs in the government. My mother-in-law gave me some of her houses to clean, but I can’t do it. Further, my mother-in-law is bossy, she gets drunk every night and abuses all of us. I have separated from the family and am living on my own. My husband has found a job cleaning cars but he is not an enterprising person. I want to break away from this cycle. But I know it will not be easy. I am still working in a few houses, to keep my family going. These are good houses, where they are not abusive.”*

Innovative planning and compensation that considers all the social, political and economic factors is required to rehabilitate centuries of degradation of a society that is still allocated the task of scavenging (Ramaswamy, 2004).

**SUMMARY: SCAVENGING IN METHARWADI, CHIRALA AND NANDIKOTKUR**

**Other religions:** Many scavengers converted to Islam but have still been treated by Hindus as untouchables. Muslims treat all scavengers better, giving them tea from the same crockery as the family use themselves, allowing them to enter their homes, placing money in their hands and not on the ground.

**Gender:** Both men and women are engaged in scavenging, more women than men except in the better-paid government scavenging jobs. Families do not allow their daughters to manually scavenge, but daughter-in-laws are expected to take over the clients of their mother-in-laws, even if they have never carried out the job before. The mother-in-law's keep the money their daughter-in-law's earn, while she lives under the same roof. Men might take a break during the day to eat and drink. Women would not stop for a break.

**Remuneration:** The maximum payment for cleaning a dry latrine privately has been Rs.20 per household per month. Official scavenging jobs have been better paid but salaries are often delayed. Manual scavengers are often seriously in debt.

**Sanitation:** Only 13% of manual scavengers have access to latrines. The majority defecate in the open, beside railway tracks.

**Handwashing:** Male manual scavengers do not wash their hands before eating their snacks during the day. All manual scavengers bathe with soap and water as soon as they get home and before they prepare food or eat.

**Competition:** With the reduction in dry latrines and competition for work from ever-increasing population, now manual scavenging is also being done by others such as the Lambada tribe.

**Rehabilitation:** Government plans are for all manual scavengers to be rehabilitated and manual scavenging to stop. Of the 797,112 scavengers enumerated in India, only 9.3% have been retrained and 23.6% rehabilitated. Those rehabilitated are not the poorest, instead they are the ones with the better social connections.

## **2.4 Protests against dry-latrine use in Andhra Pradesh**

While the Methars in Metharwadi, and elsewhere in Hyderabad, have stopped cleaning dry latrines and are now cleaning pour-flush latrines, sweeping roads and cleaning surface drains, their community in the rest of Andhra Pradesh (and elsewhere in India) are still continuing to clean dry latrines. This study closely tracked the Dry Latrine Demolition Drive of the *Safai Karmachari* (sanitation workers) Andolan (SKA) led by its young leader, Bejwada Wilson. It is useful to understand the history of the SKA process before we discuss the actual practice of dry-latrine use and the SKA agenda and process for demolition.

### **2.4.1 The seeds of a revolution**

Wilson, as he is commonly known, was born to a converted Christian Madiga family in the Kolar Gold Fields (KGF) area in Karnataka, where his entire family and community were employed in manual scavenging. An area of strategic industrial interest, Kolar was one of the first places to be electrified by the British, even earlier than Delhi or Bombay. For the population of 200,000 workers, mostly Dalit miners, the British provided communal dry latrines, which were serviced by scavenger families brought in from neighbouring Andhra Pradesh. It is interesting to note that the Madigas who refused to clean dry latrines in Hyderabad agreed to do this job in far away Karnataka.

Wilson managed to escape the scavenging task, given his mother's desire and his family's extreme sacrifice for him to become a pastor. After a master's degree in political science and theology, he came back to work with his community. His first task was to try and steer the men away from alcohol addiction, which they claimed was impossible, given the nature of the work. In good spirit, Wilson was kept away from the reality of manual scavenging, until one day he saw, in his own words:

*"One man in the group was emptying the contents of his bucket into the large collection bin which was half full of faeces. This was collected by tractors every 2 or 3 days. The surface of this bin was hardened under the sun, which this person tried to break by hitting his bucket against it. In the process, his bucket sank into the soft mass of seething, fuming shit. He did not want to lose his bucket and he yanked his right hand in to pull it out. Seeing me, he tried to clean his right hand with his left. I pulled the bucket from his hands and fell by the side of the bucket and wept for hours. It was in even greater agony that I was asked what was wrong and why I was weeping. They later confessed that they too found the job repulsive, but there was no choice. I had two options, to get buried in my misery or to work to stop this inhuman practice."*

The SKA stand has since then been uncompromising - a demand for total abolition of manual scavenging. Trade unions and even Dalit groups have demanded that the SKA organise manual scavengers into a union. Wilson argues, "why should we organise them – to demand better wages and living conditions? I am criticised for being anti-institution, anti-organisation. But our strength does not grow with a powerful organisation of manual scavengers. We can only be powerful when there are no more manual scavengers." He explains that the problems with his community of alcoholism, poverty, unemployment and illiteracy are the offshoots of a historic imposition to clean other people's excreta. Further, he argues, "abolition has to be done primarily by groups of manual scavengers themselves in the face of the exposed lack of political will by Government, and shameless apathy by the so-called civil society." Ramaswamy (2004) reiterates that while the KGF area has had an affirmatively pro-poor and pro-Dalit Communist party local leadership for the past 20 years, this same leadership has suffered from a distinct blindness in either perceiving or interpreting issues of manual scavenging.

Initially, Wilson worked through the Church, but he claims: "the Church and its ministers talk of the kingdom hereafter but not about the living hell today." He recalls priests who, though sympathetic, refused to pray for manual scavengers because they were doing *dirty* work.

#### **Campaigning for change**

When Wilson first called representatives of the 13 colonies of his own people in Kolar for a meeting to discuss ending the practice, his own people refused to support him. His determined campaign in the face of stiff internal and external resistance has included, amongst other things: advocacy about the issue amongst Dalit political groups; writing to

the KGF administration, the Chief Minister, the Prime Minister with attached photographs of dry toilets and manual scavengers; and threatening legal action for continued violation of constitutional guarantees. The system finally responded with an offer of money to withdraw the campaign. The break came when, in 1994, the leading southern daily, the Deccan Herald, published the story of the Kolar Gold Fields dry toilets from its Bangalore office. Questions were raised in Parliament, a spate of Karnataka ministers and MLAs descended on Wilson's house to make political capital<sup>16</sup>. In an emergency Board meeting, the KGF decided to convert all dry toilets to waterborne ones and transfer all manual scavengers to non-scavenging occupations.

With support from Dalit organisations in Andhra Pradesh, the focus was shifted to the entire state, which incidentally has the largest number of dry toilets amongst the South Indian states.

#### **2.4.2 The demolition drive in Andhra Pradesh**

The SKA filed a writ petition in the Supreme Court in 2003 in the belief that the apex court would give clear and time-bound directions to abolish the practice of dry-latrines scavenging. When this failed, the SKA planned a dry-latrines demolition drive between July and August 2004, in solidarity with Dalit groups. Prior to the demolition campaign, the SKA wrote to the respective District Collectors and other relevant officials requesting the demolition of all community dry-latrines in use, by specified dates, failing which the SKA would organise activists to do so.

The campaign began at Kakinada, a coastal town and headquarters of the East Godavari district on July 17 2004. Kakinada is one of the richest towns in Andhra Pradesh, with fertile hinterland, a thriving fishing industry and recently discovered oil fields. The town also has, to its discredit, 1,200 dry toilets, serviced manually by the Dalit community. This first demolition of a community dry toilet attracted little resistance except for certain Municipality staff who were unaware of the Gol Abolition Act legislated in 1993 and of SKA's political knowledge and commitment to the cause. This was followed by demolitions in different towns across the state of AP.

The SKA noted in their first four days of travelling that even dry-latrines scavengers, earning their livelihood solely through this work, were keen to give up immediately, contrary to the reluctance expressed during the ongoing research in Hyderabad.

All the scavenger employees of the Nandikotur Panchayat supported the August 8 demolition by refusing to service individual dry latrines, causing much resentment among users. All the local leaders demanded that the Gram Panchayat either continue the old practice of manual scavenging or create new facilities immediately. Finally, the GP *informally* hired four temporary workers, all males, belonging to the Madiga and Halalkhor castes. The Gram Panchayat denies complicity in manual scavenging but will not pay the new recruits, asking instead that the user households pay until *alternative arrangements* are made. Yet it is to the GP that the four new recruits report; it is the GP tractor with its driver, a permanent employee, that goes on its officially sanctioned round of collecting faeces; the baskets, brooms and shovels belong to the GP. Finally, the recruits are working on the assurance of the Gram Panchayat that they will be absorbed into the GP rolls before the end of their month. The 16 communal dry-latrines will be serviced by the new recruits on alternate days.

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<sup>16</sup> This was in the context of a Congress Government at the Centre, with the Opposition ruling in Karnataka. The KGF being a Central Government institution in Karnataka, it was good politics for state leaders to raise a hue and cry.

The demolition drive in Chirala was less eventful. Self-denial and fear was evident here. Very few local paki workers participated in the SKA procession, as they didn't want to be ostracised by the town's local population. Most of the protesters were scavengers from nearby Ongole, where the SKA had successfully demolished three community dry-latrines a few days earlier.

The two-month long agitation ended with a rally in Hyderabad on September 16, joined for the first time in history by hundreds of manual scavengers from all over the state. Narayanamma, a dry-latrine scavenger from Chirala, had come, despite the fact that her father was seriously ill. In Hyderabad, she heard of his death but she refused to return for the funeral. "I cannot miss this first ever meeting of my people". Methar women from all parts of the city joined, some of whom also made speeches: "we belong to the same community, you and I. We must leave this work (scavenging). I have dreams for us all."

#### **SUMMARY: PROTESTS AGAINST DRY-LATRINE USE IN ANDHRA PRADESH**

**Call for abolition:** *Safai Karmachari Andolan* (sanitation workers) or SKA are calling for the complete abolition of manual scavenging. They filed a writ in the Supreme Court in 2003 in the belief that the apex court would give clear and time-bound directions to abolish the practice of dry latrine scavenging. When this failed, the SKA planned a dry latrine demolition drive between July and August, 2004, in Andhra Pradesh.

**Outcome:** SKA mobilised a large number of people who converged on Hyderabad for the final rally. People who had been carrying out manual scavenging for years had decided that they did not want to do the job any more even if there was no other work for them nor any other income for them and their families. Local governments in some areas were forced to make alternative arrangements for the cleaning of latrines.

### **2.5 The persisting practice of manual scavenging**

The Government of Andhra Pradesh adopted the 1993 Abolition of Manual Scavenging Act relatively early, in 2001<sup>17</sup> as a result of the extraordinary cooperation established between the Safai Karamchari Andolan (SKA) and the State Scheduled Caste Cooperative Finance Corporation (SSCCFC). This had also resulted in official acceptance of the unique survey carried out jointly by SKA and the SSCCFC enumerating dry toilets in selected districts in the state in 2003. Given this history, the Andhra Pradesh Government declared that they would be the first dry-toilet-free state (together with adoption of the Act) by 2001. However, despite the alliance, promises have failed to translate into practice and this date has now been put back to December 2005.

The Navsarjan Trust (1997) reports that the Government of Gujarat, placing special emphasis on Gandhi's affection for the Harijans, has been setting up and failing to achieve similar targets since the early 1990s.

In practice, there is a continuing rhetoric of social development largely because of a variety of complex factors:

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<sup>17</sup> GO Ms No. 75 dated 28.8.2001



- an institutionally entrenched attitude of apathy towards the caste-driven practice of manual scavenging;
- the continuing demand for dry-latrines scavenging in the absence of sanitation alternatives;
- justification and/or denial of the issue by users and service-providers alike;
- ignoring of this issue by the apparently active civil society, including exclusion to date of the Valmiki group from Dalit networks;
- the absence of investments in appropriate technology for safe handling of human faeces and filth.

All of these issues contribute in some measure to the fact that the practice of scavenging dry-latrines persists, despite its official abolition in 1993.

The early association of the Bhangis, especially those from the North, with Gandhi led to their strong association with the Congress Party and their subsequent isolation from the Dalit movement. In the South there was a mass-scale conversion of the Madigas and other scavenging groups to Christianity. For a brief period in the late 1940s, the scavengers in coastal Andhra were organised into a Municipal Workers' Union by the Communist Party. In 1945-46<sup>18</sup>, the union organised a strike by manual scavengers for higher wages. While the strike collapsed in two or three days in the rest of coastal Andhra, the strike went on for about 30 days in Nellore, until the Municipality agreed to the strikers' demands<sup>19, 20</sup>.

Since the late 1980s, the Dalit movement has been making inroads into the scavenging issues. The SKA demolition drive is an example of this.

Initiatives like those by SKA, however laudable, often pitch the users against the service-providers, which runs the risk of further social and political ostracisation of the manual scavengers. The research in Chirala and Nandikotur confirms that the users of communal dry-latrines are mostly the poor themselves, while individual dry-latrines were found to be used by a wider economic group. For example, in East and West Godavari districts, households having property valued at over Rs1,500,000 were found using dry-latrines.

As discussed above, the suggestion to apply for schemes that allow subsidies for conversion of dry-latrines to pour-flush types, arouses much anger. The users are well aware of the irregularities in the scheme implemented by the local municipalities. Many respondents identified problems of lack of adequate space for an individual, private latrine and some other cases pointed to tenant-landlord clashes of interest. A new-found knowledge on disease transmission also continues to support the age-old practice of not having toilets in the immediate household; "it will spread germs inside our homes. We are people who work hard for a living. If we fall ill, how will we work?"

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<sup>18</sup> Information provided by Prof. K Seshadri, a Communist activist in Nellore.

<sup>19</sup> Prof. Seshadri recalls that there was intense organising activity during the strike. There were processions every second day and the strike notice was given to the Municipality a month ahead. He recalls that there was notable sympathy from the users, largely the middle-class. At this time, wages for the manual scavengers were being paid directly by the Municipality, who in turn levied user-charges on the users. Nellore town began to stink and officials feared an outbreak of cholera. However, there was clandestine manual scavenging going on with users paying the scavengers to come every second day. The Municipality finally agreed to raise the wages for the scavengers.

<sup>20</sup> When Prof Seshadri was asked why the Madigas shifted to the Congress, he said that this was part of the general development. The Congress had power, could promise and deliver largesse, whereas the Communists could only lead struggles, which became more and more difficult to maintain.

Although, there are Sulabh pay-and-use toilets in every small town, these are mostly accessed for occasional use, and are not an option for daily defecation for the poorest, given their hand-to-mouth existence.

Manual scavengers are thus caught in a vicious circle. A historically assigned occupation continues due to the demand for the services and the social and economic constraints on their own upward mobility. Scavengers are well aware that they are *tolerated* in the larger Hindu community, only if they internalise the ethos of scavenging. Though the occupation is often denied to outsiders, denial is the largest barrier to reform, according to Wilson. When he asked his friends and neighbours in the Kolar Gold Fields to support his campaign, he was told: “all these years, we have cleaned shit without too many people knowing about it. Now you want to make it public, and we will be branded.”

In reality, the social history is deeply entrenched. Wilson identifies that when asked what they do, the common response is '*Mana pani chestunnamu*' (we are doing our work). The elderly accept what they did, “it is our job to lift dead animals, to clean faeces, to clean gutters and drains. We have to do it because we are Bhangis” (Navsarjan Trust, 1997). This entrenched attitude is echoed in the justification by the upper castes, “shepherd, bhangi, carpenter, each one does what’s assigned to them. Each one is *proud* of their own status” (ibid). This attitude was reflected in the views of Gandhi as well.

What is of far greater concern is the reality that even if all dry latrines are demolished, the task of scavenging and cleaning filth will continue to be the occupation of a large number of Valmikis, Methars, Madigas and Malas, by conscious choice or design.

### **2.5.1 Beyond dry-latrines**

There are three organisations in Hyderabad, which are engaged with providing sanitation services, as follows:

1. The Hyderabad Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWSSB)
2. The Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad and
3. The Sulabh International Chapter of AP

In all of these organisations, the Dalit Valmikis, migrant Methars and/or local Mala and Madiga castes are predominantly engaged as sewerage cleaners, sweepers, scavengers and garbage collectors. The caste-specific links to cleaning and scavenging are seen to be eroded only by extreme poverty and vulnerability, which has led the Lambada tribes to join this work force. Yet the prevailing attitude is that this is a 'temporary phase', which will be discarded as soon as better options are available.

The other issue of concern is that none of these organisations has arranged to provide any form of safety regulations or enforce the sanitary handling of wastes. The situation worsens as the norm is increasingly to privatise formerly official or permanent government employment. The state government seems to have shrewdly achieved both economic efficiency and freedom from responsibility for human rights by exempting private contractors from functioning under labour law regulations. It is in this context that one needs to ask if the demolition of dry-latrines and/or conversion to pour-flush latrines alone achieves social and economic gains for the scavenging community.

## **2.5.2 Practices in the sanitation agencies in Hyderabad**

### ***Hyderabad Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board***

The first sewerage systems in Hyderabad were built in areas of the Old City which housed the nobility. The sewerage canals emptied in those days into the Musi river and the practice continues to this day. The Sewerage Department, established under the Nizam's government in 1920, extended the sewerage system into other areas of the city. The Department had permanent and temporary employees cleaning the sewers, all of whom were from the local Valmiki community.

The Sewerage Department was merged as a separate wing of the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad in 1950. In 1988, the sewerage section of the MCH was merged with the Water Works Department and in 1990 was established as a separate institution, the 'Hyderabad Metro Water Supply and Sewerage Board' (HMWSSB).

Mohammed Iqbal, General Manager of the HMWSSB, explains the work they do:

"We lay new sewage lines and repair the old ones. Septic tanks have more or less disappeared from the old city. But they are common in new areas like Banjara Hills and Jubilee Hills, which are rocky and hilly areas where a lot of money is required to lay new pipelines. We send our workers to these areas whenever we receive complaints to empty septic tanks. Since 1992, we use 'airtake machines' to clean septic tanks. Each Division has two such machines that suck out the dirt and sewage water. Our work has become very convenient and the workers don't have to do this work manually. In the past, all sewers and tanks were cleaned manually and the waste used to be piled up by the road-side, causing a stink and other health-related problems. Nowadays we dispose of the waste immediately in the city outskirts. There is a potential for accidents when workers get into manholes and drains. We do take a number of safety precautions for our workers."

He listed the equipment provided to the workers: gas mask, oxygen breathing apparatus, portable air blowers, safety belts, inhalators, gumboots, driver's suit, and rubber gloves. He also mentions that the department ensures access to medical facilities and first aid for its workers in emergency situations.

The HMWSSB Workers Union is angered at this claim that safety equipment is provided. Salam Shahidi, the President of the Union argues that there are no rules or regulations regarding the safety of sewerage workers in the HMWSSB. The Board is conveniently excluded from the jurisdiction of the Factories Act of 1948 (Act 63 of 1948) and has demonstrated neither commitment to nor interest in enabling provisions pertaining to safety precautions and/or safety training for its workers. "Sewerage workers dying before retirement due to health hazards outnumber those who die from old age. Workers have to climb down at least 20 feet deep and clean manholes, septic tanks and sewers. They are literally swimming in these drains and pipes and often don't have even oxygen masks to cope with breathing. We have asked for gumboots, searchlights and special work suits that prevent contact with human faeces and other waste and hazardous matter, but little has been delivered. Since most of the workers have no protective gear, they are prone to a variety of skin and lung diseases. They become physically infirm at a very young age. The situation is so grave that in 2004, 10 permanent and 3 temporary workers (known as H.R. Labour employees) died, most of them, during work."

The workers in the Sultan Shahi office burst into loud laughter when the researcher listed the safety equipment supposedly provided to them. They claimed that only the permanent employees are given a petty allowance to buy soaps and cleansing oil and no form of safety equipment has ever been provided. The temporary employees buy these items with their own money.

Whatever their castes, none of the workers interviewed have told their relatives or friends about the nature of their work. 'Water Works' is the answer whenever they are questioned about where they work. Relatives and friends get to know their occupation only when they accidentally spot them working in certain areas because even other family members do not disclose the nature of their occupations to others. The primary concern is not only the 'shame' of the job, but equally the difficult, hazardous working condition.

Many workers want to quit their jobs if they find employment in other occupations. They are, however, alert to the fact that people from other castes like the Lambadas are ready to take on these occupations, simply because these are government jobs.

Mr. Salam Shahidi claims that sewerage employees are amongst the lowest paid in government service and also have been denied basic workers rights since the time of the Nizam's government. The government categorises sewerage cleaning workers as unskilled labourers. The Common Standards Schedule of the Government of Andhra Pradesh requires unskilled labourers to be paid Rs94 per day (2003-2004), which has been revised to Rs101 (2004-2005). A specific note in the Schedule states that: 'Unskilled workmen engaged in cleaning of sewers and septic tanks, may be paid double the above wage'<sup>21</sup>. They are also to be paid Area Allowances which amount to 25 per cent of their daily wages. This would amount to a daily wage of Rs286.80 (2004-2005); however daily wage labourers (known as employees under the H.R Labour section) get paid only Rs101 per day. Additionally, the functions of the Water and Sewerage Circle of the HMWSSB, noted below, are mostly contracted out and not performed by department staff. Mr Shahidi claims that this is a convenient way to disown any responsibility as workers are now hired and paid by the contractors.

There are no female employees in the Sewerage Department of the HMWSSB. Some women dependents of male workers who died in employment have been allocated more 'feminine' tasks like sweeping and gardening in other departments, although they continue to be classified in the employee register as sewerage cleaners.

### ***The Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad***

The MCH functions independently of the Sewerage Board of the HMWSSB. Since 1985, the MCH, following the lead of the HMWSSB, has encouraged privatisation and imposed a ban on recruitment of permanent employees. The work of the MCH is slowly being handed over to private contractors. Currently, 70 per cent of garbage collection and sweeping work of the MCH is handled by private contractors, who hire around 700 sweepers. This is a much larger workforce than those employed permanently by the MCH.

Privately allocated sweeping work mostly happens at night, beginning at 11pm and ending at 6 in the morning. The women workers are often provided with transportation by the contractors. Scavengers and sweepers permanently employed by the MCH work from 6 in the morning to 2 pm.

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<sup>21</sup> Government of Andhra Pradesh, "Common Standard Schedule of Rates for All Engineering Departments for the Year 2003-2004 (With effect from 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2003) – Board of Chief Engineers, Govt. of A.P.

The Sultan Shahi area has 3 male sweepers (known as *Kamatees*) and 15 women sweepers (*Kamatans*). The Kamatans sweep the streets and dump the litter and waste in a pile, which is lifted into wheelbarrows and dumped into the nearest waste bin by the Kamatees. The Kamatees and Kamatans employed with the MCH are paid a salary of Rs3,000 per month. They are also provided a uniform (a blue overall) and slippers along with soap and coconut oil. The statutory minimum wage for workers with contractors is Rs2,250 per month, but these workers receive, at the maximum, only Rs1,200 to 1,500 per month, and no benefits are provided. The GoAP itself decided to waive the need for contractors to come under the purview of any law by exempting them from the provisions of the Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition Act of 1970, through the new GORT No. 1395-2001 and GORT No. 3197-2002.<sup>22</sup>

Most of the sweeping staff belong to the Mala and Madiga castes. The sub-caste divide is taken into account very strongly and the sweepers call Methar scavengers to come and lift any human faeces and/or dead animals. The sweeping, as well as the scavenging work, is supervised by Sanitary Jawans (all men).

### ***Sulabh International Chapter of Andhra Pradesh***

The situation is no different in the network of the so-called reformist Sulabh Organisation, which was started by Bindeshwar Pathak in 1970 to promote the use of the twin-pit pour-flush toilet for communal use. Over the years since then, the Sulabh Shouchalayas, using this technology, have been installed all over India in major towns, and are now common sights at metropolitan bus stands, railway stations and other public places. They are, however, almost completely staffed by members of the scavenging community. The new endeavour has not been able to break the stranglehold of the caste system in India on occupations.

#### **T S Chauhan, Honorary Chairperson, Sulabh International, AP Branch.**

Sulabh is a non-profit, voluntary social services organisation and was established in AP in 1985. We have constructed around 60 toilet complexes in Hyderabad, many of these are in government offices. We charge users Re1 per use. In each Sulabh Toilet we have 2 caretakers, 1 sweeper and 1 scavenger. The caretaker collects money from the users and supervises the maintenance of the toilet, such as running water and clean and sanitary conditions. Most caretakers are from Bihar. But we have also hired people from this state for scavenging and sweeping work. These are mostly Mehtars and some local scavenger castes. Most of them are men but we also have some women staff. We pay around Rs1,000 to 1,200 per month as wages to sweepers and scavengers.

Ever since the Sulabh toilets were launched in Hyderabad and the MCH reduced its construction of public toilets and urinals, the Mehtars claim that their jobs have been taken away from them. They complain that the new Sulabh toilet complexes do not hire them and pay lower salaries.

#### **SUMMARY: THE PERSISTING PRACTICE OF MANUAL SCAVENGING**

**Progress:** Andhra Pradesh adopted the 1993 Abolition of Manual Scavenging Act in 2001. This and excellent cooperation between SKA and the State Scheduled Caste Cooperative Finance Corporation helped to enumerate

<sup>22</sup> From: "Violation of Human Rights of Workers in Andhra Pradesh". The All India Federation of Trade Unions (AIFTU) raised a complaint about this to the Chairman of the National Human Rights Commission.

the dry-toilets in the State. The goal for Andhra Pradesh to be the first dry-toilet free state has been set for December 2005.

**Way forward:** However laudable, campaigns for action often pitch the users against the service providers, which runs the risk of further social and political ostracisation of the manual scavengers. This is because the occupation has to be acknowledged and owned, rather than ignored or denied.

**Technology:** As households increasingly obtain pour-flush latrines, less and less dry-latrines exist. Investment in improved latrines and sanitation systems may ultimately replace the manual scavenging system, although sewers will still need to be maintained and drains will still need to be cleaned.

**Safety:** Various pieces of legislation exist for officially employed personnel, including health and safety equipment for manual scavengers. Usually none and certainly not all of this is issued, let alone used on a daily basis. As more services are privatised and contracted out, these health and safety rules are being more compromised. Similarly previously agreed additional payments for the type of work are also not being applied in the new private sector.

## 2.6 Conclusion

Most of the literature on manual scavenging, including official reports, indicates that manual scavengers or the Bhangis do not consider their work dirty, and emphasise that they hold a political monopoly over their work, fiercely defending it from newer entrants. The Barve Committee Report (1949), one of the earliest official interventions to look into the working conditions of scavengers ironically mentioned:

*“Bhangis were not traditionally scavengers. Some of these people took to the dirty work of cleansing the latrines for the sake of profit. Slowly this developed into a monopoly. The stage was reached when the Bhangis wanted to exploit this monopoly and a sort of customary right was thus developed. By force of habit, the Bhangi lost his self respect to such an extent that he did not consider the dirty work of cleansing latrines as a curse from which he should endeavour to extricate himself.”*

The Malkani Committee Report (1965), on the customary rights of scavengers says: *“Scavenging has been a way of life for the family. A fatalistic attitude pervades the whole outlook due to the lack of education and the absence of other openings for employment.”*

What is striking is the silence of scavengers on this issue. People who actually handled excreta for generations seem guarded in their opinion of their work, and even this research has found it difficult to break the silence.

The SKA in Andhra Pradesh has focused on demolishing dry latrines, through an active protest movement, and has mobilised significant support for their endeavours from the Dalit groups engaged in the process of manual scavenging. However, the findings above suggest that this alone will not help change the social realities related to these practices. Manual scavenging will continue in the cleaning of nalas, drains, sewers and community latrines, emptying pit latrines and septic tanks, and caste notions will define this work. The Valmikis in Andhra Pradesh and throughout South Asia will continue to dominate

sanitation task forces in all service-providing institutions: formal or informal, private or official.

Better planning and investment in sanitation services and better working conditions for the staff hold promise of both reform and rehabilitation, possibly encouraging other caste groups to take up sanitation work. In reality, sanitation is not the priority of politicians or the administration. Public health officials estimate sanitary coverage at less than 30 per cent for the whole of Andhra Pradesh. Municipalities can raise 90 per cent loans under the Integrated Low Cost Sanitation Programme, but this does not often happen, as local politicians do not expect to receive votes for sanitation improvements; water supply is still the main vote-grabber. Costs for maintenance of a sanitation programme are relatively higher, and the benefits are not as immediately visible as those resulting from water supply developments.

Where sanitation improvements happen, their results are inequitable. A dependent relationship between the middle class and the state has brought, "...a significantly higher investment in per capita terms and better maintenance of the facilities in relatively well-off areas."<sup>23</sup> In 1983, the national sample survey showed that around 50 per cent of people in the higher income bracket had access to flush latrines, most of them connected to sewerage systems. Such systems are maintained by local authorities. Users are only levied a nominal charge and provision of sanitation facilities for the middle and upper-classes is heavily subsidised. By contrast, less than 40 per cent of the poor have access to on-plot sanitation, the maintenance for which is to be met by the users, and 70 per cent of those share this facility with others.<sup>24</sup>

Whatever the sanitation type, in most municipalities in Andhra Pradesh and elsewhere in India, adequate, appropriate sewerage is yet to be developed and most of the faeces and waste water that do make their way into drains and sewers will drain, untreated into nearby rivers. The seven municipalities surrounding Hyderabad, for instance LB Nagar and Qutbullapur, let their sewage flow into the Musi river through large drains, known as *nalas*. These drains pass beside or through the poorer parts of town, where malaria, hepatitis and gastro-enteritis are common. Richer neighbourhoods are conveniently insulated, having covered sewers within their boundaries and further screened from the impacts of disease by better access to medical services, clean water (through filtering and boiling), mosquito screens etc.

For the large mass of scavengers in smaller towns and villages nothing much has changed. In earlier times they used their own tins, brooms and buckets to clean dry latrines, now they are provided with these implements by their employers, as well as being supplied with a tractor to carry the faeces further away. In larger towns and cities the practice of dry-latrines scavenging has stopped, in part due to legislation, but largely also as a result of the change in attitudes and beliefs concerning toilets, which are now a luxury, rather than polluting entities.

The change from dry-latrines to pour-flush latrines has also made little difference to the scavengers. On the one hand, their 'implied monopoly' over the practice has receded and in the absence of any meaningful rehabilitation, there is a growing feeling of redundancy and insecurity. On the other hand, they continue to clean drains, nalas, sewers, septic tanks and pit latrines, working as municipal and/or private sweepers and cleaners. Salaries are low and below the subscribed standards in private practice, and do not, in any way, compensate for the hazards which the occupation imposes. In turn,

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<sup>23</sup> Kundu, A. (1993), *In The Name of the Urban Poor: Access to Basic Amenities*, Sage Publications, New Delhi

<sup>24</sup> A.Kundu, op.cit

occupational hazards have increased, rather than lessened with time, an indication of the disproportionately low investments in sanitation.

The clamour for scavenging jobs, historically and traditionally restricted to the Valmikis, is only recently being competed for by the economically and politically displaced groups, like the Lambadas. Yet, even amongst the new entrants, the disdain for the occupation and for the Valmikis is visible and loud.

Finally, gender disparity amongst the community of cleaners is as prevalent as it is in any other occupation. It is women, by and large, who manually clean the toilets and heap the faeces outside the toilet. The men haul this away, either on a tractor or in a handcart or rickshaw to dump it in fields outside the town. Salaries are higher for men for the same or different work and the men have achieved far more mobility in rehabilitation, when this has happened. Male scavengers have found it relatively easier to change professions, because they have had better access to the masculine, productive world and their physical mobility is unhampered by the demands of household responsibilities and childcare. Women are expected to work and bring in a share of income into the home. A woman is free to move within the bounds of work outside, but she still holds many other responsibilities that limit her mobility and choice of work.



### **3. THE URBAN POOR LIVING ON THE PAVEMENTS – VISIBLE BUT IGNORED**

Where one lives is an important determinant of variation amongst the urban poor. There are those who live in officially or unofficially recognised low-cost housing settlements (slums), those who live in unofficial low-cost housing on small tracts of lands (squatters) and those who are homeless, i.e. lacking a roof over their head.

This chapter looks at the pavement-dwellers among the urban poor, who are often the poorest. They are often invisible to government, development partners and researchers though their entire lives are on display to passers-by every day. Homeless people are vulnerable regardless of whether or not the countries in which they live have urban poverty policies and/or programmes. Shelter and security, convenience and privacy are aspects of our lives that are considered essential for all, yet they are lacking for this group, along with safe and adequate water supply and sanitation.

In analysing and demonstrating that the urban poor are not a homogeneous group, this chapter attempts to introduce and give voice to those who must spend their lives on the streets and tries to explain why this practice of exclusion from basic services and needs continues for this group. The details of how they meet their basic sanitation needs are contained in Chapter 5.

Among the large volume of research literature written about people living in urban poverty in Bangladesh, there are only a few studies which focus on those who live on the streets<sup>25</sup>. Yet every evening, large numbers of people can be seen cooking, eating, washing and sleeping on the streets, in parks, under bridges, and on the stairways and covered edges of large and small commercial buildings. There is official recognition of the homeless in Bangladesh (see below), yet there are no programmes, either official or non-governmental, that cater to this group. All the urban poverty programmes focus on those living in slum settlements.

In India, the homeless are recognised by the government, which also has an operational Night Shelter programme for this group. However, as discussed below, the services provided are inadequate in both outreach and appropriateness. In contrast to the situation in Bangladesh, there has been in recent years, a growing focus on the homeless among certain NGOs. ActionAid India's work in this regard deserves mention and was critical in persuading the Election Commission (1999-2000) to recognise that all lamp-posts are numbered by the Electricity Department, and that this can be used as a valid address for the pavement-dwellers. This led to this group being made eligible for voter's identity cards - the basic resident identity, pre-requisite for all other civic and basic identification.

Similarly, in one of the research locales (Hyderabad) the local ActionAid office had an organisational objective to make the pavement-dwellers visible to the government and other agencies. ActionAid Hyderabad had completed a survey to map pavement-dwellers in the city. This research builds upon the work initiated by Action Aid. In consultation and partnership with the ActionAid Hyderabad office, a second round of surveys was conducted with a group of young researchers, who spent several nights driving around the roads of Hyderabad and mapping areas where a significant group (10 or more) of individuals was found sleeping and living on the streets.

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<sup>25</sup> The most detailed analysis of homeless people (along with the urban poor living in slums) is the work of Begum (1999).

Three rounds of night surveys were carried out to validate the observations and these were mapped and compared with earlier ActionAid surveys.

Next, group and individual discussions were held with a select number of respondents. The discussions were held mostly in the evenings, but also included occasional discussions and meetings during the day-time. The mapping survey – sites and numbers of pavement-dwellers - resembled but was not exactly identical to the ActionAid study. One important factor of these people's lives was, however, shown in both studies: that those living on the pavements try as much as others to find a permanent place to stay. Night after night, the same respondents could be met at the same places. They ate and/or cooked food at the same places, bathed at the same places, slept at the same places – unless forced to move on.

In Bangladesh, a similar exercise was carried out in Dhaka city. Given the larger size of the city and the significantly larger number of pavement-dwellers, a physical survey was omitted, due to lack of time and resources. However, similar discussions were held in groups and with individuals and the findings were compared with the few secondary sources of information.

In both India and Bangladesh, the night research was conducted between 10 pm and 3 am and, in keeping with Begum's (1999) findings, a clear distinction was made between those '*spending the night*' on the streets (for example, rural residents having missed the bus and unable to find shelter) and those '*living on the pavements*'.

### **3.1 Who are the pavement-dwellers?**

Economically poorer and socially more vulnerable than other urban poor groups, pavement-dwellers are a socially heterogeneous group including children living on their own, the helpless aged and destitute, women of all ages and men who live on the streets.

There is a basic difference among the urban poor, those who have a roof over their heads, i.e. slum and squatter residents, and those who don't, i.e. pavement-dwellers and those who live in parks or under fly-overs. Pavement-dwellers, like those with roofs over their heads, include children, women, the mentally sick, the aged and the disabled. Like the other poor, they have no address, no security of shelter, no ration card or voting rights. They have no legal status. In the absence of sanitation facilities, they rarely bathe. The majority of them are shabbily dressed. When they attend hospitals, many doctors are reluctant to treat them. Hounded by the police and local authorities and damned by most urban residents for '*crowding streets and dirtying their cities*', they seem like aliens.

Source: Excerpts from Singh (1980).

The number of homeless males is higher than that of females, perhaps by as many as 3 or 4 males to each female. In Hyderabad, an ActionAid study (2003) identified that 72 per cent of the pavement-dwellers were men and 28 per cent were women. In Dhaka too, statistics report 357 females for every 1000 males living on the streets. Most single men were on the streets in order to support extended families, back in the villages. The single women had often been driven to live on the streets alone – comparatively more affected by practical, emotional and psychological problems (Begum, 1999).

With respect to age, an ADB-GoB (1996) study noted that the majority (74%) of street dwellers were aged between 19 and 45 years. This research in Dhaka and Chittagong more or less validated the ADB-GoB (1996) findings. It shows that the major concentration of pavement-dwellers are aged between 25 and 49.

**Age structure of pavement-dwellers interviewed in  
Dhaka and Chittagong, 2004**

Age Group	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
<20	1	1	2
20-24	1	2	3
25-29	1	4	5
30-34	2	1	3
35-39	-	2	2
40-44	4	1	5
45-49	2	2	4
50-54	-	4	4
55-59	1	-	1
60-64	2	1	3
65/+	1	-	1
<b>Total:</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>33</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

Note: The distribution, either by age or sex is not necessarily representative of the overall pavement-dweller population.

Among the older groups, this study noted a greater proportion of women living on the streets than men. Begum's (1999) study noted that 15 per cent of the pavement-dwellers were physically disabled, a significantly higher figure compared to their counterparts among slum dwellers.

Many of those living on the streets are children. Recent studies in Delhi by voluntary agencies estimate that a third of the 100,000 street dwellers are children (Dogra, 2000). Similar proportions are reported from many countries. Their situations vary as follows:

- Living with families in homes, i.e. shelters, and spending time on the streets earning an income;
- Associated occasionally with families and living on their own on the streets; and,
- Abandoned or have chosen to sever family ties.

Children living on the streets are often linked with their families. Only a small proportion (10%) of street children are completely cut off from their families and these are the most vulnerable. Girl children are *considered* to be more vulnerable, given an assumption of higher levels of female sexual abuse<sup>26</sup> on the streets. This may not be entirely true and the risks of molestation may be equally high for young boys. However, in most cultures, the honour and dignity attached to female sex and sexuality is fragile, and its sanctity is easily broken and rarely possible to restore.

This stigma is not the same for boys. This implies that the scars of molestation and sexual abuse are made more apparent and obvious to the lives of adolescent girls than boys in this culture.

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<sup>26</sup> UNICEF-Bangladesh's Adolescent Boys Report (2002) quoted a study where 9 out of 10 boys living in slums were reported to have been sexually abused (mostly by a male relative), many of them having had full anal penetration by the time they were 18 years old.

A national study (ActionAid, 2000) found that of the approximately 18 million children living and working on the streets in India, 30 per cent were aged between 6 and 10 years and 40 per cent were aged 11 to 15 years. These children often refer to themselves as 'Sadak Chap' (i.e. carrying the stamp of the street). Without even rudimentary dwellings, these children live under bridges and on railway station platforms, working during the day, eating out on their daily wages, and own no more than what they wear on their backs (Patel, 1990).

The situation is similar in Kenya. Street children in Kenya describe themselves as, "...one that is spoiled and rotten; one who comes from a poor family; one who sleeps anywhere because he has no parents; a child with a child who does not wash and dresses badly" (Kariuki, 1999). Poverty, dysfunctional families and modernisation, including the breakdown of traditional family systems and values, are issues that are responsible for making children live on the streets of Kenya (ibid.).

As with their adult counterparts, there are more boys than girls living alone on the streets. Young girls face many constraints on the streets, and are pushed to look for alternative options. It was reported by many adult women living on the streets that they found domestic work for their girl children, as soon as they were 'of age' to avoid the risks of their being molested, their reputations then being ruined, along with their chances of marriage and a settled adult life.

### **3.2 Why do people live on the streets?**

Many assume that pavement-dwellers are vagrant in nature and that shelter and a roof above one's head is possible for anyone that desires to have one.

*"Give them a proper house and they'll turn round and sell it, pocket the money and be back on the street the following week. It's their chosen lifestyle. It's because they don't have any proper education. Unless there is compulsory education for everyone, they'll never learn. They are incapable of understanding what a better standard of living entails!"*  
*"These people have a wonderful standard of living. They have no overheads, no housing costs, no utility costs. They live from day to day. They beg or they work and earn just what they need to feed themselves. Why should they spend a couple of thousand rupees a month on a small apartment in some run-down part of the city, when they can live here for free in a good neighbourhood? They're never going to change!"*  
*Public opinion on pavement-dwellers in India.*

Source: Hollick, 2000.

Yet, of the 33 respondents interviewed in Dhaka and Chittagong in this study, 28 said that they live on the streets because the rent in the slums is too high. For a few others, there was no means to pay for the transport to work. Only three of the respondents (a single man and two young women) indicated that it worked to their benefit to live on streets. The man sold drugs on the streets and the two women were sex workers.

#### **Mumtaj**

*Mumtaj Begum (42) has lived in Dhaka for more than 25 years and in her current 'home', the pavement outside the BSIC Building in Motijheel for 15 years. Having been left by her husband for another woman, Mumtaj has survived and supported her two children and her elderly mother. Her reasons for staying where she does are: "It is close to my place of work. (She works as a housemaid.) I can neither afford to rent nor to pay transport*

*charges, if I stay elsewhere.” Yet, living here on the pavements is not easy: “We can only sleep when other activities come to a close late at night. Many times we are displaced by heavy rain. We have to get up and stand until the rain comes to a halt, and after that, the floors are all wet.” She meets her sanitation needs at her place of work, while her children and her mother use public facilities. She is certain that this is where she belongs. There is nowhere else to go. All she expects is some form of a shelter and storage. The family pay Tk5 per day to a grocer to keep their money and belongings.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

Yet, the decision to live on the streets is often not planned. A large proportion of pavement-dwellers in Dhaka reported *distress migration*, characterised by:

- ‘having become suddenly and circumstantially homeless’ where
- ‘waiting would have meant starving’ and/or
- resulting from the need of providing ‘immediate medical attention for parents/family members’.

The fortunes of the poor change quickly.

*The research team in one of its night surveys met a family of four (husband, wife and two young sons) who were spending their first night on the pavement, near the stadium. The family had taken a long and hard decision to migrate because poverty had increased as a result of various circumstances, starting with land erosion by the river, followed by loss of employment. When they lost all hope of living and surviving in the village, they packed what they felt was required and left for Dhaka. The bus driver demanded that all ‘lumpy’ luggage was stored on the roof of the bus. In the morning, the family could not find their bag of clothes, utensils and bedding. It had either fallen off or had been stolen. No compensation was available. On arriving in Dhaka, they stayed with the man’s younger brother and his family, who live in a slum. “Insha Allah, we were well looked after for a few days. But their house is small and their resources meagre. We knew we were becoming a burden. This is our first night here. We have bought and eaten some food. The bedding consists of newspapers and old cardboard sheets, begged from shops. The problem is with clothing – how will we bathe and wash – we only have the clothes we are wearing?”*

*(New in the city, their rural hospitality was evident – they offered the team a seat on their ‘paper bed’ and were apologetic on having nothing else to offer.)*

Source: Fieldwork, 2004.

Migration is not only caused by poverty. Social trauma and emotional hurt has often resulted in individuals making hasty decisions to migrate. Findings in Bangladesh showed that unplanned decisions were higher amongst pavement-dwellers than amongst those in slums. 22 per cent of pavement-dwellers compared to 6.7 per cent of slum dwellers had taken immediate, individual decisions to alleviate their emotional situations by migrating to the cities. Correspondingly, 23 per cent of slum dwellers reported that the decision to migrate had been preceded by three months of thinking and planning compared to 11 per cent of pavement-dwellers. The delay had included attempts to ‘learn more about the city’ as well as exploration of work opportunities nearby (Begum, 1999).

Begum also found that given the reality of their economic and social poverty, pavement-dwellers had much lower expectations from migration. 43 per cent of those living on the pavements had expected nothing better than to live on the streets, only 10 per cent had expected to find a more permanent shelter. In contrast, of the respondents living in slums 39 per cent had hoped to find shelter in the slums. Additionally, among slum dwellers the

hopes from migration were a better life, better physical amenities, education for children and better health facilities (ibid).

However, the reality was even worse than these low expectations, for which those living on the streets in Dhaka were still unprepared. In Begum's study, of the 100 respondents, 76 found it bad, and worse than their earlier [rural] dwellings, and 21 said it was worse than they expected. In this study, no pavement-dweller was happy with their present living condition. The table below summarises the present and future expectations of the interviewed pavement-dwellers.

### **Expectations of the future and of government among pavement-dwellers in Dhaka and Chittagong**

<b>Future expectations</b>	Male	Female	Total	<b>Expectation from Government</b>	Male	Female	Total
Nothing	0	1	1	Provide night shelter near work place	2	3	5
Stay at Dhaka/Chittagong	3	4	7	Jobs and shelter	4	6	10
Educate children	1	0	1	Food and shelter	1	0	1
No dream/no plan	2	2	4	Employment	1	0	1
Go back home to run a business	1	0	1	Save money and go home	1	1	2
Go back home to own a plot	1	0	1	Stay at Dhaka/Chittagong	2	1	3
Change occupation	1	0	1	Go back home	0	1	1
Save money and go home	2	6	8	No expectation	4	6	10
Have a secure job	1	1	2	Total:	15	18	33
Good savings	3	4	7				
Total:	15	18	33				

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

Despite their disappointments, many non-slum poor are unwilling to return to their villages and are committed to the fatalism of their constraining urban lives. They envisage that the promise that the capital city holds cannot be claimed for the rural areas. The 11 per cent of pavement-dwellers (compared to 4.8 per cent of slum dwellers) who would like to return, include all those who have agricultural land or a homestead in their rural area of origin (Begum, 1999).

#### **SUMMARY: THE PAVEMENT-DWELLERS**

**Background:** A mixed group of people, some of whom have migrated from difficult rural situations and some born and brought up on the streets; some having lived here more than ten years, others having moved onto the streets just a day before (among research respondents).

**Gender** There are more males than females, but more women in their old age stay without shelter.

Age	May be any age, but the majority are between 19 and 45 years. One third of the pavement-dwellers are children.
Expectations	Most do not like living on the streets. For many it is worse than they expected. They long to live in a shelter. Many do not have the cash or the social connections to obtain shelter. Yet, given the lack of opportunities and the constraints they escaped from, few want to go back to villages they migrated from.

### 3.3 Extent of urban homelessness

There are huge numbers of the urban poor living on the pavements, even though numerically they are the smallest group of the urban poor, perhaps constituting 1-2% of the total urban population. Statistics about the pavement-dwellers are often difficult to obtain and are, at best, only a rough estimate. In many countries their status has been declared illegal, so that interviewing them or counting them creates panic.

“In my experience, in several districts of Madhya Pradesh, large numbers of the homeless are routinely rounded up by the police. This is done usually to fulfil targets of ‘preventive detention’ under Sections 109 and 151 of the Criminal Procedure Code, 1973, an effort rewarded and recognised by superiors as pro-active efforts to maintain civic peace. These sections of the Criminal Procedure Code are dependent on the subjective satisfaction of the executive magistracy that the preventive detention of these persons is indeed in the interest of public peace and prevention of crime. The magistrates rarely actually apply either mind or conscience, and routinely concur with the allegations of the police in order to maintain harmonious relations with the police. The homeless then languish for long periods in jail, because they are too poor, asset-less and without legal access or literacy, to secure bail or legal redress.”  
Source: Mander (2004).

Leading Supreme Court lawyer and civil rights activist S Murlidhar points out: “criminalising the homeless is a serious problem; a wide variety of wandering people can be defined as beggars. Powers are given to the police to deal with such persons. Even squatting on the pavement is a nuisance under the Municipal laws. Creation of nuisance can be penalised”.

The 1997 National Census of Bangladesh enumerated the pavement-dwellers as a ‘floating’ population (defined as ‘mobile, vagrant, *rootless* people who have no permanent dwelling units’) at [only] 32,081 in the whole country, ie about 0.5% of the total population, of which 24,439 were males and 7,642 were females (Government of Bangladesh, 1999:37). Dhaka city was estimated to contain nearly half of this ‘floating’ population (15,078), estimated again as about 0.5% of the population of Dhaka in 1997.

In contrast, an ADB (1996) survey identified 75,000 homeless spending their night in institutional buildings and 80,000 in markets, construction sites and in parked vehicles in Dhaka city alone. An NGO survey of Dhaka in 2004 estimated that ‘Bhashaman Janogosthi’, or the homeless population, constituted 2 per cent of the total population (Islam and Shafi, 2004).

The most comprehensive data on homelessness are probably in India, where the 1981 Homeless Census estimated that there were 2,342,000 homeless people. The 1991 National Census of India enumerated the pavement-dwellers, defined as ‘houseless’

households (those not living in census defined houses), at 2,007,489 houseless people in the whole country (Kanth, 2000; Mander, 2004) i.e. only 0.24 per cent of the total population. The 2001 National Census of India brought out a figure of 13 million 'houseless households', each household accounting for 5-6 members, totalling at least 65 million, or a massive 6.3 per cent of the national population. Non governmental agencies working with the homeless nevertheless contest all these census figures as being incorrect and under-reported.

A Delhi Development Authority report estimated that at least 1% of Delhi's 14 million people sleep on the streets (i.e. 140,000 homeless people in Delhi alone). Similarly, a UNCHS (1996) study enumerated that there were approximately 250,000 pavement-dwellers in Mumbai alone. ActionAid (2003) claims that a much smaller city, Hyderabad, compared both to Delhi and Mumbai, has some 60,000 people living on the pavements.

The 1993 survey (Begum, 1999) of 100 non-slum poor in Dhaka, found that 62% of pavement-dwellers lived at urban transport stations (at Sadarghat, Kamlapur, Phulbaria, Gabtali and Mahakhali); 10 per cent in mazars (Muslim tombs) (at Mirpur and High Court); and 16 per cent in the market centres (at Karwan Bazar, New Market, Farmgate, Baitul Mokarram and Stadium Market).

This research found a similar pattern as shown in the table overleaf. In Dhaka, nearly half of the respondents slept on footpaths, especially at transport stations (bus, rail and ferry). The next most popular location was the stadium premises, which offer them some protection from rain as well as giving them convenient access to toilet facilities and the possibility of storing luggage/belongings on payment to the stadium caretakers.

#### **Location of pavement-dwellers in Dhaka and Chittagong, 2004**

Location	Dhaka			Chittagong			Grand Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Pavement, BISIC	-	1	1	-	-	-	1
Pavement, Polwell Market	1	2	3	-	-	-	3
Pavement, Chittagong bus stand	-	-	-	2	-	2	2
Pavement, Sadarghat Launch Terminal	-	3	3	-	-	-	3
Pavement, Chittagong Railway station	-	-	-	3	3	6	6
Bus Terminal, Syedabad	2	1	3	-	-	-	3
Stadium, Dhaka	2	-	2	-	-	-	2
Stadium, Kamlapur	1	4	5	-	-	-	5
Stadium, Mirpur	3	1	4	-	-	-	4
Stadium, Chittagong	-	-	-	1	-	1	1
Mazar, Mirpur	-	1	1	-	-	-	1
Mazar, Chittagong Shah Amanat	-	-	-	-	2	2	2
<b>Total:</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>33</b>

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

It is often difficult to distinguish between those living permanently on the streets and those who occasionally and seasonally do so. In Bangladesh, there seems to be a seasonal fluctuation in the numbers of pavement-dwellers: their numbers increase following natural disasters, such as floods, cyclones and famines. This was visible during August 2004, when the research was ongoing. Even in expensive residential areas of Dhaka, where there is policing and driving away of pavement-dwellers, there was a marked presence of peri-urban, flood-affected people. The number also increases during religious festivals, especially Eid. At that time, substantial numbers of rural poor take shelter on the streets



for the hope of getting *zakat* (charity) from the rich Muslims. During these seasonal migrations, the men stay on the streets for longer periods of time than the women.

The following table details the duration of stay of the interviewed pavement-dwellers in Bangladesh.

**Length of stay in the city and length of stay at the current location by pavement-dwellers in Dhaka and Chittagong, 2004**

Length of stay in the city:	Dhaka			Chittagong			Grand total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
<6 months	1	2	3	0	1	1	4
6 months - 1 year	0	1	1	2	0	2	3
1 year – 2 years	3	2	5	1	2	3	8
3 years - 5 years	0	2	2	0	0	0	2
6 years – 10 years	1	3	4	0	0	0	4
11/+ years	4	3	7	3	2	0	7
Total:	9	13	22	6	5	11	33
<b>Length of stay at current place:</b>							
<6 months	4	7	11	0	1	1	12
6 months - 1 year	2	2	4	2	1	3	7
1 year – 2 years	1	2	3	3	1	4	7
3 years - 5 years	2	1	3	0	0	0	3
6 years – 10 years	0	0	0	1	0	1	1
11/+ years	0	1	1	0	2	2	3
Total:	9	13	22	6	5	11	33

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

However, as the table above depicts, many of Bangladesh's pavement-dwellers have been on the streets for more than 11 years. In Dhaka, the women have been on the street twice as long as the men (an average of 6 years for women and 3 years for men) and in Chittagong the men had been on the street twice as long as the women (an average of 6 years for men and 2.5 years for women). Very often pavement dwelling is a long-term lifestyle, not just a temporary state.

<b>SUMMARY: THE EXTENT OF URBAN HOMELESSNESS</b>	
How many?	Between 0.5 to 2% of the urban population in cities in India and Bangladesh are pavement-dwellers
Where?	Half stay on pavements, a quarter at bus/train/ferry stations and most of the others at stadiums and market places
How long?	Pavement dwelling is a long-term lifestyle for men and for women

### 3.4 Occupations and income of the pavement-dwellers

Common misconceptions about pavement-dwellers are that they are 'vagrants', beggars, thieves and drug-addicts'. The ActionAid India supported Rapid Assessment Survey

(2000; see below) found that some 90 per cent of the 52,765 people living on the pavement in Delhi were workers. The Government of Bangladesh Census found that only 2.6% and 0.6% of the floating population in Dhaka and Chittagong respectively were not working. This research found that less than 5 per cent of pavement-dwellers in Dhaka and Chittagong have been or are unemployed.

**Percentage distribution of the main activities of the floating population  
in Dhaka and Chittagong**

Activities	1997 GoB Census			Activities	Research 2003-4 Dhaka
	Dhaka	Chittagong	National		
Not working	2.6	0.6	7.1	Unemployed	3.3
Hawker	1.9	0.3	4.1	Vending	5.0
Agricultural labour	0.3	0.1	2.8	Agricultural labour	1.6
Industrial labour	0.3	0.4	4.0	Skilled worker	7.3
Construction labour	12.8	1.2	17.4	Unskilled worker	15.7
Maids	0.8	0.7	5.5	Housewife, maid, prostitute	6.3
Business	3.1	0.5	4.3	Own business	2.6
Service	0.1	-	0.2	Labourer	16.7
Porter	5.6	1.1	16.0	Earth worker	1.3
Hotel attendant	0.1	0.1	0.6	Mazar devotee, faith healer	0.6
Begging	15.8	1.6	26.9	Beggar	22.2
Rickshaw puller	0.8	0.5	4.1	Driver of non-mechanised vehicle	11.6
Van puller	0.3	0.1	1.4	Driver of mechanised vehicle	0.4
Tokai <sup>27</sup>	0.5	0.2	1.6		
Others	1.9	0.1	3.9	Others	4.5
<b>Total:</b>	<b>46.9</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>99.1</b>

Source: Government of Bangladesh, *Census of Slum Areas and Floating Population 1997* (Dhaka: Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1999):T31:40 and Research fieldwork, 2004.

Some 15.8% in Dhaka and 1.6% in Chittagong were enumerated as beggars in the 1997 census, many of whom were the physically disabled. Begging, followed by construction labour and portering appeared as the main occupations of the 'floating' population of Dhaka and Chittagong. The 2004 rapid appraisal in Dhaka reported a high (22%) proportion of the researched pavement-dwellers living as beggars. It is interesting to note that Begum (1999) found two more categories, prostitutes and mazar devotees representing 6 per cent and less than 1 per cent of the pavement-dwellers respectively.

<sup>27</sup> Tokai = Bangla word meaning 'collector'; usually refers to poor children who collect things (glass, wastepaper, cardboard, metals and plastics) left out on the street, from dustbins, houses and public places, for recycling. The majority of tokais are aged 8-15 and there are more boys than girls; they earn a daily average of less than Tk50 for a 10-12 hour day in a very unhygienic environment, selling crude, unclean waste to vangari waste shops.

These categories are absent in the official census. The rapid appraisal (2004) found higher percentages under these categories.

In the absence of more detailed research and analysis, it is difficult to predict whether this indicates a real increase in these professions or simply some survey variation.

Analysing occupational structure of the pavement-dwellers, the study in Dhaka and Chittagong found that most of the occupations are informal and many are self-generated, eg 'rickshawpuller cum pimp', 'pulwali' (flower girl), vegetable sorter, vegetable vendor, waiter at a community centre, and caretaker of public toilet. In the course of the investigation, the researchers found young women engaged in prostitution describing themselves as 'NGO workers'.

The table below shows that roughly 50 per cent of the researched pavement-dwellers (33) in Bangladesh earn less than US\$1 per day and only 15 per cent of the those interviewed earn US\$2 or more per day, with just one person reporting earnings of US\$3.5 a day. Except those women who are engaged in the sex trade, males earn more than females; and Dhaka's street dwellers earn comparatively more than those in Chittagong. The Census of 1997 and Begum's 1993 survey did not collect income data.

#### Daily income of pavement-dwellers in Dhaka and Chittagong, 2004

Income	Dhaka			Chittagong			Grand Total
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	
Nothing	0	2	2	0	0	0	2
Up to Tk.60 (US\$1)	2	4	6	3	5	8	14
Tk.61-Tk.80	4	3	7	2	0	2	9
Tk.81-Tk.100	0	3	3	0	0	0	3
Tk.101-Tk.120 (US\$2)	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Tk.121-Tk.140	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
Tk.141-Tk.200	1	0	1	1	0	1	2
Tk.201/+	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total:	9	13	22	6	5	11	33

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

The street dwellers spend most of their earnings on food and very little on non-food items, such as clothes and medicine. Despite this, there is a tendency among them to save money to send to family members back home. These savings are made by sleeping on the street, and thereby not paying for shelter and services. However, the ADB-GoB survey (1996) reported that some of the street dwellers incur expenses for shelter to brokers and maastans for 'helping' them stay on the streets.

The respondents included women who had lost jobs and were looking for new work. No differentiation was made regarding whether these individuals lived on their own or with their families, including other earning members.

#### Zaharuddin, Maqbool and Fayeem

*In Delhi, the difficulties in getting a jhuggi (a shelter of any type in a slum or squatter settlement) force many people to live on the pavement. "If I buy or rent a jhuggi, I have to travel daily to reach my workplace. If I stay on the pavement, the transportation charges can be saved," says Zaharuddin. He sleeps in the corridor, in front of a shop, in Chawri Bazaar. "Ever since I came to Delhi - years ago, I have been staying in the same place," he recollects. Zaharuddin has done different types of work in Delhi. He did push-cart pulling, loading and unloading and now he does tailoring. "I am old now and I can't do*

*heavy work. So this machine is my livelihood,” says Zaharuddin. He sits with his sewing machine in the commercial corridor of Chawri Bazaar. “I can earn Rs75 to 80 daily. But there are days when I don't get any work,” he adds.*

*The majority of the people who live on pavements are there because they cannot afford a jhuggi. “We have to pay rent, bus charges etc., if we stay in a jhuggi,” says Maqbool Ahmed a loader in Khari Baoli market. Though they consider jhuggis as unaffordable, most of them long for a shelter.*

*“To get a jhuggi in Delhi is not an easy task. One has to engage with either the political leader of the locality or the dada of the area,” says Fayeem who works as a coolie in Khari Baoli, the spice market in Old Delhi.*

Source: Menon, 2001.

One key issue amongst pavement-dwellers in Bangladesh, and India too, is that of under-employment and/or exploitative employment, a factor that is greatly compounded by their assumed ‘illegal’ status.

The majority of pavement-dwellers, working as informal, casual labourers are not assured even the [declared] minimum wages. Lacking any institutional support, often forced to do any work they can get and constantly facing fear of ‘eviction’ by police and local agencies and individuals, the focus is on daily survival. Those who do not work include mostly, the elderly, destitute and children, who survive by begging (Menon, 2001).

#### **Labour Fact File - Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan (AAA), New Delhi**

Fieldwork conducted by *Labour File* in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Chennai and Patna confirms that pavement-dwellers comprise an integral part of the cities’ informal labour force. In all locations, the usual occupational opportunities they engage in include: casual sales (as vendors, shop assistants); working as cooks, waiters and washers in way-side restaurants and as occasionally-hired workers for parties (including political rallies!); construction workers; handcart pushers and pullers; loaders, un-loaders, porters; cycle rickshaw drivers; domestic servants; barbers; mechanics and repairmen; and rag pickers. The houseless workers tend to locate a place for themselves closest to their place of work and try to save as much money as they can from their meagre earnings. Employment is hard to come by. Whatever work opportunity comes by is usually temporary in nature and the earning is too low to be spent on even basic (though expensive) amenities.

Field studies point to the social and economic vulnerabilities to which the workers are exposed as a consequence of their houseless status. Primarily, houseless-ness makes them identity-less, losing not only their individual worth but also their identity as citizens of the country. Without an ‘address’ they cannot open a bank account, procure ration cards or enjoy any other social security benefit. Workers acquire self-consciousness, which is defeatist and leaves them timid, lonely and silent. Employers make use of this identity crisis of workers to lower their wages and extract more work. The transitory nature of employment, residence and the threat of imminent job-loss keep the workers away from any form of organisation or representation.

For most, there is little movement, or opportunity for movement, from pavement to slums, as indicated by second and third generation pavement-dwellers. For many, there is also a push from slums to pavements, often influenced by frequent job-loss and inability to acquire comparable jobs, especially with age. For example, a worker with a specialised skill may start as a skilled ‘silver ornament’ worker and end up as a rag picker. Women and men, single and elderly have often moved from more to less permanent dwellings.

Source: AAA, 2001.

The situation of vulnerability in any country includes the common element of exploitation. A 1991 survey in Dhaka revealed that the average daily wages (incomes) of pavement-dwellers was far lower than official figures of average daily wages (BBS, Statistical Yearbook 1991:512). Begum found that slum dwellers also had comparatively higher *starting capital* from their own earnings, which they brought with them when they migrated. Pavement-dwellers started with lower amounts. In Begum's comparative study, 61 per cent of pavement-dwellers were totally landless and 100% were functionally landless, (ie owning less than 0.5 acres of land or uncultivable land) compared to 47 per cent landless among slum dwellers. Begum found that many of those living on the pavements had made up their minds to beg when they made the decision to migrate to Dhaka. In contrast, no respondents in the slums had thought of 'begging' as an option, when they had migrated to Dhaka.

The pavement-dwellers are economically poorer amongst the urban poor and more bereft of human skills (such as literacy) and social support (Begum, 1999; Islam and Shafi, 2004). Begum (1999) points out that only half of the researched pavement-dwellers in Dhaka had contacts in the city, compared to 76 per cent of slum dwellers who had access to such links. Pavement-dwellers were also comparatively less informed of living and employment conditions in the city than slum dwellers, prior to making the decision to migrate. When access to information was forthcoming, the key issue explored was, 'whether a living wage could be earned doing a less strenuous job than in the village?'

Given the reality of their economic and social poverty, pavement-dwellers had much lower expectations from migration. In Begum's study, 43 per cent of those living on the pavements had expected nothing better than to live on the streets, only 10 per cent had expected to find a more permanent shelter. In contrast, of the respondents living in slums, none had expected to live on the pavement and 39 per cent had hoped to find shelter in slums.

However, those living on the streets in Dhaka were still unprepared for the actual reality. Of the 100 respondents, 76 found it bad and worse compared to their earlier [rural] dwellings and 21 said it was worse than they expected.

The social impacts of not having a permanent place of stay are manifold; these are primarily trust and faith. Universal basic criteria for achieving employment often weigh against the pavement-dwellers.

### **Sandeep and Sunil**

*Sandeep Singh (37) from Bihar, works as a house painter and stays behind the Jama Masjid in Delhi. He says, "There are hundreds of extremely skilled workers who are deprived of work because of their place of stay." The employers refuse to take a person on if they don't have an address. "Since we are on the pavement, people think that we are goons, criminals or cheats. They never trust us," exclaims Sandeep.*

*Sandeep's typical day starts at 5 am. He carefully folds his quilt-bedding which he rents at Rs5 per night (there is no place to buy and store one) and rushes to join the crowd which stands in a queue in front of the Sulabh Shauchalay (public toilet), to brush, bathe and attend to nature's call. Between 7.30 and 8.00 am, Sandeep makes himself available at the 'labour' market. He sits with hundreds of others in the Meena Bazaar Chowk, waiting eagerly to be picked up by an employer. At times, he is selected, but many times he loiters without any work.*

*Sunil Jain, the owner of SP Jain and Company, the wholesale paper shop, says he gives work to people who live in front of his shop. "Confidence is the basis on which we give someone a job. We try to give work to the same worker that we already know. If a new person comes in, he has to be introduced to us by a worker whom we trust. At times we*

*need to ask workers to collect thousands of rupees from our clients. People who have worked for us over a period of time, or have been recommended have not cheated us.”*

Source: Menon, 2001.

The workers who sleep in the shop corridors of Chawri Bazaar, where Jain’s large wholesale paper shop is located, have consciously been staying there for very long periods – to establish their identity. When they leave, their relatives occupy the space. Aneesh Sharma, a push-cart puller in the Chawri Bazaar, correspondingly adds: “We try to build up the trust the employer has for us. That is the only asset we have.”

Many others are less fortunate. Having a permanent ‘pavement address’ and/or sustained employment is by no means guaranteed.

**SUMMARY: OCCUPATIONS AND INCOMES OF THE PAVEMENT-DWELLERS**

**Why?** Most migrate from rural locations where their lives have become untenable. Many expected to live on the streets, but most are not happy with life on the streets - for some it is worse than they ever imagined.

**Employment?** Most pavement-dwellers are employed in informal and unorganised labour. 20% are beggars (mostly the physically disabled) and less than 5% are unoccupied.

**Income?** The average pavement-dweller earns less than the equivalent of a dollar a day. They are the poorest among the urban poor.

**3.5 What is life like for the pavement-dwellers?**

Their existence is rife with violence, discomfort and human indignity and yet, they are ignored by governments and international and local non-governmental agencies. In a quantitative, comparative analysis of 100 pavement-dwellers and 100 slum dwellers in Dhaka city, Begum (1999) reports that compared to slum dwellers, a higher number of pavement-dwellers reported being conned, victimised and scared of city life. Difficulties that the researchers faced when surveying the pavement-dwellers, gives an indication of the situation the pavement-dwellers live in. On the second day of the survey, the researchers encountered five armed thugs who wanted payment. They alleged that the researchers were earning large sums of money, but only harassing the poor. The investigators had to pay them. They boasted that they were sentries of the whole city... During many nights, the survey work was disrupted by torrential rain after high, daytime temperatures. With the first gusts of wind, the electricity would be cut off and the whole city plunged into darkness. This made it very unsafe. (ibid.)

**3.5.1 Boys**

Violence plays a major role in the everyday lives of street children. At one extreme, an average of three street children are killed every day on the streets of Rio de Janeiro (Scanlon et al, 1998). Children living on the streets in Cairo are regularly rounded up by the police, beaten up, held in crowded detention centres, where their heads are shaved. Like their adult counterparts, street children are viewed by the larger society as ‘trouble-makers’ and/or criminals by nature. Some are transferred to correction centres, which they share with criminals. No distinction is made between children involved in crime and

those lost or abandoned by their families (Bibars, 1998). Yet, the reason they often steal has so many causes, not least of all, "It is so much more fun than begging" (Leite and Esteves, 1991).

Hounded in this manner, street children seek and develop damaging relationships with their peers; their lives are marked by sexual abuse, the payment of protection money and/or substance abuse (ibid). Several studies show that around 80 per cent of street children use drugs regularly (Pinto et al, 1994). Glue sniffing is common. Glue is cheap and easily available. It provides temporary but sure oblivion to cold, heat, hunger, fear, loneliness and despondency (Scanlon et al, 1993, 1998). Children are quickly addicted and tend to spend whatever petty cash they can get on glue rather than on other more wholesome 'necessities' (Bond, 1992).

### **Lives of two boys on the streets in India**

*Srinivas' early childhood in his village in Annakapalli, in the coastal district of Vishakapatnam in Andhra Pradesh, was marked by his father abandoning the family. His mother continued to send him to school until she could no longer make ends meet. She then asked him to quit school and work in a hotel, which would pay them Rs.600 per month. Srinivas quit school and started work, which involved washing utensils and occasionally serving tea and food to customers. He hated the work and began arguing with his mother to send him back to school. In a fit of anger, she branded him with a hot iron rod and threatened dire consequences if he did not continue working at the hotel.*

*That night Srinivas ran away from home.*

*He took the first train out of his village and landed at Vishakapatnam railway station. He made contact with other young boys living on the station who taught him to beg. His first lesson was to look dirty in order to arouse greater sympathy. If the people found him to be very dirty to look at, then they would not want him to linger near them for long, and would give him money so that he would move on to the next compartment. As he begged, he used his shirt to clean the compartment, and did not wash himself, although there was adequate water in the station. He endured the feeling of discomfort and un-cleanliness, all of which were difficult for him to cope with. Sometimes, the railway authorities paid Srinivas and others to lift dead corpses (suicide victims) from the rails. Yet, at most times, these boys were shooed away from the station. Begging, living and surviving on the trains and platforms required skill.*

*Srinivas was comparatively lucky – he did not run far away from home; he found companionship amongst peers, even though they encouraged him into substance abuse habits. However, the pressures of street living in the small city of Vishakapatnam were not as harsh as in many other places. An NGO volunteer camp, supported by ActionAid, located Srinivas – who is now undergoing counselling and efforts are being made to connect him to his mother. He does not wish to go back home as he feels that his mother wanted him only for the money he could bring. He is adamant that his mother will not be looking for him, as she did not venture to look for his older brother, who also ran away from home.*

*Narayana, had no parents and ran away from his brother and his family several times. His first journey took him to Mumbai, where he spent a year, unable to communicate with anyone because of language barriers. He spent a year in a shelter for the homeless after being 'captured' (assisted) by the local police. Language assistance got him back home, from where he ran away again. This time he did not go so far and began working in a small hotel. A wave of homesickness sent him back home, but on being convinced that his elder brother and his family intend to 'simply make money out of him' he ran away*

*once more, this time to Hyderabad, where he linked up with peers who taught him rag picking, petty crime and theft.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

Narayana and Srinivas were the rare, fortunate few amongst street-dwelling children, who were 'found' and are being assisted by ActionAid. This is not the reality for the majority of young children who live on the streets and work and make a living from picking rags, cleaning, serving in small cafes, shoe-shining, peddling, vending, begging and or engaging in small crime and theft.

The earnings of these young boys range from Rs30 to 60 per day. There is no concept of saving amongst this group, who earn just enough for the day. Saving of money or assets is not an option when one lives on the streets. Usually, when work is not forthcoming then food is begged for.

With youth and its advantages on their side, young boys on the street are often reluctant to go back to the constraining family conditions they ran away from. Yet, from ActionAid's experience, many have a desire to achieve something more meaningful than a life on the streets. Narayana, who had become a ring-leader himself, gladly exchanged his life for a counselling role in a local NGO Ashray (Shelter). He is currently studying and working full time in reaching out to others like him.

The water and sanitation needs and preferences of young boys living on the streets show distinct differences between age groups. For the young ones engaged in begging, staying dirty pays, and few efforts are made to bathe and clean one-self. It is similar for rag-pickers, who don't see the need for cleaning up every day, as they will soon be filthy again. In these cases, food and shelter take precedence over sanitation needs. Further, defecation is not a problem, given the greater acceptance of masculine exposure. The young boys often defecate, urinate and even bathe in the open. But those children working in hotels get a place to wash and take a bath everyday.

Adolescent boys on the streets are very particular about 'looking clean' and 'smelling good'. The pressure to belong to the society, adopt practices, or at least look like other adolescent males, is high. Defecating, urinating or even bathing on the streets are not preferred options. Given that most of these older boys aspire to work as servers in cafes, they make efforts to look clean and presentable. They make substantial investments to use latrines and bathing facilities and to buy soap and shampoo.

#### **Pandu**

*Pandu (20) came to Hyderabad from Nalgonda two years ago in search of work. He has done a variety of jobs, including cleaning at a hotel for Rs50 with food per day, loading and unloading equipment for marriage hall decorations, for around Rs100 for 10 hours of work, and any other occasional offers of work, when he is available.*

*Food can be bought cheaply; for example, he can get a full lunch for Rs1 at the Ramakrishna Math charity. He has no belongings. Every time he feels his clothes have become too dirty, he buys a fresh pair for Rs40 and discards the old ones. He doesn't believe in keeping belongings, as there are a lot of thefts amongst the pavement-dwellers. Moreover there is no place to keep them when he goes to work and he cannot carry them to work. His life on the street has also taught him to be a wanderer. He doesn't stay in one place for long.*



*He is fond of movies and spends most of his money there. However, the topmost priority for him is a good place to sleep. Often, when he sleeps near big shops, the police wake him up in the night. Also, he has to wait for the shops to close before he can sleep and they have to get up early and vacate the area. Drunken brawls disturb his sleep too. He also likes to keep clean and uses the toilet complex every day for his sanitation and bathing needs.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

### **3.5.2 Girls**

Girls on the streets are fewer than boys. They experience the same kind of situations as boys but are more vulnerable, especially when they grow up. Adolescent girls are rarely found living alone on the streets. They are usually paired with young or adult men, who offer masculine security in return for emotional and/or sexual favours as 'husbands' (Fieldwork, 2004). However, whether living alone or with others, the pressures of living on the streets are much higher for girls. If young, there is the burden of working, coupled with looking after other siblings and keeping 'home' on the pavements. For the adolescent, looking clean helps secure male attention and the universally assumed male 'support'.

#### **Radha**

*Radha is the second of three sisters, who were all left out on the streets of Hyderabad, when their father remarried after their mother's death. Although their father kept track of them and offered food and money occasionally, he could not persuade his new, young wife to give them a home. Similarly, their grandmother offered them occasional help, but could not take them to her home. The three sisters started living near Chadherghat bridge, very close to their father, doing occasional errands for the local shop keepers supplemented with begging. When Radha's elder sister found work in a paint factory and got herself a male partner, she left the other two to fend for themselves. However, young girls living alone on the street attract male attention and societal disapproval. Radha was fast developing a reputation that she was harassing customers (by begging) during the day and was a sex-worker at night [Radha and her sister did not admit to this profession] along with her sister.*

*The shopkeepers in the area wanted them to leave. Radha's retaliation to a man who attempted to touch her was treated as serious abuse and she was jailed on the insistence of the shop-keepers. Her elder sister tried to have her released from jail, but the case is still pending. At the time when the researchers met her elder sister, it was reported that Radha was in jail, pregnant but looking forward to marrying her boyfriend.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

The researchers visited a state government-supported social welfare centre for adolescent girls, many of whom were earlier inhabitants of the pavements. The situation at the hostel was similar to life on the streets. The premises were filthy and appeared not to have been cleaned for a long time. There was a single toilet and bathroom for the nearly 200 girls and that too without a regular supply of water. The very young girls reported having a bath only once in one or two weeks. They mentioned that there is no provision of hot water (bathing with hot water is the cultural norm in South India). The older girls mentioned the problems they were having with menstrual hygiene. "We wash the menstrual cloths and all of us dry them on the terrace. But the cloths are in short supply and often they are interchanged or 'stolen'."

The hostel is supervised by one female cook and a male watchman. It was reported by several girls that the watchman abuses them sexually, but there is no one to report him to. "At least, the hostel provides shelter and food."

### 3.5.3 Women

In Dhaka the marital status of the pavement-dwellers, as found in the survey by ADB-GoB (1996), shows that 61 per cent of the adult women were married, 25 per cent unmarried, 11 per cent widowed and 4 per cent divorced. This research (2004) records a much higher incidence of widowed and deserted women. This is supported by the definitive relationship between marital status and poverty in a patriarchal society.

#### Marital status of pavement-dwellers in Dhaka and Chittagong, 2004

Marital Status	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Single	3	1	4
Married	11	8	19
Widowed	0	4	4
Deserted/Divorced	1	5	6
Total:	15	18	33

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

#### Shanthamma

*Shanthamma came to Hyderabad from Mahbubnagar several years ago in search of a better life for herself and her two daughters, but today lives on the streets. Initially, working long and hard as a daily waged construction labourer, domestic maid, cleaner of cinema halls and theatres, she had managed to rent a small room. She would take her younger child with her to work, and leave the older one in her neighbours' care during the day. Neither daughter went to school. "I never thought of sending them. As soon as they were old enough to do some work, they became domestic housemaids."*

*Though she was living alone with her daughters, Shanthamma had found, over time, other women work partners, which provided her some sort of security and protection.*

*Shanthamma was thirty years old when a man called Pulliah offered to live with her, provided he did not have to support the children. She had a tubectomy and hysterectomy carried out (very common procedures amongst pavement dwelling single women). Pulliah left her. Through her own efforts, Shanthamma arranged for her two daughters to be married to two young boys. After the weddings, she moved into her elder daughter's house, as she was unable to pay the rent of her room any more. Constantly taunted by her son-in-law she decided to walk away from it all one day. "My daughters can't look after me, even if they wanted to, for the fear of their husbands".*

*Fatigued by hard work and now middle aged, she can no longer work as before. When the research team met her, it had been a year since she started living on the pavement near the Mahankali temple premises. She chose this place as it is close to her daughters' houses, and she knows the area well. Recently, she suffered a mild paralytic stroke, but her daughters did not come to her aid. She says she was treated at the government Gandhi hospital.*

*She is very protective of her belongings, 4 sarees and a blanket, which she carries with her at all times, even into the toilet complex. "All are robbers. I can trust no one." She*

has no vessels, and survives on what she gets by begging. Every morning she walks half an hour to a public toilet, which she uses by paying Rs2. The rest of the day, she has no second thoughts about easing herself behind parked vehicles. "A younger woman will have a problem. Everyone turns a blind eye because I am old. I can get away with it. So can children," she says gleefully. "I have a bath once in three days by paying Rs5 at the complex, and also wash my clothes there."

Her daughters live in 'pucca' (proper) sheds, one hour from the place where she lives. They give her around Rs20-30 every time she goes to visit them on Sundays, without the knowledge of their husbands. The sons-in law would quarrel if they knew her daughters were giving money to their old mother.

Shanthamma feels very lonely, staying away from her daughters and her grandchildren. Despite her hardships, she still takes little gifts for her grandchildren every time she visits them. Though she is quite safe and comfortable staying on the edge of the temple premises, she yearns for a proper roof over her head. "I can get water from any bore well, and food is not a problem either ...but it is shelter, a roof over your head that is very essential. I do not think I will live in a house again. This sky is my roof and this pavement my house. I came here one year ago, I shall continue to stay here forever. As I have now grown old no one troubles me, but the pavement is not a safe place to sleep on. The temple courtyard is safer."

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

### **Safia**

Safia is a young married girl, living on the streets in Hyderabad. She ended up here as a result of marrying a Muslim man (she was a Hindu) and the non-acceptance of the alliance by both families. Safia finds it very difficult to live on the pavement after living in a proper home. "Everything is a problem on the pavement", she says. "There is no privacy. People are watching all the time. It is like living your life on a stage. One has to be alert all the time. People are waiting to take advantage. There's no safety. One has to carry one's belongings everywhere, or be prepared to lose them."

Her husband works as a waiter in a hotel, and comes 'home' to Safia only once in three days, as he works late into the night and is required to start early. Hence he sleeps at the hotel itself. When her husband is 'home', they find a quieter spot at night to be together. Her first baby was born on the streets, but died a few months later. Her second child is now three years old. There is little access to health care. Her child did not have the basic immunisations done. She is not even aware of them.

She stays close to the railway station and there is a Sulabh toilet complex nearby. She can afford only one bath a week, by paying Rs5 at the complex. During the night after the complex closes, if she feels the need to use the toilet, she will find a dark corner on the road and ease herself.

Safia has befriended a slightly older lady, living alone on the streets and with a child, who she calls her aunt. This association provides a relatively greater degree of safety at night for both women. However, physical safety is not their only concern. Safia lost all her clothes and belongings in the first week of living on the pavement. She doesn't cook, because the police do not allow her to cook on the pavement. She has two meals each day. The first meal is lunch at the temple nearby, which serves food to the poor, and the second meal is bought from the hotel. She and her husband have incurred many debts, so all her husband's earnings go towards clearing the debt.

*Safia contributes to the 'family' income by going out every day to beg. She earns around Rs50 on a good day. She takes her three-year-old child with her to beg. They keep their money at a small local shop for safekeeping. She has no record of deposits and withdrawals, but relies solely on her memory and her trust of the shop-keeper. She does not see a life beyond the pavements. It is too difficult for them to rise above that.*

*On the day the team met Safia, she had just suffered the miscarriage of her third child – on the street.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

### **Renukamma**

*Renukamma is a 28 year-old woman, from Lingampally, just 18 kms from Hyderabad city. She comes from a relatively well-to-do family, and was educated up to the 10<sup>th</sup> standard in an English-medium school. Her misfortunes began with her parents' deaths, when her relatives performed her marriage to Mahavir Singh, who is an auto driver. She has one son who is 12 years old and four daughters who are nine, five, two years and nine months old. Her husband and her mother-in-law are alcoholics and in drunken bouts they have beaten and tortured Renukamma. Unable to bear the torture, she attempted suicide once by burning herself, but her husband took her to the hospital and she survived the suicide, which has left her body disfigured with scars. When she complained to the police of the torture, the police were bribed by her husband to drop the case.*

*The domestic abuse continued and she was hit with knives and bottles. Unable to bear it any more, she took a few clothes for her children and herself and left home with only Rs50. She took a bus and came to Immlibun bus station in the city; it was the only place she remembered from an earlier journey. She and her children spent their first night at the station, but were pushed away by officials and drivers. They moved to an adjoining street and sat there until nightfall, unaware of what to do. When she saw that the street was used by commercial sex-workers, she moved to a different street.*

*When the research team met and spoke to her, they had been on the streets for thirty days. Her children had started to go to the houses close by in the mornings to ask for food. They often received their afternoon meal from a nearby temple. Renuka felt greatly constrained to beg herself, but accepts any money that she is given. Whenever there is money to spare, the priority, after food, is to have a wash at the nearby Sulabh toilet, which charges Rs20 for the family to use it. Her greatest fear was that her young children would be taken away from her, by strangers on the roads. The research team assisted the family to shift into an ActionAid supported shelter run by a local NGO.*

*Greatly traumatized by the 30 days on the streets and in the absence of any other option, Renukamma has recently written to her husband to ask him to pick her up.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

### **3.5.4 Men**

As the majority group amongst pavement-dwellers, and perhaps the least vulnerable, life is still not easy for adult men living on the streets.

### **Kalimuddin and Jaswinder**

*In New Delhi, Kalimuddin makes a living by selling iced water from an insulated cart outside Delhi's bustling railway station. He is as homeless now as he was the day he arrived here from his village in eastern Bihar state, 20 years ago. At night, Kalimuddin sleeps where he can on the pavements. He cannot use the government-run shelters because he has to keep an eye on his hired cart.*

*Jaswinder, a rickshaw puller at the nearby Ajmeri gate area is better off. At night, he can turn his rickshaw upside down as a temporary home and sleep under it. He even has a plastic sheet to spread over it for rainy nights. Winters are tougher for Jaswinder, as he must hire a quilt at around 25 cents a night to keep himself warm. "That's too much but if I buy my own quilt I have nowhere to keep such a bulky thing".*

Source: Dogra (2000).

A common assumption made of pavement dwelling men is that they seek multiple sexual partners and are violent in their relationships. However, there are many other examples whom we met, who present a contrary picture.

### **Radha and Ramulu**

*Radha (35) has been living with her partner, Ramulu, on the streets of Hyderabad for the last 3 years. Radha escaped from a constraining early marriage (at 13 years) but took to the streets when her maternal family refused to help her. She had an earlier partner, Pullaiah, who made a false accusation that she was mentally ill when she failed to take care of their child, and convinced the neighbours into giving the child away to somebody else. After a year he asked Radha to leave him. She met Ramulu at a station; he insisted on taking care of her and they have been together ever since.*

*Radha and Ramulu used to collect rags every day along a 5 km stretch of railway track. They have stopped that because Radha is losing her hearing, making her prone to accidents. They now beg three times a week - on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays - on the streets and near temples and also occasionally beg for food from the slums in and around the area where they live. Both of them are addicted to drinking cheap liquor and a major part of their income is spent on this.*

*Ramulu does all the household tasks for them both, washing their clothes and cooking when he can. He considers it a great fortune to have Rhada as his partner and is willing to go to any extent to continue this.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2004

Details of how the pavement-dwellers cope with their basic water sanitation and hygiene related needs are presented in Chapter 5 of this report.

## **3.6 Who helps the homeless**

ActionAid is the most vocal and active 'agent' helping the homeless. It has its own policy, which is not to 'duplicate' services and do the government's job. So they research, write reports and carry out advocacy on behalf of the pavement-dwellers, but they do not actually provide any material support. Nevertheless, they have made some positive achievements, for example, arranging an agreement with some government schools to

use the school premises [and toilets] as a night shelter and to find places for storing pavement-dwellers' possessions during the day. Some of their local staff provide help on their own initiative, for example taking the elderly to hospitals and making follow-up visits to them.

The only groups who are truly providing material help are the Jesuit priests and Mother Teresa's home. These people regularly walk the streets and take into their homes the most diseased, the most vulnerable, the dying. Their mission is to provide dignity during the most difficult times. The researchers who went to their homes and saw them were truly impressed.

Various researchers and analysts (Mandar, Mennon, Roy, Singh) outline that a key constraint to helping pavement-dwellers is the general public's perception that they are unemployed, anti-social and/or criminals. This view holds strong regardless of place, age and/or gender.

#### **Public opinion about the pavement-dwellers**

*"I feel that, the migration into the city should be stopped! These people who live on the pavements should be sent back home to their villages and given work there, so they won't feel the need to come here and live on our streets."*

*"The streets should be cleared. These people should be housed properly back in their native villages, and given gainful employment there. Or, they could be housed on the city outskirts and employed in special factories set up there."*

Source: Hollick, 2000.

This social attitude is entrenched in the laws and policies of the pavement-dwellers. In Bangladesh, the government labels them as vagrants. In India, the law commonly applied to them is the 'Vagrancy and Beggary Law', which bestows on houseless people the status of vagrants and beggars.

Throughout the world, 'informal' and/or 'illegal' are words used to describe the markedly visible pavement-dwellers, who are an embarrassment to governments. The outcomes are forced eviction and relocation/displacement. In both India and Bangladesh, the pavement-dwellers have been considered trespassers and made invisible by not being adequately included in population data, which hides the problem from the policy-making process.

In Bangladesh, the first urban poverty interventions after independence from Pakistan in 1971 were the involuntary removal and relocation of the urban poor to distant sites. More recently (see Lankatilleke, 2002) there have been further repressive measures, such as criminalising and demoralising the informally settled urban poor in order to stop inward migration, or to cause their migration elsewhere. Recent documentation finds informal settlement policy in Bangladesh to be marked by 'blatant disregard for the country's international human rights obligations, beating people with sticks and maiming many, including women and children' (COHRE, 2001).

There is no official policy and/or programme catering to the pavement-dwellers in Bangladesh. (See Annex for comparative information from India.) During the late 1980s, the Ershad regime set up a trust called "*Pathakali*" (bud of the street) for *reaching out* and providing literacy for street children. The succeeding government discontinued the programme. Subsequent governments have not had similar agendas. None of the numerous urban development programmes of government, donors or bi-/multi-lateral agencies have included a strategy for these, the poorest of the urban poor. For example,

the currently ongoing DFID funded Advancing Sustainable Environmental Health (ASEH) Project, managed and coordinated by WaterAid Bangladesh, and implemented by several local NGOs, is one of the largest ongoing urban infrastructure and poverty programmes in the country. The ASEH project guidelines and framework make no mention of any intervention for the non-slum poor although a key programme objective is 'to target water supply and sanitation to the poorest or the hard-core or ultra-poor'. This is discussed further in Chapter 7.

In India, there is comparatively higher awareness amongst civil society and interest in raising issues related to the urban poor. This is reflected in urban poverty policies and programmes. Yet the majority of these cater to the needs of slum dwellers. There is only one programme allocated to assist the pavement-dwellers - the night shelters and sanitation scheme. This scheme barely meets the need of 10 per cent of pavement-dwellers across India (Singh, 1980).

Assessing the skewed nature of urban development plans in India, Roy (2005) argues that while differences in size and pace of urbanisation in different cities influence the magnitude and severity of problems encountered, a key issue is the intolerable attitude to the urban poor, with pavement-dwellers at the bottom of the heap. The situation of pavement-dwellers in India is worse than that of slum dwellers and the situation of the pavement-dwellers of Mumbai is undoubtedly the worst across the country (SPARC, 2004).

### **3.6.1 The night-shelter programme (or *Raen Baseras*)**

The Night Shelter programme, supported by the Government of India and the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) and implemented by Municipal Corporations, is the only official scheme to address the needs of 'the urban poor living on pavements'. The shelters aim to provide a minimum level of basic infrastructure facilities (community toilets and bathing units, drinking water) in combination with dormitory sleeping accommodation and locker facilities, for which a nominal amount is charged from the users.

#### **The Delhi Night Shelters**

*In Delhi at present, there are only 14 night shelters run by the Delhi Municipal Corporation (MCD). The majority of them are situated appropriately in the Old Delhi area, near the main railway stations, inter-state bus terminals and wholesale market places, which all require and therefore attract a large number of casual labourers. The night shelters function between 7.30pm and 7.30am. Every night shelter has two or three personnel to take care of the people who use the facilities. They provide quilts and blankets for the users, for which they pay a user-charge of Rs6, which also includes use of the bathroom and toilet facilities.*

*"I hate to sleep in the night shelter; there are lots of bugs in the sheets they give out", says Ummer, a head-loader in the walled city. "The sheets they give stink", complains Shailender who works in a wayside restaurant."*

*According to Navin Chandra one of the employees of Meena Bazaar Night Shelter, the sheets and blankets used by different persons every night, are washed only once a month*

*The Meena Bazaar Night Shelter, one of the biggest in Delhi, has a capacity of 800 people. The night shelter near the Jama Masjid had a capacity of 700 people but has now been converted into a detention centre. Bangladeshi refugees caught for petty crimes or whose visa period has expired, are placed in this centre, but at present this shelter has*

only three occupants. "This shelter was of great help to the workers in the Jama Masjid area. Now we have to go behind Liberty cinema or Old Delhi railway station for the bathroom and toilet facilities," says Arun, working as a head-loader.

People using this shelter do not have any medical facilities. If any one falls sick, they have to be taken to the Government hospital. But this doesn't come under the responsibility of the concerned authorities.

Manjit Singh, Additional Commissioner, New Delhi, feels that the services provided for the workers in the night shelters are not satisfactory. He believes that the NGOs should share the responsibility to improve facilities for the pavement-dwellers. According to him: "If given to the NGOs, the quality of the service would automatically improve. Socially active NGOs who are working in this field should come forward and do something for the betterment of the pavement-dwellers."

Out of the 14 night shelters, in Delhi, there isn't a single shelter for women. A promise made some years ago by the social welfare minister to start three night shelters for women has yet to come to fruition. "I've been on the pavement for the last four years," says Meena who sells balloons and stays with her husband on the pavement near Shankar Market. There are a further 40 families who stay on the Shankar Market pavement. They cook food on the road; take water from the hand pump and use the Sulabh Shauchalayas (communal toilets) nearby.

Source: Menon (2001)

Some NGOs are doing effective work with pavement-dwellers, as the following case study about Saroja Devi shows.

### **Saroja Devi, Delhi**

Most urban poor migrants suffer severe psychological stresses because of their up-rooting and the breaking of the supportive bonds of family, caste and community in the alien, impersonal and often hostile urban environment. Their unremitting psychological trauma is magnified intolerably for those women and children who are forced to live alone on the streets. There is no protection whatsoever from the extremes of nature, and even worse from constant physical and sexual abuse. Cooked food, privacy, solitude, a quiet moment, even an uninterrupted night's sleep is impossible on the streets.

It is not surprising that most women who by patriarchy, domestic violence, abandonment, widowhood or destitution, are forced on to the streets, suffer severe emotional distress. For homeless women who are mentally ill, the physical and psychological abuse is the most ruthless and unyielding. Their wanton and continued neglect by public policy, law and indeed the larger society, constitute some of the most unimaginable failings of our times.

In the heart of New Delhi, in Cannaught Place, is a Hanuman temple to which devotees throng at all hours of the day and night. In the murky shadows of the temple courtyard, between makeshift stalls of incense, flowers and prasad, or in its dim corners, live homeless women, under the open sky, many of whom have known no other shelter for years.

It is a shrivelled community of tough, badly battered survivors. Women of all ages gather there every night, in begrimed frayed saris. Some are alone, others tend sick, disabled, drunken male partners, still others fiercely protect their children in the spaces of the temple courtyard, which are their homes without roof or walls. Street children wander



around, bringing cheer and mischief. Older men grope at the women's unprotected bodies in the uneasy darkness of the city's night, and the policemen intermittently assault them with their batons and taunts. I will always remember the distraught faces of some of these women late one night, because two policemen had confiscated and set fire to the tiny grubby bundles of their entire life's belongings. Tempers always seem to run high in the temple courtyard, as women quarrel or a man suddenly smashes an empty bottle on a woman's head.

It is extremely difficult to get to know these women. Their lives are so brutally and unremittingly public, and yet encased in hard, defensive shells. There are many widows among them, or abandoned wives, or women who survived and escaped violent partners. Some are children of street women, or older street girls. You find some women who are almost always utterly in a daze, drunk or drugged. Some talk compulsively, but the conversation typically is disjointed and inarticulate.

Others are withdrawn and resolutely silent, hiding untold grief. Almost without exception, they display diverse symptoms of some or the other form of mental distress. It is almost impossible for any of them to survive long on the streets without resort to casual sex work or intermittent begging, to supplement their efforts to subsist by petty pavement trade or occasional wage labour.

And yet, if you persist long enough in this unlikely community of the dispossessed, you recognise these to be women of extraordinary valour in the daily grimy battlefield of their utterly besieged lives. For a woman whose only home is the streets or open city courtyards, the inhospitable biting chill of winter nights or the foul deluge of India's city monsoons is the least of her trials. Saroja Devi should know. The streets and temple courtyards of Delhi have been her only home for more than thirty years.

*Beizzatti* – dishonour - this was the overriding feature of her life, as Saroja recounted it, without sentimentality or self-pity. "To live on the streets – *beizzatti*. The policeman beats you with his baton – *beizzatti*. Any ruffian sits next to you and runs his hands over your body – *beizzatti*."

Saroja Devi spoke readily about her life, but it was difficult for me to piece together the story of her life from the scattered fragments that she shaped with her staccato words. She was born in a village in distant Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. She has faded memories of an uneventful childhood. Her father, the village pradhan, drank heavily and died early. Her mother was kind to her and did not beat her. She was married off at the age of 15 to a soldier. By 20, she was a widow.

All that she recounted about her husband was: '*Woh English peeta tha*', that he drank English liquor, not country toddy like the others. She repeated this many times. Most of their years of marriage, he spent at the borders or battlefronts, while she lived with his mother at their home in Hyderabad.

She does not recall which war he died in. But what she does remember was that she was stretched in bed, in a stupor of malaria fever, when men in uniform brought home his ashes. She donned the coarse white of a widow, and resolved never to marry again. Her soldier husband left her with two young girls to bring up alone.

With the girls by her side, she returned first to her parental home. Her father by then was dead from too much drink, and her brothers refused to give her a share of their father's agricultural land. She fought bitterly with them, and eventually left the home of her birth, never to return. Her next destination was Bangalore. She struggled through many fragile tiny enterprises, making agarbattis (incense sticks), candles and matchboxes. But there

was never enough money to feed her children. Her savings were rapidly depleted. She met a woman who advised her that her chances were far better in the thriving metropolis of Delhi. She had never travelled north before and knew only a smattering of Hindi. But she bravely decided to take the plunge.

Alighting from the passenger train at Delhi railway station, nearly 30 years ago, it was not long before she found her way to Hanuman Mandir and its bedraggled collective of forlorn women. Her daughters and she lived mainly by begging and selling flowers. She longed for some stability, some permanence, and some dignity. Therefore, when a woman slumlord offered to sell her a shanty in a slum, not far from Hanuman Mandir, she readily gave her remaining savings, a few thousand rupees. She moved into the shanty with her children, and continued to sell flowers outside the temple. But only months later, government bulldozers arrived and suddenly razed the entire slum to the ground. It was government land, she was told. They were illegal squatters with absolutely no rights. The woman who had sold the shanty to her disappeared. She took with her the life savings of many dispossessed people.

So Saroja Devi returned once again to the luckless community in the temple courtyard. These years were the worst in her life. First her elder daughter died. The government nurse said it was jaundice. She managed to admit her to the government hospital ward one day, and she was dead the next. It was not long before her younger daughter fell from a tree, which she had climbed to pluck its jamun fruit. The child lingered in agony with broken limbs and festering wounds in the overcrowded public hospital for six months. Her mother did all she could to save her life, but in the end this child also succumbed and died.

It was during those months of desolate loneliness that Saroja met Rampyari, a crabby eccentric older widow who shared the community spaces of the temple compound. They cannot say who was initially drawn to whom, but Rampyari was kind to the twice-bereaved mother, and Saroja in turn began to take care of the older woman.

These two profoundly lonely women, each without family or home, decided to adopt each other as mother and daughter. It is a sturdy unwavering bond that has survived more than two decades of the vicissitudes of life on the streets. It is typical of many such alliances that are formed between despised people in the world of the cities' pavements, sturdier in loyalties, more tolerant of idiosyncrasies, and more tender in giving, than most biological relationships. I recall a street boy who adopted a disabled old man as his grandfather: he would carry him long distance on his back, and for years save from his own earnings in rag-picking for food, medicines and the older man's addictions.

Saroja and Rampyari have another of these unlikely unions of the streets. Rampyari is a widow from Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, proud of her Rajput origins. Her husband used to work in the railway police. He and her sons were killed in a murderous family feud, and Rampyari found her way to the courtyard of Hanuman Mandir in Delhi to survive on her own.

Saroja, on the other hand, dark skinned and of gaunt frame, fluent only in her native Telegu, is everything that Rampyari, with her surviving vestiges of upper caste and North Indian arrogance looks down upon. "I don't know what she is", Rampyari told us, "a Madrasi", she said disparagingly, "maybe an *isai* (a Christian). Maybe a *kasai* (disparaging term for a Muslim). Who knows?" But one day it happened that Saroja gave her tea. They began to take care of each other. Saroja called her mother, and their kinship was sealed.

Together, the two women set up a small way-side stall, under a large peepul tree on the pavement in front of what Rampyari described as that 'very tall glass building', the LIC sky-scraper in Cannaught Place. For years, they sold a variety of trivia – rudrakas from Haridwar, maps of India and Delhi, trinkets, flowers, and newspapers. The bulk of their clients were foreign tourists. They would return at night to sleep outside the Hanuman Temple. Sometimes worshippers would give them money. In winter, there were people who gave them blankets.

If there was one thing that women of the streets of Delhi are most frightened of, it is the van named after Gandhiji's ashram 'Seva Kuteer'. The van carries raiding squads that round up people who live by begging and incarcerate them in beggars' jails for up to three years. Women have to be alert and nimble on their feet to escape their periodic marauding. However, Rampyari is ageing and therefore has been twice jailed in 'Seva Kuteer' in recent years.

Saroja was distraught when I spoke to her because her 'mother' was in the beggars' jail, serving a one-year sentence. "We must find a way to get her out", she kept telling me. She visits Rampyari every week at the beggars' jail, and carries her favourite fruits and sweets, wrapped in the edge of her sari. She also smuggles in bundles of bidis (roll-up cigarettes) for Rampyari to smoke (a privilege for which she had to bribe the caretaker). With her characteristic stubborn resolve, Saroja even managed to meet the Chief Minister of Delhi, Sheila Dikshit, to petition her to release her old 'mother'.

Meanwhile, Saroja's fortunes have changed. Activists from an organisation for homeless people in Delhi, Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan, met the women in Hanuman Mandir over long nights for more than a year. The women said that what they wished most of all was the security and dignity of a roof over their heads. There was no shelter for homeless women anywhere in Delhi. The organisation joined hands with the YMCA and Bangla Saheb Gurudwara, and built a small shelter called 'Anugraha' for the women without any home. The gurudwara provides them food, the YMCA subsistence wage work in the vermin-culture pit.

For the forty women who have found an abode in Anugraha, it is the only home they have known for years. The facilities are austere, but together they keep it clean, their bundles of belongings neatly piled beside their floor mats. The walls are decorated with pictures of gods and places of worship of all faiths. The women still quarrel and grumble, but the mercurial violence outside Hanuman Manderi, which was integral to their daily lives is at bay. A few women have small children, who are now smothered and nurtured in this new sisterhood of sanctuary. Saroja Devi would be content, if only she could free her 'mother' and tend her in their new home.

"The best thing about Anugraha is that you can have within its walls a full night's undisturbed rest".

For all the years of their lives on the streets of Delhi, the women who live in Anugraha had stretched their wearied, abused bodies on dusty, grimy pavements, but every time they closed their eyes, the unspoken medley of terrors would never cease to loom: assault by drunken, unknown men, wandering policemen, the unending din of traffic of a city that never sleeps. The shelter in Anugraha above all assures her of a full night of unmolested, undisturbed sleep. There is today little more that she asks from life, except her mother's freedom.

Source: Mander (2004).

**SUMMARY: ALLIES OF THE PAVEMENT-DWELLERS**

Policy framework	International and national policies, which are pro-poor usually ignore the pavement-dwellers. The few programmes for this group of the urban poor are not implemented well
Programmes	Only one national programme in India – ‘night shelter and sanitation’ - reaches the pavement-dwellers and this covers less than 10% of the pavement dwelling population in India. A few NGOs are also working with these groups, mostly by providing shelter and basic facilities, whilst ActionAid is researching and campaigning on their behalf.

**3.7 Summary**

Pavement-dwellers comprise perhaps 2% of the urban population. This is a significant number of people and yet they are often outlawed by their countries and unsupported by their fellow citizens. Their lives are very vulnerable, especially those of the women and girls. Human beings like the rest of us, they are expected to survive without the necessities of life of shelter and security, that everyone else considers to be essential and takes for granted. They are ignored and despised, and yet most pavement-dwellers are employed. Only 20% are beggars, mostly the physically disabled.

Many of them came from untenable situations in rural areas and the conditions in the city do not even meet the low expectations they had when they migrated. They cannot return and they are unlikely to do much better for themselves if they stay put. Adult male pavement-dwellers are perhaps the least vulnerable, but life is still not easy for them on the streets. Everyone must find cash every day in order to survive. Girls, young boys and women are even more susceptible to violence and sexual abuse. Some of this occurs when they are looking for places to defecate or bathe in privacy. Girls, in particular, carry the most stigma from such traumatic experiences.

The few programmes for pavement-dwellers are generally poorly implemented. There is only one national programme in India, (the Night Shelter and Sanitation Programme) that covers 10% of the pavement-dwellers across the country. Some NGOs and religious organisations are also assisting. Most assistance is in the form of shelter and the provision of basic services. Still, without an address of their own, they are denied many things that they should be entitled to as citizens. Although they have no fixed abode, many of them do stay in the same neighbourhoods for years. Some projects have identified ways of giving them addresses, such as the lamp-post numbers in Delhi. This enabled pavement-dwellers to have ID cards and votes in elections. More effort needs to be given to providing these people with their basic rights to access basic services, including use of communal shower and latrine facilities.

## 4. HETEROGENEITY AMONGST THE POOR LIVING IN SLUMS

This chapter is based on in-depth qualitative research carried out over two years in 10 slum settlements in three countries: two slums in Dhaka and one in Chittagong, in Bangladesh; two slums and several squatter colonies in Andhra Pradesh, in India; and 3 slums in Nairobi, in Kenya.

In Bangladesh, the three slums - Beguntila<sup>28</sup>, Modherbosti<sup>29</sup> in Dhaka and New Shaheed Lane in Chittagong were selected in consultation with local NGOs working on a WaterAid Bangladesh, DFIDB-funded project. The three slum settlements in Nairobi, Maili Saba and Mukuru kwa Reuben in Dandora and Kianda in Kibera were part of ongoing ITDG projects and a DFID-supported water vending research project. In India, a random selection of slum settlements was made, guided by the official variations in the 'classification' of urban poor settlements. Vajpai Nagar in Quthbullapur Municipality in Andhra Pradesh is a 'notified' slum and included in the ongoing DFID-supported Andhra Pradesh Urban Basic Services for the Poor (APUSP) programme. Banjara Colony in LB Nagar Municipality is a long-established 'non-notified' slum. Squatter settlements chosen for research in both the municipalities include Ravinarayan Reddy Nagar, Krishna Nagar, Balaiah Nagar, Subhash Nagar and Sanat Nagar.

### 4.1 The extent of urban slums

There are various definitions of poverty. In Bangladesh, the urban poor are characterised officially by their low incomes, poor housing (typically but not exclusively in slums and squatter settlements) low access to services, occupation predominantly in informal sector, low-wage employments, low literacy, poor health status (high morbidity), high proportion of female-headed households and broken families. Official statistics (BBS, 2004) defines the urban poor as those with direct calorie intake of around 2,122 calories and less. There is also the concept of **hardcore poor** in Bangladesh - those who could not afford more than an intake of 1,805 calories. Other officially recognised measures of the urban poor include terminology like the 'floating population', 'homeless people', 'street dwellers', 'street children' (or *Toakis*) and vagrants.

The Government of Kenya follows the UN definition of poor as being 'those living on less than a dollar a day'. Additionally, the Ministry of Planning and National Development have recently developed a Welfare Monitoring System which draws from participatory and qualitative poverty assessments, ie letting the poor measure their own poverty. Other measures of poverty categorisation include:

(i) Food poverty set at 2,250 calories per day per adult in Kenya – a figure based on FAO/WHO recommendations for food consumption for specific age groups, calculated as the equivalent of Kshs927 per adult per month (rural) and Kshs1,254 in urban areas in

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<sup>28</sup> Beguntila has about 241 households, all Muslim, out of which there are 56 households headed by/run solely by females. Fieldwork was carried out from June 2003 to April 2004, with contact maintained with key individuals in the slum until October 2004.

<sup>29</sup> The total number of households in Modherbosti is 406; of these 89 are landlords and 317 are tenants. In Modherbosti, there were also female-headed households, numbering about 46 [of which 3 are landlords and the rest are tenants]. Approximately 20-25 residents in Modherbosti are disabled and survive entirely by begging.

1997. It follows that those who spend less than these amounts on food are considered to be food poor.

(ii) Absolute poverty derived by calculating food and non-food expenditure allowances. In 1997, it was estimated that those whose combined food and non food expenditures were less than Kshs1,239 per month per adult person in rural areas, and Kshs2,648 in urban areas, were poor.

(iii) Hardcore poverty – a figure based on total expenditure equivalent to food poverty. The implication here is that, even if people with this expenditure were to devote their entire spending to food, they would still not have enough to eat. In 1997, the Central Bureau of Statistics established this poverty line at KShs927 per month per adult person (rural) and Kshs1,254 in urban areas.

In India, there is a broad consensus that the minimum standard of living should include (a) a nutritionally satisfactory diet, a reasonable standard of clothing, housing and other 'essentials'; (b) access to a minimum level of education, health care, clean water supply and a sanitary environment. The income necessary for people to afford the elements constituting the first category defines the 'poverty line'. This concept of absolute poverty - a minimum level of income required to satisfy basic physical needs or in other words, the minimum subsistence level - varies regionally, however, a standard national figure is estimated and regularly updated by the Planning Commission of India, based on the rate of inflation.

Based on research findings we broadly classify three major locations in which people live in urban poverty in India. They are:

- Slums: officially recognised; including settlements approved for service provision/upgrading and settlements recognised but not qualifying for service provision/upgrading;
- Squatter settlements: unofficial, i.e. not recognised officially, low-cost housing on small tracts of lands;
- Pavements: unofficial places where homeless people stay.

This chapter attempts to introduce and give voice to the slum poor explaining what their lives are like and how poverty affects them. The details of how they meet their basic sanitation needs are contained in Chapter 5.

Slum settlements each have their own distinctive sub-cultures, power structures and politics and these are often determined by the slum's history and origins. Hierarchies exist within each slum. The place of an individual or household in that hierarchy is determined by income, power and social status.

There are higher and lower income households, more established and newer residents, landlords (richer and poorer, depending on their occupation), and tenants, who are usually at the lowest end of the hierarchy. The background of the creation of one of the slum settlements in Bangladesh provides useful insight.

Modherbosti was previously a garbage dump belonging to the Power Development Board, a government agency. Human habitation began in 1985, when menial staff of Dhaka City Corporation [DCC]<sup>30</sup> on such low salaries that they were unable to pay house rents, were granted permission from the municipal authorities to set up temporary shacks on the site. The initial households were DCC workers/staff.

<sup>30</sup> Dhaka City Corporation is a semi-government body – and their work involves the maintenance of Dhaka city; keeping it clean and collecting rubbish; maintaining roads and other infrastructure. The local Dhaka Mayor runs the DCC and is elected by the people of the city.

A more formal allotment of land/space<sup>31</sup> to these DCC workers happened subsequently. Although this did not provide secure tenure, it enabled the selling of plots to other persons, claiming to be relatives and friends of the original settlers. This has resulted in a mixed population of landlords, tenants; DCC staff and non-DCC staff; and as more people settled there, garbage dumping also gradually stopped.

In Nairobi, 69.3 per cent of the city's population live in slums on 5% of the city's land. This is a result of an unplanned and ill-managed urban growth fuelled by deepening rural poverty. Nairobi's 123 slums are growing in size and number but are not officially recognised by the government and therefore are not supported with services from the government. There are occasional, isolated and equally unplanned water and sanitation interventions by NGOs and other agencies but demand far outstrips provision. The congestion in some inner-city slums, such as Kibera, is as high as 1,200 people living on about 2.5 acres of land (480 people per acre, or less than 9m<sup>2</sup> per person). The population density and environmental degradation is often determined by distance from city centres, the population being more congested in inner city slums, and more dispersed in peri-urban areas.

In Bangladesh, Dhaka slum settlements [or busti] have become the dominant form of housing for the urban poor. Low income groups, constituting 70 per cent of the population, live on 20 per cent of the city's residential land (Islam, 1996). Approximately one third or 3.3 million of Dhaka's population, consisting of the poorest, occupy only 1,038 acres of land (4 sq km) (ie 3,179 people per acre or only a tiny area of about 1.3m<sup>2</sup> per person) or less than 1 per cent of Dhaka's total land area (Afsar, 2000).

Slums tend to be located near to the city centre, on land that is not being fully utilised. It may be land that is prone to flooding or that has been contaminated by garbage disposal or other types of pollution. Or it may be land where permanent buildings are planned but have not yet been constructed. Very often tenure is not secure for the slum dwellers. Most government authorities ignore the slum settlements and very often resist initiatives to improve services to the slum residents.

<b>SUMMARY: THE EXTENT OF URBAN SLUMS</b>	
Type	The slum poor are a mixed group of people, some are very poor and some are not-so-poor of all ages and of each sex. They may have stayed in the slum for any length of time; from just arrived to living a lifetime there.
Extent	70% of the urban population live in informal settlements (slums and squatter settlements) on very small proportions of the city's land in many cases. Population density is between 480 people per acre in Kibera, Kenya to 3,180 people per acre in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
Where	Slums and squatter settlements are found in urban areas on land not used for anything else, such as land prone to flooding, or land that is polluted, or land that is due to be built on.
How long	Slum dwelling is a long-term lifestyle for men and for women

<sup>31</sup> As DCC was part of the government, the municipal authorities were able to temporarily give land to its workers.

## 4.2 Occupations and income of the slum poor

Monetary income and expenditure is a necessary characteristic of urban life (Moser, 1998). Cash is needed at all times to pay for everything - water, food, rent, services. And yet reliable cash income is often out of reach for the poorest, who often lack the education or trained skills to get work in the formal sectors of employment. They tend to work as unskilled labourers in the informal sector, performing labour-intensive, stressful jobs for little pay and no other benefits of service (pension, sick pay, maternity or industrial hazard protection). There are more suitable people than jobs so that when a worker becomes sick, other workers are easily substituted.

The location of the settlement determines employment opportunities for its residents. Inner city slums have worse infrastructure and congestion but offer more jobs and higher wages. In Bangladesh, the contrast is sharply visible. Residents living in the out-of-town Beguntilla slum found many disadvantages to their location. It was newly established with no local government workers residing in the vicinity and away from the main markets. "Beguntilla is so far away. We cannot afford the rickshaw fare and walking back and forth to go to the main centres of Purobi and Mirpur takes about half an hour. If we are sick or feeling tired then we cannot walk so far..."

*Jainal (42 years old) was unable to establish his business of selling food in the nearby shops because he was new in the area and, because Beguntilla is located further away from the markets, none of the stall-holders knew him or trusted him.*

*One woman said, "I used to work as a temporary domestic maid in the New Market area, but after moving here there have been few opportunities and the salary is also very low."*

For women in Beguntilla, job opportunities are limited to garment factory workers<sup>32</sup> or domestic helpers. In contrast, in both Modherbosti and New Shaheed Lane, many women have these or other occupations, including DCC work [cleaners], construction labour, cooking in hotels, supplying water to the local market and shops, and acting as fruit and vegetable vendors inside and/or outside the slum.

Begging is the commonest occupation, especially amongst the poorest slum households. Eight households (amongst the 12 poorest in the Bangladesh research locales) depend primarily on earnings from begging on the streets. Elderly and disabled beggars tend to earn around Tk70 per day. The most vulnerable are young women who may be scolded for 'not engaging in work'. They earn around Tk20 per day through begging. Those who chastise do not understand how difficult finding reliable work is for these women. None of the interviewed household members 'enjoyed' begging. Most only resorted to begging when they perceived that no other opportunities existed. The 'label' of a beggar implies very low social status.

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<sup>32</sup> The largest industry in Dhaka, which comprises garment factories, primarily employs females. The garment industries offered employment for poor women who migrated from rural areas in search of employment. This is significant in the context of Bangladesh, where the cultural institution of *purdah* requires that women, apart from minor girls, remain secluded from contact with male strangers. Many studies document the inflow of poor rural women migrating from rural to urban areas, drawn to the factories for employment. Thus, in a country where *purdah* is important, the advent of garment factories helped create a first generation female labour force working outside the home. The number of jobs created is estimated at 1.8 million, with over 80 per cent held by women (Kabeer, 2001; UNICEF, 1999).



*Kuddus Miah (45) is blind. He came to Dhaka to train in a vocational training centre for the blind. He started work in a chalk factory – which closed down. Then he sold local medicines and sweets in a hand-cart assisted by his son. A volatile political rally in the city destroyed his cart and wares. He finally resorted to begging as he knows of few other options. His son now has a job in the garment factory.*

*In the wealth ranking discussions, Kuddus Miah's family are above the income levels of others in this wealth category. During much discourse it was decided that being a beggar prevented them from entering into a higher (poor) category. However, the others in the higher category did not identify themselves with Kuddus Miah's household because of the low social stigma attached to begging.*

*Morium (25), a mother of three young children, deserted by her husband, begs for their living and earns around Tk25 a day. She detests begging because she is abused every day for 'not finding work' when she is physically able. Morium knows no other options, "If I work full time, who will take care of the children? My mother works all day in a restaurant, washing utensils and grinding spices and earns around Tk40 per day. I want to find work in a garment factory and maybe my elder daughter can look after the young one. It would be a secure job if I could get it. I was working at one garment factory prior to the birth of my children. But even to do that, we needed to get a loan of around Tk400 to pay for our monthly expenses as we don't have savings and the factory wages come at the end of the working month." Morium had set up a 'peeta' [sweets] shop inside the slum but was unable to continue paying toll taxes to the mastaans who, along with other residents, often ate at her shop but did not pay. "In the slum, the more powerful people don't pay. People like me [female, very poor and without a male guardian] can say nothing. On top of that, we have to pay toll to all these people, boys, mastaans, and police for various activities. It just became too difficult for me."*

The earnings of non-begging households amongst the poorest are equally inadequate. Many in such households resort to occasional begging for food and money to make ends meet.

*Hajera, in her late 50s, works full-time all the days of the month, from 10am to 12 midnight, in her son's hotel as a helper. She cleans utensils, helps prepare and serve food. She is paid no money. Her son pays for her rent and any other expenses related to her housing (amounting to around Tk400 per month) and offers left-over food in the hotel. She eats some meals with her married daughter and in exchange buys gifts for the grandchildren. Her decision to live alone was taken after she was treated badly by her daughter and daughter-in-law when she tried living with them. Hajera can no longer work full-time elsewhere. Even if she had the energy, no one wants to employ an old woman. In her youth, as a young widow with 4 children, she worked as a housemaid, canteen caretaker and rag picker. She is wary of what will happen to her when she can no longer work. She notes that an elderly woman recently died due to starvation, in Modherbosti, and no one was there, not even her children who lived nearby.*

*Anowara Begum, in her late 60s, was begging on the streets, until she found employment as a part-time maid servant. The earnings are not significantly different, but Anowara decided it was better than begging. The family who have employed her have changed their attitude and no longer treat her badly, given Anowara's personal dignity and charm. Yet, she knows this 'kindly gesture' will not persist for too long if her health fails and she is unable to work so hard.*

Begum (1999) found that slum dwellers had comparatively higher *starting capital* from their own earnings, which they brought on migrating, compared to pavement dwellers, who started with lower amounts. 61 per cent of pavement dwellers were totally landless and 100 per cent were functionally landless, (i.e. owning less than 0.5 acres of land or uncultivable land) compared to 47 per cent slum dwellers. However, all the researched 100 pavement dwellers were found to be functionally landless. Begum found that many of those living on the pavements had made up their minds to beg when they made the decision to migrate to Dhaka. In contrast, no respondents in the slums had only thought of 'begging' when they had migrated to Dhaka.

#### 4.2.1 How is occupation gendered?

While economic and social conditions worsen for many, attitudes are defined by age-old cultures of patriarchy and purdah. Many of the women in all three research countries believe that the husband's role is that of breadwinner. Women aspire to remain at home and view work outside the home as an indicator of poverty and social indignity. This is not surprising, especially given that religion and local cultures define women's roles as child-rearers and family care-takers and men's roles as providers, protectors and authority-holders (Salway, Rahman, and Jesmin, 2003). This shows another dimension of purdah and the rigidly laid down sexual division of labour within households, which ideally means that indoor, household work is for women and outdoor work is for men (Adnan, 1993).

Equally, for men, sending women to work is a sign of poverty and incurs irreparable loss of personal prestige and family honour. A woman working is in conflict with gendered roles and identities, and also implies the inability of her man to fulfil his role as a provider (Kabir, 1998).

The cultural ideal of purdah has its roots firmly entrenched in notions of honour (izzat) of women (Adnan, 1993). Restrictions of purdah are defined by class, education and age. Adhering to purdah is not possible for the poor and the poorest women, whose social and economic conditions necessitate going out. Such women still try to observe purdah by covering their hair, body and face when they are out in the public domain.

*Razia Begum (35) has 8 children, including two adult sons (over 20 years) who work as rickshaw/van pullers and a husband who is employed as a casual labourer. "Thank God I do not need to go out to earn an income. I am lucky for that."*

*Shefali (30) used to work as drum beater, in a jatra (troupe), when she was young. Her husband Ali did not allow her to continue the work after their marriage. She managed to find work in the DCC as a cleaner. However, she does not perform her job. Her husband works for her.*

*Hajera (35) had not worked outside the home until her husband, Rashid (47) was arrested on gambling and alcohol charges and was jailed for two and a half years. On his release, Rashid had lost much of his strength and energy to work. He wishes for a job that is less physically tiring. He cycles a rickshaw-van nowadays, but can only manage a few hours on alternate days.*

*Hajera since then has worked as a domestic maid, daily labourer, brick-breaker and rag-picker. She now mends and sells second-hand clothes. She earns around Tk20-50 a day and Rashid earns around Tk100 on the days when he works. With their joint income, they struggle to keep the family of six children. Their eldest daughter Sharmin (15) was working with Hajera until Rashid's release from the jail. In preparation for her adolescence and marriage, the family have stopped her work outside the home.*

The urban labour market does offer employment opportunities for women as well as men. However, job sectors, levels and locations remain defined by gender. Wood (1998a) points out that most of the jobs open to women are as manual workers in the garment factories or as house-servants. Jobs requiring mobility and access to the public domain, such as in the transport sector [rickshaw pulling, baby taxi driving], skilled craft-work [carpet weaving, mosaic work], service and retail [shop/restaurants, hotels, grocery stores, barbers], and working in certain markets, which involve mobility and movement at night (Salway, Rahman and Jesmin, 2003) are in the masculine domain. It is men and young boys who congregate in teashops, roadside stalls and on the streets to meet, bond and form relations to politically operating networks, providing them with information and access to different spheres of the economy and helping them to mobilise resources during times of crisis (Islam et al, 1992; Opel, 1998). Access to such networking, a form of social capital, is usually obtained by men only, for themselves and their families (See Rashid, 2004; Wood, 1998a and 1998b).

*Hasna (mother of three children) has been working outside the home after her husband left her. Currently, she works in a nearby factory and has accepted a very low salary, only because she is able to come home and look after her daughters at lunchtime. She is still breast-feeding her youngest daughter. Hasna's dilemma is common for women with babies, especially if the husband is absent or the women cannot rely on their own family for support. Those who have childcare support (through the unpaid assistance of elderly and young family members) are able to work longer hours and earn more money. Women with babies or young children who do not have support at home, are forced to bring their children/babies with them while they work. Women with babies have to stop to breast-feed, yet employers complain of 'tired, crying babies' and are reluctant to re-employ such women. Women spoke of being physically and emotionally exhausted by the end of the day; but with few options in sight and a culture of absconding husbands, this is often the only way of managing their households.*

Women earn less than men, even doing the same work in the same occupations. As garment factory workers in Dhaka, women earn Tk700-950 per month, while men earn around Tk.3500. As vegetable vendors women earn up to Tk50 daily; men earn double this amount, partly as their travel is unrestricted.

*The gendered inequality in wage structures is so prominent that it influences even an entirely informal occupation such as begging. For example, women beggars on average earn Tk250 per week, compared to male beggars whose average earnings amount to Tk750 per week. Social constraints and safety issues make it difficult for women beggars to wander around the city, particularly in areas where they are unknown. In addition, there is competition among the beggars for space. Male beggars can be assertive and claim their own space to beg, whereas for women this is much more difficult.*

*Beggars have to rent the begging space for a fixed amount (a 'toll tax') from the mastaan and the police. The interaction of women beggars with these (male) mastaans and police is probably more difficult.*

Marital instability, reluctance of men to seek work and poverty combine to force women (and men) to forego purdah and cultural restrictions to work outside the home. Women are increasingly becoming economic actors within the household, and 'breaking the boundaries of permissible female behaviour' (Kabeer, 1989). Yet women continue to be punished for this and often face discrimination. Poor women are already overburdened with household responsibilities, childrearing and working long hours outside the home in order to manage their households. Any change in domestic circumstances can impact on

the work situation of the woman. If she falls pregnant, has a baby or has to look after children then she cannot go to work or is forced to find other work (Proshika, 1998). Women who have children are often forced to tolerate poor wages and the worst kind of jobs.

*Ismail Prodhan, a resident in Beguntila in Dhaka was reluctant to allow his wife to work, fearing it would impact on his reputation and prestige. He said, "So far in our family, women do not work outside the home...my wife's job is not to go outside the house to work. I work and I earn."*

*Many of the women who remain at home and carry out all the household chores remain undervalued by their husbands and family.*

*Asea (42) said, "I work so hard but my husband gives it no value. He comes home and says to me, 'what do you do all day? You do nothing?' I have no value, I cook, clean and shop at the bazaar. I bring the water."*

*Shahida (wife of Gias Mirdha in Beguntila) works all day, not only in the home but also helping her husband in the tea stall. She also does all the household chores, including cooking, cleaning and washing and collecting water. Shahida gets up at 5.30 am and then stays awake until midnight everyday to finish both the household chores and to work in the tea stall. However, when her husband speaks, it is of his business, his tea-shop. He doesn't acknowledge his wife's contribution or hard work.*

*Khadija (in her 40s) buys and sells vegetables. It is a male dominated job. She wakes up at dawn and walks with the men in the slum (akin to social protection) to catch the bus to the markets to buy vegetables. She claims that she has become used to travelling on buses 'filled with men pushing and shoving.' While Khadija is able to travel back and forth from the markets to buy vegetables, it is difficult for her to gain entry into the markets to sell her products. "I have to sell vegetables in the slum and not outside the slum in the market...if only I could, then I could make so much more money." Khadija's movements are constrained, not only because she is a woman, but also by the fact that she has small children and needs to stay near to the slum to care for them. Her husband works irregularly and refuses to take care of the household or the children.*

#### **4.2.2 Bribes and mastaans**

A common experience for slum residents in every country is the payment of tolls (bribes) to various influential people, in order to maintain their livelihoods. The Mastaan system in Bangladesh is the most extreme that was identified in the research. In Bangladesh, 'greater' indifference of the government to the existence of the urban poor has led to all slums being under the control of a group of men who appoint themselves as the leaders, referred to commonly as *mastaans*. There are many categories of leaders in the slum. There are the relatively harmless *mastaans* who control sections of one large slum, as well as hardened and convicted criminal *mastaans* who often control these smaller leaders. The *mastaans* have different levels of authority and hierarchy among themselves, depending on their economic and political networks. This was the case in all three slums we studied.

*Mastaans* usually have close links with politicians, municipal authorities, and the police in the neighbourhood to maintain their position. In turn, political parties rely on links with local *mastaans* for electoral support and re-election of particular candidates in a given locality (See Rashid, 2004; Wood, 1998a; Islam, 1996; Paul-Majumder et al, 1996). A *mastaan's* power base is further consolidated if the political party he belongs to forms the government (Rashid, 2004). A patronage relationship characterises slum politics, from

the slum up to local authorities and political parties<sup>33</sup> (Sobhan, 2002). Each slum is often under a 'slum committee' set up by the main political parties (ruling and opposition). In the slums, the influential men plot and negotiate with each other for power and ensure that they are part of the slum committees, which allows them to maintain networks within the political-economic structures and gain some advantages. Politicians maintain links with slum leaders to create more support for their party and to get them to do their dirty work, which may include intimidating opposition grassroots supporters, arms smuggling, drug trade and controlling the slum populations for votes (See also Rashid, 2004).

Evidence from a recent ethnographic study in the slums found that mastaans usually employ men and young boys to work for them in the slums. Unemployed youths and men, deprived of adequate housing and unemployed, become members of political gangs because it offers them power, money and status (See Rashid, 2004). For young men, prestige is now attached to fighting and having links with gangs and political parties. By joining political alliances, these men in the slum hope to gain access to power, status and prestige, as well as jobs and other special privileges for themselves.

*Ismail Prodhan (45 years old) living in Beguntila is not a leader but he is well connected with local politicians and is thus seen as influential. He confesses that his close links with the political leaders have resulted in better employment opportunities for his family. His daughter's marriage, which cost Tk.40,000, was mostly borne by the political leaders. His son is studying in high school and the party leaders have assured him that they will take care of all costs, including setting him up in a job.*

*Another example is that of Ruhul Amin (40) who has strong links with his cousins who are powerful local level Awami League (opposition party) leaders. Because of these links he managed to get accommodation for his son in the national University within 3 days. Most students need to wait six months or more to secure University accommodation.*

As the ruling party government changes, the political leaders of the slum committees are removed (sometimes violently). In some cases, leaders switch allegiances to survive. As one low-level mastaan in Beguntila explained, "we poor, what kind of politics can we waste our time on? Whoever is in government, they are the ones we follow!"

The mastaans also form and join the slum committees. There are several 'Scavenging (garbage collectors) Committees' of DCC workers in Modherbosti<sup>34</sup> consisting of a mix of influential political party members and landlords. Membership in the Committee is highly sought after, because by joining, one gains control of large amounts of resources, including access to land, jobs, and other amenities. It is reported that a person who becomes a member, especially a president, can earn up to Tk100 lakh (1 lakh =100,000) by collecting toll tax from the markets, from sellers, and collecting rent tax and bribes for jobs.

Power struggles in politics often lead to bitter fighting, not only among committee leaders who belong to rival political parties, but also among individuals within the same party. At the time of the fieldwork, Ratan, the president of the Panchayat committee in Modherbosti, (a BNP supporter), was murdered (see next text box).

<sup>33</sup> A recent newspaper report found that 60 per cent of Members of Parliament in the government have links with smuggling or criminal elements in the country (New Age, 2004).

<sup>34</sup> There are six city corporations all over the country, among them Dhaka City Corporation is the largest, comprising 9,000 staff. The Scavenging Committee has elections after every two years. Scavenging Committees' overall work is to solve the problems of the 4<sup>th</sup> class employees of DCC, drivers, cleaners, sweepers, mosquito clearing persons and garbage collectors.

The fallout from this murder was great and several relatives, including tenants and others closely associated with the accused were affected.<sup>35</sup>

*After the murder of Ratan, his brother took over the Panchayat Committee, and took revenge on both of the accused men, Mannan and Nobu, whose homes were looted. All of Mannan and Nobu's tenants were asked to leave within 24 hours. A number of people, particularly relatives who had purchased homes from Mannan and Nobu and their tenants, were harassed and in some cases kicked out of the slum. A large number of families who were seen as closely linked (either related or involved in his politics) to the accused were forced to pay large amounts of cash in bribes in order to remain in the slum. The new leaders are said to have collected close to Tk25,000. Owning homes and purchasing homes is big business in the slum. There is much money to be made. This leads to regular fights among political leaders not only from rival groups, but also from people within the same party.*

The leaders in these slums, whether as committees and/or individuals, are commonly in charge of holding justice courts (*Shalish*) in all three slums. This process is open to much abuse, as the leaders punish whoever they deem fit. Residents were commonly upset and suspect that fines are pocketed in these informal courts and punishments and beatings given to innocent members in the community. According to one Beguntila resident, "Whoever has paid the most money wins the '*shalish*' (justice)." There are many incidents of poorer residents who suffered from injustice because of biased decisions.

*Mouri (single and in her 20s), in Beguntila, was forced to walk around the slum with a garland of shoes around her neck<sup>36</sup> after a fight with a richer neighbour, with whom the leaders took sides.*

*In New Shaheed Lane there was a separate Hindu Committee that oversaw all '*shalish*' matters for the Hindu members in the slum. It was obvious that the Hindus had adopted a common Muslim practice, however it was not clear how autonomous the leaders of the separate Hindu Committee were and whether they were controlled and dominated by the Muslim leaders in the slum. Observations reveal that Hindus living in the slum referred to God as '*Allah*' [Muslim name for God] and regularly attended religious Muslim gatherings – Mazars.<sup>37</sup> It is unclear whether this was because of fear or genuine solidarity and rapport with the Muslim community.*

Mastaans affect everyone in the slums. In both the small and large bazaars beside Modherbosti, all shopkeepers must pay at least Tk5 daily to leaders as a toll, in order to run their business.

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<sup>35</sup> Sometimes rivalry between groups results in leaders attacking each other's women family members. Two years ago, rival *mastaans* kidnapped each other's sisters, locking them up overnight and only releasing them the next day. As a result the reputations of both girls were tainted, as they had spent a night away with male strangers. One woman explained, "we don't know what happened to Asma's daughter. The next day they dropped her off, ruining her reputation. We don't know if the girl was raped...but she left the slum soon after and married someone from outside the slum."

<sup>36</sup> Wearing a garland of shoes is the worst form of insult for Muslims – shoes are dirty and therefore seen as polluting.

<sup>37</sup> People meet, sing devotional songs and listen to preachings.

*Shefali (living in Beguntila) set up a tea stall a number of years ago near New Market, a popular city market. She had to pay Tk25 daily just to be able to ply her trade. To make matters worse, the local boys in the slum robbed her of daily earnings once. "Apa I was standing here with my money and then some of these boys came up to me and said, 'Give it to us and I was too scared so I handed over the money to them. What can we do? I am so scared [she is whispering] – you see that house [another home], all the boys hang out there [it is locked most of the time] and they are all criminals. They do all sorts of things during the day and at night they come and hide here."*

In Beguntila, some of the slum dwellers cultivated vegetables in the empty spaces near the slum. Initially this venture met with resistance from the local mastaans who demanded toll tax money. Now some of the poorer residents pay a weekly or monthly fee to 'certain individuals' and are allowed to use some of the empty space near their homes for growing vegetables to sell in the markets. Bribes and toll tax are paid to the police and government authorities as well as the mastaans and slum leaders.

Officials also extort money for various jobs/favours for the poor. Many take bribes in exchange for promises to organise jobs. The stories of the residents reveal exploitation, desperation and powerlessness. For example, a repeated complaint was the payment of large amounts of bribes, Tk40,000 or more, for permanent jobs (e.g. garbage collector, DCC cleaner), with no guarantees of any favours.

*Jamila (living in Moderbosti) says, "I would like to have a job in the DCC as a cleaner but I need to pay a Tk30,000 bribe to the authorities to get the job. Where will I get such a large sum of money? And even if I did pay, I may not get the job. Who can argue with the leaders?" It is common knowledge that the Ward Commissioner provides a reference for the individual in exchange for a fee, and pulls some strings, making the entry of the individual into the workforce a little bit easier.*

Powerful men can provide leverage.

*Honufa's son is a local mastaan and is well connected. Her son has now become her guarantor. With his backing, she has set up a restaurant/shop in the local market and sells food. No one dares misbehave with Honufa.*

The micro-politics of the slums, particularly the dominance of mastaans, is linked to and reflects the macro-level situation of national politics in the country. In Dhaka, when the BNP Party took over, after they won the national election, violence and gun-fights occurred between rival mastaans and their supporter gangs to gain territorial and financial control in the new political environment. This included fights to gain control over petty trades (including narcotics) and extortion of residents and service providers at bus stations, streets and slums.

Even low-paid, insecure jobs are fought over and may only be secured through the social networks of relatives, friends, neighbours, employers and mastaans (Kabir, 1998). Many slum residents have to pay bribes to labour brokers, mastaans and local politicians to obtain employment. Poor workers often face unfair dismissal, remain underpaid and exploited; subservient to their employers and middlemen, whether they are mastaans, labour brokers or local politicians. Most of the poor have low wages and insecure jobs.

### 4.2.3 Incomes

In all the three countries, secure income is the key poverty indicator identified by the respondents and is affected by gender, age and access to social and political networks.

The 'poorest' usually have only one primary income source while the 'poor' have multiple incomes, but not secure incomes. Even the 'not-so poor' do not have secure incomes (only 2 out of a researched group of 6 households had a secure job). The 'poorest' and 'poor' depend on children's employment. Children from the 'poorest' families are minors when they start work, while those in the 'poor' households are adolescents. The income of the children makes a significant contribution to the family income.

*Vavilala Sandhya's husband in India was born blind, but the couple have used the disability to their best advantage. For several years, he sang in trains and stations as a beggar, while Sandhya did different jobs and now works as a housemaid. The couple managed to have all 6 of their children educated, with some being admitted in schools run by missionaries and orphanages. The eldest children are now home after completing secondary education. The eldest son is an auto-driver. The younger two are attending government sponsored computer education.*

*Hosna Ara (20) was divorced by her husband and currently lives with her elderly parents in New Shaheed Lane, Chittagong. She works in a garment factory and earns around Tk2500 per month. The work hours are long, but the factory is nearby and amongst the few which awards a 2-day paid holiday per week. She was offered a better-paid job in an insurance company, but declined the offer, as it was located too far away. Her 60 year old father, Raja Mia, was a rickshaw puller. He can only work for 2-3 hours a day now, as he is old and gets exhausted quickly. He earns around Tk60-70 per week. Her mother, Shakhina, in her 50s, used to work as a domestic help, but has discontinued her job in order to look after Hosna's 4 year old son. Her younger sister, Minu, is 15 and mentally disabled. She works as a part-time domestic help and is paid just Tk100 per month.*

*Currently the household income is adequate for day-to-day living, but not for unforeseen expenses. Hosna Ara took a loan of Tk2,000 to treat her mother for an eye problem. They have discontinued the treatment as the total cost amounts to Tk20,000, which is far more than the family can arrange.*

In Bangladesh, men link poverty to poor networking, lack of jobs and loss of social prestige in the public sphere, while women link it to the absence of support of a male guardian (Rashid, 2004), be he a husband, son or uncle. Men do not see women as integral to their poverty situation, whereas women see men as integral to their survival, thus reflecting the gendered structure of society and the insecurity of women (Rashid and Mannan, 2004).

The livelihoods and incomes of the poorest are inadequate and unpredictable and poverty may affect them for generations. While disability and old-age forces men living on their own and married couples into extreme poverty, destitution can occur for women of any age or physical condition. The poorest include many single-women headed or women-only households. Forced into the most constraining of situations, the poorest households are impacted severely by the slightest of calamities.



**SUMMARY: OCCUPATIONS AND INCOMES OF THE SLUM POOR**

Why stay	Most migrate from rural locations where their lives have become untenable. Many expected to live in the slums. Some were born there.
Employment	Most slum residents are employees. Only 0.7% are beggars (mostly the physically disabled) and less than 5% are unoccupied; about 10% are 'self-employed' (data from Bangladesh national census, 1997). Many of the occupations are determined by social networks (including mastaans). Women's occupations are more limited to being inside the home, while men's occupations are more outside and external to the slum.
Income	The average slum resident earns the equivalent of a dollar a day. The research divided the slum residents into three income groups – poorest, poor and not-so-poor.

**4.3 What is life like for people living in urban slums?**

The existence of the poorest is rife with violence, discomfort and human indignity. Those of the not-so-poor still have a life of violence, but with a little more comfort and dignity. Scarcity of land in the city and inability to access affordable housing, and no government policy and/or plans for the urban poor, means that most urban poor residents are 'illegal' residents on vacant, 'unused' land. Overcrowding and unhygienic environments characterise slum environments. Narrow lanes, poor sanitation and drainage, overflowing sewage, hazards caused by waste dumped nearby, group rivalries and clashes linked to national and local politics, and stressful conditions aggravated by chronic poverty shape the lives of the urban poor. Viewed as illegal trespassers by the government, they do not have legal and adequate access to basic resources, such as land, electricity, water, gas, and adequate drainage and sewerage.

As part of this study, researchers facilitated discussions on perceptions and experiences of poverty. These are summarised in the table below. Conditions for those living in the slums in India, Bangladesh and Kenya are remarkably similar, despite wide variations in policy and institutional contexts.

Observations in the slums reveal that increasing poverty, limited resources and the need to survive, all wear away traditional family support structures and relations become strained. Slum households are in a fragile form of unity, with different members taking advantage of economic and social opportunities to their personal benefit. Narratives reveal that these fractured relations affect the children and the elderly most.

**4.3.1 The lives of the poorest**

***Children***

Even living within the same slum settlement, the lives of children are vastly different between households, and by gender. The children in the poorest households, with poor economic, human and social capital, are likely to carry their childhood poverty into their adult lives and into their own children's lives.

Of the 12 researched households in the 'poorest' category in Bangladesh, 10 had minor children (15 years and below). Three of these 10 households had both parents present

and 7 (out of 9) school-age children (5 years and above) attended school. In contrast, of the 7 women-headed households, only 7 children attended school out of a total of 13.

However, the schools that these children attend are NGO-run informal sessions, which often:

- do not progress beyond the primary level;
- have irregular school timings;
- have constant staff replacement and no links to the national curriculum.

This means that there is little scope for these 'schooled' few to become functionally educated.

Perceptions and experiences of poverty among respondents

Household categories	Bangladesh	India	Kenya
<b>Poorest</b>	<p><b>Who:</b> Beggars, widows, elderly and the disabled Female-headed households with small children and without any male support</p> <p><b>Livelihoods:</b> Households with a number of unemployed members No secure income (e.g. erratic employment, daily labourers, begging) Are dependent on others</p> <p><b>Key characteristics:</b> Have one meal a day (if lucky) Have no education compared to others Cannot send children to school Tension within household relationship/absence of male member and/or adult children More minor children within the household</p> <p><b>Assets:</b> No social capital No political linkages Less empowered</p> <p><b>Basic services:</b> Reduced access to basic facilities (water and sanitation, electricity, access to health services etc.) No assets or few assets (no land, house etc.)</p>	<p><b>Who:</b> Elderly, orphans, widows with large families, Widows with chronic illnesses and no support Beggar women</p> <p><b>Livelihoods:</b> Totally depend on others, insecure labour and unskilled</p> <p><b>Key characteristics:</b> Eat one meal a day with difficulty Search for the meal Chronically ill</p> <p><b>Assets:</b> No support Have no homes of their own</p>	<p><b>Who:</b> Single women living alone, women-only households; the elderly and disabled; households with one or more members having HIV-Aids; large families, with several small children</p> <p><b>Livelihoods:</b> Insecure employment, casual daily labour; illicit business, eg commercial sex; labour intensive, eg breaking stones</p> <p><b>Key characteristics:</b> Look poor, wear torn, dirty clothes; smell; often illiterate; personal stress resulting in abnormal, often self-damaging behaviour; children roam about in the streets, do not attend school</p> <p><b>Assets:</b> Mostly rented homes; tiny rooms, inadequate for the family sizes; few or no household assets</p> <p><b>Basic services:</b> Reduced access to water, quality not assured; take fewer baths to control water costs; share toilets with neighbours, friends</p>
<p><b>Less poor</b> Includes those who do not have secure income and wholly depend on their physical labor. If they cannot work they cannot eat.</p>	<p><b>Who:</b> Belong to the socially less important class Mostly consist of a male/female partnered family More minor children in the household</p> <p><b>Livelihoods:</b> Not all adult members in the household work Insecure income (eg, petty business, garment workers Rickshaw/van pullers (not owners of rickshaws) Day labourers Self-employed, vendors</p> <p><b>Key characteristics:</b> Cannot have three meals a day Are dependent on others Have no or little education Children do not pursue education beyond primary level Tension within household relationships</p>	<p><b>Who:</b> Women-headed households with large families to support Physically handicapped but supported by family</p> <p><b>Livelihoods:</b> Large families to support with single male earning members Informal, occasional workers, as house maids, rickshaw pullers, beneficiaries of old age pension, wig makers</p>	<p><b>Who:</b> Large families with both adults working One earning member</p> <p><b>Livelihoods:</b> Hawkers (known locally as jua kali); riverside farming; earn slightly more than the poorest HHs, but jobs and/or incomes are insecure</p> <p><b>Key characteristics:</b> Relatively fewer children; most young children attend school, but cannot continue education up to secondary level</p>

	<p><b>Assets:</b> Mostly rented house No social capital, poor networks inside and outside the slum No political linkages</p>		<p><b>Assets:</b> A small number of house-owners; most rent; house conditions slightly better than the poorest</p> <p><b>Basic services:</b> Can afford safe drinking water, but not adequate water; most own their own pit latrines, the condition of which is not hygienic</p>
<p><b>Not-so poor</b></p>	<p><b>Who:</b> Belong to the socially respectable class, includes locally powerful individuals, mastaans, rich landlords Leaders of the slum/ respected by all</p> <p><b>Livelihoods:</b> Household with a high number of working members Have secure income (e.g., landlords, secure labour-DCC/railway workers; government workers, permanent jobs, drivers of private companies, family members abroad sending money)</p> <p><b>Key characteristics:</b> Can have three meals a day Have some education compared to others Good household relationship Less minor children within the household Send children to school</p> <p><b>Assets:</b> Less dependent on others Strong social capital, strong networks inside and outside the slum Strong political linkages Some assets (better housing, TV, radio, beds, furniture, valuable utensils, good clothes, some jewellery, poultry, etc.)</p> <p><b>Basic services:</b> Have basic facilities in the household (water and sanitation, electricity, access to health services etc)</p>	<p><b>Who:</b> Leaders of Colony Association</p> <p><b>Livelihoods:</b> Business Permanent, assured income earners: municipal workers, community volunteers, teachers and helpers of local schools Seasonal employment, for some members of the households</p> <p><b>Key characteristics:</b> Can have three meals a day Educated people Project/scheme beneficiaries Able to take substantial loans</p> <p><b>Assets:</b> Own house Basic assets: TV, radio, beds, furniture, valuable utensils, good clothes, some jewellery, poultry, etc and in some cases own vehicles (two-wheelers)</p> <p><b>Basic services:</b> Good quality houses with functioning private toilet Beneficiaries of Vambay (housing scheme without taking extra loan)</p>	<p><b>Who:</b> Local leaders, money lenders, church group leaders</p> <p><b>Livelihoods:</b> Small retail shops, sell vegetables, water vendors, landlords, more often with secure livelihoods</p> <p><b>Key characteristics:</b> Children attend private schools; known as Mdozi (rich and those with status); often known to be arrogant</p> <p><b>Assets:</b> Own land, houses and even commercial plots; houses constructed with cement, stone and bricks, with radios, televisions, tables, chairs, beds, fans etc.</p> <p><b>Basic services:</b> Able to afford water for most domestic needs; have water delivered to home; have own ventilated pit latrines</p>

*None of the 150 or so children respondents in the researched squatter settlements in LB Nagar, India go to school. Neither has any vidya volunteer<sup>38</sup> or NGO approached the residents with plans for informal education classes. The adolescents have lively, but angry looks. They know that they are on the bottom rung of the socio-economic ladder in Hyderabad, and they don't like it. They know that they will remain on this rung because they have no postal address, no secure home, no education, no vocational training and no capital (social, economic nor political). However they do not stop hoping. Unlike their elders, they are not resigned to their fates. They see movies where they identify with the young angry heroes. When asked why they don't take up other occupations, they are bitter, "We are here today, and maybe evicted and somewhere else tomorrow. How can we pursue a meaningful vocation?" They understand that their community has slid down the social scale into rag-picking. The history of their ancestors as musicians, creators of beautiful melodies, is not visible to them. They are simply the dregs of this metropolis, fighting with dogs to scavenge garbage.*

Most of the children from fractured families in Bangladesh are functionally illiterate and go through enormous social and mental trauma.

*Rubel has never been to school. "I do not like my job. I work long hours and there is no time for play. Further, my employer beats me for small mistakes. But if I don't accept this job, where will we get the money to survive."*

Girl children of fractured families are especially vulnerable. They are given away in marriage to even poorer men and have very limited social networks and/or little capital to negotiate when their marriages fail. Many of the single women living in acute poverty are those who began their lives in poverty. The cycle repeats itself.

*Shefali (42) a resident in Beguntilla, came to Dhaka with her widowed mother when she was 6 years old. Shefali's husband, a rickshaw puller, deserted her with two young daughters then married again. She married off her two daughters. Her daughter Morium (25) and two girl children were deserted by her husband.*

*Parul (38) in Modherbosti, left her village home at an early age with her sister, to locate her father in Dhaka. Her father had deserted the mother and the two young girls. She found her father but he refused to keep her in his house. Left to fend for herself (perhaps, going back was not an option or a worse option for her) she worked as a housemaid and was married to an orphan boy by her 'master's' family. "I had a very rough marriage. My husband left me to remarry several times, yet kept coming back to me when he wanted. Finally, I divorced him." Parul's 3 children work alongside her as garbage collectors. Parul desperately tries to get them time and inspiration to attend an NGO-run school, which is functional only up to the primary level for 3-4 hours a day. This is the only hope for her eight year old daughter's life to be better.*

In Bangladesh, religion permits remarriage for both men and women, however, the social terms of the contract are different. While men can choose to leave or include the children from their initial marriages, women cannot usually take their children into their second marriages. This 'baggage' is not tolerated by their new husbands.

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<sup>38</sup> Vidya volunteers are private persons contracted temporarily by the department of education to schools, as the initiation of privatisation in the state-funded education sector. Wherever there were vacancies in permanent posts, a vidya volunteer (usually an unemployed person with a high school pass) was appointed at a monthly wage of Rs1,200- Rs1,500 (US\$26-32) per month. In remote areas and villages, the regular government teacher who stays in the town rarely comes to teach. It is the untrained vidya volunteer who runs the school.

*Shaghor (8), the grandson of Anwara and Ashghar; Sumon (10) and Rajan (7) the grandsons of Kulsuma; and, Tania (10) and Beauty (8) granddaughters of Nurjahan – were all children whose mothers had not been able to ‘accommodate’ them in their second marriages. They are fortunate because they have the love and care of their grandparents, who are struggling even to support themselves.*

*Tania and Beauty call their mother ‘aunty’. They are torn between their love for her and their grandmother’s beatings if they go to visit her.*

*Shagor (8) in Beguntilla in Dhaka was abandoned by his mother. On one occasion, his father stole him away from the grandparent’s home, where he lives. Shagor’s cries aroused suspicion amongst neighbours, who beat up his father and returned him ‘home’ to his grandparents.*

*Ibrahim (11) was deserted when his father left his mother (Parul) and brother and sister. Ibrahim is the middle child, and filled with remorse. “He has married again. Don’t we feel bad? People speak ill of that. When he comes here, he beats my mother senseless and takes money from her. Once he beat her with a sharp weapon (boti). Then for the first time, I hit him three times with the same weapon. He left, shouting at me. He’s come here several times since but we tell him to leave. We lose something each time he comes. He took away the money we saved to buy some land, he took our broken TV for repair and later told us he’d sold it. Our landlady is nice now when he comes. She does not allow him even to enter the compound. Ma (mother) loves us; she feeds us by doing so much hard work.” There is much love and affection between the three children and their mother.*

The incomes of the poorest households include young children’s employment at home and outside. Education and recreation is thus ruled out for this category of children, who are aware of their ‘extra responsibilities’ from an early age.

*Morium’s daughter, Shawpna (7) already takes care of many tasks at home when she is not begging alongside her mother. If her mother finds work in a garment factory, Shawpna will be working full time at home. There is no opportunity for her brothers. Shumon (10) and Rajan (7) must find employment as soon as they can. For the moment they help gather firewood and vegetables and are just too dirty and hungry to attend school. Shawpna, Shumon and Rajan all assist in housework, they help fetch water from the road, sweep the one-room huts, and wash utensils as well as carrying out other domestic chores.*

*Nur Alam Rubel (12) works full time in a tailoring shop and is paid Tk150 per week and a festival bonus of Tk300 once a year during Idd. He helps the tailors in their work and also walks for an hour each day, fetching lunch for his employer from his home. Rubel hates the work. He feels tired, is often beaten up and bullied. Yet, he says, “If I don’t work, how will we survive?” Deserted by their father (and in time, an elder brother) Rubel supports his 45 year old mother who begs for a living. His elder sister is married to a drug addict and this is another cause of tension for the family.*

*Intra-generational poverty is visible and evident here. Hosna Ara (20) of New Shaheed Lane does not remember her childhood with joy. She began work early in an export fish-processing factory, where nimble fingers are required for sorting and cleaning shrimps and other small fish. “My fingers would be numb as we sat all day in an icy-cold storage unit.” She shifted as soon as she could to a garment factory. Back in her parent’s home*

*with a young daughter, after being deserted by her husband, Hosna is once more working in a garment factory and looking after her aging parents.*

Slums in Bangladesh, including Beguntala are devoid of girls during the week. To find them, one must visit on a Friday, when the slums are filled with the missing girls. These are the workers in Bangladesh's garment factories. They work 6 days a week, throughout the year in menial positions (Wood, 1998a).

*"We would love to study again, to be able to read and write. This might get us better jobs, but even if it doesn't we still want to be able to read and write...It is so unfair, people like you can study. You live in clean places, your homes are clean and then you get good jobs and your lives get better. We are stuck here in this small, dark, dirty place, no toilets, no water, bathing in these dirty ponds...we feel there is no escape from this. We will soon be married and being poor girls, our husbands will be equally poor and we know we will go on living this life and face the same problems wherever we go..." said Majeda, a young girl in Beguntala, Dhaka.*

## **Women**

In all three research countries women-headed, women-only households tend to be the poorest, especially elderly women living alone and/or with minors, and destitute women, both young and old, deserted by husbands and/or adult children. In India, the examples indicate that official schemes for the urban poor do not reach them, even though they are intended for them.

Marital disruptions are traumatic for women, even when dependence on male income is low. Many of the women in the slum spoke of the insecurity of living without males. Unattached, single and deserted women suffer from a culturally ambivalent status in the absence of a designated male partner, making them vulnerable to uninvited sexual advances (Jesmin and Salway, 2000; Rashid, 2004). Many women remarry or find a partner in order to manage their households and provide social and physical capital. Only 'lesser men' marry such women and so this is degrading and sometimes results in a worse situation than if they had not remarried. However, poverty is not neatly segregated within households. There are many trapped by income and emotional poverty within the household.

*Rita, in her late teens, is the seventh (!) wife of Jalil (45) and lives together with Jalil and his first wife Shanti in a small one-roomed hut in Beguntala. Jalil has married seven times to date, but is still unable to leave his first wife, Shanti, while the other 5 wives have all been deserted. Shanti provides him a home which she rents and manages entirely with her own earnings. In Shanti's home Rita faces severe abuse, "This girl who was crying and said that she has no shelter and a home, I adopted her so she would help me in the household chores, as I used to work long hours outside the home. Initially, she called us (her husband and her) mother and father. But last year my husband married her. They went to live in another slum for a couple of months, but finally my husband begged me to allow them to come back home. With all my frustrations I allowed them."*

*Rita sleeps on the floor, Shanti sleeps on the single bed and Jalil moves in between. Shanti does not blame Jalil, "My husband is good looking; he looks like a ripe mango. I have tried to leave him but he will not accept it."*

*Rita works as a domestic maid and earns TK400 per month. "Jalil keeps all that money. He gives me Tk2 or so if I want to buy something." Rita has now been instructed to cook and eat separately, while Jalil eats with Shanti. Jalil sometimes gives Rita Tk20 per day*

to buy food. She says, "It is not enough. I do not eat when I don't get the money from him. I often try to eat at my employer's place. Jalil and Shanti take all my salary. I sometimes clean toilets for others and earn an extra Tk20-30 that month."

Rita's parent died while she was small. Her paternal uncle brought her to Dhaka and put her in a house as a housemaid when she was 8 or 9 years old. Rita's master's house was robbed and the police were called. Innocent but frightened of getting caught by the police, she ran away from the house with the help of another servant. The servant left her alone, taking away all her belongings. That was when she met Shanti. She says, "Before I realised what was happening, Jalil's relatives convinced me to marry him. I do not have any place to go. I do not even know anyone in this world to turn to. I am afraid of losing this connection, so I accepted. I will be happier if I could marry someone young who really cared about me. My husband does not beat me, but he keeps all my money and does not want to leave his first wife. Sometimes he has a meal with me, especially when he's had a fight with his first wife. His daughter, who is as old as me, lives with children in the same neighbourhood. I don't think I can have children."

Pointing to his two wives, Jalil says quarrels do take place sometimes. But he comments that it is not a problem, certainly not his problem.

Women may not personally see the need for a marriage alliance, but this may be enforced by the wider society, who religiously monitor and determine appropriate female sexuality.

Murshida (40) living in New Shahid Lane in Chittagong, had a disastrous first marriage. Her husband, unknown to her, was a 'professional' thief, who after deserting her, stole their only child from her. "I lost my sanity wondering what he had done with the boy. I went to my husband's village to search for him, but was driven away by his relatives." Gathering her life again, she started work in a packaging factory. But the slum leaders were not pleased with her 'single existence'. She was forced to marry again and though she made it clear that she did not want to marry a 'married' man, she found much later on that her second husband was married and with children.

Apart from occasionally visiting her and in the process, giving her insignificant cash and three children to rear, she has had no other support from him. On his last trip, he asked for and took away all her savings. She cannot work full time as there is no one to care for the youngest, a three-year old. She assists her eldest son Rubel (11 years) to collect and sell garbage. She says, "I am married for name's sake." This union apparently satisfies the slum leaders who have looked no further.

The situation is the same in Kenya:

Grace Wanjiku, in her mid 30s, was left by her husband for another woman. She left home with her six children and came to Kenya. With considerable struggle, Grace now runs a small shop selling around 100 cups of 'githeri' (maize and beans) each day. Her major expenses include house rent (the shop is run from the home), food, clothing, water, paraffin and medicines. There is little money to do anything else. Because she was left by her husband she no longer gets any assistance from him.

It is often a no-win situation for women. Rehana (45) of Modherbosti in Dhaka, decided to rebel against the patriarchy. However, this has not helped her.

Rehana's husband was a Habilder (constable) in the police department and had a good income. "I was working in the custom section of the post office as a cleaner. My starting salary was Tk900 and reached Tk3,000. I had a well-furnished house with everything, TV,



*fan, bed, cabinet etc. As a working woman, I employed a female domestic help. My husband ended up marrying her. I felt disgusted and decided to leave him immediately with my children, to teach him a lesson. But that was my mistake. Now I beg for a living and they live in comfort. I filed a suit against him and still it is unresolved because he bribed for that.”*

In India, the social pressure of marrying young daughters and providing dowry is equally evident on both the rich and the poor. It often leads to irreparable poverty.

*Lazi is in her early 60s but looks much older than her age. She and her husband had no children of their own and they adopted a daughter. Before her husband died, they ran a tea-shop and saved enough money to construct a small house of their own on land distributed by the government. When they married their daughter, they gave away the home to her husband as dowry, however the expectation was that the couple would be allowed to stay in the home during the course of their life. Not many years later, her daughter was murdered by the groom’s family (dowry death). Lazi was unable to pursue the case further, especially as her husband was no longer alive. Her son-in-law then ousted her from the home. Lazi lives in a make-shift house.*

*Another tea-shop has been opened in the area with the support of the community leaders, which has drastically cut down her business. She survives on the mercy of neighbours who give her food in return for petty work. “Some send me food occasionally, thinking that I might just die otherwise.” From the dowry to the dowry death, all are prevented by law, which is simply out of reach for poor women like Lazi.*

*Yet, extreme poverty defies social pressure. A first indicator of upward mobility amongst migrant tribal communities is the exchange of the traditional practice of bride price<sup>39</sup> for the mainstream culture of dowry. The continued practice of bride-price amongst the Budige Jangams in a squatter colony near Lingoiguda shows the absence of upward social mobility. Venkatiah paid Rs1,500 two years ago to his father-in-law for his wife; he had to spend even more for the food, festivities and liquor.*

### **The elderly**

The places, names, religions are different, yet the lives are strikingly similar. Not only do the case studies indicate high vulnerability of the elderly, but there is also an increasing burden on them to foster and care for children in deteriorating family relations and structures. This is also reported elsewhere (CPRC, 2004-05).

Old age is an added burden for the poorest. Being a man or having an old, infirm husband makes little difference to someone’s economic security.

*Papamma (55) lives in Vajpai Nagar settlement in Quthbullapur, Andhra Pradesh. She and her husband migrated here three decades ago in search of work. She has worked as a construction labour all her life and moved into the slum 17 years ago. She was allotted a plot of land in the slum as were others. Her husband left her but with a little support from her brother, she managed to build a house. Later she lost his support due to strained relations with her sister-in-law. Unable to manage her life with her meagre*

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<sup>39</sup> The giving of dowry by the bride’s family was traditionally a practice only amongst upper castes in India. In the last few decades, there has been a dramatic spread of the ‘dowry culture’, so much so, that only the poorest are free of its dragnet. The recent spread of dowry is considered an indicator of upward mobility and adoption of upper-caste (better) norms, but in principle, indicates the lowered status of women and girls, and their relative expendability.

earnings, she incurred huge debts and had to hand over her house to her creditors. "I took a loan from someone I know in the colony, using this house as security. I lost the house in the process. I stayed on for about a year and paying Rs250 rent in my own house!"

Papamma presently works as a housemaid in two houses, both located a considerable distance from her home, and earns about Rs500 a month. She gets one meal from her employers and in the evenings cooks at home. Her brother sends her about 20-25kgs of rice once or twice a year. This is not sufficient and many times she has to sleep with an empty stomach. She has to beg sometimes when she is not able to bear her hunger. She adds, "I will be here as long as possible and when 'the body becomes soft' (unable to work due to old age) I will have to go back to my home village."

Resham Enkamma (70) died a few weeks after the researchers talked to her. When the researchers met her, she was resting on a cement platform in front of the neighbour's house. She was very frail and wept throughout the conversation. She lived with her widowed and sick daughter-in-law, who works as a housemaid and also has a child to support. They have been allotted land and selected for a housing loan under the official Vambay scheme, but have been unable to gather the resources to pay the bribe required for getting the first instalment. Their make-shift hut is covered with bamboo mats and the only belongings are a few utensils near the fireplace. The small bundle of bedclothes is kept outside in the open where they sleep. When it rains, the family of three sit up inside the hut because the space is not enough for three persons to lie down at one time.

Margaret Wangui (70) in Nairobi came to Maili Saba, after being displaced by major land erosion in her village. She is a widow with five adult children, none of whom went to school. Her grandchildren go to a Church school where the fees are reduced. Despite, her age, she still works. She breaks stone for the construction industry. She produces an average of 6 buckets of stone chips in a day and sells each bucket for around KSh15. She spends her earnings on food, water, kerosene and school fees – in that priority order.

The elderly are enormously burdened. They graciously look after their otherwise homeless grandchildren, while being neglected by their adult children. Reciprocal support, if granted, is conditional.

Kadamanchi Veeriah, probably in his 60s, lives in a squatter settlement in India with his son's family. He leaves the settlement by daybreak with his conch and bell. He sings his way through neighbourhoods and commercial complexes, and is able to pick up about two kilograms of rice, and some Rs20 cash. Some days are good, Mondays, Fridays (based on the religious sentiments of Hindus), and some days are bad (Saturdays, for instance). He keeps the cash, and gives the rice for the family pot. If Veeriah does not bring rice, he does not eat, his son is clear about that. When Veeriah gets too old to sing and bring in food, he will dot the landscape of Hyderabad as a plain beggar, or retire to the village to die of slow starvation.

The turmoil of a hard and tiring life are visible in the faces of frail Shiekh Ashgar (60) and his wife, Anowara (50), who are resident in Beguntilla in Dhaka. Ashgar used to work as a cook and rickshaw puller in his youth.

"When I was young, I worked and earned a lot, now my body fails me. I cannot drive (a hired rickshaw) in the winters.

In the summers, I try, though to work from afternoon to midnight. It is easier to find clients in Kamrangirchar (where his son and daughter-in-law) live. But they have made it

very evident that they don't want me there, even though I pay for all my expenses, including food, when I stay with them." They live here as they don't have to pay rent, but it is a difficult choice.

Anowara used to work as a housemaid, a job she lost when she lost her long-stretched working age and energy. She has, by huge luck, found part-time work. It was an uphill task to secure her dignity. "Initially they used to offer me 'bashi bhat' (stale cold rice), which I refused to take. Now with my work, they respect me – they offer me warm rice and as much sweet tea as I want."

Their source of hope is their grandson, Shagor (8) (abandoned by their daughter) who lives with them. Shagor used to work in a restaurant and earn some money, but the restaurant has closed down. Shagor now earns less than a tenth of what he did, by collecting and throwing away garbage for his ex-employer.

In Modherbosti, Minatullah (70) and his second wife Jayeda both beg. Minatullah used to work as a labourer, earning around Tk.80 a day, but no one will employ an old man. Jayeda, orphaned in her young childhood, worked for a short while as a housemaid, but has mostly begged. They are both old and poor. If they don't beg, they starve. Yet Jayeda's vulnerability is visible. Minatullah uses abusive language and says, I will get ten beggar-women (magi) like you, if I desire. "If I misbehave with his children (from the first marriage) he would kill me. I have to follow his orders, as he commands", says Jayeda.

## **Sickness and disability**

Disability and illness are major factors that drive poor people into deeper poverty. Health expenses are major expenditures. Public health services are inaccessible, inappropriate and/or inadequate. Some of the poorest families suffer occupational health hazards such as those living in squatter settlements in L B Nagar in India.

Jumani is in her late 30s and lives in a squatter settlement in LB Nagar. She used to work as a daily labourer in a rice mill two decades ago. One day, her sari was caught in the machinery and was sucked into the machine. Before she was rescued her limbs had been fractured to pieces. Jumani, like many others before her, received no compensation from the mill owners. She learnt to walk with a stick and now begs for a living. Her elder son, now 15 years old, is mentally retarded and Jumani is entirely responsible for his care. Her daughter, now 20 years old, fell down on the rocks outside their house while fetching water and fractured both her legs. After treatment with a quack, she is able to walk in a fashion. Jumani still hopes that someone will marry her. Her husband Ruplal died three years ago after a long illness.

Kala and Rajesh are a Madiga Christian family living in LB Nagar. Their shanty does not have even a roof or walls, except for one solid wall shared with a neighbour. Flapping pieces of tarpaulin let both the wind and rain in. The roof has pieces of tarpaulin secured in place with hardened tar and stones, which weigh down on the plastic.

Rajesh started as a lorry driver but now he is weak and bedridden. If he works for a day as a daily labourer, he lies in bed for the other five days. The family have already spent their savings and borrowed money of around Rs10,000 for his treatment.

No will lend them any money now. The family converted to Christianity three years ago, because the church pastor promised Kala that he would get better with Jesus' blessings. The Church also serves other purposes. The family very often do not cook because there is no money to buy rice. The little children are occasionally sent to the church where they are given something to eat. They have six children, all of them severely malnourished.

*Kalamma's mother lives with them. She also used to sell cooked food in the settlement. However, the old lady is immobile now. A year ago, she lost the use of her legs and could only move, sidling around on her posterior. Three months ago, she had a fall (there is no road on the lane; it is full of rocks and potholes) and fractured her right thigh. There was no money for doctors, and Lakshamma sits or lies immobile with a swollen mass of splintered bone on her left leg.*

*Chinna Ramachandram, in the same settlement, had his wrist bound up in a soiled bandage. He fractured his hand when he fell on a rocky place late at night. He estimates that he will be out of work for a month. Back in the village, they have one acre of dry land between three brothers. All three brothers have now migrated to Hyderabad. His two children, a 4 year old boy and 12 year girl also pick wastes. His 6 year old son died two years ago after he was bitten by a rabid dog. When we ask him how many rag-pickers in the settlement have been bitten by dogs, he answers that there isn't a single household where one or more people have not been bitten. Usually they go to the herbal doctor (quack), not to the Primary Health Centre for treatment. "With the former, treatment is simpler. If the wound heals, you pay the doctor. If it doesn't, you don't. There is no waiting line, no rude staff who tell you that you smell, no attendant who insists on his petty bribe". The herbal doctor is someone who treats people like them, and is probably illiterate himself and shares their culture.*

*Dog bites are an occupational hazard for rag-pickers, who attract and compete with dogs, albeit for different 'reusable wastes'. Many of the rabies victims die. Ramchandram spent Rs15,000 (a years' wage for the whole family) to save his son. He had to borrow this from Seth the merchant to whom they take their pickings of the day; he also gives them loans at 120% interest if they can get a guarantor. The treatment was entirely with private doctors, because of their lack of access to the government health system. We asked "Why didn't you go to public hospitals where one could possibly get free/low-cost anti-rabies treatment?" He replied, "We are not welcome there." Instead, the 'quacks' they frequent ensure that the treatments are 'compatible with their needs'.*

Health expenses are a major expenditure in Nairobi slums too.

*Winnie Wanyoni in Maili Saba lives in a rented home with her husband and four children. Her husband used to work as a security guard and was shot in the leg while on duty. His leg had to be amputated. The leg has not healed well, but the family can neither afford to travel to the Kenyatta Hospital nor pay for medicine. When the company refused to pay compensation and even meet his medical costs, he filed a legal case against them which has been going on for 3 years already, with no resolution in sight. Her husband still works crushing stones. Winnie washes clothes for others and does other household work. On good days, they may earn around KSh150. On many days, they earn nothing and then the family eats nothing.*

*The lack of any social network or support for their family is exemplified by another incident that happened to them recently. Their neighbour raped their five year old daughter. The child's physical injuries were treated at the Nairobi hospital, but an HIV/AIDS test has been suggested. No action was taken against the neighbour.*

For many, the push into old age with no social security is a threatening but an unavoidable certainty.

*Kulsuma, in her late 40s, is already worn out in body and spirit. In her youth, as a young deserted woman, living alone in Dhaka with 2 young children, she worked two shifts a day as a construction labourer. She used the money earned to build a house (of which she*

*has no legal ownership) and to marry off her daughter. Today, she begs because there is not much else she can do. No one employs her regularly given her frail appearance. She earns around Tk40 on a good day. Her family consists of an adult son (who does not work) and 2 young grandsons (deserted by their mother on her second marriage). They all wait for her to come back from begging late in the afternoon before they eat their only full meal of the day. The grandsons aged 10 and 7 have not yet found employment but contribute to the household economy by foraging for pieces of wood and decaying vegetables discarded by shop owners. Kulsuma shows a deep scar on her leg, a result of falling down recently after a spell of dizziness. There is no question of going to see the doctor for such a minor ailment. Kulsuma does not think about tomorrow, it is enough of a struggle to pass each day.*

In India too, the poorest include the elderly and destitute and women-only and/or women headed households who do not earn a living wage. The wages earned range between Rs500 to Rs1500 per month, however, the latter figures are based on the probability of finding wage labour every day. The majority of the earnings are spent on health needs and expenses.

*Mallamma supports her family of three, her husband Vallapu Kanakiah and a young daughter. The family recently lost their youngest daughter, who died of untreated jaundice (hepatitis). Kanakiah used to work as a daily wage labourer in construction work, but having been diagnosed with tuberculosis a year ago, can work only once or twice a week. "I get tired and the work is strenuous. It is a struggle to survive. If I am to take full medicine, I need to spend at least Rs15 day. But the initial diagnosis and treatment and visits to several doctors has landed us in serious debt. Now, I only buy medicine when I can. No one gives us a loan; they feel I might die without repaying it."*

*Jania, a neighbour of Kanakiah has the same problem, "My neighbours don't talk to me, lest I ask them for money. The doctor advises me to eat good food. How can I, when there is barely any money to spare and a family of 6 to feed? I lost 10kgs in weight during the time of the initial treatment. I can no longer afford that treatment."*

#### **4.3.2 Lives of the 'not-so-poor'**

##### **Men**

The 'not-so-poor' households have more income sources, of which one or more may be secure and dependable. As discussed above, in such households most adult, married women and adolescent girls do not work outside the home and contribute only to in-house productive activities. Great pride is taken in declaring this fact. The larger earning membership includes men and adolescent male children.

*Mohammed Ruhul Amin and Ali both live in Modherbosti and have permanent jobs in the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). Additionally, both have invested in building several one-room structures in the land they own bought and occupy, which are rented out. Ruhul's elder son, Riyad (19) works part-time as an artist (he studies art at the Dhaka University) and his wife, Anowara takes tutorial classes at home. The multiple sources of income allow Ruhul's family to join a local micro-credit group, which provides interest on deposits as well as occasional loans. Anowara had a kidney problem, and the family borrowed around Tk75,000 for her treatment, most of which has been paid back. Ali is the Secretary General of the local BNP party in the area and in connection with this, was convicted (along with others) in the murder case of an opposition leader. He managed to elude capture for a year, and on arrest, managed to get out of the jail within*

two months. The family home was looted during this period. The family estimates they lost around Tk90,000. They have several debts currently, but are keeping up with their repayments. Currently, Ali provides for his elderly mother, his young divorced sister and her son. Both women help Ali's wife Shampa with the domestic work at home.

Shankar Chandra Das (42) of New Shahid Lane, Chittagong is a permanent railway employee. He has built two extra rooms in their home, which they rent out. His wife, Rina Rani, runs a small grocery shop from home and keeps some animals – 4 ducks, 2 hens, 2 goats and a cow. Their son Milton (16) is still studying.

Gias Mirdha of Beguntila and Nurul Huda of New Shaheed Lane do not have official jobs, but they have a fairly reliable tea-shop business which they run from home. Gias was able to invest in the business with his own resources and Nurul Huda obtained a loan from Proshika (a local NGO). Recently, Gias's family spent around Tk50,000 for his daughter's asthma treatment. The wives of both men, Shahida and Bibi Rahima (respectively) work full-time at home and in running the tea-shop. Additionally, Nurul's son Md Farook works as a rickshaw-puller and his daughter, Rozina works in the garment factory. Gias Mirdha's elder daughter, Nazneen also works in the garment factory. Gias has been involved in left-wing politics and has been in the jail a couple of times. He is also considered a leader in the community and is consulted by many others in personal and other matters.

## **Women**

A significant difference between the poorest and the not-so-poor families is in their emotional well-being. There is less desertion and deprivation amongst women, or even if they happen, they are either tolerable or tolerated. Emotional imbalances, if they are acknowledged at all, are silently endured for the mutual benefit of the majority. The concerns are also different. It is less about survival, and more about the quality of life (as seen in Maslow's hierarchy of needs).

*In Modherbosti, Anowara (37) is educated and holds tuition sessions for children, two of whom pay her, and the third child's mother fetches water for her. Anowara also keeps poultry and is in charge of managing the rent income from three additional rooms in their plot. Anowara does not mix with others in the slums, she says 'they are not respectable'.*

*Shampa, another land-owner's wife with rented apartments, does not even go to town to buy vegetables. Her mother-in-law does this less prestigious task. No one in the family mentions, though, that Ali, Shampa's husband has a second wife.*

*On being asked, Shampa expresses her helplessness. But she was wiser, she did not desert her husband. In return, "my husband gives me the freedom to manage the household expenses and he usually consults me in household decisions."*

*Both Shampa and Anowara have latrines, which they share with their tenants; however, as landladies, they don't clean the latrines themselves. This is done on a rotational basis by the female tenants.*

*In Beguntila, Shahida, the second wife of Gias Mirdha, has relatives who live in Malaysia. She hates the slum and its situation and hopes to move away soon to another part of the city. Her sister-in-law (in Malaysia) has promised to assist the move.*

*Rahima Khatun (35) in New Shahid Lane, Chittagong, says she has much to be thankful for. Her husband, Nurul Huda does not fight with her. The children respect their parents. All decisions in the household are made jointly.*

The non-poor households often comprise complete [husband and wife] families. Often, one of the partners holds a more secure job, while the family income is also supplemented by other less reliable sources. Although domestic violence and strife is not excluded, there is a notion of a structurally complete family, which has some benefits for the women and children.

*In Modher Bosti, Shefali lives with her family in a part of her maternal home and thus saves on rent. Her husband works on her behalf as a Dhaka City Corporation cleaner. Dependent on Shefali and her family, Md. Muslim does not dare to be more than just lazy. In an almost identical situation to Shefali is Khadija in Beguntila, whose husband of several years, works as a casual labourer. Khadija makes most of the decisions in her home. "Nazrul is lazy and not very clever. He cannot bargain and always gets cheated."*

*Both Shefali and Khadija are lucky that they have not been deserted by their less capable husbands. They are also empowered to make decisions on household expenses and choices, for example on budgeting for their children's education. Yet, in terms of a gendered identity, the two women hold both masculine and feminine responsibilities and this puts a huge burden on their energy and existence.*

*In Chittagong, Shapna (25) has a good understanding with her husband Rashu (28). When she was seriously ill, Rashu borrowed Tk30,000 from their previous landlord and paid off a part of the loan by selling his land in the village. "This is different from my sister, who was left by her husband, even though my parents gave the boy's family a dowry of Tk90,000." Her parents live in the same settlement and provide a lot of emotional support to her and Rashu.*

## **Children**

Children of 'not-so-poor' slum households are more likely to be sent to school and to have time to play and be entertained.

*In contrast to the poorest children, who are unlikely to go to school long enough to get functional literacy skills, Riyad (19,) son of Anowara Begum (not-so-poor) goes to Dhaka University and his younger sister Dina looks set to continue her education beyond primary level. All the rest of the school-going age children in this category are enrolled in a private school located outside the slum.*

*In Modher Bosti, Asma's husband, Abdur (28) is a permanent driver in the Dhaka City Corporation. He is a loving father. Their 12 year old son Rocky says "He takes us for an outing every Friday when he does not have to go to work. He buys us RC Cola and gives us money." Asma's paternal family are well off and both depend on her and support her.*

## **4.4 Who helps the slum-poor**

### **4.4.1 Policy framework**

Slum dwellers are regarded in a similarly negative way as the non-slum poor by the public. A Bangladesh Government Minister responsible for urban planning was quoted in 1999 as saying that 'slum residents are criminals' and that 'the unchecked growth of 'dirty' slums destroys Dhaka city's orderly urbanisation' (ASK, 2000). With this low level of public opinion, slum dwellers are unlikely to get the support that is required if they are to have basic services.

Security of tenure is the most important issue in slums. Government policy on slum tenure determines their permanency, security and infrastructure. Government policy towards slums and squatters varies.

### **India**

In India there are three categories of slums:

- 'notified' are legally recognised by the government (see below) and are therefore eligible for officially-funded slum-upgrading schemes.
- 'non-notified' are unofficially recognised by the government agencies but it does not qualify for 'slum-upgrading' support.
- 'squatter settlements', which do not officially exist and do not qualify for 'slum upgrading' support either.

The process of 'notification' or official acknowledgement is not defined by the length of peoples' stay in the city or their need for basic services but rather by the residents' ability or lack of it to secure political leverage.

Squatter settlements are the most scantily served and therefore most deserving of basic services, especially given the greater poverty of their residents, their lack of relevant social, economic and political networking in the city, and their lack of ability to pay for private services. However, both officials and local formal and informal agencies (for example, the Community Development Societies and women's groups called Mahila Mandalis) deny the existence of squatter settlements. It is easier to ignore a problem than to work one's way around or through it. Consequently, the non-notified slums remain excluded from 'prime' official development programmes like the APUSP, while squatters face exclusion from even programmes like the Integrated Low Cost Sanitation Programme, which was applied to any un-serviced urban poor settlement in pre-election Andhra Pradesh in March 2004. (See Annex for further details of policies and programmes in India.)

### **Bangladesh**

The government of Bangladesh does not officially 'recognise' or acknowledge the presence of the urban poor or their settlements. Illegal residency translates to insecure tenure. The lack of an explicit and operational policy relating to housing for the urban poor encourages a politics of mastaanism, leaving poor slum dwellers more vulnerable to exploitation. Bangladesh's urban poor live in constant fear of sudden and forcible eviction [Islam et al, 1997; Islam, 1996; Rashid, 2004]<sup>40</sup>. Forced and violent eviction started within 4 years of Bangladesh's formation. In 1975, slums were demolished to make way for colleges, development projects and/or to allocate and sell plots to middle class and richer families by property developers. Although it is difficult to assess the actual number of slum residents evicted since then, a recent report documents that between 1989-1999, more than 45 slums were demolished in Dhaka alone, some of them twice, leaving

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<sup>40</sup> During Rashid's PhD fieldwork, the slum she was working in, Phulbari, was evicted. This was the government's second attempt at illegally evicting the slum residents from Phulbari slum, located in Mirpur. The first eviction took place in 1993 but the residents managed to hold on to their space. However, on July 25 2002, the slum population was evicted again. Around 8 bulldozers demolished the shack settlements, while hundreds of armed policemen supervised the demolition, and thousands of slum residents watched helplessly. A large number of the residents had been living in this slum for the previous 20 years. The author followed up the residents as they scattered around close neighboring areas. Until now [December 2004], there have been no attempts made by the government to rehabilitate the residents.



millions of families homeless. In 1999-2000, some 100,000 poor people were evicted from their slums (ASK, 2000). In this research, the first study area selected, Mazar Road settlement, was forcibly evicted by government authorities (with a day's notice) two weeks after the initiation of the research. The reason cited was to make way for the expansion of the road in the area.

In 1999, government eviction took place of 49 slums scattered in several areas of the city. Left homeless, several local leaders mobilised the hundreds of poor evicted families to gather and camp outside the High Court to demand justice and rehabilitation. It was a difficult time for those families. They held onto their possessions, as they camped outside on the streets, tired, hungry and thirsty and uncertain of their future in the city. Many were harassed by the police and beaten when they refused to vacate the streets.

*"After the eviction of the Agargaon slum, I had to relocate several times. We went to New Market, then to the Osmani Uddayan under the leadership of our local political leader who assured us he would do something for our rehabilitation. We were starving and I was very worried about my little kids. Then our leaders told us to go to the High Court in a final attempt to draw the attention of the government. We stayed there for two days under the open sky with rain and heat. We were given some rice but I wasn't able to get it, as it was too crowded with people fighting each other. I had a 2-year-old baby and I feared he would die in the stampede. But no one came forward to give me some food. My baby died of starvation. We stayed in the High Court for 5 days and then we were sent to Beguntila."*

The support of local politicians forced the government authorities to gather the homeless evicted from 22 different slums, put them in trucks and send them to an empty land site now called Beguntila. Government officials identified the slum as a site for temporary transit and the slum dwellers were informed that they would be provided with a more permanent rehabilitation within a few weeks. Six years later, the Beguntila residents continue to live insecure lives, still fearing eviction. Recently, a private real estate company, the Sheguifta Housing Society, has filled the water-filled low-lying land of Beguntila for housing development; rumours abound that the purpose is to construct a multi-storey apartment building.<sup>41</sup>

*The initial entry to Beguntila was traumatic. Several of the women and men refer to that time as the 'dark times', when the place was 'a jungle of trees and plants and a large pond', with no place to sleep or set up their homes. Families arrived hungry and thirsty. Nobody greeted them. "All over the area there were snakes and mosquitoes and many of the families slept out in the open sky for several days. We could not sleep all night – then how could we work the next day? It was so hard." Another woman explained, "our children along with all of us cleared the jungle and made space for ourselves." A young man said, "Under police supervision we entered this place and cleared as much as possible. Both the men and women worked very hard to make the place habitable. We almost starved for three days after coming here. After three days we were given some puffed rice and pieces of molasses by the local political leaders who had organised and helped us to come here from the High Court." Back then, there were no more than 100-150 households. Many of the families did not set up or invest in their homes properly because we anticipated eviction from this slum as well.*

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<sup>41</sup> This development has implications for NGOs and other institutions who remain reluctant to commit to interventions in Beguntila slum, because it is so new and will most certainly face eviction. This is discussed in more detail in the section on informal and formal institutions.

## Kenya

In Kenya, the government's lack of an explicit policy on land tenure for the urban poor blocks the provision of basic services in the informal settlements. As in Bangladesh, this has encouraged the informal provision of water, electricity and other services in these areas. This unregulated market does not assure quality or quantity of services, especially to the poorest. This is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

### 4.4.2 Assistance programmes

This sub-section has been divided into governmental and non-governmental assistance programmes.

#### Government

In Bangladesh, pressure from local human rights organisations, local and international agencies, as well large-scale protests by slum dwellers have largely been ignored, with no real effort by successive governments to help rehabilitate the urban poor. Eviction takes place in the context of power struggles between 'official' local residents, government authorities, the police and other existing informal networks, particularly the mastaans (Wood, 1998a; 1998b). On paper, government plans [still being discussed] exist to relocate slum residents back to villages, where they will be given basic housing, cooking arrangements and a pond for communal fishing and other needs. However, most evictees have had no such pay-offs (ASK, 2000). With very few initiatives taken by the government to invest in the rural economy, going back is not a feasible option for the urban poor. Further, many born in the slums consider them to be their homes. Only a handful of the residents in the researched areas have plans to go back to their rural origins.

In stark contrast with the situation in Bangladesh and Kenya, the Government of India has specific policies and programmes on housing for the urban poor. Yet, the process of notifying slums is inconsistent. Regardless of the 'notification' of slums, access to intended government benefits and incentives depends on links and connections with local leaders and/or mastaans. The poorest fail to establish these links.

*In Vajpayi Nagar, a notified slum, of the eight researched poorest households, only one household 'owned' their home. Two households, headed by elderly destitute women, had been allotted ownership of land they occupied, but they had yet to receive any papers specifying their title-deeds. In contrast, these papers had been delivered to all others in the less-poor and not-so-poor groups.*

*When asked what programmes the poorest people in LB Nagar had, the researchers found that they have no ration cards, no voting rights, no electricity, no water supply nor drainage, no public housing programme, no public education programme for their children, no public health .... No programme has been taken up for them, under any official or non-governmental programme except the Pulse Polio programme. Some of the respondents had lived in LB Nagar for 12 years.*

*Masru, in her 60s, heads a women-only family. Her youngest grand-daughter died a few months ago of jaundice. The family simply could not afford treatment. Masru's daughter-in-law, Lakshmi, widowed like Masru, is the sole income earner. She sells roasted peanuts and on a good day, makes about Rs60. Of this they pay Rs40 to the money-lender, from whom they borrowed money (during Lakshmi's husband's illness). "With Rs20 we buy rice and eat a meal a day. If she does not find work, we starve for the day or have to beg for food." Masru has been following up the land issue with the colony*

*leaders for several years with little success. She believes that her land has been officially allotted to someone else, who might have provided the money that is asked for such favours. She and her widowed daughter-in-law have nothing to offer. Housing loans intended for the poorest have similarly been diverted in the same manner. None of the poorest households in Vajpai Nagar have received their full housing loan entitlements. The not-so-poor households, who were not intended beneficiaries of the programme have, on the other hand, received the loan and grant in full and have added improvements to their existing homes. The bureaucracy and corruption in the approval and provision of loans creates stumbling blocks for the poorest.*

**SUMMARY: WHO HELPS THE SLUM POOR?**

Policy framework	Some international and national policies are pro-poor but usually ignore the poorest slum and squatter dwellers. Many countries do not officially recognise slums and therefore do not assist their residents. Slum dwellers usually live under the threat of eviction which is extremely stressful especially for the poorest.
Programmes	Where slums are recognised, infrastructure improvements do not usually happen in a pro-poor way and the poorest slum dwellers are often left out.
Vision	Most governments, programmes and slum poor can not imagine what can be done to assist the slum poor. However any small improvement would provide a definite amelioration in their situation. Most slum dwellers do want to stay in the city and do not want to go back to the village to live.

**4.5 Conclusions about the slum poor**

The slum poor comprise perhaps 70% of the urban population in the researched cities. This is a significant number of people. They provide useful, cheap, compliant labour for services and industry. That is partly why they are there. And yet they are often outlawed by their country's policies, laws and practices and left unsupported.

Not all the slum dwellers are poor. The not-so-poor slum dwellers manage to do well enough to concentrate on meeting higher needs than shelter and basic services. They benefit from their own well-developed social networks and any government or NGO programmes.

However, the majority of slum dwellers are poor. The lives of the poorest slum dwellers are very vulnerable, especially those of the women and girls of fractured families, women household heads, elderly women or disabled women and girls. They are human beings like the rest of us. In all the three research countries women-headed, women-only households tend to be the poorest, especially elderly women living alone and/or with minors, and destitute women, both young and old, deserted by husbands and/or adult children. Marital disruptions are traumatic for women, even when dependence on male income is low. Many of the women in the slum spoke of the insecurity of living without males. Their basic needs and rights as human beings are the same. And yet they, like the pavement-dwellers, are expected to survive without many of the necessities of life that everyone else considers to be essential.

Along with the poverty is aggression and violence. This is often between husbands and wives, adults and young children, children and elderly parents, and between siblings. This seems to be worse for the poorest families. There is less desertion and deprivation amongst women, or it is better tolerated.

In India, the examples indicate that official schemes for the urban poor do not reach them, even though they are intended for them. In Bangladesh and Kenya, slums are illegal so the governments are generally reluctant to provide services to slum residents. This encourages mastaanism and ad-hoc arrangements for all types of services.

Most tragic of all, perhaps, is that almost nobody can imagine what can be done to help the poorest. Not the government, nor the service providers (for profit and not-for-profit) nor those living in urban poverty themselves.

## 5. APPROPRIATE SANITATION: EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE URBAN POOR

Almost two and a half billion people currently lack access to safe sanitation compared to the 1.1 billion who lack access to safe water. Some reasons given for this discrepancy are that:

- Sanitation is the 'Cinderella of the water sector'; a comparatively lower priority is given by agencies responsible for delivering and/or managing water and sanitation services (Deverill, 2000; Hunt, 2001).
- One can live without sanitation, one cannot live without water; user needs and demands for water outweigh those for sanitation; sanitation is also a lower priority for users (Scott et al, 2003).
- Investments made specifically for sanitation have been less effective and/or efficient - 'Billions of dollars have been spent in improving water supply and sanitation, but still little is known about whether these facilities are being used effectively by the poor. This is important as access alone is not enough. It is use that leads to impact' (Christoffers et al, 2005).

This study attempts to analyse the above issues and also suggests that services delivered as sanitation are often not **appropriate** to user needs. In most of the programmes reviewed in this study, the contours of 'appropriate sanitation needs' for the urban poor have been defined from the top down. Urban poor 'communities', loosely identified as homogeneous groups of people living in independent housing units in particular areas of a city, are often encouraged to accept a range of deliverables (often low-cost) determined by outside project agendas (Joshi, 2002).

This chapter builds on the findings from Chapters 3 and 4 that the urban poor are a very varied group and that the social and economic dimensions of inter- and intra-household poverty determine who lives where and who has the best chance of accessing services. This chapter analyses the experiences of the urban poor in accessing appropriate sanitation services and what factors determine appropriateness across households. The research findings reveal that sanitation policies and practices neither recognise adequately the heterogeneity of the urban poor nor the different constraints that they face. This occurs where there is official investment in sanitation for the urban poor (for example in India) as well as where there is a lack of public spending on sanitation for the urban poor (for example in Kenya). The situation is only marginally different in Bangladesh, where the government often tries to ignore its urban poor but where 'donor investments or initiatives' have encouraged stand-alone 'private and/or NGO' investments in sanitation.

Hygiene awareness and promotion are recent inclusions in water and sanitation interventions, in recognition that service delivery needs to build on the beliefs and perceptions of users. Hygiene promotion is claimed to make hardware supply more effective. Awareness and promotion also need to consider the realities of what can be practised given the contexts of the lives of the whole range of urban poor as well as what is 'possible and feasible' to deliver within project limits. However, promoting positive hygiene behaviour requires complementary and significant infrastructure provision (Joshi, 1998). This usually includes comprehensive drainage, safe excreta disposal, piped water and solid waste disposal systems. Thus any attempt to promote improved sanitation must include both hardware and software but must start with the beneficiary viewpoint on what is appropriate. This chapter explores the perceptions and experiences of sanitation for the urban poor and subsequently highlights the most important criteria for appropriate sanitation as defined by the women and men interviewed during the course of the research.

In exploring what is appropriate sanitation for the urban poor, a critical concern of this study was to analyse gender issues in relation to sanitation. The findings show how women's biology and their gendered identities affect both women's needs and their roles in sanitation differently to men's in urban poor settings. Urban poor women are more likely to suffer shame and indignity as they struggle to meet their sanitation needs in the absence of appropriate facilities and lack of privacy. In many societies, a ritual cleansing is required after every menstrual period. In the absence of adequate water and privacy this is often very difficult. In addition, women are often responsible for meeting the sanitation needs of the family and all these tasks require adequate facilities.

## **5.1 Sanitation services available and in use by pavement-dwellers, squatters and slum residents**

Access to water and sanitation among the urban poor is determined by a range of factors. For those living on the streets or in slums, gender, age, occupation, workplace facilities, the ability to pay for public facilities, requirements to appear clean and even relationships with persons in charge of sanitation facilities (who may be open to bribery) will all affect access. Households with the weakest social contacts, such as poor female-headed households, especially the elderly, are usually excluded from the benefits, even when services do exist in an area. The various organisations involved in sanitation provision provide different levels of services and varying standards of provision mean that the sanitation requirements, especially of the poorest, often go unmet.

### **5.1.1 Pavement-dwellers**

Regardless of whether they live in Bangladesh, India or Kenya, the urban poor living on the streets have not been provided with sanitation services. In most places this category of the urban poor are largely 'invisible' to urban service providers.

#### ***Bangladesh***

The men, women and children who are forced to live on the streets struggle to make their own arrangements for sanitation. Finding a place to defecate in densely crowded urban centres is not easy. In Bangladesh none of the respondents living on the pavements said that they defecate in the open. They explained that the only option for adults is to use toilets at work places or at public institutions (mosques, mazars, boarding houses, transport terminals (bus, rail, ferry), stadiums and Ansar (local police) camps and sports clubs) because there is a lack of public toilets.

*Fifty five year old Marium is widowed and lives with her son and daughter-in-law on the pavement at the back of a multi-storied building in a commercial area of Motijheel in Dhaka.*

*She does not see defecation as their major problem. Toilets of the local clubs<sup>42</sup> early in the morning and sometimes late at night are some of the defecation options for Marium and her neighbours who are living in the street. "I am rarely refused access to the toilets by the caretakers/guards. They are annoyed with me but say that they would rather let me use the toilet than be disturbed by my constant begging". Alternatively the residents*

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<sup>42</sup> Sports clubs, mainly football clubs where players /organisers practise or meet, which are located abundantly around the Motijheel area where Marium lives.

*also use open drains. My small grandsons go to the disused, dilapidated latrine of a club, where access is more or less unrestricted.*

*Some small children defecate on paper, which is then folded-up and thrown away by the parents. For this, they might be scolded and forced to clean up, by shopkeepers or the guards of the buildings.” Marium’s young daughter-in-law uses the latrine at her work place, and so completely avoids the use of public toilets.*

Source: Fieldwork, 2003-2004.

Marium says that she feels sick and unwell if she does not have a wash each day but this is not easy, “neither my daughter-in-law nor I can bathe on the pavement in front of others. For we women living on pavements, bathing depends on the opportunity or luck of finding other options. Many of us work as domestic maids, as this allows us greater opportunities for bathing.” This is echoed by Saleha, who lives on the pavement and works in three households, “I can earn better and do less work as a construction labourer, but working as a housemaid allows me access to use my employer’s toilet to defecate, bathe and wash clothes”, she says.

Marium reports, “I did not take a bath today because of lack of water. I bathe only 2 or 3 days in a week and that too is difficult. Water and bathing spaces are available only through social connections or relationships with the caretakers or guards of the local clubs or organisations around this area. These are the only places we can go to. I have built some rapport with these people but despite that, I have to lie whenever I get the opportunity to enter those areas. Often, I go to the bathroom with permission to collect drinking water and take a quick shower, wearing the same sari so that the guards do not realise that I have used the bathroom for bathing. I would like to take my time to take a bath; soap and clean myself well, but that is not possible. Yesterday I took a bath in the ‘Mariners football club’ as the players have gone away to play a match. My niece works for the club and she let me enter as the players were absent. I need 2-3 ‘Kolshi’ (pitchers) of water for bathing, so it is not easy for me to collect this amount of water for bathing everyday.”

Marium is very careful to ‘protect’ her daughter-in-law. “My daughter-in-law works as a housemaid and uses her employer’s latrine and bathroom, and washes her clothes with their soap without them knowing. She cannot bathe properly for fear of being scolded by her employer. She bathes like me – in a rush and in fear. I personally go to fetch water for all domestic purposes. I do not allow her to do that, because the guards/caretakers would start harassing her for ‘friendship’.” She bathes her 8 year old grandson regularly using 1 or 2 containers<sup>43</sup> of water because, “He goes to school so he needs to be clean everyday particularly during the summer. Keeping him dirty will also expose him to diseases like jaundice” she fears. “My son goes to the stadium (football ground) to take his shower where he has to pay 5 Taka<sup>44</sup> for using the toilet. The rest of us (my grandson, daughter-in-law and me) cannot walk that far to bathe everyday, nor can we afford to spend that scarce money for our bathing needs – it is only justifiable for men”.

“Clothes too need to be washed, if one is to look clean. I wash clothes after two weeks or so. I wash them on the pavement with small amounts of water. We had a pond in the locality but it was filled up in 1992/93 to build a culvert when they upgraded the roads round here.” Even though they have to buy food on credit, she buys two packets of ‘Wheel’ laundry soap every month which she uses for bathing and laundry.

<sup>43</sup> Empty /used edible oil’s container called ‘Galoon’ used commonly to collect water - observations by researchers.

<sup>44</sup> At the time of writing 116 Bangladesh Taka were equal to £1 sterling

Young women sex workers require more reliable options to look and smell clean. Even if they live on the pavements they rent toilet facilities. The study found two sex workers who live on the pavements of Sadarghat ferry terminal who rented toilets and bathing facilities in nearby dwellings. The researchers also located a former railway employee who sublets his toilet/bathing facilities to pavement dwellers.

Twenty year old Nasimuddin also lives on the streets. He is less bothered about being 'pak', but is equally bothered about 'poy porishker' (cleanliness), which he feels is a matter of an individual attitude. "If someone is not clean we called them 'pocha' (meaning rotten, dirty, filthy)". Regular bathing and washing clothes with soap are the sanitation tasks he follows religiously. "I bathe regularly and wash my clothes, clean my teeth and cut my nails with broken blades collected from local barber shops."

Like Marium, he feels unwell if unclean, "there are always chances to get sick if I do not keep myself clean. But it is difficult to be clean in the street." More importantly, as a young man, social acceptance is a high priority. 25 year old Shaheen echoes the same feelings, "one has to be clean to hang around with friends."

Both Shaheen and Nasimuddin are rickshaw pullers, spending a small amount of their monthly income on 'reputed' cleaning material. Nasimuddin has his few belongings stored in his rickshaw. He regularly buys soap, half a bar of 'Lux' bathing soap and one 'Wheel' laundry soap in a month. This is his personal soap, which he carries around in his rickshaw and uses whenever he has the opportunity. He does not normally share this with his old widowed mother, whom he lives with on the pavement.

Shaheen buys one big Dettol soap for bathing and two '570' bars (a local brand of laundry soap) for his clothes. Given his friendship with one of the club players, he has almost unrestricted entry to the club toilet where he has *hidden* a bar of soap. He mentions that he washes his hands with soap every time after defecation. Both men do not feel the need for a toothbrush. One uses coal powder and the other uses a dental powder to clean their teeth. In their attempt to reduce their belongings, a toothbrush is something that is unnecessary.

Nasiruddin and Shaheen are well-aware of the sanitation privileges available to them as men. "We can bathe wherever we find water and urinate anywhere along the roadsides. We find access to public latrines easier, given the friendships we develop with the guards, caretakers or even the players at the clubs. Women living on the pavement often carry a mat to make a shield around themselves if they need to defecate or urinate in the open. They go together in groups at night to use the disused dilapidated latrine. They bathe at the public taps when we (men) are not around or shield the space with mats and sheets. Sanitation facilities available to pavement dwellers are not seen to be appropriate for young women. "When I marry, my wife will not live with me on the pavement. I will try to find a house or else keep her in the village," said Nasiruddin.

Saleha Begum (25) and her husband Mizanur (25) who are forced to live on the streets feel that cleanliness is reflective of human dignity, which they must try to uphold. "In the village, I used to do 'Namaz', but I don't practise that here as I feel every place on this street is 'napak' (unclean). But I try my best to keep my family as clean as possible, avoiding dirt as far as I can. I know what it is to be clean. I have learnt it from my employers (she works as a housemaid in three different houses). However, I am wary of keeping myself too clean – if I wear good clothes, oil my hair, people will think of me as a sex worker."



The demands for her to be clean are also from her work. "I used to work in Dhaka as a maid before I got married. My former employers always wanted me to be clean. They gave me a separate soap to wash my hands with after using the latrine. I was scolded if I was not keeping myself clean. Now I have got used to it. My current employer also demands cleanliness. If I take my son I have to give him a shower first with soap otherwise he is not allowed to enter their house."

### **India**

In India, the situation is no different for those who live on the streets. The only sanitation service is available to less than 5 per cent of pavement dwellers through the night shelters operated by the municipal corporations – a programme supported by the Government of India and the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (see Chapter 3). The shelters provide accommodation in dormitories, community toilets, bathing units, drinking water and locker facilities and charge a nominal fee for these services.

On the streets, 'pay and use' privately owned and operated toilets (commonly known as Sulabh Shauchalayas) are widely available for Rs1<sup>45</sup> for using the toilet and Rs5 for taking a bath. However, these are either inappropriate or unaffordable for daily and regular use. "How can we use this facility daily when the amount that we earn is not sufficient to support us?" asks Zakhir, a pavement dweller.

"When I can afford to pay, early in the morning I wait patiently in the long queue in front of the toilet. If I don't have the money, I have to defecate in the open," says Bhuri, a 38-year-old woman who lives behind Jama Masjid mosque with her husband and two children. She earns her livelihood by paying telephone bills for the shopkeepers. As in Bangladesh, middle-aged married women like Bhuri don't hesitate to use public spaces. However, young adolescent girls report that, "public toilets are not safe places to visit. It is easy to molest a woman in the toilet as she can be caught in a very vulnerable position." They reported that toilet complexes are also used as places to indulge in willing sex or sometimes to force women into sex.

The adolescent girls living on the streets in Hyderabad say that they either use the railway tracks very early in the morning or the toilet complexes by paying Rs2 to ease themselves. Having a bath costs Rs5 to Rs6 and washing clothes costs a further Rs10. Most girls cannot afford these payments regularly and they usually restrict their bathing and cleaning to the time of their monthly menstrual cycle. Coping with menstrual hygiene is another challenging task. Most of the girls are aware of sanitary towels sold in the shops, but there is simply no money to buy these. It is almost impossible to wash and re-use cloths because of the lack of washing places and places to dry and store them (rather than the lack of water to wash them). Most reported using pieces of old cloth or garments they found on the streets instead, which they throw away after use.

Sanitation needs and preferences of those living on the streets are often determined by age and/or occupation. Mothers who use their children to beg (or those who 'borrow' young children to help them to beg) make little effort to clean themselves or the children as being dirty helps to generate additional sympathy. Defecation is not a problem for the very young children as they can defecate, urinate and even bathe anywhere in the open. Slightly older children who work on their own, like to wash and stay clean but often are unable to do this on their own. Those who work in road-side hotels have the highest chance of getting to use the workplace water source to wash and bathe. Their counterparts who work as rag-pickers have no such luck and may bathe once-a-week at

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<sup>45</sup> At the time of writing 80 rupees were equal to approximately £1 sterling.

the most. Most of those engaged in rag-picking say that bathing is not a priority given that they need to forage in filth every day.

Water use is often restricted by the lack of storage space and utensils that forces pavement dwellers to lead a minimalist existence. Only those with families will cook.

Lakshmi and her family live on the streets in Hyderabad. She fetches water from a nearby temple and the family use a latrine in the nearby hospital premises by paying Rs2 per time to the caretakers. They bathe once in a week on Sunday beside the communal tap on the pavement. All the ladies bathe in the open, with all their clothes on as is customary, privacy or no privacy.<sup>46</sup>

Sujatha lives with her husband and single child in Indira Park in Hyderabad. She uses the toilet of Ramakrishna Math temple complex but they are not allowed to have a bath there. When the temple complex is closed, she has to defecate in the open. She uses the Sulabh toilet complex for bathing at a cost of Rs5 when she can afford to do so, which is once a week if she is lucky. She places the need for easy access to a toilet and an appropriate bathing place on the top of her list of urgent needs.

### **5.1.2 Squatter settlements and slums**

In India, Bangladesh and Kenya there are a significant number of slum areas where people live in overcrowded and unhygienic environments. Yet even in these environments, there are different wealth groups and people who are better off than others. Many slums are not officially recognised but even here, the provision of services depends on a variety of factors that are often outside the control of most residents. Sanitation services are of variable quality and are often grossly insufficient to meet the variety of requirements of the users.

#### **India**

In India, in contrast to the near complete absence of sanitation services for pavement residents, a range of environmental sanitation services are provided to officially recognised or 'notified' slum areas (see Chapter 4). However, the Integrated Low-Cost Sanitation (ILCS) programme is the only officially designated programme that targets the urban poor.

The objective of the ILCS programme is 'to eliminate the practice of dry latrine scavenging<sup>47</sup> (see Chapter 2) and encourage the use of pour-flush latrines' by offering targeted poor households a 50 per cent grant and a 40 per cent no-interest loan on new (pour-flush) latrine construction. Beneficiary households were to pay only 10 per cent of the construction costs upfront and special subsidies were announced for those identified as living below the poverty line. By default the ILCS programme became a sanitation programme for 'poor' slum residents in most states in India. However, as Chapter 2 showed, dry latrines are used mainly by the lower middle classes, rather than the poorest, so the programme often does not target those who are most in need.

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<sup>46</sup> In the Hindu community there is an old story of how Lord Krishna, one of the popular gods, who was said to be friendly with women, hid all their clothes high up on the tree branches, while they were bathing. The women then had to walk out naked so it is important always to wear something when bathing.

<sup>47</sup> The ILCS was complemented by a Rehabilitation Programme for the Manual Scavengers, implemented by a different department – the Social Welfare Department (ILCS was implemented by the Department of Urban Development).

The programme design and the implementation strategies of the ILCS define sanitation narrowly as latrine provision only. Other urban development programmes cover a broader range of 'environmental sanitation' services including household construction loans, drainage, paving, street upgrading, street lights and water supply provision. Again these are only provided for residents of official, notified slums and are not identified as 'sanitation initiatives'<sup>48</sup>.

The DFID-supported Andhra Pradesh Urban Services for the Poor (APUSP) programme for select slums in municipalities provides a range of sanitation benefits that complement the ILCS programme and include water supply, storm-water drainage, sanitation, solid waste disposal, roads and footpaths and street lighting. The research findings below reveal that only better-off residents of officially recognised slums benefit from the APUSP programme.

Quthbullapur Municipality has 42 notified slums and 23 un-notified slums. Additionally, this municipality has the largest number of squatter settlements (non-notified) in the Hyderabad Urban Development Authority area as the city of Hyderabad attracts a diversity of immigrants in search of work from all parts of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal.

Under the APUSP programme, a Poverty and Infrastructure Deficiency Matrix was drawn up early to help the programme focus on the poorest. However, the slums identified as the poorest and most deficient in environmental infrastructure were all notified slums, leaving out the poorest population in the un-notified slums. Programme documentation stated that, 'in phase 1, infrastructure was provided only in notified poor settlements. The non-notified poor settlements could not be taken up as they were not notified and data on socio-economic status and infrastructure were not available' (APUSP Progress Report, 2004 page 25, Sec 67).

### **Illegal settlements**

**Krishna Nagar** barely a kilometre from the office of the Mandal Revenue Office, Quthbullapur is a non-notified settlement with 200-300 long-established shanty buildings. Some residents claim to have been living there for more than ten years. They report that three years ago, the slum was demolished but they rebuilt their houses. However, the revenue officer in charge of 'notifying' these settlements alleged that all the residents were 'land-grabbers' and had purchased the plots illegally from the previous government. He claimed that the settlement was due to be demolished within a week of the field visit.

About half the inhabitants of Krishna Nagar are Muslim, which may account for their lack of bargaining power. Many of them are migrants from outside Andhra Pradesh. There is no official sanitation provided. Prior to the last elections in March 2005 the former government of Andhra Pradesh hastily provided funding for low-cost latrine units under the ILCS scheme and district administrations were punished if latrine targets were not met. However, squatter settlements or pavement dwellers were not recognised as potential recipients in this politically motivated rush to provide services.

**Banjara Colony**, an un-notified slum that is however, backed by political patronage (see Chapter 4) has been provided with the following services:

- Temporary roads

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<sup>48</sup> Sanitation for the urban poor was an integral part of the original plans for the APUSP programme. It was later decided to remove sanitation from the programme agenda, because ILCS was already operating in the State.

- Sweeping of roads once a week
- Garbage collection and removal of dead animals – occasionally and irregularly
- Drinking water supplied through tankers (available to households who make monthly payments)
- Hand pumps (on boreholes).

Individual latrines were also provided in Banjara Colony under the ILCS programme (2000-2004). Despite these services there are glaring examples of government apathy in programmes for the poor. In Banjara Colony most of the latrines built by contractors lack the actual toilets - there are four walls, a roof, and in a few cases, doors too, but there are no pans or pits! In a few cases, pour-flush pans have been provided but since there is no water supply, these toilets remain unused. The overwhelming majority of the basti-dwellers have to do what they did before and go to the neighbouring fields or plots to defecate.

Women in Lingo jigudem on the Nagarjunasagar highway near Hyderabad desperately clamour for individual latrines and water sources, which they know are being provided to *recognised* slum settlements. Lingo jigudem is a middle-sized squatter settlement with about 60 huts. The graveyard next door, usually considered taboo and inauspicious in most Hindu cultures, is where the residents go to fulfil their water and sanitation needs. They defecate beside graves and collect water from the hand-pump in the graveyard. For the latter, they have to occasionally bribe the overseer in charge of the graveyard. They are unhappy when there is a cremation or a burial, because they are not allowed into the graveyard during those periods. Even inside the graveyard, the lack of open space makes defecation difficult. Both women and girls say they defecate only under the cover of darkness. When the graveyard is inaccessible, women travel a kilometre to fetch water for drinking and domestic use from a public hand-pump. Each household has two ten-litre containers for carrying water. It is not possible to bathe at the open hand-pump site and a few households have constructed waist-high makeshift huts near their own huts as bathing shelters. Women frequently voice concern about how they will manage in child-birth in such difficult conditions. Child-birth among Hindus is a ritually polluting event, which requires isolation and periodic bathing as a means of purification. Here in Lingo jigudem, each household contributes a container of water to clean the home and bathe the mother and the new-born baby on the day of the ritual cleanings. Ritualistic requirements aside, water and adequate hygiene is required for reducing postnatal infections and for good post-natal recovery. Yet, for the vast majority of urban women, adequate water during menstruation and childbirth remains a luxury.

Officially, Banjara Colony is counted as having complete sanitation coverage but in practice, apart from a certificate which shows personal investment of Rs225 for the ILCS, less than 5 per cent of the residents use the ILCS latrines provided.

*“The contractors came and told us that latrines would be built according to the Municipality plan. Initially, the design was a square super-structure with a single pit (lined with three concrete rings). Later on, a new model called the Singapur model, was built. This is a round superstructure, so small that even a small child can barely fit inside, let alone a bucket of water for flushing. In many cases, we were concerned that the latrines were placed in the wrong Vastu (traditional architecture philosophy) locations, but the contractors would not listen at all. In many cases, they dug the pits and did not come back for months. There were many incidences of children falling in and injuring themselves. When we asked the contractors to at least fill in the pits, they demanded money! The government sanctioned Rs4,500 for each of these latrines but we know it did not cost the contractor more than Rs1,500.”*

## Recognised slums

The lack of water for the poorest families is evident in **Adhikari Nagar**, which is a recognised, notified slum, which qualifies for official urban poverty programmes as well as others, like the APUSP.

Some women in Adhikari Nagar recall, 'the hellish time' two decades ago, when they had just settled here. They had to trudge long distances to fetch water. Official boreholes were drilled later and currently under the APUSP programme individual water supply connections were made available to those who could afford to pay the connection charge and user fees. Two years after the APUSP programme, however, the struggle to access water continues for the poorest households.

The community organiser (CO) remarks, "About 5 – 10 per cent of people, who are the poorest, always get left out because the schemes are either out of their financial range or not their priority. I hear them tell me their problems but I know I can do nothing, because the Municipality (implementing the APUSP programme) will/can do nothing for them." Yet, this slum is recognised as a best-practice model in the implementation of the APUSP.

There are also many gaps in the provision of the pour-flush latrines under the ILCS scheme. Initially, the municipality contracted the work of latrine construction to a local women's cooperative, known as CDS (Community Development Society)<sup>49</sup>. In L B Nagar Municipality, most notified-slum residents identified that CDS groups had done better latrine construction than other organisations. This, they identified was because there was no external pressure on these women to do sub-standard work while they stood to gain vital social credit within the community for their good work.

After the 2005 municipal elections, all development work (APUSP and ILCS) was handed over to private contractors. The 'invested' money was to be recovered from contracts and contractors, who recoup their money by compromising on quality of materials and construction. The spin-off has been the ousting of the local women's groups from municipal contracts and non functioning latrines have been installed en-masse.

**Vajpeyi Nagar** in Quthbullapur Municipality is a notified slum. In the late seventies and early eighties, underground sewers were laid out for a considerable part of Quthbullapur Municipality. The untreated sewage discharges with the outflow waters from the Jeedimetla Effluent Treatment Plant (a fetid red stream called the 'chemical nala') and flows through the heart of the Municipality to the MCH treatment plant at Amberpet, as an open but lined drain. The sewer was extended in 1997 to newer colonies.

Residents of Vajpeyi Nagar were provided with landholding rights in 1999 and it is cited by rickshaw pullers, taxi drivers, tea shop vendors, officials and politicians alike as the classic example of a slum which has improved extraordinarily through APUSP programme. The slum site initially was a low-lying swampy area, impossible to walk through in the rainy season. APUSP provided storm-water drains, concrete and brick-layered roads and inner lanes, individual water supply points, subsidised housing, individual latrines, garbage collection from households, bi-weekly sweeping of roads and cleaning of drains,

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<sup>49</sup> These groups were formed across the State (in officially recognised slums) between 1996 and 2000 under the directives of the official, central government-sponsored Integrated (Urban) Community Development Society Programme. The societies are loose associations of local neighbourhood women's groups and are at worst an association of the elite amongst the 'recognised urban-poor' women. At best, they hold significant potential of local engagement in official programmes.

fumigation for mosquito control, sprinkling of bleaching powder and air-vacuum systems for emptying of pit latrines.

However, not all the residents access these services and benefits. Below is a table showing access to sanitation for different wealth groups in Vajpai Nagar.

### Sanitation services in Vajpai Nagar

HH category	Land/house ownership	Latrine	Water	Bathing facility	Garbage collection from house	Other services provided by the Municipality
Better-off	Own house, spent more than Rs75,000 for construction ten years ago.	Built along with the house. Spent around Rs6,000, upgraded with ILCS loan	Individual connection	Separate room attached to the latrine	Yes	Bleaching powder sprinkled occasionally; Fumigation once in a while; Open drains cleaned; Roads swept
Medium rich	Own house, more recently constructed spent around Rs75,000.	Personal latrine upgraded through ILCS loan	Individual connection	Same as above	Yes	Same as above
Poor	Most have houses recently constructed under the VAMBAY housing loan programme, Rs25,000 subsidy and 30,000 available as interest free loan.	ILCS latrine, spent another Rs1,000 above loan amount	No individual connection. Fetch from neighbours.	Own	Yes	Same as above
Poorest	No plot or house. Rent or live in make-shift huts. Some have torn down existing huts to make way for VAMBAY construction, but have not yet received loans or contractors are absconding. Stay in mother-in-laws plot by making a temporary hut.	Share latrine with neighbours or defecate in the open.	No individual connection. Depend on neighbours and access hand pump water (which is polluted and called chemical water)	No, share or bathe in the open or by the side of the house	Yes	Same as above.

As can be seen from the above table, the poorest families still struggle to access water and sanitation to fulfil their basic needs, even in a recognised slum settlement. (See also the Annex for further details if Indian programmes, including VAMBAY).

### Kenya

In Nairobi, there is no distinction or bias among slum settlements; all are equally illegal and referred to as informal settlements, despite their existence for many years.

Maili Saba, one of the research locales, has been in existence since the 1930s. The early occupants provided labour to either a white-owned sisal farm or to the nearby stone quarries. There was a steady increase in the settlement's population from the early 1980s up to the early 1990s. The population doubled in the late 1990s and the influx of new

migrants continues. In 2004, the settlement had a population of 9,872 persons in 3,368 households in an area of about 3.9 square km, resulting in a relatively dispersed population density of 2,531 persons per square kilometre.

Government policies discourage the provision of basic services to the urban poor living in the informal settlements. This illegal tenure limits the availability of support from outside and insecurity of tenure and poverty undermine personal initiatives to improve sanitary facilities. Given this situation, most slum settlements have no public toilets, solid waste collection, drainage or paving.

Seventy eight per cent of the respondents in Maili Saba were not aware of any public sanitation projects or services in the area and had never benefited from such projects.<sup>50</sup> The rest were aware of software-only programmes - hygiene promotion campaigns, community water and sanitation training workshops and occasional clean up campaigns. The vast majority of respondents were more than willing to contribute to public sanitation projects and keenly aware that meeting sanitation needs on their own was well beyond their means.

Those who can afford to, spend around Kshs5,000-6,000<sup>51</sup> (Kshs1000–1500 per foot to dig through bedrock and Kshs200 through soil) to have 5 to 6 feet (1.5 - 1.8m) deep pit latrines. Ventilated pit latrines cost between Kshs10,000 and 50,000. Flush toilets with septic tanks were owned by less than 5 per cent of respondents. This is not surprising, given that the average (mean) monthly income of Maili Saba households was calculated at Kshs7,137.<sup>52</sup> The majority of the poorest and medium-poor households cannot raise this cost and hence don't have their individual latrines.

Most of the research respondents reported sharing pit latrines and 71 per cent shared bathing rooms, both with an average of 13 users per unit. In some instances, poorest and medium-poor households team up and build one facility which is accessible to all parties. They collectively provide labour (to dig the pit) and contribute local construction materials (mainly wood and old iron sheets for roofing). Across the different wealth groups, poorest households often share facilities with those who have private pit latrines and provide digging and cleaning services as their share of the contribution. On average, those sharing latrines and bathing rooms need to walk at least 20 to 25 metres to the nearest facility.

"In most houses the landlords don't provide toilets and bathrooms. My family shares a toilet with a friendly neighbour for free and we bathe inside our one-room house or in the open", says Bernard Mutitso. "The majority of Maili Saba residents empty all their wastes (including raw human waste) into the river once the few latrines are full. This is done manually with buckets and drums. The flying toilet<sup>53</sup> menace is a common scene; urinating and defecating in dark alleys is also rampant leading to an awful odour, which is bad for our health. This trend needs to be reversed to make this place better to live in," he adds.

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<sup>50</sup> There are two community latrines in nearby settlements, which are discussed below.

<sup>51</sup> At the time of writing, 130 Kenya Shillings were equal in value to £1 Sterling.

<sup>52</sup> An average based on the 40 survey respondents and supplemented with secondary data from reports and official documents.

<sup>53</sup> Defecating in a plastic bag and throwing the bag out of the house in the dark.

## An overview of sanitation provision across different income groups in Maili Saba

	Poorest	Medium poor	Better off
<b>Type of toilet</b>	N/A	Mainly shallow pit latrines 4 – 5 feet deep	Majority have pit latrines, few VIP latrines
<b>Toilets/bathroom</b>	Don't have individual/personal facilities. Most share with those who have. Pay by providing free services for cleaning, repairing and emptying	Most own and share facilities	Majority own personal latrines and bathrooms.
<b>Gender issues</b>	Access based on the owner's convenience; inaccessible to women and children at night due to fears of rape and molestation; children often don't use the toilets as they require adult supervision. Elder girls go in groups and/or are accompanied by adult females.	More accessible to women and children (boys and girls).	Access for women and children is not an issue
<b>Women's menstrual hygiene needs</b>	Most use old clothes to absorb the blood; wrap used rags in a plastic bag and throw them into nearby pit latrines or rubbish piles, cannot afford to wash the rags as there is no water; cannot afford sanitary towels (which cost Kshs60 per packet or cotton wool which costs Kshs40)	Some can afford cotton wool, which they substitute for commercially made sanitary towels. After use, they wrap in plastic bags and dump in pit latrines or river.	Use a combination of both sanitary towels and cotton wool during menstruation times. The used material is dumped in pit latrines

It is evident that 'providing for one's defecation needs' is a basic requirement and the emptying and digging of pit latrines is a regular activity. It is costlier to empty a pit than dig a new one and this has resulted in a serious problem of abandoned pits which create health hazards and inconvenience.

Pit digging, repairing and emptying is usually the work of men. In rare cases (5 per cent), landlords have hired others to clean communal pit latrines. Where toilets are shared, the owners expect the sharers to keep the facility clean. There is overall dissatisfaction with the 'condition' of the latrines. The first common complaint is the 'terrible' stench of the many latrines, which permeates the entire settlement. During the rainy season, the latrine-pits flood and the contents overflow into the narrow streets.

The pits are covered with rough-hewn planks of wood, with a large squat hole in the centre. Frequently there are no foot rests. Children have often fallen into the holes and fractured legs. Among the respondents, young children and the disabled rated the existing latrines as inadequate, inappropriate and dangerous.

Women commonly undertake the day to day cleaning of the latrines. Fifty seven per cent of the women were concerned with the condition of the toilets compared to 30 per cent of the men. Women's concern with cleanliness has much to do with their 'gendered' responsibility of looking after children and the disabled.



*Grace Wanjiku is a single parent with six young children. She shares the bathroom with her neighbours and often finds herself cleaning the latrine on her own. "The latrine is covered with rough wooden planks and is difficult to clean, especially as there is little water. I try my best to clean it before the children use the latrine."*

*Winnie Wanyonyi lives with her husband and four children in a rented house. The pit latrine in the house is filled up, but the landlord will not invest in a new one. The family share the latrine with their neighbours, but they must seek approval every time for its use and they must wait until the owners have completed their use of it in the mornings. Often the children use the latrines at their school.*

*Rhoda lives in a rented house with her husband and four children. The owner lives on the same plot and has a small hotel on his premises. Rhoda's family use the same latrine and bathroom that is open to all the hotel customers. The facilities are often very dirty. Rhoda and the children avoid using these facilities when they can because of the filth and lack of privacy. Being the only woman in the premises, she must clean the toilet and bathroom.*

Residents grapple simultaneously with the lack of adequate water to meet sanitation needs as well as the lack of bathing and washing facilities. Women from the poorest households, who lack even a shared bathing room (15 per cent of respondents) bathe in the dark or during late mornings, inside their tiny one-roomed huts, with water brought from the shallow wells along the polluted Mwengenyu river. Seventy one per cent of the respondents share bathing rooms and only a few have their own bathrooms.

Water sold at the kiosks in jerry cans is far too expensive to be used for cleaning purposes. This is used sparingly for only drinking and cooking, especially by the poorest households. Seventy three per cent of the respondents reported that there is no water to clean hands after defecation. There is also a near or complete absence of drainage of any sort. Waste water is normally used for cleaning the house, bathroom or toilet or disposed of outside the homestead.

In the three research locales, there are only two community toilet blocks with bathing spaces, and water collection kiosks were provided as one-off facilities by NGOs. The high use and popularity of these units indicate the desperate need for 'sanitation facilities' but men outnumber women in the use of these pay and use latrines. This highlights the need to assess and understand 'gendered barriers' to sanitation more closely as part of the sanitation improvement planning process.

#### A community latrine in Kiambiu slum

Kiambiu is situated east of the main Nairobi city centre between the affluent Buruburu neighborhood and middle-low income Eastleigh estates. Kiambiu has a population of about 20,000 people. It has three functioning public toilet blocks, each fully fitted with toilets, showers and water kiosks. The units were built by Maji na Ufanisi, (one of the local NGOs) in collaboration with Kiambiu Usafi Group (KUG), a Community Group established in 1998 that now has about two hundred members.

Each block has two attendants employed by the community management committee. Their salaries are paid from the income generated from the project. Casual visitors pay a flat rate of KShs3 for one-off use of the latrine and KShs4 for one-off use of the shower. The managing committee, put in place by ITDG-Kenya, who funded the project, offers thirty days (renewable) subscription to the residents of the slum for a fee of KShs150 per month for each household. The subscribed household is issued with a stamped access

card. Children 12 years and under can use the facilities free of charge. Water can also be collected for domestic use at the same rate as it is being sold at the kiosks.

The units are used the most on Sundays, both for showers and for collecting water. Also, there are significant queues every day in the evening before closing time and early in the morning between 6.00 and 8.00am.

Casual visitors (more men than women) exceed monthly subscribers. Although access is free for children, they are the least frequent users. Many of the male respondents said it was preferable to pay and use the facilities when needed, rather than to pay a lump sum in advance once a month. Women constitute only 3 per cent of the shower users and no children use the shower. On the day of the field visit, the latrines were closed. The septic tanks had filled up and the vacuum service, provided by a private company, for emptying the tank had not arrived. There was no electricity and therefore no water. A woman, who was washing clothes to earn money had a huge bundle of clothes in front of her.

### Sanitation block in Kibera slum

There is one sanitation block in Kibera which serves a population of about 71,000 residents. The monthly subscription for using this toilet is the same as in Kiambiu - Kshs150 for households with ten or less members and Kshs 3 per use for non-members. Children are not charged. Additionally, this facility also provides tissue paper for use in the toilets as well as a designated area for washing clothes.

There were many positive experiences reported about these toilet blocks: their presence increases a resident's social standing among visiting friends and family members and the stench of faeces and drains in the settlement has decreased significantly.

Some months after the opening of the block, ITDG installed solar heaters in the bathrooms. This resulted in an increase in the number of elderly users:

*“At home, we bathe bending over small basins and this gets difficult when you get older and your body refuses to bend. We did not use the facility here when the shower water was cold but the warm water shower is much appreciated!”*

In both the toilet blocks, more men than women use the facility and a much higher proportion of men use the showers. On average only 13 children use the facility each day and then only for defecation purposes. Women mentioned that privacy is a major factor for their low use. Saving money, either for a monthly pass and/or for casual uses is often beyond the capacity of the poorest women. They also worry about leaving their children or houses unattended and fear the risk of being attacked and abused.

### **Bangladesh**

Water supply and sanitation for slum residents in Bangladesh are comparatively better than in the slums of Nairobi. All the slum settlements in Bangladesh have some form of sanitation services (including water supply) provided by a diverse range of agencies, while they are mostly absent in the Nairobi slums. However, the agencies in Bangladesh provide fewer services - only tap stands and latrines - and these are still often unaffordable or impractical for meeting 'sanitation' needs.

## Beguntila

When the research was initiated in early 2002, there were no functional water points in Beguntila. UNICEF, in collaboration with the local municipal government authorities provided 10 tube-wells in 2000. By 2002, none of the tube-wells was working. The residents attribute this to 'overuse' by almost 1500 people [total of 241 households]. Since then, two local leaders have obtained DWASA<sup>54</sup> mains-water connections. One of these provides water only at midnight for about 2-3 hours for which the residents are expected to pay Tk50 per month. The other is connected to a cement storage tank which can be accessed during the day for Tk25 per month. However, these facilities only provide about 2 kolshis (5 litre pot) per family, which is inadequate even for drinking and/or cooking needs of the residents,

Women and young children walk 20-30 minutes in the mornings and evenings to neighbouring areas to fetch clean water for cooking and drinking from households and shops located on the main road, which allow slum residents to access their water points, charging them Tk15-20 a week, a costly amount for poor families. Several of the slum women access water from a well-known religious lady, who has a government water connection line in her home. She charges the residents a nominal amount of Tk2 per week, to cover her costs. She does not limit the amount of water the slum women can access, but all are required to say religious prayers before they take any water. She has declared, 'that those who cannot read the *sura* [prayer] cannot access the water.' This therefore excludes the one Hindu family living in the slum.

Many families filter the filthy water with a '*sari*' before using the water for washing vegetables, and to wash their bodies and clothes. Many of the families complained that because of dirty water they suffer from different kinds of skin infections. Indeed, skin infections such as scabies and weeping sores are common among Beguntila residents.

During the time of the research there were 14 latrines provided by UNICEF in Beguntila, which were being used by around 1,500 people. All the residents paid a fixed sum per month for the cleaning and maintenance of the latrine.

Early morning, observations found long queues consisting of mostly men and elderly women outside the latrines. There were plenty of heated exchanges among residents as they waited their turn in the queue. Small incidents led to arguments. When one left the queue for a moment, their place was lost. If a person took a long time in the latrine, people started shouting, "what are you doing? Why are you taking so long? What is going on? Hurry up?" Sometimes the women and men left the latrine dirty, which annoyed the next user resulting in a tirade of abuse. Children standing in the line were pushed out of the way by adults until later when the queue had subsided. Some of the elderly soiled their clothes while waiting in the queue:

*"We stand in line for hours. The latrine doors are broken, there is no water in the latrine ...they are in an awful state." For women the broken doors and lack of lights at night make it difficult for them to use the latrines properly and for the disabled the situation is even worse. A blind woman explained her suffering, "I have to wait for my nephew to take me to the toilet. I have to send people to call him to help me out...otherwise I just hold it in..."*

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<sup>54</sup> Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority

Complaints are made of the extremely bad smell. "After I come out of the toilet, I can't eat... it is so dirty, that I lose my appetite. During the monsoon it is really difficult to go to the toilet – everything there is so muddy and dirty." Gul Bano, an elderly woman in her 60s, says. "If only one could breathe calmly and not have to hold one's breath while defecating." She knows from her experiences of using latrines in her employer's home that latrines can be clean and free from smells.

Previously in the slum, the committee collected Tk20 per month from all the residents to organise the cleaning of the latrines. A young woman Majeda (32 years old and very poor) was paid Tk800 per month for cleaning the latrines. The rest of the money (about Tk4,000) was kept by the leaders. Majeda left her job, as she was never paid on time and literally had to beg for her salary. The slum residents confronted the committee leaders and also queried what was happening to the rest of the money. Some residents took the matter into their own hands and appointed a new cleaner, a 20 year old woman called Najma. They decided that they would pay Taka 5 per month each directly to Najma for cleaning the latrines and no money would be deposited with the committee members. Najma works hard at cleaning each day, bringing around 3 buckets of water for each latrine from the nearby ponds. However, the volume of use is simply too large to clean the toilets adequately.

### Modherbasti

In the slum settlement of Modherbasti, committee leaders and NGOs have brought in several DWASA water connections over the years. The fact that these connections are supplied to those willing to invest in the infrastructure and pay maintenance charges means that those who are better-off or better-organised can access the facilities. To install a household water connection from an existing pipe costs Tk3,000-15,000 depending on the distance of the home from the water point location. This is still cheaper than bringing in a separate water connection which costs about Tk60,000. Landlords decide whether and when to allow their tenants and others to access water.

In 1996, Dhaka City Council (DCC) authorities provided 9 communal hand pumps 'free of charge' for the poorer households. Of these, only six deliver water. According to the residents, the landlord and their tenants have priority in accessing the water.

Water scarcity is an everyday problem, accentuated during the dry summer months. The water of the ponds (jheels) is more polluted and visibly dirtier during the dry summer months. However, regardless of the season, women need to be up at dawn to wash before the men are up.

*"We bathe in the pond as early in the morning as possible. But it is impossible to avoid the men completely. We bathe with our clothes on - all our clothes - so we can't really soap ourselves; then we come home to change into dry clothes and go back to the pond to wash our dirty wet clothes. If only we had a little clean water to bathe, to wash our faces, it would mean so much to us. If only we could bathe, as we wanted, and not feel ashamed for bathing every day."*

Young girls spoke of bathing in groups remaining fully dressed to avoid glances and harassment but they still have to walk back home with their wet clothes clinging to their bodies. This is particularly difficult during menstruation. "When we have our periods it is a problem to bathe, to be alone enough to wash the cloth napkins we wear, to take it back home and find secluded corners inside the house to dry them where no one can see or touch them." Older women, who bleed less, spoke of wearing two pairs of underwear to absorb the blood discharged at this time.

During the course of the research (2004), the male leaders in Modherbasti decided that women were 'shamelessly' bathing at tapstands on the main road and this practice would need to be discontinued. Male leaders viewed the public bathing of women as bringing dishonour to them and the reputation of the slum. It was not that women disagreed with them - it was sheer desperation that had compelled many of these women to choose to bathe (with their saris on) at the water points. In this way, they saved time and didn't need to haul large pitchers of water to their house just to have a bath. These were primarily the poorest women (tenants/female headed households) who did not have hand pumps close to their homes. These women were once more made to carry large quantities of water back home from the water point to bathe.

Modherbasti being the home of the DCC workers (see Chapter 4) has facilitated the construction of roads, public latrines and water points in the slum. NGOs also operate here. Of the 84 individual latrines<sup>55</sup> in the slum, 42 were financed by landlords and the rest were built using loans provided by an NGO called PSTC<sup>56</sup>. PSTC provides interest-free loans of Tk1,500 for the construction of individual latrines. Earlier, these latrines were not connected to the underground sewerage system but opened into drains. PSTC has recently built a 300 feet (100m) sewerage line in Modherbasti and since then provides latrine loans only to those households which will agree to connect to the sewer. This increases the cost of the latrine construction and also restricts the spread of latrines across the settlement.

It is interesting to note that PSTC loans are flexible depending on the person's position in the slum. Anowara Begum (a landlady) received Tk3,000 which is double the usual amount to build a latrine. She is well known and had facilitated the entry of the NGO into the area by carrying out community mobilisation and finding new members. In addition, she is a long-established landlord and her husband has a high salaried job in the DCC. In this way, NGO workers facilitate their own work in the slum community by keeping 'key' individuals (gatekeepers into the slum) happy. With the loan, Anowara was able to build a latrine and cement her water point. Now with a latrine, Anowara is able to charge more rent from her tenants. Not all families were willing to invest in latrines. Many of the tenants complained that their landlords were not going to build the latrines. Some of the landlords are not DCC workers and fear eviction; some do not have adequate space in their compounds, or cannot afford to install a latrine system that connects to the sewer, as PSTC requires.

There is also an 18-seater public latrine, but only 10 of the latrine stalls are usable. Of these, 8 stalls have been occupied by landlords, who have built boundary walls around the latrines with restricted access for themselves and their tenants. As these landlords are closely linked to, or are themselves influential people, then ordinary people cannot challenge their actions.

In Modherbasti, demand exceeds supply and a large number of men, women, disabled and children complain of the long queues faced every morning. Public facilities are equally as dirty as elsewhere and mothers spoke of how they were scared that their young children might fall in the latrines. Many of the younger children defecate and urinate in the

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<sup>55</sup> Simple single pit latrines are common in Modherbasti.

<sup>56</sup> PSTC, established in Modherbasti since 1998, has the following programs: garbage collection (charge Tk5 per month); hygiene education; provision of sanitary latrine; sewerage maintenance; adult education (female only) and gender education and reproductive education (for adolescent girls).

slum drains, making Modherbasti visibly dirty with an awful stench of urine, faeces and waste in the alleyways.

### Sanitation provision remains inadequate

While men and women both face problems accessing communal latrines, women have specific social and cultural concerns that make access even more difficult. Many of the women complained that they felt unsafe and uncomfortable using 'broken down' latrines for the shame of being seen from the outside. In all of the slums, women complained about the lack of lights in the latrine. Using the latrine at night when it is less crowded is often ruled out because of inconvenience, personal safety and fear of ghosts. As one young girl explained, "The latrines are dirty and there is no light. We try not to come at night, but when we have to, it is with a (male) escort and with a small light." Others like Khadija use the latrine at night. The filth, the stench and the lack of lights make the toilets a dreaded place. It is commonly believed that 'ghosts' abide in the latrines and no woman or girl would dare go alone at night. One corner of the house of an elderly couple in Modherbasti reeked of urine, possibly as a result of their inability to venture out of the house at night and the inconvenience of doing so during the day.

Among users, there is a constant search to find other sanitation options. Some of the women and men access latrines outside the slum. Hasna Hena, a 35 year old, single mother, defecates in the garment factory latrines once she gets to work. Hasna says, "The slum latrines are really very dirty; you can't even enter. It is really horrible and there are so many people who stand in line. I would never reach my work on time". Rehana (20 years old) uses the latrine in a house on the road. She is friendly with the female landlady of that household and offers services in exchange for this favour. Yet, she continues to pay money for cleaning the slum latrines even though she rarely uses them. She is scared that if she doesn't pay she will be in trouble with the committee, and will not be counted as part of the slum population.

Where proper latrines were constructed and are used, residents report a distinct behavioural change in defecation practices. Most households confirm that a decade ago, everyone practised open defecation in these areas. The construction of latrine units has made open defecation acceptable only to those who are unable to access the latrines, mostly the most vulnerable and destitute, many of whom are single women. Many individuals now link defecation to social status and consider it demeaning to defecate in the open.

Women using the recently-provided latrines identify them as a boon. Some of them recall the horror stories earlier when they had to habituate their bowels to function only after dark, to stand up when men passed by (men should not see women's bodies), to hold in or be ashamed when they had diarrhoea, or to worry when their young daughters went out for defecation without them.

When asked why they had not voiced the need for latrines earlier or constructed their own latrines, respondents said that issues relating to personal or body-hygiene are not acceptable areas of discussion for women. However, women in these areas have been encouraged by leaders and NGOs to mobilise and demand secure land-tenure. This is a classic example of women internalising and articulating the demands of the entire community, at the expense of issues that concern women's needs more specifically. The urban poor can be very articulate but they risk being noticed and possibly evicted, if they are too outspoken.

It is important to mention that in Bangladesh, Kenya and India, the rental value of slum rooms is linked, in part, to the presence and condition of water and sanitation facilities. The poorest can only afford the worst housing options. Many tenants report that absentee landlords are indifferent to their plight because they do not live in the slum.

### **Summary**

The above findings illustrate that sanitation services available to the urban poor range from a complete lack of facilities to a wide range of facilities provided by government and non-governmental investments. When there is a lack of services individuals are equally affected regardless of their income levels. Meeting a composite whole of personal and environmental sanitation needs requires far more than just individual investment.

There are many families who are financially capable of paying for their own individual latrine. However, because of the dense housing on small plots of land and lack of security of tenure, latrine construction is not possible. Significant social and political resources had to be invested just to bring water supply into the settlement.

The case studies from India, Kenya and Bangladesh reveal that water supply and sanitation in 'illegal' slums is often provided as a result of active leaders, mastaans and/or NGOs, all of whom will have their own interests and motivations. The many NGOs which operate in Beguntilla provide micro credit, health care and non-formal education. All of these needs are important but were not determined in consultation with the community in Beguntilla. The NGOs came in with their own pre-determined agendas. The Government in India provides individual pit latrines in most 'formal' settlements but these latrines also rarely address the sanitation needs of women, the elderly, disabled, and children and may not even be appropriate for men.

The current approach to sanitation means that different levels of sanitation services are provided in different areas and commonly this amounts to systems for excreta disposal, which are not always safe, nor always convenient or matching people's needs. Often services only reach or benefit the not-so-poor, i.e., those living in recognised slums or the not-so-poor households in these slums.

Projects often fail to take into account the social and economic dimensions of inter- and intra-household poverty, which determines not only who lives where but also the differential access to services. In some cases the exclusion is deliberate. For example, the APUSP programme was implemented only in legally recognized slums and did not reach squatter settlements, which house the poorest in the urban centres. This happened even though the programme objectives specified targeting the poorest.

Similarly, in Bangladesh, poorer tenants had to move out when NGOs provided interest-free loans to landlords in some slums to construct latrines and obtain water points. The landlords in turn, raised their rents, which were no longer affordable for the poorest tenants. Similarly, despite higher subsidies, poorest households were unable to demand and secure individual latrines under India's ILCS programme. Public latrines in Bangladesh, India and Kenya are not used by many women, often as a result of cost, inconvenience or fears for safety.

Where available, the designs and modes of delivery of sanitation services are planned and decided in a top-down manner and not according to user needs and situations. The plans and designs cater to a generic 'urban poor' assumed to be living in a home, willing to make additional investments in a tap and/or a latrine and/or having easy access to public spaces. The poverty and gender biases in this assumption are all too evident.

## 5.2 What is appropriate sanitation?

Appropriate sanitation has to be defined by the users themselves. The following section details some of the perspectives of those involved in the field studies and shows that for many women and men, young and old, appropriate sanitation does not just comprise suitable facilities for the disposal of excreta but the ability to maintain hygiene and dignity even in extremely difficult circumstances and with very limited resources.

During the course of the research, it was often felt to be 'demeaning' to ask what would be appropriate sanitation as the options available to the urban poor appeared to be so limited and inadequate, especially for the poorest. All the respondents among the urban poor aspired to a higher standard of living, desperately wanting to live as the non-poor 'legal' residents they observed and worked for. It was evident that a basic *minimum* sanitation standard was required for all. In the slums in Dhaka, 60 year old Gul Bano's desire to breathe well and calmly while defecating; the desire of the young adolescent girls to be clean by bathing in clean water and in covered spaces and the increased number of elderly who decided to avail themselves of the warm-water bathing facilities in the communal latrine in Kibera slum in Nairobi all reflect the basic and universal need for adequate sanitation.

However, sanitation projects often by-pass the poor and plan and deliver what they think is appropriate for the poor. Women, much more than men, were interested to talk about appropriate sanitation. It was unclear why this was so. Was it because it was easier to convince and persuade women to talk, as is the case in most research, or was it because women living on the pavements or in the slums, hold the primary responsibility for maintaining a clean household environment? This includes helping young children to defecate, cleaning up children's faeces, bathing children, arranging water for husbands to bathe, washing clothes for the entire household, washing and cleaning food and cleaning the house and the front yards.

Across research locales, the above tasks are identified as strictly female ones and conveniently linked to the moral identities of the women. Good women are those who perform these tasks diligently and keep their homes clean. Good women are equally those who meet their personal sanitation needs in privacy, shielding their bodies from public view and hiding the specific features of their sexual biology, for example menstrual blood.

Most of the adult and adolescent female respondents in Vajpai Nagar in India identified appropriate sanitation as:

- Individual latrines and/or privacy and convenience during defecation;
- Water connections at home with adequate water for household cleaning needs;
- Personal cleanliness (bathing, wearing clean clothes, oiling hair) and ensuring the same for children;
- Washing utensils;
- Washing clothes;
- Sweeping, cleaning the front yard with water and cow dung and drawing ritually ornamental patterns known as 'rangoli' on the floor;
- Cleaning the house – sweeping, mopping;
- Keeping the bathroom and latrine clean.

The views expressed by women in Bangladesh and Kenya were not very different from the above. Maili Saba residents have a clear idea of what should be done about the lack of sanitation, "the first step should be to dig trenches to collect and drain the waste water



and also the provision of public toilets with pour-flush latrines, sewer systems and pipes.” They emphasise that there cannot be effective sanitation without appropriate and adequate water. “Having pit latrines, bathing spaces, places to dump our household waste and drainage systems instead of taking the waste to Mwengenye river - that is what I think is appropriate,” says 70 year old Margaret Wangui. “Here raw human waste from the latrines is also emptied in the river” says Bernard Mutitso who perceives sanitation and hygiene as comprising “access to deep pit latrines, clean water availability, electricity, proper roads for easy mobility and working sewerage and drainage systems.”

### 5.2.1 The need for water

The research findings show that sanitation means much more than locating an appropriate space for defecation. “Give us water and we will teach you what sanitation and hygiene is all about”, said one of the respondents in Dhaka. Water is the most important component of the overall sanitation needs, which enables one to be ‘pak’ (clean for worship), practise ‘sunnat’ (washing hands, arms, legs and face after every defecation as instructed by the Prophet Mohammed) or simply to look clean and presentable. Living on the streets without a roof over one’s head, strips a person of basic human dignity; keeping and looking clean is one step towards social acceptance. Young men living on the pavements say, “An unclean or a dirty looking person is not easily acceptable to others. Those who look unclean are ‘khochor’ (very lowly).”

In India, a group of women graded what is considered unclean and insanitary, in terms of bodily waste. **Faeces** are considered the ‘dirtiest’ of all, while menstrual blood, seminal fluids and therefore the act of sexual intercourse are less dirty.

In terms of meeting sanitation needs, what matters most to Marium is the cleaning process after defecation. “I wash my legs and hand after using the toilet, as it is ‘sunnat’, I never miss that”. She thinks this is the way a person should ‘purify’ him/herself, otherwise they remain ‘napak’ (unclean). After defecation Marium tries to borrow soap from others if she does not have it herself. “Otherwise I use dirt from the road to wash my hands with but that does not give me a good feeling.” Younger women do the same, “Though I don’t perform ‘namaz’ (prayers) here, I try to observe ‘sunnat’ and wash my hands, arms, legs and face after every defecation. After menstruation, I take a full body and hair bath and change and clean all my clothes.” It is equally important to bathe after sexual intercourse. Most women mention that they keep water beside them at night to have an early morning bath if they know they will need it.

In both Bangladesh and India, toilet and washing facilities are particularly important to young men and adolescent boys living on the streets. The pressure to ‘look clean’ and ‘smell good’ helps in bonding with other adolescent males. So significant is the desire to look like ‘normal boys’ that defecating, urinating or even bathing on the streets are avoided where possible.

Given that most of these adolescent boys hope to work as servers in slightly up-market cafes or community function halls rather than street-side hotels, the need to look clean and acceptable is even more important. Substantial investments are made on the use of public latrines, soap, shampoo, bathing and laundry. We found one boy who chose to rent a hut as he found the costs of keeping clean were lower in such a permanent dwelling compared to living on the pavement. A structured observation of a pay-and-use toilet complex in Hyderabad revealed that most of the users were young men.

### 5.2.2 Latrine maintenance

A group of men analysing why communal latrines are left dirty by users, explained that people do not detest their own faeces and have no concern about ensuring proper disposal. It is other people's faeces that seem so much dirtier - too nasty to even see or smell, let alone clean. Among Hindus, the emphasis is on separating oneself from faeces. Therefore, after defecation, the overriding focus becomes bodily purification, bathing, washing etc. and not dealing further with the faeces. The same applies to Muslims – it is the act of performing wuzu or cleansing that is important.

For the very same reasons, toilets are also considered dirty. In India, most first generation urban migrants were not comfortable with toilets attached to their homes:

*“In earlier times, it was always separate. Even now, the utensils for anal cleansing are always kept separate. But times are changing. Earlier, we had to have a bath after defecation – but in the slums, water is not readily available and there is so much work at home in the morning. We just wash our hands and feet after defecation and take a bath later on in the morning.”*

Women in India and Bangladesh mention that young children's faeces (children less than one year old) are considered less dirty and/or polluting. The WEDC MDG study on water, sanitation and hygiene in Kenya (WELL, 2005) found a similar belief amongst women. Most communities believe that children's faeces are harmless compared to adult's and little effort is made to dispose of children's excreta safely. Men will not handle anyone's faeces apart from their own – not even children's.

A mother of a three month old child in one settlement in India explained that her husband was nice, compared to others. He helped her with the housework after childbirth, but of the many things he will not do one is to wash the child's soiled napkins. On an after thought, she added, “Neither will I allow him to do so.”

This helps to explain why women are responsible for cleaning the latrines and men only “demand that it is cleaned.” It is demeaning for men, and for the family, who derive their worth from that of the household head, to clean latrines. In India, the Dalits (considered to be the lowest caste - see Chapter 2) clean public latrines and in Bangladesh, only desperately poor women like Najma (see above) are willing to clean the public latrine.

### 5.2.3 Handwashing

While it is commonly accepted that faeces are dirty, not all believe in the faeces-disease links. Elderly women in both India and Bangladesh identify the ‘galeez’ (filth) of the faeces but see only a need for a ritual purification after defecation. Handwashing with soap immediately after defecation is not considered important.

Sixty year old Anowara washes her hands with sand or soil if water is available or simply rubs her hands on the wall after defecation. Even though her husband and young grandson use soap, she feels she can minimise the household budget by sparing her use of the soap. However she cleans her legs and hands in the prescribed manner (*wuzu*) everyday, using water sparingly in order to be ‘pak’ and presentable for prayers.

In contrast, women with younger children appeared to be more aware of the faeces-disease-link and expressed a greater need for hand washing after defecation. In Modherbosti, Safia a young girl in her late teens is married and pregnant. With little knowledge of the faecal oral routes or the much-promoted message of hand washing, she

claims, "hands are one's ultimate enemy – the carrier between dirty and clean, between defecation, eating and cooking." She feels that if the hands are taken care of then much can be controlled. She feels one should wash the hand often; after defecation, before eating, before cooking, preferably with soap. The rest of the issues are of secondary importance and more related to convenience and attitude – like regular bathing, washing clothes, washing utensils well and keeping the household environment clean.

Her husband Jamal and their neighbour Kamal (32) are less convinced of the need for such caution:

*"The poor living in such situations have a natural immunity to disease. Hygiene is not required by us, it is for the upper classes. I know one, who after defecating and anal cleansing washes his hand simply with water, then smells it. If the smell persists, he rubs his hands on his thighs and finally on the hair. The smell of hair oil takes away everything else – both the smell and anything that might be harmful. To him, like many others, the smell is what is most undesirable."*

Structured observations reveal that many women and men do not wash their hands with soap after defecation. The ready availability of soap, a reliable supply of water and finally the belief in one's worth and the cleaning value of soap are all needed to encourage hand washing. In Beguntilla, Khadiza (28) reports:

*"After my marriage, I used to live with my in-laws. When I used soap to wash my hands after defecation, my mother-in-law remarked, 'The landlord's (zamindar) daughter has come to the wrong house.' I have been taught to be clean since my childhood and I continue to practise these habits, as far as I can."*

#### **5.2.4 Bathing**

Bathing is an integral part of sanitation. For men, the issue is related to finding adequate and clean water, while for women, the high priority is privacy during bathing. The female body attracts undesired attention and attention dishonours patriarchal respectability.

In Nairobi, bathing rooms, like latrines are shared among the not so poor. The poorest women, whose families have nothing to offer in exchange for sharing the facilities with others, bathe inside their homes.

Save the Children (2004) reports that soap is an important part of household expenses. People strive to look and smell clean and looking dirty means that a major compromise has been made and that a person is not able to cope with their situation. Kuddoz, who is in his forties is blind. He is more conscious than most men of the need to be clean:

*"Everybody likes cleanliness. People call me 'itar' (stupid) if there is bad odour from me. Also people think I don't need to be clean as I am blind. I cannot bathe without help. The big pond is too far to go. The nearest pond is dirty. I cannot bathe with the dirty pond water. It makes me itch and I get headache and fever. So I bathe with piped water (clean). We get only two kolshis (5 litre pots) of water and I need at least 2 kolshis for the bath. Before moving to Beguntilla, I was used to bathing twice a day but now I cannot even bathe once every day. Sometimes I go without bathing for 2 days*

*when there is crisis of water, and sponge my body with a wet towel.  
I feel very uncomfortable when I've not had a bath."*

It is rare to see appropriate bathing spaces for women being provided in sanitation interventions for the urban poor. What is provided as sanitation are individual latrines, water points, drainage, solid waste disposal and street-paving. The provision of water is limited to 'safe drinking water' needs. Personal hygiene is 'preached' in awareness campaigns but rarely accompanied with appropriate services and facilities.

The need for bathing is not only physical but also ritual. Hindu men and women acquire impurity by processes of birth, death and sexual intercourse; while birth signifies auspicious impurity, death is considered as inauspicious impurity (Das, 1982). Water is considered to have intrinsic purity and the capacity to absorb pollution and to carry it away (Murray, 1994). In both India and Bangladesh, bathing is important after sexual intercourse. Semen and vaginal fluids are as polluting as menstrual blood, and one is not clean enough for worship without a ritual bath. Yet, in both places, it is the women who must provide the water for the men's bathing. This practice of bathing after sexual intercourse is common across age and class groups in India and Bangladesh.

### **5.2.5 Dental hygiene**

Interestingly, dental hygiene stands in second place to bathing and washing. Anowara, Ashgar and their young grandson in Beguntilla have been cleaning their teeth with charcoal dust for the past two months. The vendor who sells 'Mazan' a local brand of toothpowder for Tk2 a packet (sufficient for one person for one month) has not come to the settlement recently. Every month, the family pays Tk30 for water supply, Tk5 to the latrine cleaner, Tk32 for laundry soap, Tk11 for soap and Tk20 for hair and body oil.

Similarly, Khadiza stopped buying toothpaste as the first measure to reduce costs when the household income fell. But she says she cannot live without soap. Young men in the streets in Dhaka feel that the mouth can be cleaned with twigs and hands and rinsed with water. Soap, and sometimes shampoo, were however considered necessities.

### **5.2.6 Privacy and security**

As discussed elsewhere, privacy and security are important components of appropriate sanitation. Migrant women from Bihar in Uttar Pradesh speak of the enormous restrictions applied on their movement,

*"In Bihar, we cannot walk out of the house courtyard. In the early morning, young males watch over the latrines while we defecate and prevent older men from coming near. As we come home, we bathe inside the kitchen or in a sheltered corner of the courtyard. Often our mothers-in-law wash our clothes, if the well or tap is in the open. We cover our faces with a huge gunghat<sup>57</sup> so that no part of the body can be seen. We must not even look out into the streets."*

In the slums in Nairobi, for the poorest households who lack a pit latrine, it is more convenient to defecate in plastic bags, tie them up and wait for the cover of darkness to throw them out. Harassment by men who like to stare at younger women, means that only elderly women use communal, shared latrines.

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<sup>57</sup> Gunghat is the Hindu equivalent of purdah. It means that the sari is worn so that one end completely covers the head - in extreme cases the face and neck too.

### 5.2.7 Sexual intercourse and menstruation

Women's biology is also considered polluting by women and men in both India and Bangladesh. Among practitioners of Hinduism, impurity is ascribed to the organic aspects of life, symbolised by the peripheral extremities of the human body, including the physical margins and matter issuing from them, including hair, nails, spittle, blood, semen, urine, faeces or even tears (Das, 1982; Murray, 1994). Human bodies in the act and process of producing bodily secretions or associating with these materials are polluting. Thus all women become polluting during menstruation and childbirth. Similarly, in Islam, menstrual blood is considered impure. Women of all ages need to take a ritual cleansing bath after the end of the menstrual period. During menstruation, they do not read the Koran or perform 'Azan' (daily prayers). If in the middle of a fast they start menstruating, then fasting is stopped. When the menstruation ends, the woman must bathe, wash her clothes and her home is cleaned with water. During her period, 45 year old Jayeeda says:

*"I feel impure and sleep on a different bed (away from my husband). I try to bathe twice a day, if I can get the water. After the menstruation stops, I bathe and wash all the clothes I used during this period. This then makes me 'pak'. This is Sunnat (the way to achieve God, the correct way of living.),"*

In India, women seclude themselves during menstruation. They visit neither temples nor ritually 'clean' places; they take baths more frequently and when the bleeding stops they wash the entire home and the clothing they used. A girl's first menstrual cycle is marked by an initial isolation and then a celebration after the cleansing period (7-14 days). Although the practice of celebration has eroded in urban slums among families who are exceptionally poor, the practice of isolation during the first cycle continues.

In India and Bangladesh, there is much fear and apprehension about what should be done with the stained cloth/cotton-wool pad used to soak up menstrual bleeding. The general belief is that someone can cast an 'evil eye' on the blood, which will affect the health and fertility of the person and their family. Hence used menstrual materials are burned, buried or thrown into swift flowing waters – whatever is possible and convenient. Rarely will used menstrual materials be thrown into an open place visible to the public. However, convenience overrides fear and a comparative study of young adolescent girls in the slums showed that those who work outside the home and earn some money have switched to wearing disposable sanitary towels or collecting pieces of cloth from tailors' shops and buying cotton wool to make absorbent pads, which they then throw away after use. Economic independence adds to one's social worth and hygiene practices change once a person can make her own choices. However, this is not feasible for many who have limited sources of income.

In the slums of Bangladesh, young, single girls working in the garment factories take the greatest care with regard to cleanliness. Even if they lack clean water to bathe, as in Beguntilla, they all use beauty soaps for bathing and brush their teeth with toothpaste or toothpowder. They take care to wear clean clothes. Most of them mentioned using sanitary towels or cotton wool wrapped in pieces of cloth. They discard these after use on their way to work. Their parents either don't know or are generally supportive of these expenses.

Meena (16) and Selina (14) work in a garment factory and demand separate bathing soaps, hair-oil and clean clothes for going to work. Both of them use sanitary towels, which they throw away after use. Hasina, their mother never used these products but feels her daughters should get these because "they earn as well."

In contrast, Rita (16), the second wife of Jamil (late 40s) cannot exercise this freedom. Rita works as a domestic maid and makes around Tk500 a month. She has to hand over all the money she earns to Jamil, who occasionally gives her what he feels she needs. “During menstruation I need to change three times a day. I use old sarees and wash the cloth with water and try to find a space to dry it. Only after my period is over do I wash all my clothes with soap.” Rita gets the water to wash from her employer’s house.

### **5.2.8 Access for the disabled**

There were not many disabled people amongst the respondents in this research, but there are examples from elsewhere that the disabled are often the most vulnerable when access to water supply and sanitation is inappropriate or inadequate. There are few examples in the research literature of adaptations made to water and sanitation facilities to assist people with physical disabilities:

‘In Bangladesh, a 60 year old disabled man was found dead one morning under a make-shift hanging latrine (latrine built of bamboo pieces fitted loosely and standing over a ditch or pond). While using the latrine at night, he fell over the ditch full of stinking dirty refuse’ (Jones, 2005).

Disability can be permanent or temporary. Injured, sick and/or pregnant women are often unable to use existing facilities. Where family ties are strong, support is extended to the disabled, like Kuddoz, whose wife and sons lead him to the toilet and bring water for him to bathe each day. However, in patriarchal societies, the chances of receiving care are less likely for a disabled women (ibid).

### **5.2.9 Laundry facilities**

Another aspect of appropriate sanitation is being able to keep clothes clean. Men expect that their clothes will be kept clean, “it is okay to wear torn clothes, but they must be clean.” Clean clothes are a sign of upward mobility and even if women can’t keep their own clothes clean, they try to ensure that their husbands’ clothes are clean. Rahul Amin, a DCC staff member who is one of the better-off residents in Modherbosti says, “earlier, we lived in a good locality, but circumstances have forced us to be here. I used to change my shirt several times in a day if it got dirty with sweat. Now I can only do that once a day. We have to stay clean. Everyone else here looks up to us.” His wife, Anowara, is one of the few women who can employ someone else to wash her clothes. All of Rahul’s clothes are sent to be ironed after washing.

Rarely, some men may wash their own clothes and those of younger sons, but they will never wash the clothes of their wives and adolescent daughters. It is as if, like women’s bodies, their clothes too are considered objects to be hidden and kept away from masculine touch or glance. Women too feel that, “it is a mistake to get men to wash our clothes. Their dignity and value in the society and together with it, ours will diminish, if this happens.”

In Nairobi, clothes washing facilities [on payment] have been provided in public toilets. This facility is used by women who clean clothes for others for money. It is rarely used by women who clean their own family’s clothes. It is either too expensive or inconvenient. “We perform several other tasks while we soak the clothes in soap or rinse them and often we bring water from the boreholes (which are free, although highly polluted). We can barely afford to pay for clean piped water (from kiosks) for cooking and drinking. Clothes can be washed in other (dirtier) water.”

### 5.2.10 Washing up facilities

In Bangladesh, it is only women who mention how they cope with cleaning utensils. There is a distinct difference between the not so poor and the poorest families. Only the poorest wash their utensils at the pond with the dirty polluted water. Even then, some, like Khadiza, rinse the utensils with a little clean water before use.

Yesamma of Vajpai Nagar in India says, “here, if women are sick, 25 per cent of men will employ someone else to clean the kitchen utensils. They might wash a plate which they ate off, but they will not clean the other utensils if they can help it. Katte Veramma says, “in my long life, I have never seen a man offering to help with any cleaning work at home. They are trained not to do it and we are trained to believe we must do it. That’s how it works.”

### 5.2.11 Holistic sanitation

All the above tasks are recognised as sanitation and all require substantial amounts of water. However, very few water and sanitation projects plan for this integrated demand for water. As a result, most urban poor women spend considerable amounts of time and energy fetching water or where possible make do with impure unclean water. It is calculated that African and Asian women (rural and urban) walk an average of 6 km each day to fetch water and they fetch water for all domestic needs and for the entire household (Fisher, 2004).

Sanitation is a complex linking of habit, hygiene and ritual beliefs, all of which result in the need for washing and cleansing activities in the household environment. Women are primarily responsible for cleaning and an important observation is that cleaning practices increase as families move up the economic ladder. This includes increased amounts of water as well as expenses on sanitation goods: soaps, washing powders, shampoos, brushes and so on.

Insights from Kenya and Bangladesh show that men have some responsibilities in sanitation. Harun (22) lives in Modherbosti with his parents and works as a helper in a bus station office. All his sisters (younger and older) are married. His father, Monu Mia, feels it is way past Harun’s marriage age. But his mother, Rashida (45) has refused to find a wife for him until Harun gets a better job and is able to provide his wife with ‘*tel-saban*’ (hair-oil and soap). “This much should be the responsibility of men.”

Similarly, it is men who must dig latrine pits in the settlements of Nairobi. Once constructed, women are responsible for daily maintenance, i.e., keeping the latrine clean.

However, failing economies and competing priorities for basic survival, urbanisation and the culture of service provision have made men’s tasks impossible and/or redundant. While men have foregone their gender-assigned tasks, women’s responsibilities continue, driven by the absolute need for these tasks to be met for basic survival and a stronger and continued conditioning of feminine responsibilities.

Across the research locales, women identified adequate water for bathing, cleaning and washing, privacy of bathing facilities, individual latrines and removal of household wastes as appropriate sanitation needs. Men’s needs are fewer: cleaner latrines and adequate water to bathe everyday. Men are not too uncomfortable with public, shared toilets, apart from the dirt and the excessive waiting times. In fact queuing in the morning was said to be a good opportunity to exchange news and views!

There are significant gender differences in relation to the definition of 'appropriate' sanitation. Gender role reversals or the sharing of domestic tasks are often inhibited by religion, culture and local beliefs. An effective self-disciplining persists - virtuous, good women are those who keep their homes and surroundings clean, who practise 'sunnat' and teach these values to their daughters to uphold.

Women use words which had nuances related to religion and/or their defined sanitation tasks when talking of sanitation. In Bangladesh, *pak-pabitra* (wuzu & gushal - to make oneself pure for prayers), *pay-parishkar* and *chutra* (cleanliness relating to the household), '*safa-sufa*' and/or *safai* (cleanliness related to washing of clothes, the home, utensils and rarely personal hygiene) are used to describe sanitation. Similarly, in India too, the most commonly identified notion of sanitation was '*shubhram*' (South Indian) and '*shudh*' (North India) which is most closely translated to mean a ritual cleansing which brings and/or is indicative of good fortune. There is a common saying that in a Brahman's house, cleanliness brings in Laxmi, the Goddess of wealth.

Very few women claim that being clean makes them 'feel upbeat' in comparison to a large number of men, especially younger men.

To conclude, notions of appropriate sanitation are derived from basic human needs and individual beliefs, which are influenced by religious beliefs, local culture, and from what is seen and learnt from the media and from one another. What is practised is dependent on contextual realities – security of tenure, the motivation and ability to make investments, access to service providers and/or facilitators and finally by the skilful juggling of long term and immediate household investments and expenses.

That the urban poor, and especially the poorest among them, make do with the absence of some or all of these services is not indicative that they have different sanitation needs or have no demands for these: from Dhaka to London, the need for sanitation varies little. It is indicative, rather, of the gross inequity in the provision of services. Inadequate, low-cost services, which fail to meet people's needs, also compromise basic human rights and dignity. Beyond the absolute necessities, it is individual and personal beliefs that encourage some to invest in the 'additional frills' of sanitation within the four walls of the bathroom or toilet.

The above findings illustrate that, on a minimum level, personal hygiene and environmental sanitation needs include convenience, safety and privacy, especially for women during defecation and for dealing with menstrual blood. It also requires adequate<sup>58</sup> water conveniently located for meeting personal and household cleansing needs. Used water and surface water needs to drain away and solid wastes need to be removed with some reasonable frequency, based on the size and nature of the settlement.

Given that household and environmental sanitation tasks are assigned to women, across the three research countries and more generally, sanitation, more than any other sectoral intervention, needs to be gender aware. The shame attached to the female body requires that services and facilities should be conveniently sited for easy access for women. A change in gender attitudes is called for and will need to be addressed strategically, if improved hygiene practices are to be adopted in the long term. The performance of project staff (Government and NGO) and the success of projects needs to measure gender roles in water, sanitation and hygiene tasks, and related decisions, if the gender imbalance is to be addressed. Where boys assist their mothers and sisters in their youth

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<sup>58</sup> The SPHERE minimum guideline in emergencies is 15 litres per person per day, but actually most people do not use more than 8 litres of water per day unless they have a tap at their home.



with sanitation related tasks, it may be easier to convince communities to continue to share the tasks.

However, findings show that women, across the research locales, are solely responsible for meeting household sanitation needs. This leaves no other option, but to plan sanitation interventions around the unequal gendering of household responsibilities. Only then will the services stand a chance of being appropriate. Women's voices and needs are rarely sought nor heard in the network of formal and informal planning of sanitation. All of these operate and exist in the public, masculine domain. The exclusion applies equally to children, the elderly and the disabled.

As has been shown, the men and women who were the subjects of this research, have a very clear idea of what constitutes appropriate sanitation. Policy makers and programme planners have only to listen to their experiences and ideas to ensure that sanitation services are provided in a more holistic and effective manner.



## 6. NATIONAL AND AGENCY POLICIES RELATING TO SANITATION FOR THE URBAN POOR

### 6.1 Emerging international policies on sanitation and hygiene

#### 6.1.1 Drinking water and excreta disposal coverage

At the Millennium Summit in New York in 2000 it was announced that 1.1 billion people lacked access to safe water. Heads of state gathered at the meeting agreed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) of which the goal to 'reduce by half the proportion of the global population without access to safe drinking water by 2015<sup>59</sup>' was considered primary to achieving the other seven goals. The challenge in relation to sanitation was even greater, with over 2.6 billion people (over 40 per cent of the world's population) lacking access to 'basic sanitation'. Two years later, at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, the water MDG was revised to include sanitation, 'To reduce by half the proportion of the global population without access to *basic*<sup>60</sup> sanitation by 2015.'

A mid-term evaluation by UNICEF and WHO (2004) of progress towards the achievement of the MDGs draws the following conclusions:

- Discounting regional variations, the world as a whole is on track to meet the drinking water target; however,
- The global sanitation target will be missed by half a billion people – most of them located in Sub Saharan Africa and in Asia.

Others calculate that even if the two goals are fully met in 2015, taking into account the projected population increase, there would still be more than 1.5 billion people lacking access to sanitation in 2015 (Khosla, 2004). Indeed, based on current trends of aid to the sector, it is predicted that the sanitation target will not be met in Africa until 2100 (Green et al, 2005).

Green and others at a meeting in New York in early 2005 identified the key impediments to the achievement of the MDGs as: inadequate aid, aid-tied to privatisation, poor targeting of aid to poorest countries, and bureaucratic funding procedures<sup>61</sup>.

Even when the MDGs are met, the poorest people in each country are likely to still to be without access to water and sanitation!

#### 6.1.2 *Scope of water and sanitation*

Analysis of the documentation produced to date on water and sanitation for the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) 2004-2005<sup>62</sup> reveals rhetoric in policy and confusion as to what is meant by 'sanitation'. Khosla (2004) states that there are fundamental problems associated with the wording of these goals and the means of

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<sup>59</sup> It was much later that the baseline year was identified as 1990.

<sup>60</sup> This term has been much debated and was an improvement from an earlier use of the term 'safe'. Currently, the MDG Task Force talk of not basic, but improved sanitation.

<sup>61</sup> At present it takes about 8 years for aid funds to be disbursed. This situation is repeated at national levels, where local governments are given responsibilities without increasing the resources available.

<sup>62</sup> The theme for which was water, sanitation and human settlements.

measuring progress. 'There are wide definitional variations in what constitutes 'safe drinking water' and 'basic sanitation, as well as 'access to' and 'sustainable', especially in relation to sanitation.'

Drawing from two earlier papers prepared on behalf of the MDG Task Force, Evans (2005) defines sanitation as 'not having access to a safe and secluded space for defecation'<sup>63</sup>. '...access is access to any means of safe excreta disposal, and when this is linked to improved hygiene behaviour (principally hand washing) it will yield large benefits' (ibid.).

Others, also reporting on behalf of the MDG Task Force, give a slightly more expanded definition, '...access to, and use of, excreta and waste water facilities and services that provide privacy while at the same time ensuring a clean and healthful living environment both at home and in the immediate neighbourhood of users' (Lenton and Wright, 2005).

Neither definition tallies with what poor women, men and children, the disabled and elderly, those living on the pavements and in slums interviewed in this study actually identified as 'appropriate sanitation'. To them, as discussed in Chapter 5, it encompasses:

- Affordable water in sufficient quantities to meet drinking and other household water needs, available without excessive physical effort and time, which facilitates handwashing, food hygiene, frequent bathing, washing of clothes, cleansing of the home environment.
- Reducing the indignity and security risks particularly affecting women, young and adolescent girls and young children by provision of private excreta disposal facilities and bathing facilities.
- Enabling poor people to live more healthy lives which result in increased productive time, energy and financial savings, thus breaking down some of the traps that hold them in poverty.
- Access to water supply, excreta disposal, bathing and laundry facilities for the disabled, the elderly, pregnant women and young children so that they too can enjoy the benefits of improved sanitation.
- Safe and appropriate facilities and services for solid and liquid waste disposal. (Source: Swann and Cotton, 2005; Jones, 2005; WELL 2005; this research).

Instead of this wider concept of sanitation, countries like Bangladesh and Kenya, with large proportions of their populations living on less than US\$1 a day, are preparing sanitation policies and strategies that focus on water supply and excreta disposal only. Applying cost recovery mechanisms and privatised service delivery, this certainly frees public funds. However those freed funds are not being used to include unserved urban areas, as suggested by Evans (2005), but to continue to subsidise and improve water and excreta disposal services for the non-poor.

Research has shown clearly that improved excreta disposal, hygiene (mainly handwashing) and safe and adequate drinking water supplies make significant contributions to reducing diarrhoeal disease (Briscoe et al, 1986; Esrey and Habicht, 1986; Esrey et al, 1991; and Esrey, 1994). However, the purpose of the MDGs is not health improvement alone. The UN Millennium Declaration (2000) includes the 'collective responsibility (of the international and national governments and agencies) to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity, especially of the most vulnerable, and in particular, children of the world, to whom the future belongs'. Ironically, various photographs of unsanitary human habitats, of children standing near dirty drains flooded

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<sup>63</sup> In the report commissioned by NORAD for the CSD 2004-2005.

with waste water, of women washing clothes and utensils in stagnant, dirty pools of water where children and women are also bathing, of human excreta draining from open pipes in congested urban poor neighbourhoods, are included in reports which then argue that sanitation is limited to 'safe disposal of excreta'.

'People need to be at the heart of water and sanitation projects so they are not passive recipients but instead are agents in their own development' (Green et al, 2005). It seems that this well-known lesson is seldom taken into account in the setting of MDGs and related policies and programmes.

### **6.1.3 Financing**

One consistent element in the international documentation is on who should bear the costs of sanitation. All agree that it should be the users. Hygiene education and promotion are widely expected to be subsidised services. Occasionally there is mention of infrastructure subsidies for those who really cannot afford the cost, or in areas where the appropriate technology requires relatively expensive investments such as major pipe networks or concrete pit-linings for domestic pit latrines. However, it is widely acknowledged that capture of subsidies by the 'elite' is notoriously difficult to prevent.

Evans (2005) is most explicit on why this should be the approach. 'Fundamentally, we have to stop assuming that the situation (in the poorest countries) is comparable to that experienced in countries (in the North) where universal coverage is the norm; or even to experiences in Victorian Britain where municipalities had access to funds that enabled them to establish a networked service available almost universally and to finance (or ignore) the costs of cleaning up the mess afterwards. We need a new sanitation. While sanitation challenges may be multiple and/or location specific, the most important is managing excreta at the household level. The new approaches would need to target citizens (users) as customers. Public funds will then be freed 'to promote hygiene and to market sanitation', 'to support emerging markets of smaller service providers' and 'be diverted away from household facilities' towards explicit public good elements' (such as waste water treatment and sewer networks in urban areas). Resistance to these new ideas stems from political resistance and interference.'

Findings in the previous chapters (2 to 5) of this report, as well as other reports of research on poverty, identify that such policies and approaches are acutely distanced from the poverty of those who live on less than a dollar a day.

In practical terms, some conclusions on eradicating extreme poverty outlined in the Chronic Poverty Report (Section 1, 2004) are:

- The links between poverty and exclusion are mutually reinforcing;
- Lack of investment and/or state failure in assuring basic water and sanitation needs, contributes to the poorest staying poor;
- Interventions are needed that target and prioritise resources, including basic service provision to the poorest to provide immediate safety nets, and in the long-term, move them away from poverty.

Those who need the water and sanitation services most and will benefit most from them, will have to pay for them. This is ironic because they are the least able to pay.

Other MDG Task Force reports agree that the MDGs should be driven by the need to eliminate poverty and efforts should be focused on populations trapped in poverty. However, while greater donor assistance is called for, it is still specified that this should be

provided *subject* to 'credible arrangements for reforms to ensure effective use of resources and sustainability of investments' (Lenton and Wright, 2005).

Many donors support the linking of MDGs and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). PRSPs were originally put in place by the IMF and the World Bank with an aim to tie debt relief to poverty reduction initiatives in Heavily Indebted Poor Countries. Despite the accepted importance of this initiative, a multi-country study of the PRSPs reveals:

- An overarching focus on economic policies of liberalisation and privatisation which reflect the conditionalities on the PRSPs, which may serve to increase inequalities between the poorest and better off (Marcus et al);
- Inadequate knowledge and information on the links between poverty and water and sanitation in the PRSPs of 5 Sub-Saharan countries (ODI, 2002); and
- Over-emphasis on delivering physical infrastructure (ibid.).

In contrast, the NGO Consortium at the CSD (2004-5) called for unconditional debt relief and aid and 'for donors and developing countries to double spending in order to meet the MDG water and sanitation targets, with special priority given to Africa and to sanitation' (ibid.).

#### **6.1.4 *Linking gender and poverty in policy***

Although intended as goals for reducing poverty, the MDGs do not reflect poverty. For example, there is no mention of reaching the poorest with sanitation in the goal of reducing by half the number of people without sanitation by 2015. It is almost certain that when the MDGs are reached for water and sanitation, the poorest people (urban and rural) still would not have water and sanitation services.

Similarly, the MDGs do not reflect gender. They incorporate no change to the norm of women having to do all the water, sanitation and hygiene related tasks, but lacking the control over the resources that enable it to happen (eg not owning the land on which the facility could be built).

Until these issues are clearly defined and identified as issues that need to be addressed and monitored, then progress towards them is unlikely to occur.

## **6.2 Analysis of national urban sanitation policies (India compared with Bangladesh and Kenya)**

The disparate voices at international levels confuse rather than clarify what needs to be done, where, and who should pay for it. It is not surprising that there is confusion at the national level. In all three research countries, there is inconsistency between policy, planning and practice in the urban sanitation sub-sector.

Kenya has a National Policy on Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion. Bangladesh has a National Water and Sanitation Strategy and a Water Policy in which sanitation gets brief mentions, and a sanitation policy is being drafted. India has no sanitation policy, but has a much wider range of operational urban poverty programmes, of which sanitation (including water supply, solid and liquid waste disposal and excreta disposal) is one component. Going further than what is proposed as MDG targets, the Government of India has a progressive (if rhetorical) approach to sanitation for the urban poor, addressing the poverty-health-sanitation links, including the need for security of tenure

and employment for the urban poor in its slum development programmes. The flaws are with the continued trend of huge investments and subsidies to a select group of the urban poor (but not the poorest) where the urban poor are ghettoised, with separate programmes, separate standards of what is appropriate sanitation for them and separate departments and agencies to deal with them. There is another gap, where the specific details of gender roles and poverty are not addressed; in addition, the urban poor are not participating in decision-making. The gap between urban development and the urban poor is wide and evident.

### **6.2.1 Unequal coverage**

In pre-independence India, investments in sanitation exhibited distinct colonial biases. The public health needs of the colonial population were ensured, often by providing only the colonial settlement areas with waterworks and piped water, water-borne sewerage systems and the institutionalisation (see Chapter 2) of dry latrines (known colloquially as the 'thunder-box'). Investments in public health facilities usually bypassed *native areas* with devastating impacts in the native-resident parts of the city (Oldenberg, 1989; TARU, 1996. This disparity was only addressed when it became evident that it was impossible to separate the health of the colonials 'from the [in]sanitary conditions of the native population, especially as regards the occurrence of epidemics' (Royal Commission on Health, 1863). As almost all the colonial population was concentrated in cities and towns, piped water supply and sanitation services catering to a more general population made their first appearances in those urban areas. It was during the colonial rule that a new urban institution 'the Municipality', was constituted in all urban towns and legislation relating to municipal taxes and penalties was established to finance the municipalities and enable administrative control of urban environmental hygiene.

Colonial biases were inherited after independence, the focus of provision shifting from 'colonial' to 'elite *native*' pockets and to concentration of funding to larger cities. Constitutionally, water supply and sanitation changed from being a local to a national priority and responsibility. Water and sanitation was housed initially under the Ministry of Health, but later moved to the Ministry of Works and Housing in 1969, now known as the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation. This move weakened the linkages between health and sanitation and also resulted in the priority given to the creation of infrastructure and to maintenance, as opposed to health and hygiene. Current official institutional structures for sanitation are completely divorced from health departments and/or concerns and are driven by a focus to expand infrastructure. This situation was and is similar in most former colonies.

Estimates in the early 1990s indicated that 1.5 million pre-school children in India die every year from diarrhoea, and that cholera, dysentery and gastroenteritis are responsible for 60 percent of the total **urban** deaths (Sivaramakrishnan, 1993).

Verma (2002), in her book entitled 'Slumming India', blames the national and local governments, aid agencies and the larger public for the proliferation of slums in India's cities. Analysing the only urban development policy, the [Draft] National Slum Development Policy (NSDP), prepared in 1999 for the Ministry of Urban Development, she laments that the policy is inequitable, separatist and illogical. For example: 'The NSDP suggests the process of integrating slums to commence with demarcation of slums from regular not-poor neighbourhoods, then listing the slums and issuing identity cards to slum dwellers to make them eligible for slum upgrading in 'tenable' sites and resettlement.'

Although commending the NSDP's stand against slum evictions, Verma identifies the judgement of tenable vs untenable as a loop-hole which has been used to justify many evictions. Calling for an urgent need to 'stop planning the past and doing nothing about preventing future slums', Verma suggests that real planning for the poor needs to include:

- Equitable distribution of land; strictly reserving land for the poorest in all development plans (rather than the continued downsizing of plot and house sizes for the poor in existing or relocated slums);
- Equitable planning and design of infrastructure for the poor as for the not-poor (rather than the distinctly different urban development policies and programmes for the poor and non-poor); and,
- Re-defining roles and responsibilities of city planners and other departments and agencies to include integrated plans for the urban poor as well as the non-poor (rather than separate departments in municipalities and local bodies).

Lack of demarcated areas for low-income population, limited investment in public housing for the poor, and rapid growth of the urban real estate market continue to consign the poor to the fringes of the cities or the unplanned areas in the city core. Water supply and sewerage infrastructure do not extend into such areas. Where provided through special programmes for the poor, these are low-cost and poorly designed and prone to breakdowns. Most neighbourhoods inhabited by the poor have on-site services that derive little benefit from the city-wide piped infrastructure created with public investments. Even these are only provided to officially 'recognised slums' (see Chapter 4) and/or when deficiencies impact upon the overall environmental sanitation and health conditions of the city. (Benjamin, 2000; Chaplin 1999)

The formulation of poverty and urbanisation policy in Bangladesh can be traced back to 1976, when the Government of Bangladesh drafted the National Report on Human Settlements during the UN Habitat I Conference held in Vancouver, Canada. The report recommended town zoning and planning and the development of another metropolitan city in the northern region of the country to create a more balanced spatial urban development. The classification of towns has happened, but the extension of infrastructural and service facilities to urban centres all over the country, which was proposed in the second Five-year Plan (1980-85), is yet to be implemented. Three decades and many confirming reports later, the largest single metropolis, Dhaka continues to grow at an unabated rate and soaks up all urban development focus and funds.

Over the years, the Report of the Task Force on Social Implications of Urbanisation (1991), National Housing Policy (1993), the Bangladesh Urban and Shelter Sector Review (1993), the Bangladesh Urban Sector National Programme Document (1994) and the Bangladesh National Habitat II Report (GoB, 1996) have all been much discussed and all spelled out policy directions and even action plans for achieving a balanced development process. The National Housing Policy (NHP) is an officially approved document and so is the 1996 Habitat II Report. All these documents and policy statements make specific reference to spatial aspects of urbanisation and to urban poverty alleviation strategies and programmes. The NHP recommends the extension of better housing and service delivery for the low income groups and the urban poor (Article 5.10.1), and that the squatters and slum dwellers should not be evicted without arrangement for proper rehabilitation (Article 5.10.2). In December 2004, the current government formed yet another Committee for the Urban Sector Policy Review to formulate a national policy on urbanisation. The PRSP has its own set of guidelines and action plans.



One of the primary reasons why successive plans have failed to be achieved and policies to be implemented in Bangladesh is the partisan attitude of alternating governments. Another reason is the elitist and partisan attitude towards the urban poor, which is evident among decision-makers and service-providing agencies.

Rapid urbanisation in Bangladesh has been primarily a function of rural to urban migration. However, the urban pull especially of the primate city, Dhaka, and other metropolitan cities, is often understated and the causes are often overlooked. For example, the garment industry promoted by the globalisation principles of a free market economy has been instrumental in the in-migration to Dhaka. The rapid growth of Dhaka remains high, despite a strong and visible anti-poor, anti-slum attitude of government agencies and the elite, illustrated by frequent eviction of slums and squatter settlements (see Chapters 3 and 4). The poor simply move from one place to another, making enormous psycho-social sacrifices. Millions of the rural poor yet to be brought into any form of a rural development programme continue to migrate to the city.

Policies and promises abound. What is lacking are policies that reflect ground realities and a sustained political will to address the problem. In place, is a visibly hostile attitude to the urban poor, both slum and non-slum dwellers, who combat, often on their own, discriminatory and dispersing actions by the government and the economic elite. Despite significant investments, the international donor community has made little dent in challenging some of the latent flaws in relation to gender, poverty and sanitation for Bangladesh's urban poor.

During a personal meeting with the lead researcher in Bangladesh, a senior urban development staff-member of a donor said (2002) that the donor's focus was not on urban poverty, as this would oppose the government initiatives to control in-migration.

In Kenya, as elsewhere, sanitation coverage lags behind water. One of the main policy-related reasons has been the lack of an institutional home for sanitation. The legal clauses that govern sanitation issues are scattered in different government ministries. Some of the laws addressing sanitation include:

- The Public Health Act (Cap 242) dated 1972 and revised in 1996, which provides the legal framework governing environmental sanitation in Kenya;
- The Water Act which covers waste water;
- Food, Drugs and Chemical Substances Act (Cap 254, food hygiene);
- The Mosquito Control Act which deals with mosquito breeding; and
- The Local Government Act (Cap 265) (Donde, 1997).

In 2000 an Environmental Sanitation and Hygiene Working Group (ESHWG) was set up under the administrative control of the following ministries: Health (MoH), Local Government (MoLG), Environment and Natural Resources (MoENR), Roads, Public Works and Housing (MoPWH), Finance and National Planning (MoFP), Education and Human Resources (MoEHR) and Attorney Generals Chambers (AGC). The first action of the Group was to draft a national Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion (SHP) policy under the support and guidance of several donors and local NGOs. The current policy draft recognises the Ministry of Housing as the nodal body, while attempting to bring together the several different strands of thinking and legislation in relation to environmental sanitation and hygiene. In Kenya, the PRSP explained the links between poverty and lack of water and adequate sanitation and claims that its recommendations were incorporated in the SHP policy. In reality, both the PRSP and the SHP policy are too vague to interpret. For example, the phrase 'sanitation is a basic human right, which all Kenyans should enjoy. The Government is committed to creating an enabling environment in which it will

motivate all Kenyans to improve their hygiene behaviour and sanitation facilities and get the necessary support to achieve this.’ The policy gives no details of how it will be done nor the minimum standards that every citizen will enjoy.

### **6.2.2 Scope of urban sanitation**

As mentioned earlier, India has no sanitation policy, but incorporates a broad scope for sanitation (including water supply, solid and liquid waste disposal and excreta disposal) within its urban poverty programmes. In contrast, the Kenya SHP policy and the Bangladesh PRSP both consider sanitation to be ‘safe disposal of excreta’.

India’s urban policy was substantially influenced by the National Commission of Urbanisation’s study in the 1980s, which made the links between poverty and environmental sanitation. The study identified the concentration of vast numbers of the urban poor as vital contributors to the urban economy, and yet living in congested areas in urban centres which are acutely deficient in basic services. Prior to this study and especially in the 1970s, settlements of the urban poor were treated as an urban malaise and their informal settlements were frequently demolished and their residents displaced. The report brought about a change in the focus of urban development activities towards the provision of housing and basic services for the urban poor, and also in the promotion of employment opportunities. Since that historic shift, the objectives of urban poverty development programmes have remained largely unchanged. Sanitation needs were addressed as part of overall infrastructure provision (roads, drains, water, paving). Some of India’s recent programmes (such as NSDP) have flexibility to provide anything from water supply, storm water drains, community bathing places, widening and paving of existing lanes, sewers, community latrines, streetlights, community centres, pre-schools, non-formal and adult education centres, to maternal and child health, and housing for the urban poor, all as investments under the programme. Recently, a targeted programme, the Integrated Low Cost Sanitation (ILCS) programme, has been launched to provide additional support to the construction of household excreta disposal facilities. In practice, those slums that are ‘not-recognised’ officially do not benefit from the government assisted programmes.

Erukala Nanchamma in LB Nagar municipality, with a population of over 1,000 people residing there for over 5 years, do not even have a water supply, which is often provided, if only occasionally, to other unrecognised settlements through tankers. Women and children walk more than 2 km every day, losing a critical amount of work time in the search for water.

In contrast, in the same municipality, officially recognised slums are provided with water supply, sanitation, VAMBAY housing, asphalt access roads, internal pavements, storm water drains, electricity and employment schemes.

The lack of political will to understand the challenges faced by the urban poor, and the lack of mechanisms to monitor and evaluate slum development processes imply that local politicians and local mafia control who gets access to officially allocated services for the poor. As was mentioned in Chapters 2 to 4, the poorest, including select settlements of ethnic groups, the most vulnerable amongst women, the elderly and disabled, are often unable to develop necessary links with these mediators and thus remain isolated from benefits intended for them, not even the ‘minimum’ improved drinking water supply and excreta disposal facilities, let alone the other facilities that are so necessary for a decent human life.

The proportion of people in India with access to safe drinking water is reported to have increased from 62 per cent (rural: 56 percent; urban: 81 percent; baseline 1991) to about 84 percent (rural: 80 percent; urban: 94 percent) by 2000, exceeding the 81 percent MDG

target for 2015. Those still not covered in urban areas are the urban poor, as shown by Chapters 2 and 3 of this report. Progress in achieving the MDG for sanitation (based solely on access to excreta disposal facilities) is much slower. The 1991 Census reports that only 54 percent of the urban population (and 24 percent of rural) had access to sanitation (defined as access to latrines). The Central Public Health and Environmental Engineering Organisation (CPHEEO) estimated that by March 2000, 55 percent of the urban population had access to sewerage and latrine facilities. However, the average rate of growth of the number of latrines in the country (cumulative for urban and rural areas) is about 8 per cent per annum and it is estimated that universal coverage would take about 50 years, requiring an investment of about INR236 billion. Progress is slower and the costs are higher if people's broader definition of appropriate sanitation is taken into account (see Chapter 5).

In Bangladesh and Kenya, the distinction between 'recognised' and 'non-recognised' slums does not exist. Further, particularly in Bangladesh, the urban poor live in extremely congested conditions and in areas where service provision is not institutionally or technically feasible without reforms for equitable land redistribution and ownership. Given that there is little political will or international pressure to resolve these issues, it seems likely that Bangladesh and Kenya will not meet even the 'minimum' levels of water supply and excreta disposal defined as MDG targets.

### **6.2.3 Finance**

The tone of the recent financial reforms in India reflects the Ministry's focus on achieving financial sustainability in the urban development sector. In India's urban areas, entitlement, infrastructure, procedural barriers and poverty all restrict access to sanitation services for the poorest households. Urban poor settlements located on disputed or marginal land (near drains, canals, railway lines or in upland areas) are often not acknowledged and therefore denied access to urban poverty projects and schemes. Institutional procedures for seeking a water or sewerage connection demand that applicant households furnish proof of land ownership and a recent receipt for payment of property tax. Pavement dwellers and those living in unrecognised settlements cannot fulfil these institutional demands. Even where the common problem of the lack of secure tenure may not be an impediment, dense settlement patterns often restrict personal investments to meet sanitation needs. Examples below show that where there has been some provision of services for the unacknowledged poor, it has been entirely due to the efforts of the poor themselves. Policy alone does not encourage inclusive planning.

#### **Gopal (28), basti leader, Ravi Naryan Reddy Nagar, Quthbullapur**

*"Everyone in this basti belongs to the Vaddera caste and are migrants from Ananthapur district, some 20 years ago. This area had no stone crusher machines when we came in search of work. We used to live in huts that we built near the mounds of stone that we used to break up by hand. Now there are about 150 houses in this basti. Initially we didn't have any basic facilities like water, electricity, or even roads. People used to trudge every day for about 2-3 kms to another basti to fetch water. When we saw that services were being provided in other areas, we went to the municipality and demanded at least water. As a result, we started getting water supplied by tankers twice a week. But each household was entitled to only 4 buckets of water. In the last 2 months, our Municipality helped us to get a water tanker daily, but we still get the same 4 buckets. We still have to fetch water from elsewhere. In 1999 we rallied and got electricity. We all pay our bills. We were able to achieve this only after we formed the 'Ravi Narayan Reddy Nagar Welfare Association' and made applications to the Municipality of Quthbullapur for roads, housing, water and electricity. The officials rejected the road and housing application on the grounds that we had no land pattas (title deeds).*

*I'm the basti leader here and constantly visit the Municipality offices and am therefore aware of a number of government schemes. I've made our basti people apply for all the schemes, but we have not received much. Even the ILCS scheme has not come to our basti."*

In Kenya's SHP policy and Bangladesh's PRSP, the approach is to increase private investment and to move towards full-economic costing of services. The SHP policy also emphasises the need to *educate* (rather than understand) the public on hygiene promotion through marketing. It is mentioned in the SHP that many households are willing to pay for provision of sanitation and hygiene services. Evidence from Chapters 4 and 5 of this report suggests that the bulk of (Kenya's) urban and rural poor are not able to pay for the necessary water and sanitation services that they lack. This is probably true for many developing countries.

There have been several reforms detailed in Kenya's Water Act (2002). The reforms are all based around a principle of water marketing and privatisation. They include policy change, new regulatory measures and water management principles. Several new water associations have been created to ensure the implementation of the reform agenda at national, regional and local levels, of which the nodal body is the Water and Sanitation Reform Committee and Secretariat. The WSRC/WSRS are required to develop facilities, prepare business plans, give licenses for water and sewerage services, apply regulation and tariff controls, purchase, acquire and lease water and sewerage infrastructures. Some details such as the pricing of water, local water market licensing fees, meter reading and issuing bills, all remain controversial.

#### **6.2.4 Poverty and gender**

While sanitation for the poor remains a 'poorly researched issue', gender issues in sanitation are an even more neglected concept, highlighted only by the occasional passing reference to women's needs for privacy during defecation or in their roles as family caretakers. Very often, gender policy, or gendered poverty analysis does not exist. The Kenya SHP policy and the Bangladesh PRSP, both fail to include an understanding of the local poverty and gender inequities that affect sanitation and its uptake. This is ironical in the light of the huge volumes of poverty research, especially in Bangladesh. In practice, in both Kenya and Bangladesh, the urban poor are not acknowledged and, if they are identified, it is usually with the purpose of evicting them and *freeing* the increasingly congested urban cities.

The Constitution of Bangladesh ensures equal rights and equal opportunities to all citizens, irrespective of sex (Articles 19 and 20) and participation of women in all spheres of national life (Article 10) and this is incorporated in the principles of City Corporation 'municipal ordinances - *intent*' to provide basic services to all. No national gender policy exists. There is a National Plan of Action for the Advancement of Women (1998), whose implementation is meant to be overseen by the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. Instead, it is largely ignored, in part because it is too long, too complicated and too confusing. Each project in each sector then develops their own gender policy according to the donor's requirement. These have not been consolidated by the respective ministries or departments (or even donors). There is such resistance to follow a project's gender policy that even committed staff members can not make progress beyond their own immediate scope. Gender policies in themselves tend to only cover the difference between men and women. However, men's and women's lives from each different socio-economic group are so different, as detailed in Chapters 2 to 4.

For example, those women in poor to middle-income households in Bangladesh observe purdah and do not move from their homes except with a male escort (usually a male relative above 5 years of age). By necessity, the poorest women have to abandon this social restriction and move around on their own for work and food. The lives of these different economic groups of women are totally different. Gendered poverty needs to be integral to every policy statement in Bangladesh. This has not been included, except in a few, isolated programmes. Gendered poverty analysis is also required in other countries, including India and Kenya.

Articles 17, 18 and 19 of the Bangladesh Constitution refer to the provision of educational, nutrition, health and other socio-economic services and opportunities (MOL, JPA, GOB, 2000), while the 1997 Pourashava Ordinance includes provision of water supply, sanitation, drainage, refuse disposal as the compulsory functions of these local bodies (MOL, JPA, GOB, 1998).

The National Housing Policy (1993, 1994, 2004) makes specific recommendations (in Article 5.10.2 of NHP, 2004) to provide 'slums and settlements with hardcore poor' populations with water supply, sanitation and other basic facilities. The policy goes as far as recommending (in Article 5.10.5) extension of water and sanitation services to permanent dwellers and other non-slum poor (GOB, NHP, 2004).

With regard to gender, an early reference was made in the Bangladesh National Report for the Habitat Conference (1996) in Istanbul which stated, 'Women's rights in housing, health, business, industries and social services are recognised by the GOB' (GOB, 1996). Since then, most urban policy documents categorically mention women and/or gender with little differentiation made between the two terms. The widespread use of the term gender has been largely influenced by donors.

What is delivered as sanitation in India is significantly better than what is advocated internationally. Yet, several important gaps remain in both policies and practice, founded in a lack of understanding of what is appropriate sanitation for the urban poor, and a lack of understanding of who are the urban poor. Official projects then fail to take into account the gender differences in the perceived needs for household sanitation services. Gender disaggregated data and information on service quality is lacking in all programmes, preventing an understanding of people's needs and priorities. Despite the financial commitment and the institutional arrangements, programmes fail to take into account the need for secure, convenient and sheltered spaces for defecation and bathing and adequate water for drinking, cooking, laundry and home cleanliness. These are the high priority needs for women and girls, the elderly, the disabled – especially from the poorest households.

What is required is a comprehensive framework for understanding urban poverty as well as incorporating the real sanitation needs of the poor and vulnerable. This remains the biggest challenge for urban policy in India, given that up to a third of the urban population are poor and excluded from existing service delivery systems. The new measures to achieve financial sustainability will not be appropriate for the poorest. Due to population projections, it is predicted that the largest number of the poor without access to 'sanitation' will be in India and China. To compound the gaps in policy, those policies, their regulation and implementation are also widely separated in most cases. This results mostly from a conflict of interest within the three-tiered government system and the resulting confusion of roles and accountability.

### **6.2.5 Participation by people living in poverty**

Despite the vast numbers of poverty studies and analyses in Bangladesh and Kenya, policy formulation remains an elitist exercise. Most urban policies are prepared by local bureaucrats and international consultants, on behalf of both international agencies and national governments, with little if any involvement or consultation with the people themselves. An example of this is Bangladesh's PRSP, finalised in December 2004.

The PRSP (entitled Unlocking the Potential) was prepared to meet international demands. It states that at least 70 percent of urban households would have sanitary facilities by 2006 (no mention of 'urban poor'). It also includes 'the need for private sector engagement in water supply and sanitation' and 'the need to encourage building institutional capacity of organisations of the poor (CBOs) and organisation for the poor (CSOs, NGOs) to ensure equitable access to public services'. The PRSP made little specific reference to the urban poor and slums in the main text. Most of the references to poverty are limited to matrices and annexes.

There is local criticism that 'the policies proposed in the Draft PRSP are pro-poor but do not offer tangible initiatives to bring about real improvements in the lives of people living in poverty' (Ahmed et al, 2004). The PRSP is claimed by its formulators to be a product of participatory consultations, but provides no evidence of consultation with the people living in urban poverty.

The National Housing Policy is the only urban development policy in Bangladesh with little influence from international donor and financial institutions. Adhering to international conventions, several policies concerning shelter and 'water and sanitation for all' have been declared and adopted in the country. However, as with international policies, the target year for meeting agreed goals, keeps being extended.

Donor-led initiatives have encouraged an increasing volume of research (including this), as well as the drafting of poverty reduction policies and some ad-hoc projects delivering health, water and sanitation services to the urban poor. However, respect for the rights of the poor to demand a space and voice in urban planning is not encouraged by the government and is rarely challenged or supported, even by progressive donors.

The researchers in Kenya noted that children are not mentioned in any of the reform frameworks; nor is there mention of services for the disabled or elderly. Equally, there is no discussion of how hygiene and sanitation tasks can be shared with other family members and not shouldered by women alone.

Water, sanitation and hygiene promotion programmes that focus on children are one of the most effective ways to address long-term poverty within communities, for two main reasons. Firstly, children suffer disproportionately from inadequate water supplies or sanitation; most ill-health impaired development and preventable deaths of children are related to water and sanitation. Secondly, children can be important agents for change. Both UNICEF and Save the Children (UK) for example, have found that children's views in decision-making positively benefit project development.

This oversight is not restricted to Kenya. There is a remarkable silence in both India and Bangladesh, as well as in international policy statements on the sanitation needs of children, the elderly, the disabled and finally on why and how women remain responsible for the bulk of sanitation tasks at home.

### **6.3 Conclusions**

Policies and programmes in the countries included in this research do not tend to reflect the realities and requirements of people living in urban poverty. MDGs do not reflect poverty, and it is almost certain that when MDGs are reached for water and sanitation, the poorest people (urban and rural) still would not have water and sanitation services. Similarly, MDGs do not reflect gender. There will be no change in the norm of women having to do all the water, sanitation and hygiene related tasks, but lacking the control over resources to make it happen.

Sanitation equates only to excreta disposal in the MDGs. People living in urban poverty envisage a wider scope for sanitation – including privacy for bathing, places for laundry, wastewater drainage and solid waste disposal.

It is going to cost an enormous amount of resources to mobilise finances, even for people to build their own excreta disposal facilities. Increasing the scope of sanitation will increase the costs. Even if this cannot be done now, it should form part of the thinking of international and national policy makers and planners.

MDGs have been set by governments, influenced by international agencies and the influential global powers that drive them. The decisions are far removed from the people living in poverty. In the majority of cases, poor people were not consulted nor involved in the decisions concerning what standards of living should be their minimum. In basic issues of survival, like adequate drinking water and a basic facility for excreta disposal, then perhaps this is justifiable. However, when will the development process start to address the other water and sanitation needs of those living in poverty? When will issues of privacy for bathing, convenience for washing clothes, tenure in places that are not flooded or overcrowded or inconvenient, be addressed? When will a mechanism be developed whereby men and boys are encouraged to assist the women and girls to carry out the basic sanitation and hygiene related tasks? Shouldn't the international community be jointly developing solutions to these issues too while promoting the minimum standards? Should we not also be addressing the human rights of people to have a voice in the international goals and national policies and programmes that affect their everyday lives? If so, then this will necessitate some alterations in the way national governments operate. Their development partners need to be held accountable. Donors, international and local agencies and private sector organisations need to have consistent gendered poverty policies. Their staff need to be aware of these and have them impinge on them.





## **7. AGENCY UNDERSTANDING AND INTERPRETATION OF GENDER ISSUES IN SANITATION – UNRAVELLING ONE PROJECT'S EXPERIENCE IN BANGLADESH**

Universal consensus has been reached regarding the critical importance of addressing gender in the planning and delivery of sanitation services. However, there is little practical understanding of how gender issues relate to sanitation and how they can be addressed, especially for those living in urban poverty. For many agencies in the water and sanitation sector, 'gender still means women (and children)' and addressing gender translates into involving women in projects, with an underlying emphasis on making projects successful, i.e. completing projects in the given timeframes and with least costs (Wallace and Wilson, 2005).

Taking as a case study a relatively new donor-funded project that aims to deliver improved water supply and sanitation for the urban poor in Bangladesh, this section of the report analyses what and how organisations engaged in this project understand, interpret and practice as 'gender'. The emphasis here is not in outlining the institutional structure of these organisations nor the ways in which they interact, rather, it aims at a qualitative analysis of the gender related cultures and attitudes within the partner organisations, ie the basis of the practice of gender issues within these organisations and how this is reflected in the ways in which staff at different levels of the organisations interpret; address and measure 'agreed' gender goals and objectives. Given that the implementation phase of the project was initiated in late 2004, the findings do not include a field analysis of the gender and poverty impacts of the project.

The project is the UK government Department for International Development-Bangladesh (DFID-B) supported 'Advancing Sustainable Environment Health' (ASEH) Project. This project was tackling gender issues better than any of the other projects identified in India, Bangladesh or Kenya in the process of this research. Even so, the findings reveal some confusion about gender and poverty issues in relation to urban sanitation improvement, and different perceptions in different layers of the project - written policies, opinions of management and fieldworkers of all partner organisations (donor, government and non-governmental organisations) and different interpretations of how to implement. This is not surprising considering the complexity of the issue and the early stage in the project's development. This reveals the significant challenges that there are in addressing gender in practice in this as well as other sectors.

The major areas of weakness are in the:

- Conflicting national priorities in the sector (demand-led and cost-recovery vs poverty focus);
- Implementation approaches.

This chapter focuses primarily on analysing the capacity building process in the NGO which is the principal designer and manager of the project, WaterAid-Bangladesh (WAB) and its key local partner organisation, Dhustha Shasthya Kendra (DSK), during the inception phase of the ASEH project.

## 7.1 Marrying equity to efficiency: falling into the same old policy traps

Stemming from DFID-B's commitment to 'support and align' with the Government of Bangladesh's sectoral policies, implies agreement to all of the following issues: involving women, achieving project efficiency through cost-recovery approaches, and involving the private sector, as well as addressing extreme poverty, empowering women and making the poorest and most vulnerable aware of their civic rights. These often contradictory goals are difficult, if not impossible, to achieve, especially in the political environment where the government does not 'legally' recognise its urban poor and where eviction of slum settlements remains the order of the day.

ASEH partners (and DFID-B) invested considerable resources by spending one year to analyse and understand issues of gender, poverty and participation, led by the key project agency, WaterAid, Bangladesh (WAB). As part of this process they developed an understanding of these issues and prepared specific policy and strategy papers as a framework for planning, implementing and monitoring the project. The process included consultations with expert advisors and potential project partners, and interviews with other key agencies operational in the sector in Bangladesh, including UNICEF, DANIDA and the official agencies, the Dhaka City Corporation and Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority.

DFID-B supports in principle the National Policy for Safe Water Supply and Sanitation (1998) and therefore the role of official agencies, especially the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), through practical support, for example, by funding the GoB/WES Rural Water Supply and Sanitation Programme and some initiatives aimed at reducing the impact of arsenic in drinking water supplies).

In Bangladesh, urban local government, ie city corporations (numbering six), pourashavas (municipalities) and upazilas (urban centres not yet declared to be of municipality status) are declared constitutionally responsible for urban planning and development including the delivery and management of water supply and sanitation. Islam (2004) points out that in practice, there is a fair amount of institutional chaos in the planning and delivery of urban basic services and the scale and context of problems varies in different urban centres.

Support to NGOs working outside the official programmes has, however, been a preferred initiative of most donors, including DFID-B. This is especially so because of collective experience that the government and its bureaucracy have historically not regarded donors as development partners. Despite being signatory to international development and aid policies, the government has resisted donor involvement in internal planning and functioning (DFID-B, 2002).

For the ASEH project, it was predicted that working through the official machinery would result, as in earlier cases, in a preponderance of large, hardware-driven investments. The ASEH project was expected to demonstrate successful alternative approaches instead, which would help in changing and influencing the official outlook and approach. Thus the project was subject to the significant challenge of creating examples of 'pro-poor community empowerment approaches' which could be scaled-up to manage water supply and sanitation with Union and Upazilla level governments in rural areas, and Pourashavas, City Corporations and WASAs in selected towns and cities. These achievements were identified as feasible on the basis of WAB's particular advantages as an international NGO of repute in the region and the organisation's ability to draw the strengths and innovations of its local partners into developing a coherent advocacy strategy for the sector (WAB, 2002).

### ***The thinking on gender and poverty in DFID-Bangladesh***

The Bangladesh Department for International Development Country Strategy Paper (2002) outlined that amongst the 65 million people living in absolute poverty in Bangladesh, women are primarily vulnerable given the extensive violation of their human rights and the acutely disproportionate lack of access and control of resources and basic services. It was identified that promoting gender equity would require addressing cultural norms that deny women their basic human rights.

However the strategies outlined for addressing the deeply entrenched gender inequalities were conservative and modest based on the National Action Plan<sup>64</sup> (1998) for the Advancement of Women. They included internal capacity building, supporting official commitments to gender as outlined in the [Bangladesh] National Action Plan, mainstreaming gender through sectoral programmes, particularly health and education through support to NGOs working on women's access to resources (micro-credit) and social organisation. So, while DFIDB recognised the entrenched violation of human rights, especially those of the poorest women in Bangladesh, they chose in their strategy to support a long established WID plan and did not push for more radical gender dimensions.

DFID is the second largest bilateral donor in Bangladesh and through its programme size and history occupies a significant seat of importance with the government. The emphasis is thus to support ongoing government policies and strategies. This was especially evident in DFID-B's engagement in the water and sanitation sector, including ongoing support to the Department of Public Health and Engineering and UNICEF. Despite this presence, donors (including DFID) have usually been unable to influence indigenous planning and policy making. The strategy to address poverty and gender therefore included working outside the government through NGOs, even though it was realised that such interventions may not result in long-term sustained improvement for the majority. In the water and sanitation sector this included working with conventional partners like WAB and CARE Bangladesh.

A review of DFID-B in 2001 identified that with the exception of a few projects, DFID-B interventions were generally not reaching the extreme poor and this was largely due to an emphasis on project delivery and aid utilisation, rather than on the process of development. A significant step forward was announced to engage with more radical, rights-based groups, organised around a membership democracy, rather than with conventional NGOs. Given the conflicts arising from the non-conventional work styles of these organisations and DFID's existing framework of appraisal and partnership requirements, including the pressures to spend aid money, this required and successfully resulted in a separate Human Rights and Governance Fund in DFID-B's aid programme. Unfortunately this also resulted in the isolation of sectoral interventions from human rights and governance initiatives and the failure to bridge the necessary gap.

## **7.2 Advancing Sustainable Environment Health, the ASEH Project**

Announced just after DFID-B's 2001 review, the ASEH programme included all the ingredients of the new thinking in DFID-B: addressing extreme poverty, reducing gender inequality and influencing official policy and practice in both. In 2003, DFID-B committed to a £15.5 million grant for the ASEH project to WaterAid Bangladesh, one of the largest grants ever handled by regional WaterAid offices.

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<sup>64</sup> Plan of Action for Women's Advancement, Local Government Division, 1998

This initiative was announced to build on the success<sup>65</sup> of DFID-B's earlier support to WAB in hygiene promotion, environmental sanitation and water supply. The project was to be implemented in partnership with local rural and urban NGOs.

WaterAid, a UK-based international NGO, has been working through local NGO partners in the water and sanitation sector in Bangladesh since 1986. The ASEH project builds on the experience from the DFID-B supported WAB "Community Based Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene Education Programme in Bangladesh" (January 1999 to March 2002), which sought to develop, promote and implement cost-effective models for providing sustainable, community-managed, safe water supply and sanitation facilities for the urban and rural poor in a number of technically "difficult" environments in Bangladesh. The project evaluation considered that it largely achieved its purpose but would have benefited from greater attention to impact monitoring (poverty, health and hygiene) and monitoring of cost effectiveness. Key concerns relating to the feasibility of the ASEH project identified by DFID-B were:

- WAB's internal capacity to run a more strategic and larger programme; and,
- An advocacy strategy which was understood by all its partners, but also needed to extend to influence policies governing the sector and the agencies responsible for policy formulation and service delivery.

For these to be addressed, capacity and systems in WAB and its partners needed to be developed prior to project implementation.

ASEH Programme Proposal (WAB, 2002)

It was apparent that the ASEH project aimed to contribute significantly to addressing the grim statistics of inadequate sanitation in Bangladesh and the national commitment to deliver 'sanitation for all' by 2010, agreed in the South Asian Conference on Sanitation, 2002.

Adequate sanitation coverage is estimated to be only 25% in Bangladesh. Diarrhoea alone accounts for 30 per cent of deaths of children under five, or about 110,000 child deaths each year<sup>66</sup> and environmental factors account for 90 per cent of diarrhoeal disease. Those surviving suffer from stunting and wasting due to malnutrition caused by repeated attacks and intestinal worm infestations. According to the 1999 Progothir Pathy, only 19% of children's excreta was then disposed of in sanitary latrines, over 41% of the population used unsafe over-hanging latrines, and just 20% of the population washed their hands with soap or ash after defecation. Women and adolescent girls are disproportionately burdened by inadequate, inconvenient and poor quality water and sanitation services.

Women spend a long time collecting water. In risk ranking exercises women from the poorest 'bustis' identify sanitation (hanging latrines, open sewers, and the constant stench of sewers), long queuing times for water, and unclean environments (solid waste piling up, standing water, and insects) as their most important environmental concerns.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> It had been outlined that key failings of earlier programmes were in not reaching the extreme poor and not bringing out sustainable change in institutional [including policy] practices officially.

<sup>66</sup> UNICEF in ESHWRA, Inception Report, December 2001.

<sup>67</sup> WELL Environmental Health Scoping study, 2001.

In addition to lack of domestic water supply, 25 million people<sup>68</sup> are estimated to be at risk from arsenic contaminated sources. Other issues of concern are the inequities in access to safe water, especially in poor, underserved communities; and the lengthy periods of time women spend in collecting safe water.<sup>69</sup>

WAB, 2002

### 7.2.1 Influencing policy or toeing the line?

The Government of Bangladesh recognises the public health benefits of water and sanitation and, to this end, sees itself as responsible for assuring basic services to all citizens. Constitutionally, urban local bodies are responsible for delivering a wide range of basic services, including water supply and sanitation. However, there is a serious mismatch between this and the national policy framework for the sector. Framed and adopted under international influence, the 1998 National Policy for Safe Water Supply and Sanitation envisages people's participation and cost-sharing, and the involvement of local governments in planning and implementation, complemented by service delivery by NGOs and private companies. This was to be achieved by the adoption of demand-responsive approaches, which would change the role of government agencies from that of provider to facilitator. This policy is complemented by the National Water Management Plan and a proposed 2003 National Sanitation Plan, and the GoB Interim PRSP.

In keeping with the Country Strategy commitment to support GoB's national policy initiatives, DFIDB adopted the 1998 National Water and Sanitation Policy approach for the ASEH project. However, they did not make institutional linkages with other DFIDB engagements working with a rights based approach in the water and sanitation sector (such as Nijera Kori). None-the-less DFIDB considered ASEH to be fully consistent with the key principles of their Technical Support Programme for Addressing the Water Crisis, which included addressing extreme poverty and sustainability.<sup>70</sup>

Unfortunately no clarification was given concerning a number of inconsistencies in national policies, such as the government's definition of urban centres.

The deeply entrenched gender bias, ignoring women, is evident in the legal definition of urban centres in Bangladesh. Sub-section (2) of section 3 of the Pourashava<sup>71</sup> Ordinance, 1977 states (TRF et al, 2004):

*The Government shall not declare any rural area to be an urban area unless it is satisfied that three-fourths of the **adult male population** of the area ... are chiefly employed in pursuits other than agriculture, and such area contains not less than fifteen thousand population, and an average number of not less than 2 thousand inhabitants per square mile.*

Instead, ASEH started addressing gender and extreme poverty by building organisational understanding of gender, poverty and equity within WAB and among partner agencies.

WAB was required to prepare policy papers on poverty, participation, gender and equity, to give direction and promote understanding at all levels. New staff were hired, and were

<sup>68</sup> Arsenic 2000, An Overview of the Arsenic Problem in Bangladesh, E. Jones, WAB 2000.

<sup>69</sup> WELL Environmental Health Scoping study, 2001.

<sup>70</sup> DFID – Addressing the Water Crisis – healthier and more productive lives for poor people – Strategies for achieving the international development targets, March 2001

<sup>71</sup> Urban centres other than mega cities and metropolitan centres.

aided by external consultants to assist with preparation of these papers. One of the consultants was working both for DFID-B and WAB, allowing a useful cross-fertilisation of expectations and outputs. One of the new posts was a 'gender and equity' advisor based in the WAB office, whose role includes monitoring the application of the policies in the project, and sharing the experiences with other WaterAid regional offices.

WAB initially agreed to implement the ASEH project using a demand-responsive approach, which had been the WAB programme strategy in the past.

This implies HELPING PEOPLE WITH THE WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE IMPROVEMENTS THAT THEY WANT rather than WAB and its partner organisations constructing water facilities and latrines wherever they are lacking. WAB mobilises and runs awareness campaigns about the importance of good hygiene regardless, and once communities learn the link between bad hygiene and disease, they are expected to improve their hygiene practices and want to establish water and sanitation facilities themselves. WAB and its partners will then help the communities to approach the local government departments responsible for water and sanitation and work with (and pay for) them to establish new facilities.

This approach makes the new facilities a lot more sustainable as communities recognise the importance of good hygiene and have vested interests in helping establish the facilities, maintaining them in the long run and keeping up good hygiene practices. Communities will be trained to manage the water supply facilities, and helped to establish savings schemes so that they can fully cover all future maintenance costs themselves. Where infrastructure is provided, this will recover almost two thirds of the invested funds through the community contributions and fees.

WaterAid Bangladesh, 2001

In making the case for the demand-responsive approach, WAB (2002) pointed out that 'the lead official agency, the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) functions largely in a top-down and supply-driven manner, with adverse consequences for the quality and sustainability of services and service delivery to the poor. The cost of capital works is high, construction is slow and quality poor. Examples of successful implementation of alternative approaches would help in changing the agency's outlook and approach.'

The contradictions between equity and efficiency were recognised, though not resolved:

The principle of no subsidy for individual hardware investments will ensure greater ownership and commitment. Cost-recovery policies for community level investments are also designed to ensure use, maintenance and sustainability but will need to be carefully reviewed in order to ensure that they do not penalise and exclude the poor and vulnerable.

WAB, 2002

Thus, the initial project documents demonstrated an uneasy fit between full cost recovery, while having the poor as '*primary stakeholders*'.

Cost recovery for water supply and sanitation infrastructure from the poorest, who have no security of tenure and are frequently evicted, was not fully considered as a risk in the project's logical framework, nor by project partners.

'The *target* people of the project are the hardcore poor, with emphasis on women and children. In the urban centres, this includes households with complete lack of household [legal tenure] security ... almost two thirds of the invested funds will be recovered [from the '*target*' group] on the basis of capital cost recovery for all infrastructure works. This will be reinvested in the immediate project area...'

DSK, 2002

Some progress has been made since then. WAB and its partners were able, in 2005, after the inception of the project, to convince DFID-B that the demand-responsive interpretation of cost-recovery would have to be significantly relaxed if the poorest were to be targeted.

Speaking of past experiences, WAB quoted that, 'One thing is clear: because the programme was to require people to pay for the water and sanitation facilities provided, most partner NGOs selected areas that were relatively stable (in terms of land tenure security) and whose populations seemed economically strong enough to pay for the facilities. The cost-recovery approach thus has limited the ability to provide services to the very poorest people, or to work in places where the majority are extremely poor.'

WAB, 2005

However, the new strategy (2005) for cost-sharing and recovery is still confusing:

'The purpose of sharing/recovering the capital cost of water supply and sanitation is to contribute to building a sense of ownership ... costs shared by communities will be ploughed back into increasing coverage for scaling up ... the poorest are often unable to pay 100% capital and O&M costs and alternative, creative cost-sharing solutions will have to be sought, including:

- Charging better-off users the full percentage of capital costs and a higher share of O&M costs;
- Subsidising poor and marginalized groups for a percentage of the capital costs [from project funds] and cross subsidisation for operation and maintenance costs'.

WAB, 2005

The project document identifies four categories of the poor and the project aim is to reach the maximum number of the poorest households (also known as the extreme or the hardcore poor) in the community. In urban areas, the project strategy is to cross-subsidise, where the not poor (most better-off) households will be 'motivated' to pay 100 per cent of the capital costs for water supply, sanitation and drainage and footpaths; the poorest households will pay only 10 per cent of the capital costs for water supply and drainage and paving and 20 per cent of the costs for sanitation (latrines). Capital costs for this group of households will be cross-subsidised through the project. A similar system has been set up for operation and maintenance costs. It is too early to assess how this is working especially as the *not-poor* in this case are still sufficiently poor to be living 'illegally' in informal slums. Such households may not be easily 'motivated' or able to provide the subsidy for the rest of that slum population. The poorer people may not be able or willing to pay even the service charges for improved water and sanitation facilities.

In a slum settlement in Dhaka, single women (working as beggars) were forced to move out when rents were increased by landlords, who were in-turn investing in improved water supply and sanitation facilities (through a loan from a WAB project). The women moved to rooms which lacked these services but had lower rent. In another settlement, the

woman caretaker of the community latrine used the facility but was unable to allow her family members to use the facilities without payment of the set monthly fee.

Joshi, 2002<sup>72</sup>

Considerable emphasis was given to raising the profile of gender in the ASEH project. Gender has still been interpreted within WAB as the recruitment of women and providing 'service privileges' such as maternity leave to female staff members. The policies are not written on paper, so have not been consistently applied to all staff members and have led to tensions within the organisation. Male and female field staff expressed 'the need to involve women' as 'most important'. In the field, this has been interpreted as the need to plan and design women-friendly (and children-, the elderly-, and disabled-friendly) water and sanitation infrastructure. The details of how this would be done have not been finalised, and nor have the details of how to ensure that additional project responsibilities do not burden the target women. Few of the researched staff members had read the gender and equity policy strategies. Gender issues were introduced through one-off training sessions.

Women have in the past, been asked to undertake [unpaid] project work, often because men are not interested in voluntary work, or cannot be tracked down if they run away with the project money and investments. Women on the other hand are [assumed to be] readily available and interested.

DSK staff members, 2004

The key challenges of delivering sanitation to the urban poor were recognised, but no ready strategies were identified:

Despite the obligations of the national water supply and sanitation, provision of water and sanitation services to informal settlements remains a problem. Virtually no slums in Bangladesh are "recognised" and, hence, provision of water and other services, in the absence of tenure, to slum dwellers is illegal. Similarly, provision of sanitation facilities such as latrine blocks for urban slum dwellers on municipal land is challenging. Initiatives (by WAB, and other NGOs and donors) have so far been largely *ad hoc*. Although the official agencies (DWASA and DCC) have cooperated in previous efforts, replication at scale requires the development of a national consensus and policy on slums.

It was hoped that the ASEH project would develop a critical mass of examples and a body of evidence that *could* be used for influencing such required changes in policy. The task is indeed formidable.

*"An important challenge for ASEH will be to institutionalise service provision to the poor and marginalised in urban areas while lobbying for wider provision of basic environmental sanitation services."*

WAB, 2002

The ASEH project was initiated in July 2003. The findings below are drawn from discussions held with WAB staff between March and June 2005 and illustrate the progress made and some of the areas yet to be dealt with.

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<sup>72</sup> A 2001 field visit organised by WAB for visiting WAUK managers.



### 7.2.2 Who are the urban poor?

There is a definite consensus amongst most WAB staff interviewed that the urban poor are 'slum residents'. Beyond this general understanding there are various definitions of the urban poor. This indicated "...the lack of a policy and working framework to define and understand urban poverty. Till then, simply all people living in slums [and not elsewhere] are treated as the urban poor," as pointed out by a senior manager of WAB.

*'By urban poor, we mean those who live in slums and those who are very poor, ie rickshaw puller, day-labourer. These people are considered as illegal dwellers and those residing in areas which lack basic water supply and sanitation. We try to identify those groups as the urban poor.'*

*'Those with monthly incomes less than Tk2,000-3,000 can be defined as the urban poor. However, there can be several perspectives of poverty.'*

*'We have no absolute definition of poverty. Rather, we let people define what poverty means. If people think themselves as poor, they are poor.'*

WAB staff (male and female)

Within WAB partner organisations, a better understanding of urban poverty was notable among field staff than in senior management staff.

*'The urban poor are people of low income, living in slums and having no work.'*  
Senior Management, DSK (male)

*'The urban poor are those living in slums; however, not all slum dwellers can be considered as poor. In most slums there are some families who have 8-10 rooms to rent out. Some slum residents also have shops and/or rickshaw garages, which do make a regular income. Some families have 2-3 earning members, while many families have disabled and invalid older persons. There are families where only one member is earning an (unreliable) income and often the family needs to borrow money and food. Those who earn less than US\$1 a day and have a low calorie intake are definitely the poorest. We can categorise the slum residents into groups.'*

Field staff-member, DSK (male)

The findings of the policy 'research' into poverty, conducted by WAB, are challenging to apply in practice, because they contain contradictions between equity and efficiency as mentioned earlier in this chapter.

### 7.2.3 Poverty principles of the ASEH project

Under ASEH, WAB and their partners intend to contribute to sector development and enhance the lives of the poorest by bringing about sustainable improvements in health, quality of life, and livelihoods for poor rural and urban communities. New approaches specifically linked to addressing the needs of the poorest in both rural and urban contexts include:

- **Affirmative action:** Priority to be given to the poorest and most vulnerable groups for the provision of services, resulting in strengthening of their livelihoods capital.
- **Use of local resources:** Pro-poor service delivery and self-reliance through the use of local resources, including information, knowledge, skills, labour, materials, land, finances and organisations.

- **Participatory approach:** A socially inclusive participatory project approach with involvement of the poorest in the planning, implementation, management, monitoring and evaluation of projects.
- **Acknowledgement of the needs of the poor** to access water and sanitation services and the responsibilities of stakeholder institutions to provide them in a transparent and accountable manner.
- **Disaster preparedness:** The improvement of community preparedness for natural or man-made (including evictions) disasters affecting the access of the poor to water and sanitation services in project areas.
- **Enhanced private sector** contributing towards sustainability of projects: An effective local private sector, including community-based entrepreneurs, is needed for the sustainability of water and sanitation systems.

In order to achieve any of these, the needs of the poorest must be thoroughly understood. WAB field surveys in poor areas demonstrate the complex and multi-layered nature of poverty. Lack of information about the 'realities of poverty', and unhelpful attitudes towards those living in poverty, are common problems, even for organisations with a long working history of implementing urban poverty programmes.

*'The slum people are the most vulnerable. There are two categories of the slums, those located on public and those on private lands. Slum residents living on public lands are hugely dependent on local leaders and their middlemen for protection against evictions. The ADB Urban Poverty Leadership Project made a recommendation for government to stop evictions. However, ten years since that recommendation was made, evictions still continue to be enforced officially. We need basic information, ie good research and convincing advocacy to bring about an attitudinal change amongst policy-makers. Without a sound understanding of poverty, all interventions are superficial. The official attitude is not sympathetic to the needs of the urban poor and this is complemented by the lack of interest and commitment by major donors. The feeling is that if more facilities are provided, it will encourage in-migration. UNICEF is in an advantageous position, given its working relationships with the government. Yet, we shy away from dealing with anything more than providing water supply and sanitation. It is time that we broadened our perspective and framework to really address issues that are central to urban poverty (such as the legal right to shelter and infrastructure).'*

UNICEF Management (female)

The understanding that tackling urban poverty requires far more than just providing hardware (sanitation) and software (hygiene promotion) was also voiced by field staff of government organisations, who were equally vocal of the 'unsympathetic official attitude'.

*'The role of the government is not positive. Slum evictions are a major challenge to sustainable work for the urban poor. Eviction throws the poor into further poverty and yet, poverty alleviation is the main goal in many official programmes, in keeping with what has been agreed for the Poverty Reduction Strategy Process (PRSP) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Here, at the Dhaka City Corporation, staff at the Project Coordinator level protested against this duality and ambiguity in a meeting on 16 January 2005. But we have had no response from the senior management. And while we don't resolve the core issues, we go on promoting soaps (for hygiene promotion) under various programmes.'*

DCC staff (female)

Not acknowledging the wealth of experience and knowledge among their own staff, government organisations wait for yet more external projects to develop an understanding of poverty.

*'DWASA has no concrete policy paper on gender and urban poverty. A large project funded by the World Bank is shortly to be approved. Under this project, DWASA will improve its gender sensitivity and other pro-poor policies.'*

Senior Management, Dhaka WASA (male)

BRAC is the largest NGO not only in Bangladesh, but also worldwide. Within Bangladesh, BRAC wields considerable influence over the government, yet it shies away from influencing government practice. The same applies to DANIDA, one of the largest bilateral donors in the water and sanitation sector, with great potential to influence water and sanitation policy and practice in favour of the hardcore poor.

*'BRAC's work in the urban context is temporary, as there is always the fear of eviction of slums by the government or by private landowners. Personally, I don't think we should or can intervene in influencing the Government for the legal right to land for slum dwellers. We can work best in the present context in a limited manner to temporarily improve the living conditions of the urban poor. In 2003, the Government invited NGOs to work in urban areas. We fulfilled our commitment by installing 5,000 latrines in Dhaka and 5,000 in other urban areas outside Dhaka. This was our commitment to urban poverty.'*

BRAC staff (male)

*'DANIDA's commitment in Bangladesh is to work with the hardcore poor. This group do not reside in one particular area – so we do not have a fixed urban or rural programme. However, given our resources and other limitations, we do not usually work with the hardcore poor in Dhaka and the other larger cities. This would require huge investments in programme funds and staff strengths and still 80-90 per cent of the investments would be absorbed by the non-hardcore poor. Also, we work in partnership with the government and within the legal framework of the government. Urban slums lack official legal status.'*

DANIDA Senior Management (male)

Despite a constitutional declaration that water supply and sanitation are basic human rights and a census which recognizes various categories of the urban poor ('slum' and 'non-slum', see Chapters 3 and 4) and a policy outlining organisational responsibilities for basic service delivery, intervention by a local non-governmental organisation was required to enable *select* slum settlements to be supplied by a government water supply system.

*'Our focus was on ensuring safe water supply in slums and we often managed by setting up tube-wells in Dhaka's urban slums. However, in some areas, it was a problem to tap underground water, either due to lack of space or due to water contamination. We contacted DWASA asking them to extend the piped water system and install a water point into the slum. Formal land ownership (a land holding number allotted by the DCC) is officially required for a DWASA connection. A long negotiation with local ward commissioners, DCC and DWASA staff and the Ministry of Local Government and Co-operative's Engineering Department (MoLG&C, LGED) resulted in DWASA breaking its own rule and installing a water connection in a slum settlement on the condition that DSK (or another organisation) guaranteed to pay any unpaid water charges. Much of this was possible due to the 'sympathetic' attitude of the Minister of LG&C. DSK continues to have regular meetings with DWASA and we will continue to influence the Government and other agencies to work for the urban poor.'*

DSK Senior Management staff (male)

However, this agreement is not institutionally official and DWASA staff continue to 'require' the guarantee of intermediate organisations such as DSK, who do not work in all slum settlements nor in all urban areas. The lack of a definite policy has given rise to many cases and examples of 'middle-men' corruption (see Chapters 4 and 5, and below).

Currently, the official attitude is still only 'sympathetic' towards slum-dwellers and restricted to personal commitments and subject to external funding:

*'I can reach poor people and serve them by supplying drinking water. If community based organisations (NGOs) become capable, we can legalise water supply for slum dwellers as for others. I will feel good if I can create the opportunity to provide poor people with water. Everything is now abstract in DWASA. I am eagerly waiting for the World Bank project to have some change in the organisation.'*

Senior Manager, DWASA (male)

To conclude, beyond the expressed 'official and personal' interpretations of the urban poor and urban poverty among staff in different organisations, it is common knowledge that urban poverty is a complex subject that requires detailed research and evidence in order to arrive at strategic and practical solutions. Most organisations recognise that concrete and sustainable solutions to urban poverty are difficult to achieve without relevant changes in official policy and practice. Official government attitudes towards the urban poor are 'unsympathetic', characterised by the frequent and forceful evictions of slum residents and the official mandate to declare the bulk of the urban poor as 'illegal residents'.

Changes in attitudes to urban poverty are critically required at the national and official levels. Yet, poverty is a low priority for the government. The tendency and practice has been both donor and private funding for poverty programmes, especially in the water and sanitation sector. Poverty alleviation is not in the interest of the government and its bureaucracy, and given its closed-door practice of internal planning, donor investments in poverty reduction initiatives have resulted in few meaningful and sustainable outcomes.

The ambitious poverty goals of the ASEH project need to be weighed against these challenges. At best, it can achieve a change in mindsets and attitudes in partner organisations. But for this to be achieved and applied in practice, the confusion and ambiguity in the policy directives need to be first rectified.

#### **7.2.4 Addressing gender**

The ASEH Policy Paper on Gender and Equity (WAB, 2002), identified that WaterAid, UK (WAUK) has attached increasingly greater value to equity and gender issues in its work over the past decade. The 2000 Organisational Strategy paper committed WaterAid to mandatory gender assessments of all projects and required country programmes to reflect their findings in the development of working relationships with partners. It also mentioned that WAUK and the regional offices have generally refrained from prescribing equity and gender guidelines to partners in acknowledgement of their autonomy, skills and expertise in community based work. As a result, there was no uniform gender policy among WAB and its partner organisations, each working according to their own vision and mission. WAB only sought to support awareness of the issues and encourage partners to increase investments in equity and gender based studies and activities. Prior to this, WAUK did not have a gender policy or strategy (WaterAid UK consultant review, 2000)

'There is a corporate commitment to gender, but no common understanding of what such a commitment means in practice nor of the starting point for such work, ie whether it means involving women in project work so that projects are sustainable or involving men and women in projects in ways which will begin to address the gender and class disparities in each society. Both partners and staff recognise the importance of gender, yet the perspective or understanding of this concept and applying it in relation to the water and sanitation sector is very wide indeed' (Wallace and Wilson, 2005).

WAUK were not happy with the above consultant review (2000). 'The consultants felt that gender approaches could not be simply taught and grafted into WAUK's work. They asked for staff to analyse the specificities of gender inequalities in different contexts of their work and to use the learning and experiences to redefine their work. Staff, but especially senior management, found this suggestion frustrating; they wanted immediate solutions about how to work with gender issues'. The organisational emphasis and therefore the demand on the consultants, then (setting aside a serious commitment by middle management women staff) was to 'develop the appropriate tools for staff to implement a gender approach' (ibid).

These words from the consultant report for WAUK apply just as much to WAB and its partners in the ASEH project. In consultation, during this research, with local staff, it was reported that until 2003, WAB had no specific gender policy, but followed the principles established by the Head Office in the UK (ie, no specific gender policies until late 2002). It was DFID-B who raised the need for ASEH (and therefore WAB) to 'demonstrate mechanisms and strategies for reaching the extreme poor and addressing gender which would influence official policy and practice'. This was distinctly different from WaterAid's earlier, project-based approach.

The ASEH Project's Policy Paper on gender and equity is far more comprehensive than its poverty paper. It was agreed that under ASEH WAB and its partners would seek to improve their understanding of the underlying causes of social inequity and gender division and to maximise the transformative potential of water supply and sanitation projects to bring about improvements in the social and economic status of the poorest. As a first step, it is mentioned [in the paper] that consultations were held with partners to define the terms as follows (WAB, 2002):

**Equity:** "Equity" implies "justice" and requires capacity building of all citizens to claim and establish their "rights".

The term "equity" refers to an egalitarian society based on justice, which requires affirmative action/positive discrimination to ensure the flow of resources and facilities towards disadvantaged citizens, thereby leading to poverty reduction. Equity is a holistic approach and special attention needs to be paid to poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged groups. Equity measures are those required in order to move towards equality.

**Gender:** The socially and culturally constructed differences between men and women irrespective of age which are characterised by:

- unequal power relations between men and women;
- lack of equal participation of men and women in decision making processes;
- unequal treatment of men and women;
- discrimination of rights in terms of: (i) poverty, (ii) security, (iii) mobility, (iv) education, (v) health, (vi) socio-economic and political opportunities and (vi) resources.

### 7.2.5 ASEH project outcomes

The policy document states that the following outcomes were agreed to, in consultation with partner organisations:

**At the organisational level:**

- Both WAB and its partner organisations are to mainstream a gender balanced approach to staff recruitment, including the appointment of at least 50% women as field workers and initiatives to recruit more women to senior managerial positions.
- A systematic process of building awareness and sensitising WAB staff, its partner organisations and project communities on issues related to equity, gender and development.
- Increased understanding of the linkages between sanitation and water, and women's and adolescent girls' health.

**In the field:**

- Increased access to water and sanitation services for the most marginalised communities;
- Disproportionate access to resources, services and project benefits for women and girls, the poorest; this includes sanitation interventions to enable meeting women's menstruation management needs, those of pregnant women and female adolescents through appropriate software messages and hardware construction;
- The promotion of appropriate technologies able to meet the practical needs of women, the poor, the disadvantaged and elderly, and populations in difficult or geographically disadvantaged areas;
- Equitable access to hygiene education and sanitation facilities in schools, with special attention to gender sensitive facilities in secondary schools;
- Disproportionate access to project information and decision making at all phases of the project and beyond for women, the poorest and disadvantaged groups;
- Decision-making that increasingly reflects the preferences of women and marginalised groups;
- Reduction in the traditional water and sanitation burden borne by women and girls;
- Improved safeguards to prevent the poorest and most vulnerable becoming further disadvantaged through their participation in project work (e.g. not displacing rag-pickers, designing appropriate activity schedules, and including social protection and safety nets for the poorest);
- Better targeting of men and adolescent girls and boys for hygiene promotion sessions; and
- Better representation and voice of women and girls in hardware design, water-point locations and investment decisions.

**Advocacy Outputs:**

- Increased awareness of local government regarding equity and gender issues through the implementation of the ASEH project

However, despite what is stated, discussions with WAB staff and staff from DSK (which also holds responsibilities for training other partner NGOs in the ASEH project) to identify their perceptions of gender in the ASEH project, reveal both vagueness and ambiguity at various levels within the organisational hierarchy.

### 7.3 Addressing gender in the ASEH project

#### 7.3.1 The case of WaterAid Bangladesh

*'WAB still does not have an organisational gender policy, even though we have prepared policy guidelines for the ASEH project.'*

Senior Manager, WAB (female).

*'The concept 'gender' came from the donors. We take gender from our own experience. There is no policy direction on gender in WAB, but there is also no gender discrimination. We provide support and promote female staff. We have special budgets for training and capacity building. Our society is male-dominated and patriarchal and there is still an environment that is hostile to accepting women in senior positions. Most NGOs have however overcome this and welcome women at work.'*

Senior Manager, WAB (male)

*'Among our office staff, we have employed three women who were attacked with acid. One of them is a (diploma) engineer. We have developed a culture where there is the scope to address gender issues. If a woman gives birth, she can attend office with the child. If she has to go to the field, she can hire a nurse and the office will reimburse the costs. All that is our strategy, not necessarily outlined and documented as policy. Our performance must have been positive for DFID-B to make this big grant to us.'*

Senior manager, WAB (male)

*'Appointing more and more women does not imply that the organisation is gender sensitive. Not all women are gender sensitive.'*

Middle manager, WAB (male)

This view was also expressed by several female colleagues who expressed concern that women in senior management positions do not always represent or share the interests of female staff at lower levels.

*'The organisation does not have clear and fair guidelines for the basic issue of maternity leave. Basic maternity leave is identified as 3 month fully paid leave. In WAB some staff (having worked for more than two years) get 2 months full pay and one month half pay. Those who have been here for less than 2 years get only 2 months of maternity leave with half pay.'*

*'There is nothing specific set in the policy except a vague declaration that, there will be an environment where women can work spontaneously and do not face any discrimination relating to promotion and increment. This means nothing in practical terms. Let us take the basic issue of transportation after office hours. My home is close to the office and this makes it a problem as local transporters refuse to take me for such short trips. During my late pregnancy, I requested for a drop by the office vehicle. This was not permitted. Even as the 'rented office vehicle' used to stand inside the office, I had to either walk or pay double fares for taxis. After my child was born, I came back to work as soon as my 2 month maternity leave ended. I was on the technical team and feared that any more absence would affect the work and therefore my position. As I had no one to take care of my baby at home, I was given 'special' permission to bring my baby to the office. Many colleagues were not happy with this and I faced an awkward situation.'*

Senior and middle managers, WAB (females)

WAB does not implement projects, but works with local partners, mostly NGOs, involved in water supply and sanitation. While the gender and equity policy has succeeded in

raising the profile of gender, it has not yet resulted in concrete actions nor practical solutions.

*'WAB were certainly not originally monitoring work by our partners with a gender focus. It was a big challenge in starting the ASEH project to get some uniformity in the work practices and perceptions (on poverty, equity and gender) of our partners. One can almost say that the focus on gender started with the ASEH project.'*

*'The partner organisations have formed a Technical Coordination Committee which meets once a month to discuss issues related to water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion. In every meeting, the prominent issues for discussion are how women 'lag behind'\*. We want to give priority to women who lag behind.'*

On asking what sort of priority is being accorded to women, the example provided was:  
*'In the beginning we used to build latrine clusters (3-6 latrines in a block) with no separate entrances for women. This thinking has certainly changed. Now we consider the fact that women are not able to share latrines with men, especially the young and adolescent girls.'*

WAB staff (male and female)

\*'Lagging behind' relates to cost-recovery, as well as to meeting the specific needs of adolescent girls, children and the disabled. However, there was doubt that the 'lagers' would catch up, given the project emphasis on timely spending of grant money and achieving fixed targets.

*'It is not easy to consider all these issues and still achieve targets within the timeframe. Commitment to these issues will require a household-specific analysis. The ASEH project is a big challenge to WAB. As a team here in Bangladesh, we have our own expectations. WAUK has its own mission and strategy. This applies equally to local partners. It is a big challenge to bring all these together in one programme.'*

Senior manager, WAB (female)

### 7.3.2 The case of DSK

A mid-management female staff member at DSK points out that gender issues are not new to the organisation. *'In the beginning, since its inception by left-leaning professionals, DSK has prided itself in treating both women and men equally. Gender is a matter of attitude and it is well recognised that DSK is a good place for women to work. However, our work and staff have grown and, given that people carry their social attitudes to their work, it is important to enable organisational development. Many staff feel that women are privileged and that this is not right. Some say to me, "Didi, women get priority everywhere, this has to stop." Some leave everything related to gender to me.'*

There seems to be some confusion as to what addressing gender requires. While most of the staff know that DSK has a gender policy (under the ASEH project) most did not know much about what it contained. Many field staff had not seen it. In practice, gender translates into women and addressing women's service needs, both in the organisation and in the field, with little access to information about the policy and little scope to demand progressive benefits like paternity leave.

*'DSK scores over international NGOs in the fact that we provide 4 months maternity leave and 10 days paternity leave. The venue for a training programme was shifted recently*



*from outside Dhaka to Dhaka city, because one of our female colleagues could not leave her child overnight.'*

Middle management staff (female)

*'My wife was in hospital and having a C-section and I could not get leave for even 2 or 3 days. In the case of a female employee, we grant a 4 month maternity leave.'*

Field staff (male)

Staff at various levels seem to be satisfied with the way that gender issues are being addressed in the field. This seems to have been achieved in the absence of any significant training or capacity building. There is considerable confusion about whether or not gender trainings had been conducted, and if they were appropriate to helping to understand the concept, and whether there was even any budget for such trainings.

*'Middle and senior management from DSK attended the gender trainings held by WAB for the ASEH project. We will now conduct trainings for the field staff. On joining DSK each new staff member goes through a week of training and orientation, of which understanding gender is one component.'*

Middle management (female)

*'I have taken one or two orientation courses on gender, but not formally. Five years ago, when I joined DSK, we had gender training for 3 days. When we organise any training session, we try to keep at least one day for gender. We have orientation for new staff and this also includes some gender training, but not all staff take all the trainings.'*

Middle management (female)

*'I have heard we have a gender policy and strategy for the ASEH project, but I don't know properly about it. We should all be informed about it, but I don't believe we need gender training or that we can learn gender in 4-5 days. We need to understand the principles of the ASEH project and need to know the tools to collect information. We are using PRA tools to collect information on gender, poverty and sanitation in the situational analysis. So I don't think we will face any problem.'*

Field staff, ASEH project (male)

*'I am not aware if we are implementing the [ASEH] gender policy. But in DSK we have a culture to help women – both in the organisation and in our work.'*

Middle management (male)

*'We need to move from policy to practice but finance is a major constraint. To address the policy we need to make a gender unit and we need a person to manage this work. This will need to be someone competent and also someone who shares the beliefs and perspectives of the organisation.'*

Senior management (male)

*'We have a training calendar and have arranged for gender training for all staff. We have a separate budget for this work. This sort of work is inherent in our social responsibilities.'*

Senior Management (male)

The confusion exists in WAB as well.

*'Capacity building is essential, which we don't have here in WAB or for our partners. A gender action plan was prepared for relevant partner organisation staff. This translated to two types of training – a two day, WAB facilitated course for middle-level staff and a two day course facilitated by an external consultant for senior management staff. The two day*

*trainings were useful and interesting, but this is not enough to bring about a change in gender issues in the organisation or in the work. We have an action plan, but no strategy and no mechanism for follow-up capacity building. In such an environment, a two-day training produces no results.'*

WaterAid Bangladesh middle management (male)

It was not surprising therefore that the common understanding of 'addressing gender' among DSK staff at all levels, was 'involving women'. This could be done relatively easily in the field and success could therefore be quantified in the numbers of women involved in programmes and committees. Yet, addressing these issues, whilst of some significance, would not really resolve the real constraints on women in the field, in terms of power and decision-making.

### **Applying a gender-sensitive approach, or using women for successful implementation of projects?**

*'We have been working with women in the past, although we don't have a specific gender policy or strategy. We implemented health and micro-credit programmes for women. Fifty per cent of the beneficiaries in our micro-credit project are women. We saw that it is easy to find women, but difficult to get hold of the men. Also, organisations like the Grameen Bank (another large NGO) have got back 90 per cent of their returns in the women's credit programme. So we encouraged and implemented such models. For the successful implementation of any project, we have realised the importance of female involvement. We also encourage women to resist male pressure on decisions around the use of the loans.*

*We also encourage women to form a committee to manage hardware activities in project implementation. First we formed an all-male committees and the result was that the men ran away with the money. Then we made a mixed committee, but the men dominated the women. After these experiences and on discussing with the local women, we now form all women committees.'*

Senior management (male)

*'DSK is developing options for children as the commodes and pans available are too large for them. We are also thinking of latrine options for the disabled.'*

Field staff (male)

*'The men can relieve themselves anywhere, but women can't do that. We need to focus on women in planning sanitation.'*

Field staff (male)

*'Women's specific sanitation issues are menstrual hygiene and security during latrine use at night. Through situational analysis [exercises] we have identified these issues. We try to involve women in the planning processes and collect women-specific information during situational analyses. We create 'female-only' committees and try to include them in the implementation process as well, for example, by making them in-charge of supervising the construction of sanitation blocks. Women are a disadvantaged group and that is why we need to give them importance. When they are involved, they become conscious about their rights; as a result they learn to raise their voices and protest against illegal matters [in project activities]. We allow a sense of leadership to grow in women and thus we are empowering them.'*

Field staff (male)

Although some progress is being made, real, serious constraints remain. Field and middle management staff point out the challenges of implementing the ASEH project as follows:

*'DSK did motivate DWASA and DCC to allow water supply in slum settlements, but there are still problems related to the bureaucracy. When slum residents visit DWASA on their own and ask for water connections, they are ignored. For the [poor] common man, there is no other way, but to bribe. This has resulted in water lords in slums. These [often outsider] local mafia leaders bribe DWASA and sell water in the slums at high rates.'* (See Chapter 4, Beguntala).

*'The local politicians and leaders do not like NGOs and see us as competitors. They also don't like to see awareness among slum residents, as this threatens their power bases. Given that they are better placed in (connected and attached to) the slum settlements, we cannot evade many of the threats they pose. Such leaders especially do not like women to move forward and pose this as a huge issue which is against religion and culture; they therefore influence many of the men to withdraw their wives from holding any position.'*

*'Eviction is a major problem and the government has no policy on this. Slum residents are not assured of permanency in their dwellings and we cannot provide this assurance. Often, some of our micro-credit group members need to be searched for, as they get evicted and move to new slums. We face problems sometimes, but mostly they themselves contact us and let us know their new addresses.'*

DSK staff (field and middle management)

These underlying 'real' problems are rarely raised in important national and international discussions. DSK's Executive Director has been the National Coordinator of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, Bangladesh Chapter since 2001. During this time he has addressed and been engaged in several international and national sessions of the WSSCC, but little useful debate appears to have taken place on these issues and little progress has been made.

The numerous donors<sup>73</sup> that DSK work with undoubtedly have a wide range of diverse demands and addressing these seems to have taken DSK far away from their roots of active voluntary work in the slums and in flood affected regions, providing the poor with free medical assistance and food. Since then, the organisation has grown enormously in size and functions. Not all of the concepts with which they are now required to struggle, and hopefully address, reflect local realities. It is perhaps this ambiguous situation which colours DSK's current thinking on gender in providing sanitation for the urban poor.

### **7.3.3 Government departments and gender**

It has been pointed out that Bangladesh is not aid dependent; therefore there is little incentive for the government to cooperate with donors. The official bureaucracy has not regarded donors as development partners and has, in fact, resisted their involvement in internal planning (DFID-B, 2002). This is evident especially in the consideration of gender in official programmes and institutions. The huge donor investments on addressing gender seem to have made few inroads in official organisations and programmes.

#### **Addressing gender?**

*Slum Development officers at the office of the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) cannot recall any training or event on gender. 'In the field, it is agreed now, that we need to address*

<sup>73</sup> DSK works with WAB (DFID), CordAid, Swiss Red Cross, IFAD/ADIP, ILO, WSSCC, BRAC Bangladesh, Grameen Trust, Plan International and others.

women and we have specific programmes for women, like health, education, micro-credit. But this thinking is not applied internally in the organisation.'

'We have about 1-5 per cent women employed in DCC. You can forget about separate latrines for women in the slums. Right here in the office, we had not even one separate latrine for women. Obviously the toilet was not designed for use by women and one day, a sanitary towel was stuck in the toilet. All the (male) staff made a big issue over this, making out that this was a hygiene issue. Since then, all of the female staff united and struggled to get one latrine allocated for the use of women only.'

'There are various other discrepancies. A motor-cycle is provided to male Community Development Officers, for field travel. The same is not allowed for women CDOs under the thinking that motorcycles are not appropriate for women.'

'At the same level, women are treated as less experienced and less aware. My male colleagues don't take my contributions to the work and programme seriously.'

DCC middle and field level staff (females)

The situation is the same in the DWASA. The researcher was asked not to waste her time meeting women staff, as 'they don't know anything, really, about DWASA's work.' Fewer than six per cent of DWASA's staff are women and most of them hold clerical [administrative] positions.

'We fully realise that the mother is the chief manager of the family. An educated conscientious mother can only ensure the good health of the family. To a large extent, the mother's inadequate knowledge causes high rates of child mortality. So women should be the target for our sanitation programme.'

We don't have a gender [or poverty] policy as yet. As I told you we are waiting for the World Bank project to work on all these issues. We are going to develop a policy where women will be 'logged on' to an inbuilt development measure. There is no barrier to involving women in terms of religion and culture.'

Senior manager, DWASA (male)

A senior, male bureaucrat at the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs (MOWCA), (the focal government ministry for monitoring progress on gender equity, particularly the National Action Plan for the Advancement of Women) reports satisfaction with progress on gender issues.

'We have made gender issues a focal point in sixteen ministries. On many occasions, women are not included in programme activities. It is our work to monitor these gaps and to demand to know the reasons for the exclusion. Our Ministry, specifically, provides loans to elderly women – Tk165 per month as a widow allowance, made available to all elderly women. The annual budget for the widow allowance programme is Tk11.8 million.'

We also have a loan programme for women. Earlier we were charging a 12 per cent interest rate, but I have personally reduced this to 5 per cent. Women don't do business with this loan, unlike men. So how can they pay back? In all we have nine specific women-focused programmes implemented by this Ministry.'

It is a great pleasure for me that we can address the problems of women.'

## **7.4 Conclusions and recommendations**

To conclude, this chapter reveals a familiar situation that is neither new to Bangladesh nor to sectors other than water supply and sanitation. Achieving gender equity and reducing poverty will require a departure from current ways of thinking and working in development. DFID-B made this departure from common practice in working with membership-based rights organisations, yet appears to have failed, in this case, to have connected this experience to the water supply and sanitation sector. This is despite past evidence that working with conventional NGOs had not resulted in reaching the extreme poor nor addressing entrenched inequities.

The ASEH project enabled a rethinking on issues of poverty, participation and gender in conventional NGOs. Given that this was premised on a conflicting policy position and involved no challenging of the core reasons and basis for the evident urban poverty and gender inequality, progress on achieving these goals is likely to remain slow. This is further hindered by a lack of clarity which arises from plans to deliver gender-aware sanitation to the extreme poor, within a broader framework of achieving full cost-recovery for services provided. Finally, concerns relating to addressing gender are at best restricted to improving sanitation planning and design for women's increased privacy and convenience. There are few examples in the policy guidelines which outline how inequality by gender, relating both to the strict codes of conduct levied on women's bodies and therefore their sanitation functions as well as the inequality in allocation of sanitation tasks and responsibilities, will be addressed.

If the above discussions and analyses can be taken as indicators of progress in the initial phases of the ASEH project, it appears unlikely that the extremely ambitious goals of the project will be addressed, that the vulnerabilities resulting from gender inequality in relation to sanitation needs and preferences will be met and that the politics of 'poor' governance will be impacted upon. However, these are broad assumptions and do not reflect the tangible outcomes of the project.

The progress made in drafting gender and poverty equity papers; on recruiting staff for these specific positions including women; encouraging women to stay in their posts; as well as involving women living in the slums in decision making processes of the design of latrines and water points, and water point management, are all positive starting points. Given the high priority attached to addressing gender and poverty, progress in the ASEH project will be interesting to observe.

Areas that could be improved include: ironing out discrepancies in policies and strategies; continued capacity building and training of staff both in WAB and in partner organisations in order to build a better understanding of the primary project goals relating to social development; exploring practical ways of translating policy into practice; and, finally, developing innovative methods for monitoring progress in a fully participatory fashion. All of these processes hold the potential to provide lessons learned on gender and poverty, that will be extremely useful to many other programmes and projects.

Finally, although mentioned as a project goal, there appears to be little outlined as a principle on how the lessons learnt through the ASEH project will influence wider policy and practice. To be able to meaningfully impact on official policy and practice, the ASEH project will need to challenge dominant policy and practice that tends to ignore the urban poor. Inviting rights-based membership groups to participate and play an important role in the ASEH project may be a useful way to move forward in this direction.



## **8. NEGOTIATING FOR SANITATION SERVICES – OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE URBAN POOR: CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS STUDY**

This, the final chapter of the report, brings together the lessons learned from the analysis of the experiences of people living in poverty in the research locales relating to their sanitation needs and practices. The chapter is divided into three sections: gender, participation/inclusion and recommendations. Analysis of the research findings shows that gender issues, which impact upon the ability of poor women and men to plan and negotiate for basic improvements in their day to day sanitation needs, are rarely considered in the policy and practice of sanitation. This has devastating effects on the people living in urban poverty. However, most people, including both those who seriously suffer human indignity from a lack of appropriate sanitation and those who look on, are not shocked by the devastating effects, because inequity in access to basic services and needs, has been the norm for generations. Development policies and plans consider those living in urban poverty as different to the not-poor and the trend has been to plan and make-do with quick and easy, low-cost solutions for the poor. The findings show that where and when services are provided they are mostly inadequate and inappropriate, both for the users and for those who provide and maintain these services manually, who are often those living in poverty themselves. The recommendations set out in the final section of this chapter, do not contain answers or solutions to how these problems can be rectified. Primarily, the recommendations made here are 'food for thought' for policy- and decision-makers, as well as for practitioners who might be prepared to test different approaches to delivering sanitation for those living in urban poverty.

The key messages that this research provides are that those living in urban poverty are not homogeneous and remain divided by socio-political and economic differences among other aspects of basic human capital. Yet their sanitation needs, taking into account issues of different needs by sex, are broadly the same; adequate water and privacy, safety and human dignity to perform basic sanitation acts that relate both to personal and environmental hygiene as well as to various socio-religious practices. Additionally, addressing gender issues in sanitation requires the need to focus on service users as well as service providers. As seen from examples in India, a huge number of women amongst those living in urban poverty and belonging to a particular community are engaged in manually handling and managing human faeces, in ways that are grossly exploitative.

Changes that will impact positively upon the planning and delivery of sanitation services for those living in urban poverty will not happen if they remain isolated to a few interventions planned only at the user community level in individual projects. Changes are required across different institutional levels and need to begin with providing legal recognition to the vast populations of the urban poor living on the pavements, in illegal squatters and in slums. This first step will further strengthen what the urban poor are desperately trying to do, that is to make legal claims on their basic citizen entitlements.

### **8.1 Gender issues in urban sanitation**

The primary focus of this research was to analyse gender issues relating to sanitation amongst those living in urban poverty. This was premised on the research assumption that there is little information on this subject, beyond the recognition that a lack of privacy in meeting basic sanitation needs (the need to urinate/defecate) affects women's biology and social dignity. Therefore it was assumed by this research that addressing gender in sanitation is interpreted as enabling women living in poverty in urban centres to have

more privacy in performing these activities. Those who promote these approaches claim that inequality in terms of gender is best addressed by involving women to be engaged in and/or completely take over the planning and management of sanitation infrastructure, namely latrine construction<sup>74</sup>.

This research shows that women-only water and sanitation facility management committees can operate successfully. Women are as interested as men in managing additional community and project responsibilities. This strategy does help to meet women's practical sanitation needs, because they have the responsibility for looking after the water and sanitation needs of their families. It is also possible that on seeing how well women can operate systems, they will win the respect of their husbands, male neighbours and male leaders. However, it would be disappointing if projects were to suggest that this indicates empowerment of women and promoting gender equality. The operating of facilities actually increases the number of roles women have to perform, and gives them a greater burden of domestic and managerial work. What will the role of men be if women manage everything?

More emphasis must surely be on changing the existing gender roles and attitudes of men, so that they are better able to take on or at least sensitively support their women in performing household tasks that relate to personal and environmental sanitation.

### **8.1.1 Women's bodies, privacy and sanitation**

Chapter 5 of this report shows that women are relatively more affected by the lack of privacy than men in relation to performing every-day sanitation activities. This is probably not related to the [different] biological design of women's bodies, but rather the social norms surrounding them. The need to screen and/or shelter the female body is a social construct of the greater (and often libidinous) sexuality assigned to the female body. This thinking, derived across cultures from religious texts, some more blatant and compelling than others, influences every day living and thinking. However, the situation varies from place to place. Different notions of appropriateness apply to the public display of women's bodies; from nude women in some parts of the world to the completely masked women in places like Bangladesh and rural India. Yet, all of these practices are considered appropriate locally. Therefore the fact that women require privacy in meeting sanitation needs is not so much a women's issue, rather it is related to what is considered appropriate in specific local contexts (see Chapter 5). Local context is what makes it relatively less constraining for men to urinate, defecate and bathe in public in Dhaka and India. Such practices would however not be considered acceptable in say the UK, and are equally avoided by economically better-off males in Dhaka city, itself.

Meeting basic sanitation needs is by and large a private, personal affair for every man and woman, and it is basic social practice to desire privacy in meeting these tasks.<sup>75</sup> This explains why young men living in the streets in both India and Bangladesh, prefer as far as possible, not to urinate, defecate (and to a lesser extent bathe) on the streets. This is a trend in behaviour which they emulate from other, economically better-off men of similar ages.

Secluded and safe defecation and bathing facilities are equally desirable for men and women, but it is more important for women, especially young women. This was evident

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<sup>74</sup> See examples of SPARC's Mahila Milan groups (Community Empowerment of the Poor – Building Capacity of Pavement Dwellers; A Case Study of Participatory Approach, SPARC/Mahila Milan/NSDF, India, May 2000)

<sup>75</sup> This obviously varies in places where public and communal bathing are common practices – for example Turkish baths.



outside the public latrines in slums in Dhaka, where the only women in the queues were elderly. Similarly, a much lower percentage of women use the public latrines in the slums in Kenya and India. There were stories of rapes and molestations of women at some of these Indian toilet and shower blocks, which had separate sections for women and men.

The fact that women living on the streets are more constrained than men in the same situation is affected by the greater discomfort that they experience, given the realisation that their behaviour is not considered socially acceptable and can even risk their being labelled as sexually immoral. Yet it is basic human nature to put aside or ignore such moral and social dictates if these demands are not practically feasible. This was precisely why women expressed resentment about the decision by certain male leaders in one slum settlement in Dhaka to put a forcible stop to their bathing in public. In the small, congested lanes and rooms which are their home, fetching and carrying water home to bathe, from public stand-posts, was not their preferred option.

This research therefore confirms that it is essential to assess what is appropriate for women and men in different social contexts. Yet, meeting women's specific needs for privacy does not by itself address gender issues in sanitation for the urban poor. It does not reduce the core reasons for gender-based inequality. Addressing gender issues strategically requires addressing and challenging the blatant display and practice of patriarchy by both men and women, which confers different norms of control on women's and men's bodies and their bodily functions. Addressing gender would also include enabling women to feel more comfortable with their sex and sexuality. Unfortunately, these issues are generally considered to be beyond the scope of water and sanitation projects.

However, what is feasible is that the planning and design of sanitation infrastructure should comply with local norms concerning appropriate women's and men's behaviour in connection with sanitation. Understanding these norms does not require an elaborate exercise of identifying what is specifically appropriate for those living in urban poverty, as such norms are common across the classes; what is appropriate for those living in urban poverty is not very different from the human and/or social needs of the non-poor local population. In other words, it would be better to plan a standard design that would be acceptable to all women, than to spend time identifying what different groups of the poor want and how much they each could afford to pay for it.

### **8.1.2 Definitions of appropriate sanitation**

Qualitative, participatory research in India, Bangladesh and Kenya (as detailed in Chapter 5) identified that addressing gender issues in sanitation for those living in urban poverty includes far more than the provision of secluded and safe facilities for defecation. Women living on the streets described that finding a secluded space for defecation was not as big a problem as finding clean water and seclusion for bathing. Many women (both pavement dwellers and slum residents) hastily bathe with their clothes on, in public places, often with dirty, cold water.

Their understanding of appropriate sanitation is aligned to the original, broad technical definition of sanitation that includes both personal and environmental sanitation.

To them, appropriate sanitation is defined as:

- safe and secure places for defecation, bathing and laundry;
- adequate quantities of clean water available at convenient times and places, for drinking, cooking, performing ceremonial cleansing, anal cleansing, hand-washing, face-washing, cleaning homes, washing utensils, washing laundry and, preferably warm water for bathing;

- frequent removal and safe disposal of solid waste;
- adequate drainage of wastewater and rain-water run-off from walkways and homes.

Again, this is not very different from the needs of the non-poor local population in those countries and elsewhere.

It is true that urban poverty is synonymous with the unhygienic environmental conditions in which the urban poor live. It is therefore surprising that this basic concept, apparently understood in recent policy statements from many donors (eg DFID, 2000)<sup>76</sup>, has been ignored in the recent redefinition of sanitation, where the Millennium Development Goal for sanitation<sup>77</sup> will be measured by latrine access and hand-washing practices alone (see Chapter 6). This is what is required in order to reduce diarrhoea and to improve health. However, only the broader definition will improve dignity, which is also a human right.

As the broader definition of sanitation is the requirement for most people, from whichever culture or society they may come, then the long-term goal for sanitation must surely be for everyone to achieve at least the minimum standard for each type of sanitation-related service. This broader definition has been agreed for refugees and the internally displaced under the SPHERE guidelines (2004). Setting narrower minimum standards for the non-displaced residents of developing countries, and especially for the urban poor, may possibly be considered a useful short-term goal. However, the longer-term vision must be for everyone to enjoy at least minimum standards of the full range of basic services. Sometimes this broader long-term goal can be achieved in the same time-frame and with only nominal extra investment in relation to achieving the restricted short-term goal.

### **8.1.3 Gender assigned sanitation roles**

Nobody, not even those living in the deepest urban poverty, likes to live in unhygienic surroundings. First generation migrants from cleaner rural surroundings are more disgusted by the filth, but all residents must adapt to this visibly disturbing reality of their lives. Many of the respondents in Bangladesh and India mentioned that they consider themselves immune to the impacts of the filth, unlike the not-poor. They identified themselves as 'different humans' (see Chapter 5). Occasionally, when the subject was raised, respondents gave an angry outburst of frustration. Illness, poor health and pessimism were identified as outcomes of their living environment. There were very few respondents who were proud of where and how they lived. Many slum residents were deeply discontented and desired to move to better dwellings in the future. Pavement dwellers were very unhappy with their situation and longed for shelter and security more than anything else. Wherever they could, they would send their adolescent daughters elsewhere for work, such as domestic helpers, and young unmarried men stated that they would not bring their wives to the streets.

While discontentment for the absence of environmental sanitation was expressed by men and women, it was women who bore the greater brunt of this. Again, gendering of household responsibilities as feminine implies that women hold the responsibility for trying to keep the immediate household environment clean. This includes cleaning the inner household (sweeping, scrubbing floors, washing clothes, washing utensils) as well as keeping clean a certain area (as applicable in the local context and recognised as personal) of the outer surroundings swept and clear of rubbish. Among the researched community in India, these practices were linked to culture and religion and these tasks, if well done by the housewives, were believed to result in prosperity. This was reinforced by

<sup>76</sup> DFID'S Urban Target Strategy Paper, 'Meeting the challenge of urban poverty', December 2000

<sup>77</sup> Halving by 2015, the proportion of people (2.4 billion - urban and rural populations) without access to sanitation.

the fact that the grantor of wealth and good fortune is a goddess (Laksmi), who set high ideals for women. Women themselves reported being ridiculed frequently by their husbands and other women in the neighbourhoods, if they did not diligently perform these tasks. Good women are those who kept their homes and surroundings clean.

Men identified clean surroundings and a clean home as appropriate sanitation; women identified the performing of these tasks as appropriate sanitation. However, there is a distinct difference observed between the keeping of this tradition and the actual maintenance of good hygiene. High caste Hindu women have more activities around cleansing 'impurities' than lower caste women, but this does not mean that they have cleaner homes (in the 'western' sense) than the lower castes. Many of the respondents believe in this divide of work responsibilities and strive to develop this habit and attitude in their young daughters, even though this is often difficult to achieve to perfection, given the surroundings in which they lived and the lack of adequate water. They had been conditioned to identify these tasks as being appropriately feminine. Asking their men to help them in such activities translates to reducing the masculinity of their men, and this is not a preferred option. This implies that Dalit men, who clean streets and drains, are therefore lesser men. Sometimes, men employed to clean public streets and drains abdicate these public cleaning tasks, as well as the domestic cleaning tasks, to their wives (see Chapter 2).

This division of responsibilities applies equally in Bangladesh and Kenya, even though there is no similar religious doctrine concerning women's link to keeping the house and the surroundings clean, and there are other concepts associated with being a 'good woman'<sup>78</sup>.

In all three countries where this research has been carried out, Kenya, India and Bangladesh, it is women who remain responsible for cleaning private (individual household) latrines. In India, it is mostly women belonging to the Valmiki caste who clean both public and private latrines, continuing an age-old practice of manual scavenging (detailed in Chapter 2). The dominant Hindu culture considers faeces as extremely polluted and while upper caste women have recently taken to cleaning their own latrines, they have always cleaned up the faeces of their very young children. A 'good' husband might help his wife with some household tasks, but he will rarely clean the toilets or wash the soiled napkins of his young children. This is simply not done in their culture. In Kenya and Bangladesh there are no such religious barriers on handling faeces, yet the responsibility of cleaning toilets and cleaning young children after defecation is still assigned to women.

In densely congested slums, environmental sanitation infrastructure and services will contribute to meeting women's practical sanitation needs. However, even the broader definition of sanitation would not address the core issues of gender inequality. Addressing inequality by gender will require challenging the embedded beliefs that link sanitation tasks with religion, culture and notions of women's character. This will both require and encourage a more equal distribution of hygiene and sanitation related tasks between genders. By targeting women for hygiene and sanitation messages, most sanitation projects actually embed the existing gender-biased beliefs still further.

#### **8.1.4 Personal sanitation**

As pointed out above, personal sanitation needs include defecation, bathing and washing clothes. For all these activities, convenience, safety and privacy is important for both

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<sup>78</sup> One major aspect of being a 'good woman' in Kenya and Uganda is to have children, regardless of having a long-term relationship with a man.

women and men, but especially for women who need to additionally deal with managing menstrual blood and washing after sexual intercourse. All of these tasks require water and the responsibility of finding water falls largely on women. Women not only deal with their own personal hygiene needs, but also those of the family.

The need to bathe is defined by religion. Amongst the Hindus, it is important to bathe after defecation, sexual intercourse and at the end of the menstrual cycle. This relates to the 'polluted' nature of bodily excrements, especially faeces, blood and seminal fluids. There were, originally, strict norms which defined that women (and men) could not re-enter the main house nor perform tasks in the kitchen without bathing. While there was some laxity in not bathing (nor even washing hands) after defecation, the same could not be applied to sexual intercourse and menstruation. The rigidity concerning the need for a cleansing bath after these acts was applicable both among the local population and migrants. It also applied in Muslim Bangladesh, where it is as important as the ritual cleansing of the face, arms, legs and feet (known as *wuzu*) for a man before praying or reading the Koran. Women in Bangladesh and India report fetching bathing water for their husbands before going to bed if they thought that there might be sexual intercourse. Similarly, if a Muslim woman begins to menstruate during the Ramadan fasting period, she must stop fasting and begin again only after her menstrual bleeding has stopped. In a similar fashion, a Hindu woman must not cook for her family while she is passing menstrual blood.

The shame and secrecy for women associated with the natural female bodily function of menstruation is demonstrated in all three research countries. In all three places the shame and taboos associated with it affects girls and women's self-worth and well-being. In many parts of South Asia and Africa, menstruation is not talked about. Adolescent girls from most socio-economic groups are so oblivious that they are surprised and shocked at the onset of their first menstrual period. It is then that they are introduced to their culture's taboos around menstruation and menstrual blood. At this point, many of them drop out of school because they find management of menstruation more problematic outside their homes and they are teased by boys when they come back to school after several days' absence. In Bangladesh, the notion of pollution associated with menstrual blood is so strong that if the blood is disposed of down a latrine used by males or if the laundered clothes of a menstruating woman are hung beside male family member's clothes, then she will bring destruction on him and his family. Rags used to soak up the menstrual blood need to be washed and dried. Often these are washed or dried hurriedly and in secret and therefore inadequately. The effect is that these rags harbour mould and other infection-causing organisms which result in embarrassing fungal infections and ultimately can cause sterility in the affected woman (Arefin et al, 2004 for UNICEF). Very little work has been done on promoting improved menstrual hygiene practices, and less still on addressing the taboos and shame associated with menstruation. Sanitation and hygiene promotion practitioners need to work out ways to deal with menstrual hygiene management without further embedding cultural taboos and shame for women. One possibility is to give adolescent girls the opportunity to get together to discuss puberty, menstruation, menopause and other women's health issues and work out ways of managing it. Similarly adolescent boys may need to have discussion groups themselves for their own puberty issues, as well as to reduce their teasing of girls. This may at least address some of the most basic personal sanitation needs of women and might discover some potential solutions for the more strategic gender needs.

### **8.1.5 Gender issues in the provision of sanitation services**

Not analysing issues of inequality by gender beyond the community of users is a serious limitation in the research about and practice of gender (Joshi, 2003). Gendered inequality

in the policies and internal (work) practices of service providers and decision-makers is rarely explored. This research has explored two examples in this way:

- a) The history and practice of manually handling human faeces – a task assigned to one particular community in India (see Chapter 2); and
- b) The practice of addressing gender and poverty inequalities by agencies involved in a DFID-supported water and sanitation project in Bangladesh (see Chapter 7).

### ***a) Manual handling of human faeces***

The Valmiki caste in India was traditionally assigned the task of handling and disposing of human faeces and other wastes (including dead animals). This was because they were defined by Hinduism as the most polluted and lowest caste. This research found that this task was performed by both men and women, but that women had virtually no choice of any other task, particularly after marriage. When they became daughters-in-law, they took on the service contracts of their mothers-in-law, working long hours and getting paid next to nothing, carrying other people's faeces on their heads. As long as they lived as a joint family, even this meagre payment was not theirs, it was their mother-in-law who was the matriarchal manager of these life-long contracts. Termed officially as manual scavenging, this already existing practice was encouraged by the Mughal and British colonisers.

After independence, an official ban was announced on manual scavenging. Government initiatives to convert dry-latrines to flushing and pour-flush latrines were set up, accompanied by a rehabilitation programme for those engaged in the scavenging work. Several decades later, the manual scavenging continues. This research followed a mass campaign by Dalit activists (SKA) to demolish dry latrines operated throughout the state of Andhra Pradesh. Ironically, the resistance was highest in a small town, when the activists tried to demolish a dry latrine functioning in the civil court premises in the town. Hundreds of Valmiki women (migrants and locals) in the state of Andhra Pradesh remain bereft of the promised social rehabilitation. The few opportunities made available are offered to their men-folk. Where large-scale conversion of dry to pour flush latrines has taken place as part of the modernisation process, and the job of 'manual scavenging' disappears, there can be a livelihood crisis. What will the former manual scavengers now do?

A state-wide 'Andhra Pradesh Urban Basic Services for the Poor' (APUSP) project funded by DFID India had ignored this issue, even though social empowerment was its key focus. As a consequence, DFID India have to date missed out on involvement in some of the most exciting and critical social developments in India.

In India, with a glorious history of social activism, it is the Dalits who must fight for their own rights. It is ironical and unfortunate that the task of manual scavenging, declared long ago and constitutionally as a blight on human development (by Ambedkar, a Dalit leader) continues in practice and is challenged primarily only by members of the community engaged in this work. The work done by SKA in Andhra Pradesh is laudable, yet frail in both its strategy and planning, it is prone to many critiques, even by those who support the movement. That this practice is prevalent not only in India, but across South Asia, has long been ignored by the planners and implementers of sanitation projects. This study recommends that sanitation interventions for the urban poor no longer skirt and skip the reality that change is required equally for those who provide services as for those who demand and use them.

Section 2 of this chapter further identifies how certain institutional changes promoted through the APUSP project have worsened the situation for women workers engaged in sanitation tasks in the state.

## ***b) Addressing gender and poverty inequalities by agencies***

Among all the researched projects, the DFID-Bangladesh supported 'Advancing Sustainable Environmental Health' project was the only one where a concerted effort had been made to address issues relating to gender inequality and poverty. Many other projects and programmes state that 'addressing gender inequality' or 'poverty eradication/reduction' are among their goals, but in reality they do not deal with basic needs let alone strategic needs. Even the ASEH programme has had difficulties translating their goals into practice.

International sector policies, being promoted by sector professionals and international agencies such as the World Bank, include cost recovery. This policy is based on experience of previous development projects that free gifts are not looked after and appreciated by recipients. Also, based on financial projections of the cost of meeting the targets of water and sanitation for all, then it is suggested that the users must also pay. However, cost recovery conflicts with the vicious cycle of poverty. How can very poor people pay for additional services when they really do not have enough money to buy sufficient food to live on? However, without adequate sanitation, how can they avoid contracting the diseases that make them even more poor? If one benefactor provides poor people with the basic services, then it can lead to a deepening of the patron-client relationships and lead to even greater indebtedness for the poorest. Cross-subsidising services by the not-poor so that they pay for the installation and running of services for themselves and subsidies for the poor is being tried out. But it is made more difficult in an environment where national policy declares the urban poor to be 'illegal', and therefore they should not to be provided with even rudimentary facilities for water supply and sanitation, or they do not own the land on which they are expected to make long-term capital investments.

A similar policy decision was suggested, for public distribution systems of food rations to go back to a universal public distribution system, because of widespread wrong exclusions. Cross-subsidising is complicated and has been proven to promote wrong exclusions. In the case of cross-subsidising services by the not-so-poor for the poorest, it is asking one group of poor people to subsidise another group of poor people. How fair is that?

Projects suggest and agree ambitious targets in order to secure donor support. This leaves them with too much to do in the agreed timeframe - from scaling-up the structure and size of organisations, to the complexities of achieving tangible development outcomes. More realism is required from donors and projects. Increasingly, donors are realising that lone projects cannot achieve much and/or be replicated. Agreed global targets help donors to focus efforts and to monitor achievement against their joint efforts. But the question is, who sets those targets? How can inequality by gender, participation and voice remain in focus while efforts are being concentrated on increasing access to latrines and safe water facilities?

Amongst all these matters, the lack of clarity on gender persists. The earlier focus on women's involvement continues to restrict the concept of addressing gender to an increased involvement of women in projects and project offices. Even this is hugely challenging in the midst of contradictory policy goals and ambitious project targets! Focusing on women masks the analysis and understanding of the unequal relationships that exist between women and men.

## **8.2 Participation and inclusion of the urban poor**

A policy vision which includes good governance, or even pro-poor governance, is currently popular. In simple terms, this means developing accountability, ie making governments and other service institutions accountable to the [poor] people they are supposed to represent and serve. It is recognised that developing the capability of the poor to demand their basic rights is pre-requisite to enabling agency accountability. Many development agencies, including DFID, now accept that the earlier approaches of [only] delivering services facilitated neither of the above. Some projects and implementing agencies claim to have achieved some progress towards this objective of enabling good and/or pro-poor governance. This is especially claimed in relation to 'empowering' women through water and sanitation interventions. However women-only committees for sanitation tend to reinforce the notion that women are responsible for all sanitation tasks.

It is not always clear whether good governance relates to better accountability of agencies and politicians to the community of users as well as accountability of the organisation to their own staff. The theory of good governance includes both, but because it is often not explicitly stated, the accountability of organisations, especially to staff working at lower levels of the organisational hierarchy, are rarely considered in planning for good governance. The people at the lowest levels of the organisation tend to be women and people from less educated, poorer and minority backgrounds, if these types of people are employed in the organisation at all.

As many authors have observed (Beall, 1999) establishing accountability towards different groups living in urban poverty is not easily achieved. Quoting Sherlock (1997) Beall refers to the income and health care problems of the elderly living in urban poverty, 'Little has been done to assess relationships between the various forms of institutions and strategies or the ways in which they combine to form patterns of resource opportunities and constraints for particular groups.'

The processes of official planning and decision-making, both at local and supra-local levels, are often out of the reach of the urban poor because of their illegal status and the exclusive nature of the service-providing agencies. Indeed it was an assumption of this research that the practicalities of poverty limit the meaningful engagement of poor people in the decision-making processes. Others counter claim that the assumed 'hapless and helpless' situation of the urban poor, especially poor women is not true. Analysing the relationships of women slum dwellers with a range of political and service-providing agencies in Bangladesh, Sultan (1999) articulates that poor women are compelled to be actively engaged in local politics in order to survive. The struggle to access even the most basic of services requires poor women and men to form and sustain litigious relationships with local politicians and mafia. These 'patrons' offer those living in urban poverty the much-needed 'protection' in return for their political support. Sultan, however, discounts NGO claims that they altruistically 'empower' poor women. According to her observations, the work of many NGOs serves their own self-interests, as they also function in hierarchical and exclusionary ways. Better negotiating and management skills among the urban poor, especially women, are the indirect outcomes of engagement with agencies.

The conclusion from this research about this subject resonates well with claims made earlier. Just as people living in urban poverty cannot be assumed to be passive groups subject to the mercy of wider social processes, groups of people living in urban poverty cannot be viewed as an undifferentiated group. Understanding household relationships is an important starting point for understanding how different groups of the urban poor are engaged or not in processes that affect their survival and access to resources. It is not

only gender, but equally race, class, ethnicity and generational differences that impact upon how basic rights are realised or unmet (Beall, 1999).

### **8.2.1 The practice of gender and poverty issues within organisations – case-study of a programme**

The ASEH Programme in Bangladesh was the one programme included in this research that was tackling gender issues better than others identified in India, Bangladesh or Kenya. Even so, there is some confusion about gender and poverty issues in this programme, with different perceptions about the issues and what should be done about them, both between and within each of the different organisational layers. This is not surprising, considering the complexity of the issues and the early stage that the programme has so far reached in its development. The major areas of weakness were identified as:

- Conflicting national priorities (cost-recovery vs. poverty focus), and,
- Implementation approaches.

Government, donor, international organisation, national organisation, local partners, communities, households, individuals - all had different ideas about what gender and poverty issues are and how they should be dealt with. The international policies which are heavily promoted by international organisations like the World Bank have been accepted as good practice, and adopted by the donor, international/national organisation and local partner organisations alike. Such policies include cost-recovery and a poverty focus. Cost recovery is based on experiences of how to help people to help themselves, and the poverty focus is based on the principle that unless you focus on the poor, then they miss out on support intended to help them – that the trickle down effect does not trickle down fast enough (if at all) to those below the end of the social scale. This research identified that partner organisations were selecting communities to work with that were able to repay investments, and were therefore avoiding working with slum communities and individuals in the slum communities or pavement-dwellers who were too poor, and therefore unlikely to be able to pay back or without the confidence to ask to borrow in the first place.

Policies had been prepared for the programme, but these were limited to the work of the programme and had not so far impinged on the working of the parts of the partner organisations that were not directly involved in the programme. Even staff working on the programme, particularly field level staff, knew about the policy but had not seen it written down or being practised, nor internalised it in any detail. Although some training had been organised and every programme staff-person had received this training, they still did not know the policy nor the programme direction for gender and poverty alleviation. The organisations were starting to address gender disparity in various levels within the hierarchy of their respective organisations, but were not yet at the stage of considering the mix of socio-economic groups working at each level within the organisation, nor the effect that has on the way their staff can interact with the target people in the respective communities. Outcomes for gender and poverty were not being measured as part of annual appraisals, and so any progress in terms of gender and poverty is not impinging on the staff themselves, beyond terms and conditions of contracts offered to male and female staff, such as maternity and paternity benefits.

ASEH has managed to make some breakthroughs in service delivery; notably, it was able to convince a government water supply agency to supply water to an organised group of slum residents. Other aspects of sanitation that they are promoting are excreta disposal including facilities that are suitable for use by children in schools and for disabled and elderly at or near their homes. Work is also commencing on the promotion of menstrual hygiene and information about adolescent girls and women's health among women and



girls. Specific posts have been created to look at policy and gender/poverty issues within the programme. There is a lot of difficult groundbreaking work to be done. It will be very interesting to see how these challenges are resolved and develop over the coming years.

### **8.2.2 Sanitation service providers in India: what changes for them?**

After independence, the Government of India (GoI) and state governments established various commissions and committees to look into the practice of manual scavenging, with the stated objective of stopping it. Most of these initiatives recommended the conversion of dry latrines to pour-flush types as well as social rehabilitation of Valmikis.

Findings in Chapter 2 show that, despite good intentions in policy, the rehabilitation plans in Andhra Pradesh, and elsewhere were tainted by corruption. Bureaucracy and a devious attitude of both officials and (male) Dalit leaders contributed to its failure to achieve its goals. Amongst the Valmikis, the women, who were largely illiterate, rarely qualified as candidates for rehabilitation.

Though the practice of dry latrine use has stopped in Hyderabad, the Valmiki women in Metharwadi continue to manually handle human faeces in poorly constructed and poorly maintained public pour-flush latrines. They continue to clean the latrines and drains without any protective clothing. Very few of them are able to break away from this caste-linked occupation. Innovation among a few individuals rarely matches the hurdles in the process of rehabilitation, set up through centuries of patriarchy and disparity (Ramaswamy, 2004). Instead, the culture of patriarchy and female subjugation continues.

Individual Methars who have brought about a change in their destinies are those who had multiple sources of support and were first and foremost favoured by their gendered identities. The small number of Valmikis in Metharwadi who no longer perform cleaning tasks are mostly men in the community and those belonging to households where one or more parent had a government job and could afford education for the children. The situation has not changed for men belonging to the poorest families among the Valmikis, Malas and Madigas. The situation has not changed for many women as well, even though a few significant changes almost tilt the scales of power disparity. Yet, in Metharwadi, every morning, between 7 and 8 am, a stream of women, their scarves drawn over their faces, still move out of the colony to perform toilet-cleaning tasks. The types of toilet have changed, but little else has. Women among the poorest families, or those with children or the elderly to care for, who cannot carry out such work, or do not have access to these jobs, consider these women lucky.

Empowerment is not easily accessible to most women. One needs to look beyond the narrow assumptions of a universal sisterhood of women, or for that matter, of men. A complex set of inter-relationships of gender, class, age and even marital status determine, in this case, any opportunities to escape age-old vicious cycles of inequality. Official policies only operate when other factors make them feasible. In reality, sanitation is not the priority of politicians or the administration.

### **8.2.3 Negotiating basic services for the urban poor – a case-study from Bangladesh**

The National Housing Policy of the Government of Bangladesh acknowledges that the government should *avoid* forcible displacement of slum residents (ASK, 2000; Ministry of Works, 1993). In practice, slums continue to be razed by successive governments. Continued pressure from local human rights organisations, and from local and international agencies, as well as large-scale protests by slum dwellers have been ignored, with no real effort by successive governments to help rehabilitate the urban poor.

On paper, government plans, which are still being discussed, exist to relocate slum residents back to villages. It is difficult to assess the actual number of slum residents evicted in recent years, or what resettlement assistance they have received. Reports estimate that between 1989 and 1999, more than 45 slums were demolished in Dhaka alone, leaving millions of families homeless. In 1999-2000 over 100,000 poor people were evicted from their slums, 60,000 with tear-gas, batons and water-bombs.

In a political environment where their very existence is considered illegal, the only way the slum dwellers are able to access basic services is by exerting a counter political pressure. This is done through engaging in the local informal politics operating in the city's slums (*mastaanism*). Mastaans are the local mafia functioning as pimps for local politicians. Slum residents try to establish patron-client relationships with local mastaans to obtain material benefits (such as jobs, loans, or a space to put up a house) in return for support and votes. Class and party divides exist among mastaans, which determine their alliances. Political parties seek out and invest in the more powerful mastaans.

Sultan (1999) claims that some urban poor, including women, are informed and skilful political agents, indicated by their capability to negotiate resources for themselves and the larger community. Mannan and Rashid (2004) confirm, from this research, that the relationships of those living in urban slums with the mastaans and/or other agencies, including NGOs, are fundamental to their survival. However, those living in extreme poverty are more likely to be passive observers in the play of local politics. Those living in urban poverty in slums are not equally vulnerable, even though they are all illegal.

Researched evidence points to the importance of political-economic networks which operate according to that particular slum culture and on a household-by-household basis. Certain individuals are able to negotiate with external agencies for basic amenities. These alliances do not signify structural changes in empowerment. Personal interests often take precedence over communal welfare and change to some extent with time and circumstance (Sultan, 2004). This research concludes that class and gender exclusivity remains more constant. Slum committees, especially those that have evolved (as in Beguntilla) often represent a comparatively successful mobilisation of common goals, while, at the same time, being the keepers of a patriarchal and hierarchical social order in the same manner as the government and NGOs. Committee members/leaders are the main decision-makers on social issues as well as concerning control of resources. Certain individuals bring in essential services and decide who can enter the slum, who can sell or own land, and who is punished in what manner for violation of their established norms of social behaviour (see Chapter 4). Decision-making processes conducted through informal community courts (known as *shalish*) are marred by party politics and the self-interests of the concerned individuals. Women are normally not given a just hearing in *shalish*, even though certain individual women are able to persevere and tenaciously achieve justice.

It is common practice in Bangladesh, as elsewhere, for NGOs and other agencies to hastily form slum committees. These committees are then given authority to manage and operate projects. This process is declared to be empowering for the larger community. These outsider-led interventions often do not acknowledge the complex interconnections between social and political-economic structures, and access and control of basic services and infrastructures for different groups of the urban poor.

There are many individuals living in these slums who remain excluded from the networks of mastaans, local politicians and NGOs, because they are not part of current governance processes, either deliberately or accidentally. They may be excluded from goods and services to some extent. They are like the poor in traditional Confucianist-dominated Chinese society:

*“Stepped on by merchants, landholders and government officials, the poor were at the very bottom of the social scale...or rather, they were not on the social scale at all”*

*(Hoff, 1992).*

### ***Land tenure and the politics of mastaanism***

Research findings in Chapter 4 show that the primary reason why slums develop is because the formalities to own land and/or housing and gain access to basic services are regulated by governments and managed by market-forces in ways that make land unaffordable and/or inaccessible to the poor. Most governments choose to ignore the significance and reality of the urban poor either by declaring them ‘illegal’ (Bangladesh and Kenya) or by limiting services and benefits to select groups of the urban poor (notified slums in India).

The concept of entitlement, as pointed out by Sen (1984), refers to differential access to existing resources. Individuals need to be legally entitled and able to exercise their rights to access established state benefits or to pay a market value for these resources.

In Dhaka, land ownership patterns are highly asymmetrical. Low income groups, constituting 70 per cent of the population, have access to only 20 per cent of the city’s residential land (Islam, 1996). Approximately one third (3.3 million) of Dhaka’s population, consisting of the poorest, occupy only 1,038 acres of land [4 sq. km] or less than 1 per cent of the total land area (Afsar, 2000). Successive governments in Bangladesh have maintained highly selective priorities for allocating land at subsidised rates to influential groups such as bureaucrats, military officers, members of parliament, business enterprises, as well as to certain elite families (ASK, 2000). The primary problem therefore is not the scarcity of land, it is a problem of the lack of entitlements among the urban poor.

For those living in urban poverty, illegal tenure translates to insecurity. Surviving on an insecure and illegal tenure requires engaging in local politics, which controls most illegal activities in the city. These interactions are often unequal and those living in urban poverty give far more than they receive.

### ***Women’s political activism – findings from Sultan’s study in Bangladesh***

Drawing from her studies in Bijli Moholla (a Dhaka slum), Sultan (1999) claims that most researchers in Bangladesh do not investigate poor women’s political opinions. That *politics is the business of men* is taken at face value, often due to the gender and class prejudices of the researchers themselves or due the lack of time invested in forming relationships of trust with the local women.

In her study, Sultan analyses the following: the role of women in a residents’ committee which successfully stopped two potential evictions of the settlement; women’s day to day engagement with local politicians and NGOs; as well as the negotiations that women make in their homes and within the community itself. She concludes that women’s active role in politics is sought primarily in order to meet individual household needs, and secondly for larger communal benefits. She also concludes that the poor are the only actors at the lower rungs of political pyramids. The activism, especially of women, is not blatantly visible because of the above reasons as well as the astuteness of women themselves. They distinguish between electoral politics (raj-niti) and the politics of basic survival (pet-niti).

*“The poor have no party. No party really cares for them. The politics that we follow and have to follow is pet-niti. I have to listen to whatever party makes it possible for me to make a living and survive in the basti” (Johura).*

Women often engage in pet-niti indirectly through their husbands. Women are equally as greedy as men for political gains and victories. Their dependence on male support and/or the need to support particular political parties often makes women take decisions against other women. Political activism at the level of urban slums is organised around class and neighbourhood rather than gender.

Bijli Moholla makes up one third of the electorate constituency of Dhanmondi. This has resulted in active door-to-door campaigning in Bijli Moholla by local politicians during local and general elections. The slum residents are also recruited by political parties for campaigning on the streets. While, traditionally it was mostly men who took part, women are now increasingly involved. Hired buses are sent by local politicians to collect women for street demonstrations. As women increasingly take on bread-winning roles, they can no longer afford to hide behind the cover of their purdah.

*“If I don’t go, they will ask me: ‘...If when we call you, you don’t come to our meetings, then when you will call us, we won’t come to help you. So don’t I have to go out of fear?’” (Halima)*

There are women who refuse to engage in electoral politics because their social-moral dignity would suffer:

*“...to get up on the back of trucks with other women to dance and prance about shouting slogans...I work in a garment factory because I have to and nowadays even women from good families work in these factories. But I will never join such political parties and make a show of myself, even if I have no work or money...” (Mohsina)*

The social class of Mohsina’s family have not been identified in the research, but it is likely that she comes from a family where they can afford the luxury of turning down the benefits from this type of political support.

Those living in urban poverty are acutely aware of the political tensions relating to their survival. “No matter how conscious members of a subordinate class may be of having got a raw deal, the daily pressure of making a living and the risks of open defiance are usually enough to skew the ethnographic record systematically in the direction of compliance if not acceptance, of the inevitable” (Scott, 1985).

This research shows that the political links and connections established by certain individuals among the urban poor cannot be assumed to be beneficial or accessible to all. There are many amongst the poor, whose lives are so vulnerable, that they merely conform and try to adapt to how things around them change.

#### **8.2.4 Differential access to sanitation in a restrictive political environment**

Findings from Chapter 4 outline that within varying slum cultures hierarchies exist between households. In planning pro-poor governance, it is important to understand both the distinctive sub-cultures and political practices, which critically shape power structures in the slum. To a casual observer, it appears that everyone in a slum is equally insecure. Yet, there are some who can lock their homes and leave the settlement for periods of time; while there are others who cannot afford such risks.

Viewed as illegal trespassers by the government, slum residents and homeless people are largely excluded from legal and adequate access to basic resources [land, electricity, water, gas, and adequate drainage and sewerage]. In such circumstances, politics significantly impact upon access to resources. Despite policies which exclude slum residents and the homeless from access to officially provided services, there are a number of NGOs and others delivering these. Services offered through political connections are often illegally secured and used as baits to promote political support. However, it is the ability of the individual which determines the extent to which these facilities - land, housing, gas, water, electricity, and jobs - are accessible.

Access to sanitation in the slums and streets is determined by various factors: the role of NGOs and other development agencies, one's networks with key persons, political networks of slum leaders to mobilise resources, the economic resources of households, and finally the role of government, and particularly of 'corrupt' staff who are willing to provide amenities in exchange for bribes. While poorer people with fewer networks are vulnerable, it is the poorest women, particularly female-headed households and the elderly who are the worst off in their ability to access sanitation.

Chapters 6 & 7 show that the official agencies do not provide water or sanitation services to 'illegal' slums and squatter settlements. Occasionally NGOs can persuade them with a guarantee of service and operation and maintenance costs. This is an improvement from earlier times, when slum residents were completely excluded from services, in the belief that providing services would promote 'de-facto recognition of the right of occupancy'. In practice, the current approach has led to selective identification of slums to be serviced, based on political influence or NGO benevolence. Where this formal approval (e.g. NGO-Water Authority) does not happen, local leaders are able to illegally bring in connections for water. Regardless of which agency provides services, a simple truth persists – water supply and sanitation (implying latrines as is the common practice currently) are not accessible to all. This study found that 30 per cent of the households living in the researched slums have access to piped water supply and 20 per cent to sanitary latrines. The rest of the population, by far the majority, lacks such access.

Over the years, the situation has improved for those who can pay. This includes landlords who have bought their own water points and latrines, often with interest-free loans provided by NGOs. These loans have to be paid back in full. Landlords then increase the rents to cover their expenses and because their premises have been improved. As a result, poor tenants are forced to move out to lower rental homes, which again do not have private water supplies and/or latrines.

Those who do not have direct access to water have a long wait or a long walk to collect water, almost an hour per load, most days, in some of the research slums. The wait is similar for each use of the communal latrines.

Water supply improvement is a far more popular development activity for local politicians than the provision of latrines. The 14 latrines for a current population of 1,500 people in Beguntila were built with UNICEF funds managed through the ward commissioner's office. In Modherbasti, a large presence of NGOs has resulted in comparatively better provision of water supply and latrines. At the time of the research, there were 84 single latrines<sup>79</sup> in the slum. 42 landlords had built personal latrines with their own resources and 24 landlords had taken a loan from PSTC to build a latrine in their household compound. There were 23 poorer landlords who do not have latrines in their homes. These households and the tenant families used the 18 public latrines provided by the DCC authorities. However, 8 of these 18 latrines had been taken over by individual landlords,

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<sup>79</sup> The ring slab latrine is the common type of latrine of Modherbasti.

who had built boundary walls around the latrines, isolating their use for themselves and their tenants.

PSTC<sup>80</sup> has been working in Modherbosti since 1998, largely focusing on water supply, sanitation and healthcare. Under the DFID-B supported programme managed by WaterAid Bangladesh, PSTC provides Taka 1,500 [interest free] to individual households to build a latrine. PSTC supports only those households that are able to connect the latrine system to a 300ft long (100m) underground sewer built in the area with project funds (mostly not-poor landlords). The loans provided to 55 landlords by DSK in New Shaheed Lane are similarly only to better-off households.

To conclude, access to basic services is possible for slum residents only by engaging with external agencies and a patron-client relationship becomes inevitable for all those engaged in this process. These relationships are often biased against the urban poor. Yet, even these skewed networks are not available to all. Evidence from all three researched slums and from pavements in Bangladesh clearly demonstrates that access to resources are contingent upon one's position and relationships within the vertical structures of such relationships. Whether you are a *mastaan* or leader, or powerful/poor landlord (government worker) or powerful/poorly connected tenant or pavement dweller determines how you can negotiate or not in different contexts. A large group of the urban poor, including women, are less able to forge these slum resident-external agent networks. For the poorest women, their relationships with their landlords are what matters most. The several layers of relationships and networks in accessing basic services often imply that the poorest, who lie at the bottom of the pyramid, receive the fewest benefits and are often negatively impacted by agreements made amongst the others. The few women who have crossed these barriers and are able to articulate in public and private to their benefit do not face the limitations that most other women in the settlements do.

There are many actors engaged in the governance processes that affect access to resources in the urban slums, including those living in the slums. However, contrary to the claims made, especially by NGOs, of empowering the poor in this manner, the findings show that the skills acquired by those living in urban poverty to negotiate for basic services, are largely learnt through perseverance, experience and innovation. Many slum residents, including women, have managed to acquire these skills, yet access to a particular basic need happens often only when the agency able to influence its delivery, sees the worth of this engagement. The latter can include the marketing of water and electricity or developing political support and/or patronage.

However, not everyone amongst the urban poor has a voice in these processes. According to Sultan's theory, the decision to not voice opinions, or to not engage, is a conscious choice. This form of political engagement, termed compliance, is often made in order to minimise risks that may come from raising a voice. This is understandable in theory and indeed this appears to be the practice.

On the other hand, political engagement of some groups of the urban poor, however imperfect, does enable their better survival, especially when the group as a whole is ignored by governments. However, the engagement of a few – as seen above, does not take into account the concerns and needs of the majority.

So what are the ways forward for planning pro-poor governance? Do agencies which determine access to resources need to themselves undergo change so that they find

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<sup>80</sup> PSTC has taken on the following programmes in its working areas: garbage collection (charge Tk5 per month); hygiene education; provision of sanitary latrines; sewerage maintenance; adult education (female only) and gender education and reproductive education for the adolescent girls.

ways to accommodate the needs of those currently without a voice, and/or should time and resources be allocated to strengthen local informal institutions to thrive and assume greater responsibilities, but in ways that are more equitable? These are some of the questions posed by the findings of this study.

So what are the ways forward for planning pro-poor governance? Do agencies which determine access to resources need to themselves undergo change so that they find ways to accommodate the needs of those currently without a voice, and/or should time and resources be allocated to strengthen local informal institutions to thrive and assume greater responsibilities, but in ways that are more equitable? These are some of the questions posed by the findings of this study.

### **8.3 Recommendations**

This research was not able to test any potential solutions to alleviate gender discrimination or to reduce poverty and increase voice. These recommendations are, however, based on careful analysis, as presented in this report, of the findings of a substantial period of study in three countries on two continents. They comprise suggestions for new ways of thinking about the sanitation needs of those living in urban poverty, changed policies in order to take those needs into account, and modified ways of working for practitioners in both ongoing and new sanitation projects.

#### **8.3.1 Addressing gender discrimination in sanitation**

The MDGs for meeting water supply and sanitation needs do not adequately consider the complexities of urban poverty as well as inequalities by gender. Providing latrines that are safe and secluded as well as improving handwashing after defecation, as proposed in the MDGs, will not bring about the essential change that is necessary to meet the basic sanitation needs of those living in urban poverty. The real development goal must be for everyone to enjoy at least the minimum standards of the full range of basic sanitation services (adequate safe water, safe secluded latrine and laundry areas, frequent removal and safe disposal of solid waste, adequate drainage of waste water and rainwater run-off, privacy and clean, warm water for bathing).

Further, just meeting women's specific needs for privacy does not address the totality of inequality by gender, though that is a valuable starting point. To be more complete requires dealing with the different norms expected of and taught by men and women, in relation to their bodies and their bodily functions. It includes making women feel more comfortable with their sex and sexuality. There is need to work out how to address menstrual hygiene management without further embedding cultural taboos and shame for women. Adolescent, same-sex peer discussions on puberty, menstruation, menopause and other women's health issues are likely to help. This may at least address the basic personal sanitation needs of women and might reveal potential solutions to strategic gender needs.

Further, the proposed Millennium goals will not reduce women's numerous sanitation responsibilities, nor their ability to better access and control resources that affect those responsibilities. It is therefore essential to work with men (and boys) to develop their understanding of the currently different roles of women and men, and to encourage them to be more sensitive in supporting their women in performing their roles and reaching their potential.

Addressing gender inequality requires challenging the beliefs that link sanitation tasks with religion, culture and the notions of women's character. This will require and encourage a more equal distribution of hygiene and sanitation related tasks between genders.

Targeting only women for hygiene and sanitation messages must stop. This excludes men and further polarises their opinions and roles. As well as encouraging women's voices to be heard in the decision-making process, men need to be encouraged to play their part in assisting women with the household chores.

Staffing policies and practices within organisations involved in sanitation at all levels (donors, government departments, international and local NGOs), and at all levels within those organisations, from senior management to field staff, require significant changes in order to modify both attitudes and behaviour. Training of staff and partners is needed on what it really feels like for poor people, especially for poor women, to deal with a lack of basic sanitation needs. Substantial exposure to the reality of urban poverty is needed for staff at all levels. Perhaps some innovative ways can be tried and tested to encourage people from 'disadvantaged backgrounds' to be recruited and promoted into higher levels within the organisations. This would then require monitoring of the socio-economic status of staff and volunteers and interviewing dissatisfied and dropped-out staff to find out any organisational changes required to ensure their full and effective inclusion.

### **8.3.2 Ideas to promote participation and inclusion of the urban poor**

Many poor people do not voice their opinions, in order to minimise the risks that may come from expressing them. There is need to work out how to ensure that all citizens' voices are heard and responded to equally. This requires significant changes to governance in all the organisations and institutional structures involved. Some of the suggestions in 8.3.1 will go some way to bringing this about, but much more innovative thinking, planning and testing is needed to seriously address the need for all voices to be heard and then given attention.

Water has often been used as a lever for improved excreta disposal because there is such a high demand for water. Where adequate, clean water is provided, the sanitation-related uses of water can easily be encouraged. In some cases, the installation of a certain proportion of domestic latrines has been a prerequisite before improved water supplies are installed. Similarly, water can be used as a lever for good governance. Compliance to agreed accountability procedures, including record-keeping and auditing the financial and social procedures of local committees, councils or organisations can be a prerequisite before any investments are made in basic services. Donors and NGOs could insist on the organisations that they support actually adhering to procedures that the organisation itself professes to have in place. Many DFID country programmes are using this kind of leverage for sanitation-related activities in urban areas, such as the DFID funded State and Local Government Programme (SLGP) in Nigeria.

Better investment and planning in sanitation services and better working conditions for the manual scavengers hold promise of both reform and rehabilitation for manual scavengers (and possibly encouraging other caste groups to take up sanitation work). In reality, progress is slow for both reform and rehabilitation because sanitation is not the priority of politicians or the administration. There have been examples of politicians becoming more interested in sanitation and the administration following on with this support. One example is the Mayor of Abijan, Cote d'Ivoire, who was elected on promises of higher taxes, in order to generate the revenue for cleaning up the city, notably with the provision of an adequate refuse disposal system. He was elected on his promise and proceeded to clean up the city to the delight of the electorate. Others, such as the Minister for Health in Uganda understood the financial drain of inadequate sanitation on the health and well-



being of Uganda, and made extensive efforts to encourage local political leaders and their administrations to plan, finance and implement sanitation improvements. It must therefore be possible to highlight the importance of improved sanitation with the political leaders in urban centres of Kenya, India and Bangladesh, and perhaps, once again, to point out the scandals of manual scavenging to the political elite in India. They have to be talked to in terms they understand, such as votes in the next elections, pilot projects in their home areas (and perhaps the recouping of money invested in elevating them to the positions they are in).

In planning pro-poor governance, it is important to understand both the distinctive sub-cultures and the local political practices, which critically shape power structures in the slum. Much more study of such socio-political backgrounds needs to be included in project appraisal and planning, in order to make more realistic attempts at achieving sustainable and holistic sanitation solutions for the urban poor.

Women cannot be assumed to stick together and support each other. Political activism at the level of urban slums is organised around class and neighbourhood rather than gender. A gendered poverty analysis is therefore always required, again as part of the detailed appraisal and planning for effective work with those living in urban poverty.

There are no easy answers to the question of how to lift people who are currently off the social scale, for example the manual scavengers, onto a more acceptable position on the scale. Ways need to be found to encourage women to negotiate more effectively for sanitation services. Methods for advocating to maastans, local leaders and NGOs that improving sanitation services can win them support and loyalty without tying the poorest people into stronger patron-client relationships, are also required. This might require some kind of incentive system whereby local leaders who are being helpful to the poorest men, women and children in their area are officially recognised for their contributions. This would not be with money but perhaps with formal acknowledgements of their contributions, perhaps 'thank you' notices in the local press or a formal letter or certificate presented publicly at official functions or during commissioning ceremonies, fully stating their contribution to the progress.

There is an urgent need to lobby and encourage governments to end the policies that make homeless people and slum dwellers 'illegal'. Many development researchers and workers have recognised this serious constraint in urban work – our finding is sadly not new. Ways do, therefore, need to be found to give the urban poor an address (and an identity, and a vote) – such as the lamppost address concept in India. But this will not be possible until there is a political will to accept that the urban poor are a vital component of the urban society, and that better conditions for all will improve both social and development for the whole population.

There is a great need to scrap the policy of cost-recovery for sanitation from the poorest. It makes both political and economic sense to provide a subsidised, basic level of services for the full range of sanitation facilities. These subsidies should be accounted for by monitoring whether they really help the poor, especially the poorest men, women and children. This will require a mechanism to reclaim money that has been 'eaten', i.e. not used for the intended purpose. It may not necessitate a new system. The existing system and financial procedures may be viable, but the system may need to be allowed to work as intended. Other initiatives such as the DFID governance programmes (e.g. SLGP, Nigeria) may provide useful links.

All this will necessitate some alterations in the way national governments operate. Likewise, their development partners need to be held accountable. Donors, international and local agencies and private sector organisations need to have consistent, gendered

poverty policies. Policies are simply agreed statements of intention, recorded on paper. They need to be implemented, reviewed and adjusted as necessary, on the basis of experience. Where appropriate, donors need to work together to assist governments in making and adjusting policies. Their staff and (private/NGO) contractors/sub-contractors need to be aware of the policies. When the policies impinge on the staff themselves, then they are more likely to make sure they are followed. For example, this might be encouraged by linking progress towards the eradication of poverty and gender discrimination to the annual performance reviews of government and profit/not-for-profit staff.

Donors and project managers need to give gender and poverty eradication much higher recognition than timely spending of grant money or meeting other project outputs, including the MDGs for water and sanitation. Monitoring and evaluation of poverty and gender related outcomes needs much more emphasis than at present – significant qualitative change is needed in our work, as much as quantitative results.

One example of where donor money was well accounted for was in a World Bank funded infrastructure programme in Uganda. When bids were let for individual wells, bridges or latrines, these were published in the local newspaper along with photographs of the government official handing over the contract to the contractor. When work was completed, the official hand-over of the infrastructure was celebrated with a hand-over ceremony at which the budget and expenditure details were read out and also published in the local paper. In this way everybody knew who was contributing what to the project, and every penny was accounted for; everyone, including the poorest women, is informed of what they are entitled to and what has been spent and by whom. If this system was followed more often, and budgets and expenditure were published when new projects start and when sanitation facilities are commissioned, or when hygiene promotion and mobilisation has been completed, accountability would be greatly improved.

Ideally it might be useful to instigate a whistle-blower's charter, which provides an opportunity and some kind of protection for people (staff or citizens) who inform on those who are not supporting or otherwise following the agreed policies and practices. However, working out a simple system that even the lowest in the hierarchy could use with confidence would not be easy.

Genuine commitment to social development goals rather than monetary spending goals would necessitate project audits including un-announced visits to project sites to find out what was really going on. Monitoring progress towards social development goals by the project itself or by long-term independent agencies can provide useful information. However, they need to be aware that independent audit will be carried out to verify their reports. For example, in one project in Bangladesh, implementing agencies, the long-term local monitoring agency, the regular consultants contracted for the project reviews, and even the donor were all happy to report that satisfactory progress was being made in the field after a complex framework of notified field visits was completed. However, un-announced visits to the field sites revealed a very different picture. The losers in this were the intended beneficiaries themselves, the poor, particularly the poorest women and children in the project area.

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## ANNEX

### URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND URBAN POVERTY PROGRAMMES IN INDIA AND BANGLADESH

#### 1. India's programmes

This section provides brief outlines of recent urban development and urban poverty programmes in India, together with examples of implementation practices from field research in slum settlements in Quthbullapur and LB Nagar Municipalities in Andhra Pradesh.

##### 1.1 Urban development programmes

**Integrated Development of Small & Medium Towns (IDSMT)\*** to arrest urbanisation in mega cities, centrally funded and implemented by the Municipalities.

Quthbullapur Municipality had 4 proposals approved under the IDMST, which included a shopping complex, a vegetable market, widening and development of National Highway 7 (which runs through the town) and a recreation park. None of these beautification schemes directly benefit the poorest households in the municipality.

**The Mega Cities Project\*** - Infrastructure Development of the Mega Cities of Kolkata, Mumbai, Chennai, Bangalore and Hyderabad; funded by central and state governments and implemented by autonomous urban development boards constituted under the Ministry of Urban Development.

**Healthy City Programme** - Financed by WHO as part of its global integrated environmental health management initiative and implemented by the Housing and Urban Settlements Institute (HSMI), Town and Country Planning Organisation (TCPO) and the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA). The objective of the programme is to build capacities of state and local agencies to integrate environmental health issues into all major urban policies and programmes. In practice, the project exists only in a few towns in a few states, and remains functionally isolated from existing programmes. In the towns where it has been implemented, it has not operated in unofficial slums and settlements.

##### 1.2 Urban poverty programmes

**Low Cost Sanitation Scheme for Liberation of Scavengers<sup>81</sup>** - Initiated in 1980-1 and implemented currently by the Ministry of Urban Development. The scheme aimed to eliminate the practice of manual scavenging through conversion of existing dry-latrines to low-cost, pour-flush latrines and also includes social and economic rehabilitation programmes for those engaged historically in manual scavenging. The scheme is implemented by different organisations in different states but the concerned urban local body/organisation is required to give an undertaking concerning banning manual scavenging in towns under their jurisdiction. The scheme was also supposed to include all urban and rural households that lack sanitation facilities. Households are offered a combination of a loan and a subsidy, the proportions vary according to the socio-

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\* These programmes may include the development of off-plot, technically elaborate and expensive excreta disposal infrastructure in the new areas developed. The pricing and tariff structures for ensure that these newly developed areas are out of the reach of the poor.

<sup>81</sup> See Chapters 2 and 4 for field analysis of ILCS implementation in Andhra Pradesh.

economic status of the family. The loan and subsidy is provided to beneficiaries through the project implementing agency by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) at an interest rate of 10 percent per annum for a term of seven years. Beneficiary contributions range from 5 per cent of the total costs in the case of Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), 15 per cent for Low Income Group (LIG) households and 25 per cent for High and Middle Income Groups (HIG and MIG) households. As of March 2002, statistics noted 1.8 million new toilets sanctioned (built or in construction) and 1.7 million approved for conversion to pour flush latrines and over 142,500 manual scavengers rehabilitated through 847 schemes spread over 1,317 urban centres across the country. In practice, as discussed in Chapter 5, the scheme is best recognised and implemented (poorly) as a low-cost sanitation programme in officially recognised urban slums. As discussed in Chapter 2, vast numbers of dry latrines in smaller towns and municipalities remain functional and there has been little effective rehabilitation of the manual scavenging community.

**Accelerated Urban Water Supply Programme** - Initiated in 1993-4 to provide safe and adequate water supply facilities to the *entire* population of smaller towns with populations less than 20,000 (as per the 1991 Census) on grants made available by both the Central and State governments. It is unlikely that such towns would have significant numbers of those living in extreme urban poverty and facing the serious consequences of urban congestion and lack of services. There are no tools to evaluate poverty concerns in the planning and implementation of this programme.

**National Slum Development Programme** - Introduced in the Fifth Five Year Plan as the Environmental Development of Urban Slums (EIUS), this centrally sponsored scheme was later transferred to the states (see Chapters 4 and 5). In 1994, the national Directorate of Town and Country Planning directed all states to notify the formerly 'non-notified' slums as urban poor settlements. These newly 'notified' slums would henceforth qualify for the implementation of the EIUS.

In 1994, the Government of Andhra Pradesh gave instructions to all municipalities to conduct detailed socio-economic surveys in all slums. For all practical purposes, the slums identified and notified in these surveys were considered as notified slums. Settlements that did not meet the criteria of notification (see below) or those that came up after 1994 are treated as non-notified slums.  
Source: Joint Director of Town Planning section, APUSP

Under this process of categorisation, certain urban poor settlements identified as being located in environmentally sensitive areas or on private land, or on land under legal dispute and on government land, were not notified and were subsequently identified as non-notified slums. There has been no revision in notification since 1994. The reason given is to minimise political pressure to notify areas that are not poor as slums, which could result in these areas benefiting from slum-improvement investments.

However, because the official administration is unwilling and unable to deal with malpractices, for political reasons, large populations of the poor (see Chapters 4 and 5) are deprived of their entitlements.

State governments did not demonstrate the fiscal commitment and/or ability to continue the scheme and the programme took off only in those areas where special projects were sanctioned (including externally aided urban slum development projects). In 1996 the Government of India reintroduced the programme as the National Slum Development Programme (NSDP). The Planning Commission indicates an annual budget, which is allocated to the different states on the basis of their slum populations.

Seeking to bring a convergence of different urban poverty programmes, the NSDP is designed to have the flexibility to include water supply, storm water drains, community bathing places, widening and paving of existing lanes, sewers, community latrines, streetlights, community centres, pre-schools, non-formal and adult education centres, maternal and child health, and housing for the urban poor, all as investments under the programme.

In theory, the scheme is to be implemented by Neighbourhood Committees and Community Development Societies (CDSs) set up in the slum settlements and monitored by a Slum Development Committee, comprising elected members of the municipal body, co-opted representatives of the CDS and local NGOs. Examples from Andhra Pradesh (see Chapter 5) show that political interference hampers the effective functioning of CDS groups and that NSDP benefits do not reach the worst-off urban poor settlements, as a result of those areas being officially 'not-recognised'.

Erukala Nanchamma in LB Nagar municipality, with a population of over 1,000 people residing there for over 5 years, do not even have the water supply which is provided often, if only occasionally, to other unrecognised settlements through tankers. Women and children walk more than 2 km every day, losing a critical amount of work time in the search for water.

In contrast, in the same municipality, officially recognised slums are provided water supply, sanitation, VAMBAY housing, asphalt access roads, internal pavements, storm water drains, electricity and employment schemes.

The lack of political will to understand the challenges faced by the urban poor, and the lack of mechanisms to monitor and evaluate slum development processes, together imply that local politicians and local mafia control who gets access to officially allocated services for the poor. The poorest, including select settlements of ethnic groups, the vulnerable amongst women, the elderly and disabled, are often unable to develop the necessary links with these mediators and thus remain isolated from benefits intended for them.

**Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana** - (SJSRY) includes the three Urban Poverty Alleviation Schemes: Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP), Nehru Rojgar Yojana (NRY) and the Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme (PMI UPEP). SJSRY aims to provide employment to the urban unemployed or underemployed by enabling self-employment or by providing wage employment. Govt provides 75 percent of the resources for the scheme as a grant, while the states meet the rest. The programme is meant to be integrated into the NSDP.

The Urban Wage Employment Programme, under the UPEP seeks to provide waged employment to those living below the poverty line by demanding the engagement of these persons in the labour and construction aspects of other urban development programmes. However, this rarely happens in practice as there is little coordination between different programmes.

**VAMBAY** - is a central government scheme designed to provide housing to notified and non-notified urban slums having at least 300 population or 60-70 families living in poorly-built congested tenements in towns with a population of 50,000 or more (as per 1991 Census). The programme is theoretically supposed to target households living below the poverty line with specific reservations made for scheduled tribes and castes, other backward castes and the disabled.

Grants are given for the construction of a house area of 15m<sup>2</sup>. They total between INR40,000 and 60,000 depending on the city, of which 50 percent is a Government of India subsidy and the rest is a loan provided by the State Government, mobilised either through an institution like HUDCO or from the State's budget. VAMBAY was to further integrate the Swarna Jayanti Rojgar Yojana (SSJSRY) and the National Slum Development Programme (NSDP) project components. Again, this is not evident in practice.

In a 'notified' slum in Quthbullapur, the VAMBAY programme was the one that residents most wanted to talk about. Buchamma's experience is typical of poor residents:

**Buchamma (70), vegetable seller**

*"I don't have anyone to look after me. I live alone. I get Rs75 a month as old-age pension and whatever else I get by selling vegetables in front of my house. They told me that I would get a new house under the VAMBAY scheme and broke down my hut. Then they raised a foundation and pillars and walls and then laid a roof slab. After that the contractor simply left, saying that the government money was not enough to finish the house. So now I have no doors, windows not even a floor, only this sandy ground. I don't have any protection either from the sun or the rain. I get baked in the summers and soaked in the rainy season and frozen by the winter. It's been like this for the last 2 years. I don't have the means to finish this house on my own. I'm worried because the bank will come some time and force me to pay up the loan."*

Poor residents in Quthbullapur had all had problems with the contractors while the not-so-poor had their work completed and had evidently spent additional money on their homes.

### 1.3 Training, HRD and reforms

The Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation has identified 12 institutes across the country to conduct post-graduate and refresher courses in Public Health Engineering and Environmental Engineering. Some of these institutes, including the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI) do train urban development professionals, however, they are weak in terms of urban poverty and gender training. The Ministry also supports research and development activities, which are commissioned to various academic and research institutions in the country. Finally, the Ministry is the nodal agency for all externally assisted projects. There is, however, little evidence of effective cross-learning between externally assisted and national programmes except in rare cases, such as the work done by UNICEF state offices in close contact with urban development departments and local municipalities.

The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments (also known as the Nagar Mahapalika [municipality] Act) were instrumental directives which encouraged local governance through fiscal, financial and institutional reforms in urban development initiatives. The reforms spelt out principles for empowering locally elected bodies (municipalities or urban local bodies [ULBs]) by decentralizing decision-making powers from the state government to the local government and thereby promoting local accountability. They also enabled decentralisation of responsibilities, thereby increasing the functional areas of local bodies and giving them more powers.

While the ULBs are closer to and representative of the local community, in reality (as illustrated in Chapters 4 and 5 and below) decision-making processes at this level are deeply impacted by complex political, geographic, social (caste) and economic fractures. Additionally, as municipalities often function with inadequate resources to meet the needs of any of the recipient areas, the practice of elite capture is common. This is also because

responsibilities for delivering and managing services were given to the ULBs in most states, without corresponding transfer of financial powers. In practice, as the largest financier of projects through Centrally Sponsored Schemes, the Central Government is the initiator and driver for most interventions in the sector. It provides finances through national financial institutions and monitors various external assistance programmes for housing and urban development in the country as a whole.

In terms of an overall reform or evolution in urban development policy the Ministry of Urban Development has gradually approved and taken up the following initiatives:

- Implementation of the 74<sup>th</sup> CA and the principles of local governance
- Fiscal incentives to amend the Income Tax Act in order to improve municipal budgets by:
  - raising investment resources
  - demanding a double entry accrual based accounting system for better accountability
  - tax exemption for market based Municipal Bonds
  - encouraging private sector participation in building and operating urban infrastructure including the development of guidelines for Public-Private Partnerships
- Regulatory frameworks for water and environmental sanitation work
- Proposals to restructure cities, and
- Proposals for a city challenge fund to support reform and restructuring initiatives.

Some of these initiatives are already being implemented in selected states and urban centres, such as the Tamil Nadu Urban Development Fund (TNUDF) in Tamil Nadu; double entry accrual based accounting in municipalities under the DFID funded Andhra Pradesh Urban Services for the Poor Programme; Municipal Bonds in Ahmedabad (Rs1 billion tax free bond notified by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation); privatisation initiatives in the Municipal Corporation of Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh.

## 2. Bangladesh's programmes

The following table summarises some recent urban projects in Bangladesh.

### **Low Income Housing and Shelter Improvement Project in Different Cities in Bangladesh**

Name and location of the project	Project objectives	Funding Agency	Implement -ing agency	Fund size (Tk in lakh)	Implement -ation period	Beneficia r-ies
1. Resettlement of 2,600 squatter families at Mirpur, Dhaka.	Resettling 2,600 families with core house and services	UNDP UNCDF	Housing and Settlement Directorate	1,811.75	1987-1990	Squatters
2. Resettlement of 3,400 squatter families at Dattapara, Tongi.	Resettling 3,400 families with core house and services	GOB	Housing and Settlement Directorate	1,198.00	1986-90	Squatters
3. Urban Area	Improving	World	Housing	2,234.91	1988-1994	Middle

Development Project for low income housing at Kaiballadham, Chittagong.	living condition, testing loan scheme for low-income group in Chittagong.	Bank	and Settlement Directorate	(Local) 232.50 (foreign)		and low income groups
4. Environmental Improvement Project Dhaka (Islambag, Shahidnagar and Rasulpur)	To improve living conditions, solid waste management and disposal and other items.	World Bank	DCC	11,594.00	1988-1997	Low income people of slum areas
5. DUIMP, Phase II, Mirpur, Dhaka.	Improving physical environmental condition.	ADB	DCC	2,795.00	1988-1997	Lower middle and low income
6. Slum Improvement Project in 25 Towns and Cities	To assist urban poor in improving living conditions, providing basic services, increasing capacity of the government and municipalities.	UNICEF ADB	LGED Municipalities	168.95 (UNICEF) 56.5 (World Bank) 19.0 (ADB)	1985-1996	Urban poor particularly the slum dwellers

Source: CUS (1990), The Urban Poor in Bangladesh, Comprehensive Summary Report, Vol 1.

The recent (2004) Urban Governance and Infrastructure Improvement Project (UGIIP) funded by ADB and implemented by 22 secondary city authorities with support from the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has a poverty focus. The project components include urban planning, environmental and infrastructural (water, sanitation, roads, drains) improvement, poverty alleviation, gender and local urban governance in slum settlements. It does not address land tenure issues for the urban poor. ADB also supports an Urban Primary Health Care Project (UPHCP) serving the four largest City Corporations.

The closest a donor-led initiative has come to influencing official practice (note: not policy or programme) is the work of the WaterAid Bangladesh supported local NGO, Dustha Sasthya Kendra (DSK) whose advocacy makes it possible now for slum dwellers in Dhaka to apply for and access water connections from the Dhaka Water Supply and Sanitation Agency (DWASA) on full cost payment (see Chapter 5 for further details). The catch in this achievement is that DWASA still requires guarantors of the likes of WaterAid. The policy has not changed. Perhaps by showing that it is possible, WaterAid and others will be able to persuade the government that policy could be changed so that groups of the urban poor could (and should) manage and pay for their own services.

Action Aid-Bangladesh is one of the few international NGOs, which encourages the urban poor to raise their voices against civil, social and economic injustices.