



Understanding Homelessness: A Case Study of Ranchi City, India

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Abstract

India is one of the fast growing urban regions in Asia with regard to the economic growth and the urbanization. India's urban population is second largest in the world after China. The modernization and urbanization in neo-liberal regime have created socio-economic change which gave rise to new strata of people known as "Urban Poor". The Urban Poverty is a condition in which a person or community is deprived of or lacks the basic needs i.e. food, clothes and shelter. This paper will describe urban homelessness, its understanding and suggesting remedies to improve their lives. According census 2011, the total urban homeless population in Jharkhand is 6967. In case of Ranchi the homeless population count is 1304, which is also under estimated. A survey was conducted by EKJUT (A national level NGO working on urban homeless), they found the number is much higher than the census data i.e. around 6488. The homeless group is a highly invisible, which keep on shifting from one location to another location. The nature of diversity related to occupation and the level of deprivation is also varies from one group to other. Methods used were: Selecting few hotspots where these people are found and focus on different multidimensional aspects of homelessness, selecting few representing samples (occupation wise), exploring the reason behind homelessness, night visits to interact with homeless, Visiting night-shelter homes, discussion with ward parshads and other eminent persons of different Government and private agency's to know about their perspective about the homeless. The entitlements of homeless are clearly mentioned in the guidelines of the scheme but somehow they are not meeting to them. The concluding remarks end with policy recommendations and government interventions, with the help of it how to make their life dignified and sustainable.

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Introduction:

The term “homeless” means such persons (including men, women, eunuchs, and children) who Don’t have a home or settled place or abode, and spend their nights in night shelters, transit homes, child homes for a short term stay, live on pavements, spend their nights sleeping in the place of work such as shops (including dhabas), factories and offices etc., spend their nights on their means of livelihood such as hand/push carts, rickshaw etc., spend their nights in public places such as railway platforms, bus stands and places of worship etc., live in temporary structures at construction sites. The Census of India defines, houseless people” as the persons who are not living incensus houses”. The latter refers to a structure with roof hence the enumerators are instructed by Census officials to take note of the possible places where the houseless population is likely to live in above mentioned places. The homeless comprise the significant number of the estimated eight to two hundred million of people who sleep hungry every night. This condition makes them susceptible to extreme weather conditions. The rise or fall in temperature increases the basal metabolism rate (BMR) of a body resulting to a requirement for more calorie intake to maintain its temperature. Several numbers of homeless people died in the streets of Delhi in winter 2009 due to a very cold weather and in no avail their demise could be associated to starvation. This led the civil societies and other NGOs bring the plight of the homeless to the notice of the Honourable Supreme Court. The civil societies and other NGOs pointed out that people are dying in the streets not because of hunger but because they are without shelters.

A series of order of Supreme Court dated on 20th January, 2010, 10th February, 2010, 05th May, 2010, 21st July, 2010, 05th November, 2010, 24th November, 2010, 16th December, 2010, 12th December, 2011 and 09th January, 2012. The crucial orders were:

- To set up at least 100 temporary shelters for people living in streets within one week.
- To build at least 140 permanent shelters for people living in the streets by December 2010.
- To set up at least 500 community kitchens across the city and provide nutritious and cheap cooked food.
- To issue AAY ration cards to all homeless people in Delhi with a validity of at least two years and renewable if they remain homeless in the city by March 31, 2010.
- To file an affidavit to the Supreme Court on steps undertaken to protect the food and shelter rights of homeless people in the City by 15th February 2010.
- All cities covered under JNNURM and above 5 lakhs, to have one 24hrs, 365 days a year, homeless shelter with a capacity of 100 persons for every one lakh population.

- Basic amenities to include mattress, bed roll, blanket, portable drinking water, functional latrines, first aid, primary health facilities, de addiction and recreation facilities etc.
- 30% of these to be special shelters (women, old and infirm, recovery shelters)

It is indeed very difficult to bracket out the heterogeneous homeless population using a single criteria. The homeless comprise of single men, single women, women with children, people with special needs, elderly and is essentially a neglected group that only needs shelter per se but also an assurance of dignified life. The Supreme Court orders were an initial starting point for a series of events that occurred in the various cities. Many cities have opened permanent night shelters but they lack the basic amenities and facilities; many have only provided night shelters that needs to be upgraded to permanent shelters; some are in the process of building permanent night shelters and so on. The paper mainly focuses the micro-study I have done in Ranchi City and I will conclude by mentioning two parts Pre-Sustainable Development Goals Phase & Sustainable Development Goals Phase because there were attempts to make the lives of homeless sustainable prior to SDGs that is called “Right to the City.”

Approaches to Understand Homelessness:

It was challenging to have a comprehensive understanding about the urban homeless within a stipulated time period of 25 days. The homeless group is a highly invisible group, which keep on shifting from one location to another location. The nature of diversity related to occupation and the level of deprivation is also varies from one group to other. Therefore we decided to select few hotspots and focus on different multidimensional aspects of homelessness.

We have made a distinction between homelessness into two categories:

- **Permanent Homeless:** Permanent homeless are those staying in city since generations without a house like Rag pickers and Beggars.
- **Transient Homeless:** Transient homeless are those, who frequently migrate to city for work and go back to their village once or twice in a month.

Both the category have some assets at their native place but their living condition in the city lacking basic amenities like shelter, food and water therefore it is very difficult to sustain without it. The Rickshaw pullers, Cobblers and Construction workers will come under Transient homeless. The following Table 1 shows the number of hotspots visited, along with the total number of homeless persons in that particular place. It also mentions about the number of persons, we interacted with.

Table 1: Interaction with various Homeless People

Sr No	No of Hotspots Visited	Strength	Major Occupation	Interacted with					
				Male	Female	Disabled OR Mentally challenged	Oldage > 60	Widow	Child
1	Pahadi Mandir	20	Beggar Followed by Rag picking and house maid	4	3	5	7	2	2
2	Firayalal Chowk	10	Rickshaw pullers	4	-	-	-	-	-
3	Main Road near Kali Mandir	15	Rag pickers	3	-	-	-	-	5
4	RIMS Chowk	5	Beggars	1	1	2	2	-	-
5	Sriram Mandir	10	Rickshaw puller and beggar	3	-	-	-	-	-
6	Durga Mandir near Ratu Road	10	Beggar and Rag picker	2	-	-	-	-	2
7	Back side of Bakri Bazar	25	Rag picker, House maid and collecting gold from dead body	3	4	-	-	-	-
8	Rickshaw garage near pahadi mandir	15	Rickshaw puller	8	-	-	2	-	-
9	Doranda Labour market	25	Construction workers	6	-	-	-	-	-

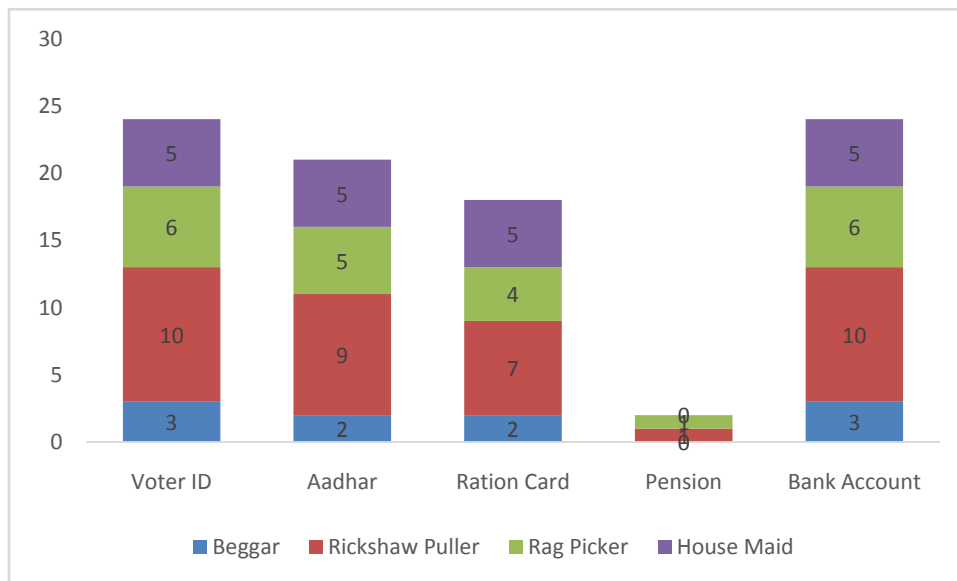
Accessing Entitlements by different homeless groups:

The Table 2 below depicts the status of accessing entitlements by different homeless groups. Four major entitlements is considered here like Voter ID Card, Adhar Card, Ration Card, Pension (if applicable), Bank Account. It shows that the permanent homeless groups like beggars and Rag pickers are more vulnerable in getting entitlements then transient group. Though maximum permanent homeless persons don't have access to house and other entitlements mentioned above.

Table 2: Access to Entitlements

Category	Samples	Voter ID	Adhar	Ration	Pension	Bank account
Beggar	9	3 (33%)	2 (22%)	2 (22%)	0	3 (33%)
Rickshaw puller	12	10 (83%)	9 (75%)	7 (58%)	1 (8%)	10 (83%)
Rag picker	8	6 (75%)	5 (62%)	4 (50%)	1 (12%)	6 (75%)
House Maid	5	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	5 (100%)	0	5 (100%)

Table 3: Basic Amenities Accessed by Different Categories of Homeless Groups



Occupation Group	Drinking water Source	Food Source	Toilet	Sleeping Space
Beggar	Hand Pump, community tap	Given by Devotes	Open Defecation, Sulabh Shauchalaya	Near Mandir, shelter house
Rag Picker	Hand Pump, Purchase	Hotel, dhalbhat yojna, Charity	Open Defecation, Sulabh Shauchalaya	Dumping Yard, Rented, Road side
Rickshaw Puller	Hand Pump, Tap water	Hotel, Dhalbhat Yojna	Open Defecation, Sulabh Shauchalaya	Garage, In Rickshaw
Ear Cleaner	Purchase, hand Pump	Hotel	Sulabh Shauchalaya	In shelter house
Cobbler	Hand Pump, Tap water	Cooking	Open Defecation, Sulabh Shauchalaya, toilet at home	Rented home
Construction workers	Hand Pump, Tap water	Hotel, Cooking (Provided by Contractor)	Open Defecation, Sulabh Shauchalaya	Mostly go back to their native place.

Table 3 shows the basic amenities accessed by different occupation groups, it can be seen from the table the most disadvantaged group is Beggar followed by Rickshaw Puller. Other occupation groups are slight better than these two groups.

Reason behind Homelessness and Current Occupations:

- Very less support from family members to old age, disable and mentally challenged persons leaves no option other than begging.
- Poor from first generation leads to forced migration and opting occupations like driving rickshaw and labour in construction works this also create venerable situations during financial crisis.
- Lack of resources along with less education facilitates to opt occupation which was being practiced by their ancestors like Ear Cleansing, Cobbler, collecting gold and Iron, rag picking etc.
- Less emotional, social and financial support leads children to elope home and live on the streets with their friends (chance of getting charity from different group is higher in town area).
- Illiteracy is higher among these groups.
- Continuous & forceful eviction.

Threats faced by Different Homeless Groups:

- Major occupants (Rag pickers) still sleeps on the street, on footpath and near dumping grounds. Few take rented home after marriage. Most vulnerable are Women and children.
- Rickshaw pullers who became older suffering from back pain and other body aches. After battery operated rickshaw came into operation, their struggle increased further (night shift).
- Drug addiction by the children and youth.
- Prone to many infectious diseases.
- Many type of harassments to adolescent girls.
- Threat of eviction.

Table 4: Present Status of Shelter House under DAY-NULM in Ranchi

Shelter House	Category	Capacity	Accessed by	Basic amenities
RIMS	GENERAL	Around 40	Medical patients and beggar	Bedding
Pahadi Tola	WOMEN	12 (new room under construction)	Beggars and house maid	Bedding
Anand Nagar	GENERAL	Not Functioning		
Doronda	WOMEN	Not functioning		
Bakri Bazar	GENERAL	12	Migrants (Ear cleaners)	Bedding
ITI Bus stand	GENERAL	Police camp occupied the place since last 3 month		
Karbala Chowk	GENERAL	14	Beggars from W.Bengal	Bedding, toilet and drinking water, water filter (not functioning)

There are 11 shelter homes in Ranchi, we have visited 7 shelter homes. These are the temporary shelter homes which are working on the half of the capacity mentioned in the NULM guidelines, the permanent shelter homes yet to be constructed they are work in progress and to be finalized till end of the year. Three among the seven are not functioning and four are functioning but all the amenities are not present, when asked the reason the management of shelter house said that because of shortage of fund from the Urban Local Body who is responsible for the implementation of the scheme.

Some Minimum suggestions for addressing the urgent need through Shelter House:

- Minimum system needs to be established for safely keeping their possessions.
- Minimum basic amenities like construction of toilet and bathroom and disable friendly toilet for disable persons.
- Electricity connection.
- Norms for strict prohibition of consumption of alcohol.
- Construction of more shelter homes for catering more homeless people especially for women.
- Helping the homeless for getting their entitlements like PDS, Pension etc.

Policy Recommendations:

- Special attention should be given for helping the vulnerable group for accessing different entitlements. (especially beggars and rag pickers). PDS, Pension, ICDS, SSA , RSBY etc
- Safety measure should be in priority for Rag Pickers.
- Counselling parents for aspiring for a better life. Counselling children for drug addiction.
- Special schools to cater the need of homeless children.
- Creating better employment opportunity/ active implementation of current programmes like MGNREGA for mitigating forced migration.
- Serious measures for identifying homeless population which is being under reported and providing house under PAY in priority basis.
- Addressing health issues of urban poor especially for women, old age, disable and children.
- Identifying green shoots and large scale dissemination of the same.

Conclusion:

After spending 25 days at Ranchi from 02-01-2018 to 27-01-2018, there are several observations in general and specific related to the urban context, by which I have gained a significant learning and the theoretical underpinnings are also interesting to substantiate the policy level gaps by witnessing the ground realities and policy level implicit on arrangements from the government side. I must admit, it has opened to understand the larger issues of governance by interaction with the local municipality authority and various stakeholders including the social activists and non-government organizations. As elaborated above, in order to counter the debilitating reality of the dispossession and exclusion of urban poor, the right to the city as a concept encompassing bundle of human rights could become a powerful organizing principle for mobilization and advocacy. There is a clear trend of concentration in megacities, urban corridors and urban regions which states that the peripheries are further polarising. City GDPs and growth rates differ significantly across regions, and are highest in developing countries, mainly in the Asia-Pacific

region. The fastest overall urban economic growth is found in mid-sized cities (with populations between two and five million). Economic growth continues in megacities although the pace is slowing down. According to Alice Charles “As we live in an increasingly urbanized world, cities and human settlements will be the key to achieving the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. However, since the adoption of the 11th goal, progress towards implementation has been slow, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, taking place in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016. However, if significant progress is to be made post Habitat III, national governments will need to find the political will to empower cities, and build their capacity and resources. Cities, meanwhile, will need to enable vital cooperation between the public and private sector, as well as wider civil society, to create the financial and delivery models required to achieve sustainable development.”

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