

Urbanization and Urban Poverty in India: Rethinking the Healthy Development of Urban Areas

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Abstract

This paper examined the trends of urbanization and status of urban poverty in India. Further, it is explained urbanization with urban poverty through analysing the access of urban basic amenities, urban slums and urban multidimensional poverty. It is noticed that growth of urban slums is the product of rapid urbanization. It is found that India has witnessed rapid urbanization in recent years along with lacking of basic infrastructure facilities, a growing number of urban slums and increasing poor conditions of urban people. It is found that there is a strong relationship between rapid growth of urbanization and urban poverty in India. It is suggested that government should more concentrate on the eradication of urban poverty along with rural poverty. There are need of strong policy reforms to eliminate urban poverty.

Keywords: *Urban, Urbanization, Urban Poverty, Slums, Multidimensional Poverty.*

Introduction

Urban population refers to people living in urban areas as defined by national statistical offices (UNPD, 2018). National Geographic Society (2022) stated that urbanization is the process through which cities grow, and higher and higher percentages of the population comes to live in the city. Human populations have tended to increase over time. The world population has grown significantly, and our economies have become more industrialized over the past few hundred years, and as a result many more people have moved into cities. This process is known as urbanization. Nearly half of all people now live in urban areas. They are attracted by jobs in manufacturing and the professions, as well as by increased opportunities for education and entertainment.

Urbanization is often discussed in reference to countries that are currently in the process of industrializing and urbanizing, but all industrialized nations have experienced urbanization at some point in their history. Moreover, urbanization is on the rise all over the globe. One effect of this huge increase in people living in urban areas is the rise of the megacity, which is a city that has more than 10 million inhabitants. There are now cities with even more than that. Tokyo, Japan, for example, has nearly 40 million residents. Another effect of urbanization is urban sprawl. Urban sprawl is when the population of a city becomes dispersed over an increasingly large geographical area. This movement from higher density urban cores to lower density suburbs means that as cities expand, they often begin to take up significant tracts of land formerly used for agriculture. Sprawl also increases the need for travel infrastructure, such as roads, because people's homes are likely to be farther away from where they work and the amenities they enjoy.

India is a rapidly urbanizing country. The pattern of urbanization in India is characterized by a continual concentration of population and activities in large cities. The rapid increase in urbanization in India has expanded, increasing numbers of people migrate to towns and cities in search of economic opportunity. There is, however, an equally strong and vocal viewpoint asserting that the process of urban development in India is not necessarily positive, as it is associated with the accentuation of regional and interpersonal inequality and, unfortunately, with little reduction in poverty (Kundu, A, 2011). In India, large numbers of poor people live both in rural and urban areas. The urban poor are migrants from villages, live in slums and on pavements. Most of them are in the unorganized or informal sectors including construction, while others are forced to look for petty jobs like street hawking, housemaids, etc.

India has issued its first-ever report on the nature and dynamics of urban poverty in the country.

Undertaken with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), India: Urban Poverty Report 2009 identified the problems faced by the poor and focused on the systemic changes that are needed to address them. While launching that report, then Minister for Housing and Urban Poverty alleviation said that “The pace of urbanisation in India is set to increase, and with it, urban poverty and urban slums, despite 62 percent of GDP now being generated in towns and cities,” The report examined various issues related to urban poverty, such as migration, labour, the role of gender, access to basic services and the appalling condition of India’s slums. It also looked at the dynamics of urban land and capital market, urban governance, and the marginalisation of the poor to the urban periphery. Key messages of the report included are (a) Poverty in India has become urbanized, (b) Migration towards urban centres has increased (c) Urban poverty poses different problems (d) Slum populations are increasing and finally, the Slum dwellers lack access to basic services. Most slum dwellers do not have access to clean water, sanitation and health care facilities. They were facing a constant threat of eviction, removal, confiscation of goods and have virtually no social security cover. Some 54 percent of urban slums do not have toilets; public facilities are unusable due to a lack of maintenance.

Urbanization in India

Urbanization in India began to accelerate after independence, due to the country's adoption of a mixed economy, which gave rise to the development of the private sector. Implementation of Liberalization, Privatization & Globalization (LPG hereafter) in India (1991) made a easy way to development of urbanization along with industrialization. The population residing in urban areas in India is increasing in each Census Decades. The urbanization of India is taking place at a faster rate than in the rest of the world. According to a survey by UN, in 2030 about 40.76% of country's population is expected to reside in urban areas (Chauhan, 2007). As per World Bank, India, along with China, Indonesia, Nigeria, and the United States, will lead the world's urban population surge by 2050 (Business Standard, 2012).

Table 1: Projected Average Annual Growth Rate of Urban Population for World, Asia & India

Period	World	Asia	India
2015-20	1.76	2.04	2.42
2020-25	1.65	1.89	2.43
2025-30	1.54	1.73	2.41
2030-35	1.43	1.57	2.29
2035-40	1.31	1.40	2.08
2040-45	1.19	1.24	1.87
2045-50	1.05	1.06	1.64

Source: United Nations Population Division (2010), World Urbanization Prospects: The 2009 Revision (POP/DB/WUP/Rev.2007) UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York.

The United Nations Population Division (UNPD) used the data given by the national-level agencies, generally without adjusting for definitional anomalies. Many countries are highly restrictive in defining their urban settlements. This is not the case in India, where the population Census defined clearly the urban areas. Even though there is shortly projected declining trends of annual growth rate of urban population, it is a matter of concern the conditions of the people (Table: 1). The South Asian region, though predominantly rural, has recorded much higher annual growth of urban population (2.04 during 2015-20). India, the leading country in South Asia has shown an unprecedented increase in the urban population in the last few decades and its urban population has increased from 2.42 (2015-20) to 2.43 (2020-25). This growth is mainly uneven, but not skewed and not concentrated in a single city of the country. India shares most characteristic features of urbanization in the developing countries where the rate of urbanization is faster than the developed countries. India's projected average annual growth rate of urban population is more than Asia and World Level (Table 1).

Table 2: Urban-Rural Population Growth Differentials (Annual Exponential Growth Rate in %)

Decade	Rural	Urban	Urban-Rural Growth Differentials
1971-81	1.76	3.79	2.03
1981-91	1.8	3.09	1.29
1991-2001	1.69	2.75	1.06
2001-2011	1.16	2.76	1.6

Source: Census of India Documents

The urban-rural population growth differential is critical to the process of urbanization. It is evident that the rural population growth has declined much faster during 2001-2011 compared to earlier decades. Further, it is also noticed that the growth rate of the urban population remained maintained steady growth compared to the rural growth rate of population (Table 2). The urban-rural population growth differential is the product of the differential in natural increase between rural and urban areas (births-deaths), net rural-urban classification and net rural to urban migration. Therefore, it was the net rural-urban classification and net rural to urban migration that was responsible for higher urban-rural growth differential and speeding up urbanization during 2001-2011 (Bhagat, R.B, 2018).

Table 3: Status of Urbanization in India

Census Year	No. of Towns	Urban Population (Million)	% of Urban Population	% Decadal Growth rate of Urban Population
1961	2699	78.9	18	--
1971	3126	109.1	18.2	38.28
1981	3949	157.7	23.3	44.55
1991	4615	215.8	25.7	36.84
2001	5161	286.1	27.8	32.58
2011	7935	377.1	31.2	31.81

Source: Census of India Documents

India is urbanizing rapidly and about 377 million people live in 7935 towns/cities (census, 2011) across the country which constitutes about 31.2 % of the total population. The number of towns has significantly increased from 5161 in 2001 to 7935 in 2011. During the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century, the country experienced rapid growth of its urban population. But during the last few decades, India has experienced urban deceleration. The country has experienced a noticeable slowing down of the rate of urbanization and urban growth in the past two decades (1981-1991 and 1991-2001). But there has been an urban turn around in 2011 which reported an acceleration of urbanization (Table 3).

It is now widely recognised that the rapid growth of urban populations has led to a worsening in absolute and relative poverty in urban areas. India is considered as a hub for global investors because its rapid growth of urbanization. It is marked that town areas are increasing in each census year. The percentage decadal growth rate of urban population also increased over a period of time. The urbanization has reached its own momentum of growth due to migration from rural to urban area and the identification of new settlements as urban.

Urban Poverty in India

Urbanization is considered as a new source of prosperity for cities and towns, but it has also resulted in its fair share of 'by-products.' 'One of the most persistent is pockets of poverty, overcrowded residential areas, substandard housing, and inadequate basic services, which come in all shapes and sizes and have different names but all mean the same thing and are commonly referred to as "slums." Urban poverty is the most common development and management problem in **developing countries**. It is **acute and more alarming** in developing countries like India. It is a form of **poverty quite visible in mega cities** characterised with substandard living conditions and income along with deficient provisions of basic amenities and low quality of life. It poses the **challenge of reducing exploitation**, relieving misery and creating more humane conditions for working, living and growth for those disadvantaged people who have made the city their home already or are in the process of doing so.

Table 4: Access to Basic Amenities in Urban India

Basic Amenities	2001	2011
HHs with Sources of Drinking Water (%)	90	91.4
Literacy Rate	79.92	84.1
% of HHs having bathroom facility within the premises	70	86.98
% of HHs having Drainage facility	7.87	81.77
% of HHs Don't have Lactrine Faciltiy	26.28	18.6
% of HHs Don't have exclusive room	2.32	3.08
% of HHs with the condition of Census house as Dilapidated	3.6	2.88

Census of India 2001 & 2011

Access to essential socio-economic facilities for the urban people in India provide an understanding of how growth has impacted development. According to Census 2011, about 91.4% households in urban India had access to sources of drinking water compared to 90% in 2001. The literacy rate in urban India has shown an improvement from 79.92% in 2001 to 84.1% in 2011. Universalization of good sanitation and drainage system is a necessary requirement to ensure betterment of community health and hygiene. Cities act as beacons for the rural population as they provide a higher standard of living and offer opportunities not available in rural areas. This results in large scale migration from rural to urban areas. Negative consequences of urban pull often result in growth of slums characterized by housing shortage

and critical infrastructure inadequacies. Bathing facility with in house was 70% in 2001 which increased to 87% in 2011. Households having drainage facility in 2001 was 78%, which also increased to 82% in 2011. In 2001, 26% of households had no latrine facility available within the house, which decreased to 18.60 % in 2011 (Table 4).

It is clearly found that the access of basic amenities was increased from 2001 to 2011 census period, but still many people are lacking of the minimum basic facilities, namely drinking water, literacy, bathroom, drainage, lactrine and etc. Eventhough India is recorded positive rate of growth over a period but it is not achieved 100 percent provisions of basic facilities to their people where other developed countries achieved 100 percent provisions of those facilities to their people. (Table 4). So it is noted that rapid urbanization has led to the increasing problem of housing, overcrowding in small houses, steady growth of slums and unplanned settlements and severely deleterious effect on civic services in urban areas.

Addressing the 'State of the World Population 2007' (UN, 2007) report, then Minister of Urban Development, Government of India said that urbanisation was a sign of liberalisation but the condition of slum-dwellers were even worse than that of the poor in villages. According to the report, over 90 percent of slum-dwellers live in developing countries with China and India accounting for 37 per cent of them. About 56 per cent of the urban population lives in slum conditions. The report also noticed that in countries like India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the literacy rate of women living in slums is as low as 52 per cent. For countries like India, the report said, getting ready for the aging population is another big challenge. The population of towns and cities in developing countries like India is set to double in the space of a generation, while the urban population in the developed world is expected to grow relatively lower, the report said. In comparison to the urban population growth rate, the world's rural population is expected to decrease by some 28 million between 2005 and 2030.

Slum residents are especially vulnerable to health risks. 'Vulnerability' can be defined as a situation where the people are more prone to face negative situations and when there is a higher likelihood of succumbing to the adverse situations (Loughhead, S., & Mittal, O. 2000)). With reference to health, it implies a situation leading to increased morbidity and mortality. Agarwal and Taneja (2005) discusses a number of factors that could increase health vulnerability among the urban poor which are summarized as follows (see Box 1):

Box 1: Factors and Situation Affecting Health Vulnerability in Slums

Factors	Situation affecting Health Vulnerability in Slums
1. Economic conditions	:Irregular employment, poor access to fair credit
2. Social conditions	:Widespread alcoholism, gender inequity, poor educational status
3. Living environment	:Poor access to safe water supply and sanitation facilities, overcrowding, poor housing and insecure land tenure
4. Access and use of public health care services	:Lack of access to ICDS and primary health care services poor quality of health care
5. Hidden/Unlisted slums	:Many slums are not notified in official records and remain outside the purview of civic and health services
6. Rapid mobility	:Temporary migrants, denied access to health services and other development programmes, difficulty in tracking and providing follow-up health services to recent migrants
7. Health and disease	:High prevalence of diarrhea, fever and cough among children
8. Negotiating capacity	: Lack of organized community collective efforts in slums among slum dwellers

Thus, the urban poor are exposed to a number of risk factors which result in poor health outcomes.

Source: Agarwal, S., Satyavada, A., Kaushik, S., & Kumar, R. (2007).

During the decade 2001-11, growth rates in cities and slums were compared. The number of towns reporting slums substantially increased from 1725 in 2001 to 2613 in the 2011 Census. The number of towns reporting slums and slum population in common towns increased 51.48 percent and 18.13 percent in 2001 & 2011 census respectively.

Table 5: Slum Status in India: 2001 & 2011 Census

Indicators	2001	2011	Growth (%)
No. of Towns reporting slums	1725	2613	51.48
No. of Common Towns in 2001 -2011	1504		
Slum Population of Common towns	49731771	58749367	18.13
Urban Population	286119689	377106125	31.80
Slum Population	52180399	65494604	25.52

Source: Census of India : 2001 2011 Census

It is found that the actual growth rate of urban population and slum population over the decade (2001-2011) reported 31.80 percent and 25.52 percent respectively. It is clearly revealed that there is a positive relationship between the increase in urban population and the increase in slum population (Table 5). When people migrate to major cities for work, they frequently look for low-cost housing in order to avoid the burden of high urban living costs. Usually, low-income families who cannot afford transportation or

who lack any form of affordable public transportation end up in squat/slum settlements within walking distance or close enough to their formal or informal workplace. It's also worth noting that non-slum areas are growing at a rate similar to urban areas (Census of India, 2011).

Though reducing poverty is one the national agendas of India, there is always a discussion between rural and urban poverty rate in policy formulation. The 2010 UNDP's Human Development Report introduced the new Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Methodology (Alkire, S & Santos, 2010) for measuring poverty at Global and Country Level. The global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was created using the multidimensional measurement method of Alkire and Foster (AF). In the global MPI, a person is identified as multidimensional poor or MPI poor if they are deprived in at least one third of the weighted MPI indicators. In other words, a person is MPI poor if the person's weighted deprivation score is equal to or higher than the poverty cutoff of 33.33%. Following the AF methodology, the MPI is calculated by multiplying the incidence of poverty (H) and the average intensity of poverty (A). The MPI reflects both the incidence (H) and intensity of poverty (A).

Table: 6: Globa MPI in India by Region-wise

Year	Rural (%)			Urban (%)		
	H (Incidence-k=33.3%)	A (Intensity)	Population Share	H (Incidence-k=33.3%)	A (Intensity)	Population Share
2017	53.5	46.7	68.5	14.8	43.3	31.5
2018	36.5	44.1	67.3	9	42.6	32.7
2019	36.8	44.1	67.7	9.2	42.6	32.3
2020	36.8	44.1	67.7	9.2	42.6	32.3
2021	36.8	44.1	67.7	9.2	42.6	32.3

Source: Global MPI Country Briefing 2021: India (South Asia)

The Global MPI indicated that urban people are experiencing more poor conditions compare to rural people. In terms of Headcount ratio (H), rural India has the highest incidence of poverty and its intensity (A) is almost equal to the urban MPI intensity. It is surprisingly noticed in the table 6 that two most horrible condition of urban people experienced that are (1) urban India has a very low incidence of poverty (H) but its intensity of Poverty (A) is awfully highest in all the years and even its almost equal to the rural. This explained that urban people have lacking of many basic necessities like health, education and living standard facilities compared to rural areas. (2) Even though, Urban India has recorded less than 50% of the rural population, but urban India has experienced the very remarkable intensity of poverty (Table 6).

Policy Implications

One of the dominant concerns of the present age is the improving the living conditions of the rapidly increasing population living in cities. The government has taken many initiatives to reduce urban poverty. The most demanding challenges is the task of adequately feeding, educating, housing and employing a large and rapidly growing number of under-nourished, semi-literate, semi-skilled, underemployed and impoverished city dwellers who are living on pavements, unhygienic slums and inadequate settlements. This requires a huge political will, investments, skills training and education to uplift the urban poor and provide them their basic right to live a dignified life with basic amenities. The problems faced by the

people living as the slum dwellers in India have become significant concerns of the government. There is a need to examine slum areas and their living conditions and determine the most critical and problematic zone of the slums.

There is need to proper coordination and co-operation between the various agencies working in the slums, ensuring that these agencies are free of corruption and red tapism and consistency in slum development policies and programmes. State governments have to develop strategies to prevent the formation of new slums. These should include access to affordable land, reasonably priced materials, employment opportunities, and basic infrastructure and social services. Public investments must focus on providing access to basic services and infrastructure. The cities need to invest in housing, water, sanitation, energy, and urban services, such as garbage disposal. These services and infrastructure must reach the poor living in informal settlements. The urban local bodies must be accompanied by fiscal empowerment and technical and human resources support to those particular falling under the category of small and medium size towns.

To make and keep India beautiful, first of all, we need to improve the living conditions of all the people, especially poor people those are living in urban and rural areas. It's a humongous task and would require humongous efforts from Government as well as active and equal participation from communities. **Keep India Beautiful, Smart City Mission, AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) and others urban development programmes** works towards improving the living conditions in urban areas and there is need further strengthened these programmes for better results. We all need to work together for making & keeping our country real beautiful

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