URBAN POVERTY AND BASIC EDUCATION DEPRIVATION

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES
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Urban Poverty and Basic Education Deprivation

Local Education Report

Bangalore, Karnataka

This brief report is part of a study on primary education conducted by the Sociology and Social Anthropology Unit at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore. Field research was conducted between October 1999 and November 2001 in the following six areas: Jaunpur Block (Uttaranchal), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Khategaon Block (Madhya Pradesh), Bangalore (Karnataka), Tanjavur (Tamil Nadu), and Chirala (Andhra Pradesh). A composite report on all the areas studied will be available separately.

The objectives of this Local Education Report (LER) are to share the findings of the study with members of the communities in which this research was conducted and to disseminate the study widely. Hence, this report is primarily descriptive of the conditions and trends in each area that was studied. We hope that in each area members of the community, teachers, elected representatives, parents, education department personnel and others interested in promoting elementary education will find the report useful.

Several people have at different points helped make this report a possibility. Sarita Tukaram helped with the second phase of field research and with the compilation of data for this report.

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S. Dharmendra conducted the field research in the first phase of the study, Dr. Keerthi Shekar, H. T Ramchandrappa, and K.C Jyothi helped conduct the household surveys, and Savita Sastri processed the data. I thank them all for their interest and support. Special thanks to all those who participated in the study – the children, both students and those out of school, teachers, parents and other community members – for their time, patience and inputs.

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URBAN POVERTY AND
BASIC EDUCATION DEPRIVATION

It's 11:30 a.m on Friday, the 9th of November, 2001. The Government Lower Primary School in Vahana Nagara, a slum settlement in the heart of the city, wears a deserted look. Inside there are no children, only adult men either sleeping or in various states of hangover. For the past eight days, since canvassing for the City's Corporation elections began, the main classroom of the school has been taken over by members of a major political party. The classroom is used to cook two meals a day and to store liquor, which are distributed free to the residents of the slum. The school has been dysfunctional for twelve days and none of the children are to be seen in the vicinity of the school.

The state of this school epitomizes the dismal condition of government schools in Bangalore's poverty or slum areas and indicates the extent to which political priorities take precedence over the right of children to basic education. That this is the condition of a large number of

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government schools in a metropolis raises several questions. Why are government schools largely dysfunctional and inadequate in a city, which is noted for its high technology centers, entrepreneurial spirit and models of good governance? Why, despite the mass demand for education, are so many children from poor families out of school? And, why do children who seem bright and enthusiastic consider schools to be boring and harsh?

These are questions central to an understanding of the educational opportunities available to children in Bangalore's poverty areas. To raise such questions is to reconsider the axiom that urban areas provide better opportunities for basic education and to examine why a growing metropolis is unable to assure a large number of children in poverty their right to basic education. For, as the details will indicate, educational deprivation is caused by multiple factors and one key result of such deprivation is the growth of the service and tertiary sectors at the cost of children's opportunity to be educated.

RETHINKING THE URBAN BIAS IN BASIC EDUCATION

Most statistical data and studies on urban and rural differences in educational opportunity indicate the advantages that urban areas have over the rural areas. This is particularly true of infrastructure, functioning of schools and literacy levels. In Karnataka also, data indicates that an urban bias has been prevalent. In 1991, while rural Karnataka registered a literacy level of only 47 per cent, in the urban areas it was 74 per cent. Rural districts such as Raichur and Gulbarga, with little or no industrialisation and urbanisation, account for some

of the lowest literacy levels in the state. The percentage of children attending school in Karnataka in 1992-93 was estimated to be 65.3 per cent in Bangalore Rural and 82.4 per cent in Bangalore Urban[1]. In 1996 the percentage of out of school children in Bangalore Rural was 33.3 per cent while in Bangalore Urban it was 12.7 per cent [2].

But the city may no longer enjoy the advantages it once had, especially in terms of basic education opportunity for the poor. As scholars have noted, the poverty zones in India's metropolises will now house the largest proportion of non-literate children[3]. In Bangalore, the growth of the city, especially the growth of poverty areas, problems in the administration of the education system and the disadvantages of the households and communities in the poverty areas combine to decrease the schooling opportunity for children from poor families.

GROWTH OF THE CITY

Karnataka recorded the nation's highest proportion of urban population, which is 33 per cent of the State's population, against the national average of 27 per cent[4]. Bangalore's growth also supports this; since the past three decades the population of Bangalore has grown from 16.64 lakhs in 1971 to 29.21 lakhs in 1981, to 41.30 lakhs in 1991, and is currently 56.86 lakhs (2001 census)[5], making

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[1] Karnataka Human Development Report. Bangalore. Government of Karnataka. 1999.
[2] Ibid. No rural-urban differences are available for the 2001 survey.
[3] Rangachar Govinda, Status of Primary Education of the Urban Poor in India. Research Report no 105. International Institute for Planning. Paris. 1995.
[4] Provisional population totals, Karnataka, Rural-urban distribution. Census 2001 Bangalore. Office of the Director of Census Operations, 2001.
[5] Ibid.

it the nation's fifth largest metropolis. As the city has grown, it has failed to provide adequate housing and civic facilities to most members of the labouring classes, leading to a growth in areas that are popularly called 'slums'. That the growth of the city is matched by the growth in the number and size of slums is evident from the data on slums.

GROWTH OF POVERTY AREAS OR SLUMS

Poverty areas are easy to recognize by the low quality housing, inadequate infrastructure and poor civic amenities which characterise them. However, there seems to be a problem in identifying and enumerating them for official purposes. Data on the number and size of slums/poverty zones in the city vary according to the organisation or persons collecting such data[6]. The most recent data, from the 2001 Census, lists 733 slums in Bangalore[7].

Despite such variations in the enumeration of poverty zones or slums, it is widely recognised that the number and type of poverty areas have increased in the city. From the 1940s until the 1970s slums were mostly located near factories which were primarily places of employment. The post-1970s spurt in the growth of the city has seen the establishment of new slums located on marginal lands like canals, tank beds, quarry pits, or adjacent to railway lines.[8] Slums relocated

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[6] The Slum Clearance Board identifies only 339 settlements as slums with a population of 17.17 lakh for 1996-97. Schenk identified 444 slums in Bangalore in 1991 with a population of 1.12 million (11.2 lakhs) – about 20 percent of Bangalore's population. A survey conducted by the Bangalore City Saksharatha Samithi in 1998-99 identified 763 slums in Bangalore with a population of 22 lakhs.

[7] Provisional Population Totals, Karnataka. Census of India, 2001. Director of Census Operations, Karnataka.

[8] Solomon Benjamin and R Bhuvaneshwari. Urban Governance and Poverty: A Livelihood perspective from Bangalore. September 1999.

to the periphery of the city have also increased in size and are characterised by poor civic amenities, inadequate housing structures and congestion. Some areas that were once rural settlements and agricultural zones and have now been absorbed into the city have also developed the characteristics of slums or poverty areas.

While most residents of such areas provided and continue to provide a range of services and are the labouring class of the city, they have continued to remain in conditions of poverty. A survey of three cities, Bangalore, Calcutta, and Indore, conducted by the National Center for Human Settlements and Environment suggested that in Bangalore, 73 per cent of slum inhabitants were below the poverty line[9]. Subject to periodic unemployment many slum residents have little or no assets or savings. Further, while most civic amenities are not available to them, they also do not receive adequate support from most of the public services, such as the health, police, education and other governmental institutions[10]

LITERACY LEVELS IN POVERTY AREAS

The growth in the size and number of slums has not been matched by adequate schooling facilities for the children living in these areas. That the growth of literacy levels (for adults) in the urban poverty areas of the city is slow is indicated in a study conducted by H. Ramachandran and S. V. Subrahmaniam[11]. Conducted in 1973 and

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[9] ibid.

[10] Samuel Paul and Sita Shekar. Benchmarking Urban Services: The Second Report Card on Bangalore. Public Affairs Centre. Bangalore. 2000.

[11] Hans Schenk, Living in India's Slums: A Case Study of Bangalore. ed., IDPAD/Manohar: Delhi. 2001.

again in 1992, the study of 11 slums in Bangalore showed that illiteracy, which was 59 per cent in 1973, declined to 49 per cent in 1992. In other words, the level of illiteracy had come down by only 10 per cent in 20 years. The study also documented that the number of people who had acquired primary education increased by just one per cent in 20 years – in 1973 it was 21 per cent, in 1992 it changed to 22 per cent. According to the 2001 census, the literacy rate in Bangalore's slum areas is 59.69 per cent.[12]

That the availability of schools and the pupil-teacher ratio is not evenly distributed is evident from the data on schools.

Table: I
PROFILE OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS, 1999-2000[13]
BANGALORE URBAN

	Government	Aided	Unaided
No. of schools	1312	553	898
No. of teachers	6324	4030	8616
No. of students	2,30,134	1,77,600	3,44,267
School:teachers	1:4.82	1:7.28	1:9.59
School:students	1:175	1:321.1	1:383.3
Teacher:students	1:36	1:44	1:39.9

This data indicates that the demand for government schools is far less than that for private or unaided schools. Yet, in reality, the attendance at private schools among the poor and lower middle classes is often a reflection of the demand for education and the dissatisfaction with the existing government schools. Further, many private schools that

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[12] Census 2001.

[13] Shaikshanika Anki Amshagala Pakshinota.1999-2000. Handbook of Education Statistics 1999-2000. Office of the Commissioner of Public Instruction. Bangalore. 2001.

cater to children of the poor are unregistered, of poor quality, with inadequately trained teachers, and are also not taken into account by the government in its data collection.

Further, government schools are subject to more pressures. As the data indicates, there are only an average of 4-5 teachers per government primary school and in the context of multi-grade teaching, the problems and overload are greater. Yet, government policies assess the functioning and demand for schools in terms of the existing pupil-teacher ratios and often overlook the extent to which low pupil attendance is actually a reflection of the poor functioning of schools. Decisions like the one to close such "economically unviable schools"[14] further deny children in such areas the right and opportunity to access government schools. A more accurate analysis would be to assess the number of schools available in each poverty area in terms of the number of children in these areas and the percentage of out of school children among them.

POVERTY AREAS AND OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

Responding to national debates on the growing number of out of school children, the Government of Karnataka conducted a statewide survey in January 2001. According to the survey, among the 8,93,675 children in the 6-14 years age group 33,302 children or 3.72 per cent were out of school in Bangalore district. The average percentage of out of school children in the slum areas was considered to be ten

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[14] The recent (mid-2000) decision of the Karnataka government that about 2000 schools which had low teacher-student ratios were not viable and should be closed reflect this.

per cent[15]. Further, the survey indicates that 8,579 of the 1,52,570 SC children and 1356 of the 22,268 ST children between the ages of 6 and14 in Bangalore Urban are out of school[16].

This data, which is generated for the district as a whole, does not accurately represent the schooling opportunities or education deprivation in the poverty zones of the city. Further, the data does not indicate the condition of schools nor does it indicate the extent of education deprivation of children in these poverty zones. More specifically, such data does not indicate two key issues: one, the number of schools for the population living in poverty areas is not available; two, the pupil-teacher ratio, the functioning of schools in the poverty areas and an accurate estimate of children out of school are also not available.

A sample survey of households in five poverty areas of Bangalore, conducted by NIAS,[17] indicates that a high percentage of children are out of school. Based on the survey, the following details about out of school children emerged.

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[15] In terms of the whole state, Bangalore (urban) accounted for 3.16 percent of out-of-school children in the State.

[16] Survey conducted by the CPI office in 1999-2000

[17] This survey was conducted in the months of May and June 2001 by Dr Keerthi Shekar, K.T. Ramachandra and K.C. Jyothi.

Survey of Poverty Areas and Education Opportunity of Children in Selected Wards

Slum	Ward No.	No. of House– holds	No. of school-going children	No. of out-of-school children	Percentage of out-of-school children
Lingarajapuram	88	167	376	61	13.9
ISRO slum	82	210	428	83	16.11
Markondiah Layout	45	112	231	98	29.5
Ramakrishna Seva Nagar	24	224	466	128	21.5
Rajagopal Nagar slum	24	223	243	226	48.1

Rajagopal Nagar consisting of recent labour class migrants from Raichur has a very high percentage (48 per cent) of children who are out of school and hence is not representative of conditions in most other poverty areas. Therefore, based on the average of the other four slums, 21 per cent of children are out of school . This clearly indicates that a larger proportion of children than the ten per cent identified in the recent survey by the government, are in conditions of education deprivation in the poverty areas.

That a large proportion of children are out of school is also recognised by some NGOs working in some of Bangalore's poverty areas. For example, a study conducted in 2001 by the NGO *Paraspara* in 13 areas of Malleswaram constituency indicates that there are 9737 children in 17 slums of the constituency. Of these, 52 per cent attend school, while 11 per cent are in conditions of wage labour and the remaining 37 per cent are neither in school nor in wage labour[18].

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[18]Statistics of Survey of Children (Nammura Makkalu).Paraspara. Bangalore. 2001.

Living in a growing metropolis does not assure many children access to basic education that can ensure life-long literacy. That despite the increase in public demand for education there has been no commensurate increase and improvement in educational infrastructure and services is evident particularly in growing metropolises such as Bangalore. The failure to provide an adequate number of schools which function regularly and which would cater to the children of these areas has had several implications. The growth of child labour in a number of industries and in the domestic service sector, the presence of a large number of "nowhere" children, that is children who are neither working nor in school[19], and the presence of a large class of non-literate working poor are directly attributable to this.

POVERTY AREAS AND THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

The city's informal sector of the economy is growing at high rates. Ramachandran and Subrahmaniam's study indicated the increase in home-based economic activities between the years 1973-92[20], a trend that has also been observed in other recent studies[21]. Since then, given the almost continuous boom-like growth of the city, poverty areas have become not only sites of residence but also areas to which a large number of home-based economic activities are being relocated[22]. The production of home-made food items, piece-goods tailoring, *agarbatti* and *beedi* rolling, etc. now takes place in the

[19] D.P Chaudhri, A Dynamic Profile of Child Labour in India. ILO. New Delhi. 1999.

[20] Hans Schenk, ed., Living in India's Slums: A Case Study of Bangalore. IDPAD/Manohar: Delhi. 2001..

[21] Solomon Benjamin and R Bhuvaneshwari, Urban Governance and Poverty: A Livelihood Perspective from Bangalore. MS. 1999; James Heitsman, "Becoming Silicon Valley", Seminar, Vol. 503, 2001.

[22] Solomon Benjamin and R Bhuvaneshwari ,Urban Governance and Poverty: A Livelihood Perspective from Bangalore., MS, 1999.

urban poverty zones. As a result, urban poverty areas are emerging as multi-activity zones which not only house the labouring classes and an army of service workers but are also centres of the informal economy and sites of contract production.

CHILD LABOUR AND URBAN GROWTH

The slow rate of growth of educational facilities and hence of literacy has led to an increase in child labour in various sectors. While the presence of children in a range of occupations and services has increased, there are no accurate surveys or data about the actual number of children in conditions of labour in the city. While data from the State's Labour Office indicates an increase in the number of children employed in hazardous and non-hazardous industries, the actual numbers and figures are not reliable[23]. For example, for the year 1996-97, the Child Labour Cell documented only 12 children as working in hazardous industries and 88 in non-hazardous industries in Bangalore. For 1999-2000, the Cell documented 33 children working in hazardous and 104 in non-hazardous industries; in 2000-01 a total of 147 children were identified as employed in hazardous industries and 7015 children in non-hazardous industries.

Such data is not reliable and is not representative of the real conditions in the city. For example, that child labour is growing in the city has been documented by non-governmental organisations. A survey

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[23]The Child Labour Cell was contacted personally between the months of April and May 2001. No published records or documents were made available. The data cited in this report was compiled by an officer of the Child Labour Cell and given to us. Date of receipt of data: March 31 2001.

conducted by *Paraspara* in Malleswaram constituency shows that 11 per cent of the children are engaged in wage labour. Also, a survey conducted by NIAS in five slums of Bangalore shows the following numbers of child workers between the ages of 6 and14 engaged in wage labour.

- In ISRO slum, of the 515 children surveyed, 16 per cent are employed. Boys work as construction coolies and vendors or are employed in fast food hotels, while girls work as domestic or construction labourers.

- In Markondiah Layout, 30 per cent of the 332 out of school children are engaged in various forms of labour; boys work as mechanics, welders, coolies, tailors, automobile cleaners, and vendors. Girls roll *agarbattis* and *beedis*, work as domestic servants and also in the colour pencil industry, and in choultries as dish-washers and sweepers

- In Lingarajpuram, 15.5 per cent of the children are employed, with boys working as construction coolies, garage mechanics, printers, and ragpickers while the girls roll *agarbattis*, work as domestic servants and construction coolies.

- In Ramakrishna Seva Nagar, 21 per cent of the children are employed in a variety of areas. Apart from working as construction coolies, boys also work as mechanics in garages and petrol bunks, vegetable/fruit vendors, and as waiters in hotels.

- In Rajagopal Nagar, of the 475 children interviewed, 48 per cent are engaged in labour. Most of the boys work as construction coolies while the girls work as domestic servants.

Though data such as this indicate that large numbers of children are engaged in labour, official acknowledgement of this fact is not forthcoming[24]. The pervasive presence and use of child labour in the city's economy calls attention to the links between urban growth, education deprivation, and child labour. The lack of regulation of child labour has meant that young children, especially between the ages of 8 and14, are employed in the tertiary sector, in hotels, petty shops, garages, and tea/coffee shops[25]. As a study of working children in Bangalore indicates, most working children are between the ages of 12 and14 years[26]. Children of this age, particularly boys, are considered to be submissive and useful to the functioning of such enterprises. Moreover, the wages paid to them are nominal. But, as they grow older these very same children are considered to be less compliant and therefore are not considered employment worthy. As a result, young boys above the age of 14 are often dismissed from employment. Non-literate, untrained and also redundant in the employment sector, it is these older boys, in most cases, who are found "hanging out" in the poverty zones.

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[24] Child Labour Cell, March 31st, 2001.

[25] Garages, workshops, tyre retreading centres, construction sites, agarbatti, beedi making, ragpicking, pottery, stone cutting, sex work have been identified as 'hazardous industries' by the Labour Department. Shops, hotels and commercial establishments are classified as non-hazardous employment centres and the employment of under-aged children is rampant in these sectors.

[26] S.G. Suresh Kumar and M.V. Srinivasa Gowda, "Child Labour in Karnataka Needs A Holistic Approach", in Little Hands in Chains: Child Labour in India. Ed. P. Jegadish Gandhi and Susheela Subrahmanya. Bangalore: Southern Economist. 2001.

POVERTY ZONES AND EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY

There are several reasons why there are problems in the establishment and administration of schools in the urban poverty zones. For one, slums or poverty zones are considered to be illegal, temporary settlements and hence little or no effort is made to establish schools within these settlements. As a consequence there are no government or corporation schools in most of these areas. If there are schools they are substandard in quality, do not have the capacity to cater to all the children in the area and are characterised by high teacher and student absenteeism. In addition, schools are subject to a range of vicissitudes; one month a teacher is absent and nobody enquires about the children, another month the food does not arrive, a few months later riots affect the settlement and the school is closed, or floods force closure of schools or children migrate to other areas. Given such substandard and dysfunctional schools, it is no surprise that they are marginal to the interests and lives of people in the poverty areas.

Unlike rural settlements, settlements within poverty zones do not have a definite sense of community or a sense of belonging to a particular community or settlement. Most residents are migrants and even if they are long-term residents, they always hope to move away from the slum soon. While community mobilisation by NGOs and local groups has helped in organising them into interest groups so as to enable them to assert their rights, there is little by way of mobilising a sizeable number of people who can command or demand the services and facilities that are due to them.

Most slum areas are parts of larger wards and are not uniform in their characteristics. In addition, most slum residents are mere members of a political vote bank and do not wield any political or administrative clout themselves. As a result they are not able to assert their rights and make the teachers accountable to them. In most cases, residents, including "leaders" of the slum community, are both hesitant and afraid to speak to teachers about their absenteeism or discuss any issue related to the school or to problems that their children face.

CASE STUDY

While the above is a broad overview of the growth of the city, it is important to provide a closer view of the actual functioning of a school located in such a settlement and to identify the reasons for the extensive education deprivation in the city. The findings of the study[27], may help provide an in-depth picture and an understanding of schooling in the urban poverty zone.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF CONDITIONS IN VAHANA NAGAR

Vahana Nagar[28] is a low-income settlement which houses the labouring poor and is situated within Jayanagar, a high-income ward which also

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[27]The research study was conducted between September 1999 and mid-2001in a poverty zone and consisted of a survey of all the households, detailed interviews with 15 percent of school-going and out-of-school children, observation of the classrooms and their transactions, and interviews and discussions with teachers, parents and members of the community. Periodic visits to the settlement and interaction with the teachers and children enabled us to get a sense of the continuous changes and pressures which were imposed on the settlement's only school.

[28]A pseudonym.

has the highest number of slums in Bangalore. The slum, established in 1974 around two hillocks, consists partly of single-room concrete tenements and about 1500 huts. Of them, 76 belong to Muslims, 800 to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 200 to Gowdas, 150 to Christians, 270 to Naidus and Shettys and four to Brahmins. A majority of the residents, 53 per cent, are from Scheduled Castes. Some of the hutments and structures are rented, while most housing units are owned by the residents.

The residents of this slum perform a range of service and menial work. Most men are in the construction industry (35.42 per cent), in skilled and unskilled jobs, while others are in menial labour, or work as vendors of vegetables, fruits and trinkets. A smaller number are owners of petty shops such as newspaper and bottle recycling outlets, tyre and puncture shops, and local tailoring units. Others work as coolies in the market, or as mechanics and welders. But with the decline in the construction industry, many have become part of the casual labour force and many others have been rendered jobless. A majority of the women (58.33 per cent), however, work as domestic helpers or servants while a few others do piece-rate work such as rolling *agarbattis* at home. Most of the families are migrants from other districts of Karnataka, Tamil Nadu or Andhra Pradesh. Many return periodically to their villages, especially during festivals and the harvest seasons. Literacy levels of men, primarily of fathers, in the settlement is 27 per cent, while 30 per cent are non-literate and 35 per cent can sign their names. On the other hand, women are more literate than men: 32 per cent are literate, while 29 per cent are non-

literate and 37 can per cent can sign their names. Functionally, 65 per cent of all adults are non-literate[29].

FAMILY STRUCTURE, ORGANISATION AND ORIENTATION

Though most families (72.92 per cent) are nuclear, they tend to be large with an average of 6.6 members. And as migrants, it is not unusual to have relatives from the village staying in the household unit. Close to 114 families (10.96 per cent) are single-parent families, which typically consist of mothers and their children. Apart from women who are widowed or separated from their husbands, there are also many young women who have been abandoned by their husbands and left to fend for themselves and their children.

Family relationships and life among the urban poor are particularly stressful. Adults and children experience high levels of distress caused by frequent unemployment, poor housing conditions, and lack of social support. Many parents work long hours outside the home and are not available to care for or supervise their children. Unsupervised children, especially teenagers, are easily drawn into a web of harmful activities such as gambling, drinking and taking drugs.

COMMUNITY POLITICAL/ECONOMIC/SOCIAL STRUCTURE AND DYNAMICS

Like most poverty areas, Vahana Nagar is seen as a vote bank by political parties and their agents, and recruitment to political parties

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[29] Eight percent of those interviewed did not stipulate their education or literacy levels.

is most visible just before elections. The corporator, who lives in the upmarket area of the ward, makes occasional visits to the settlement and has recently, just prior to the elections, been instrumental in installing a water tank and providing other civic amenities to the area. However, he rarely monitors the school and has not contributed in any way to the development of the school.

The presence and support of community-based organisations in the settlement is low as it houses migrants from different parts of the country and the State, who arrived at the settlement at different times and relate to the economy in different ways. In most cases they live not with a sense of shared poverty but in conditions of constant competition with one another, competing for living space, basic resources and jobs. Though some degree of everyday social activity and support during moments of crisis are available to most members, long-term collective organisational endeavour and orientation are not evident. This is seen in the fact that though the settlement is more than twenty years old and has a population of about 7,500, there is no single organisation that represents all the residents. A number of different organisations and associations have been established, each catering to a particular religious, caste and cultural group.

A Mosque which has a Madarssa functions within the settlement but the Madarssa does not provide formal education. Other organisations such as a Christian Missionary group and an activist group that runs night classes for young domestic girl workers are also active in the settlement. Several parents resort to accessing the missionary group only during periods of crisis or for monetary aid towards their

children's uniforms and school fees. About 94 per cent of fathers and 86 per cent of mothers are not members of any organisation. Many parents are not aware of the organisations that exist within their locality. Some parents even admit that the organisations of which they are members do not meet regularly and even if they do, nothing important is discussed. As a result they are not exposed to any form of discussion, either about education or the community or their children's right to education. About 14 per cent of the women, are members of a Mahila Sangha, and they are both aware and relatively more active than others in matters related to education and civic issues.

One association which is visible with its sign-board is the "Ambedkar Sangha". Though at the time of founding the association had recruited members and collected membership fees, it currently does not hold regular meetings and events and has not recruited new members. However, the founder of the Sangha, a carpenter by occupation, plays a *de facto* leader's role and is often the spokesman and representative of the settlement. As a *de facto* leader, he liaises with political leaders and their agents and considers that it is due to his "connections" that he has been able to improve the roads, sanitation, water and electricity facilities in the settlement. It was thanks to his interactions with a political agent that he was able to get a local industrial group to provide a midday meal to about 120 students in the government school for about two years. Yet, in June 2001, the meal scheme was withdrawn and no explanations were forthcoming. However, in October 2001, as the city prepared for the corporation elections, a message was sent asking people to join a certain political party and to elect its candidate,

if they wanted the meal scheme to be restarted. Two months after the elections, the school continued to be without the midday meal.

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOLING

A survey conducted by NIAS in August 2001 showed that 1040 out of the 1500 households in Vahana Nagar have children between the ages of 6 and14, who are eligible to attend school. The survey documented 2106 children in this age group, of which 69.9 per cent (1474) are enrolled in school. Of the total number of children in Vahana Nagar, 30 per cent, that is 632 children, are out of school. And of these, 30 per cent (190) are employed in wage labour, while the rest (442) are neither in school nor employed.

A majority of the school going children, 81 per cent, attend various government schools that include the lower primary school located within the settlement and two other government schools located within the ward. Though government schools are supposedly free, most parents incur additional expenditure in sending their children to these schools. Data indicates that of the families who send their children to the local Government Lower Primary School (GLPS) or to other government schools in the vicinity, 60.42 per cent spend an average of Rs 300 annually on school and other expenses. That the GLPS is not the first choice of most parents is evident. Only 163 of the settlement's children are registered in the GLPS while most children attend other schools outside the settlement. For many parents it was the lack of monetary support or the lack of information on other schools that made them send their children to the GLPS.

On the other hand, 17 per cent of the children attend aided schools (private management and government-aided) and only 2 per cent attend private schools[30]. Parents with higher, regular incomes, who typically work as carpenters, skilled mechanics, drivers, etc. are able to send their children to aided and private schools which generally charge higher fees than the government schools and also have other additional costs. On an average the expenditure incurred by parents on sending their children to government schools is about Rs 500 per annum and in the case of aided and private schools, about Rs 1500 per annum. While 15 per cent of the parents had sought and received aid from missionary associations, about 28 per cent had incurred loans in order to send their children to school. Several mothers had taken loans from local moneylenders or from visiting moneylenders or 'agents', at interest rates of 40 to 50 per cent per annum so as to be able to send their children to school. Many of these parents, including single mothers, see education as a way out of their current conditions of poverty and as a step towards the desire of seeing their children getting jobs.

Yet, despite the effort and cost of sending their children to the private and aided schools, not all parents were satisfied with the functioning of these schools or their treatment of the children. Many mothers complained of the excessive corporal punishment meted out to their children and the frequent demands for fees and insistence on buying only books and uniforms supplied by the school. They felt that such

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[30] We were unable to study these private and aided schools as the managements of the three schools which most of these children attend, refused to permit us to do an intensive study of the classes and interview the teachers.

rules went against their economic interests and capacity. Mothers also spoke about the frequent ill-treatment of parents by teachers who scoffed at them for their inability to attend parent-teacher meetings, to be dressed presentably, and also about the reprimands they received if they were unable to pay their children's school fees on time.

CONDITIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL (GLPS)

The GLPS located within the settlement currently functions out of three separate rooms with a combined capacity of about 80 students but crams in about 120 students (though the registered number of students is 163). The rooms have been donated by different charitable organisations and the school does not receive any funds from the government for maintenance. The government supports the school by deputing four teachers. There is no toilet or drinking water in the school. Crammed into a narrow alley, the school has no playground and as Jaya, the teacher, notes, it is impossible to allow the children to play in the neighbourhood. "We tried to conduct games on the roads but neighbours complained that the children's shouting disturbed their afternoon nap. According to the timetable they have a period for games. But because there is no playground we have to keep them in class." Perhaps one of the reasons why the children are restless and even unmanageable in class is that they do not have the space to play and exercise.

FUNCTIONING OF THE SCHOOL

The school is subject to frequent disruptions and is often closed. Apart from festivals and temple feasts, which draw the parents and children away from the area, upheavals and disruptions in the city also lead to the school's closure. In 2000 the school was closed for nearly fifteen days during the Raj Kumar kidnapping episode. But even after the school reopened officially, many children were absent as their parents had sent them either to safer zones in the city or to their natal villages. The school also closes whenever teachers are called to perform a range of duties such as conducting the census, being on election duty or attending teacher training courses. Other school-related programmes such as the pulse polio drive, and the receipt and distribution of free grains to the students are also occasions when the school remains closed. The school also does not function on a number of days due to teacher absenteeism. Such frequent closure and disruption combined with the poor overall conditions and lack of order in the schools account for the fact that most parents see government schools as dysfunctional and seek to enroll their children in other schools.

The functioning and orientation of the school indicate that it is not able to retain most children even up to Standard IV. Elimination or drop-out rates are high. Data collected for the years 1994-2001 indicate the following trends:

GLPS ENROLMENT DATA 1994-2001

Year	I std	II	III	IV	Total
1994-95	69	19	4	5	97
1995-96	55	26	16	5	102
1996-97	56	20	14	14	104
1997-98	58	29	12	13	112
1998-99	42	24	20	9	95
1999-00	67	40	14	19	140
2000-01	73	33	33	24	163

As the data indicates, the dropout rate is very high. Between the years 1994 and 2001, an average of 77 per cent of children in the school dropped out by Standard IV.

—— Of the 69 children enrolled in Standard I in 1994-95, 82 per cent dropped out by Standard IV.

—— In 1995-96, 55 children enrolled in Standard I. By 1998-99, i.e. by Standard IV 84 per cent of the children dropped out.

—— Of the 56 children who enrolled in 1996-97 in Standard I, 67 per cent dropped out by Standard IV.

—— In 1997-98, 58 children enrolled in Standard I but 76 per cent of them dropped out by Standard III.

An attempt to understand why the school has such high dropout rates and why it remains marginal to the life of the community can be based on contextualising the conditions in which the school functions.

STATE/ADMINISTRATIVE FACTORS

State support for the school, until recently, was inadequate and intermittent. The State government provides free uniforms and text-

books to all SC and ST children up till Standard IV. Three kilograms of rice are given to all children who have more than 80 per cent attendance. However, the provision of a meal at lunch-time was a stronger incentive for children to go to school than uniforms and bags, and until recently, seemed to draw a large number of children and improve attendance marginally. The daily meal for all the school children was provided regularly by a private company and had a positive impact on attendance. The teachers agree that most children attend school in the morning for the meal and note that the meal is an important incentive, which also addresses a key problem in the community, namely the lack of adequate and timely food for children. However, the supply and distribution of the meal was stopped in June 2001 and this has led to a noticeable dip in the attendance rates of children. Just prior to the elections in November 2001, promises were made by agents of political parties to re-start the free meal scheme.

Policies such as the cancellation of the post of "school inspector" meant that between mid-1999 and mid-2001, the school was not inspected or checked regularly. Basic conditions such as the dull and overused board, the leaking roof, and the inadequate teaching-learning methods in Standards I and II went unchecked. The creation of a new post of "school co-ordinator" in place of the school inspector, has led to monthly reviews by the co-ordinator of the functioning of the school in terms of student attendance and conditions in the school. However, not much attention is paid to teaching methods and the learning levels of the children.

COMMUNITY-SCHOOL RELATIONS

Until the recent (mid-2001) establishment of the School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMC), the school, like all urban schools, was supposed to have a School Betterment Committee (SBC). However, the SBC had not been formed. Even committed and active parents had not heard of the SBC. Meetings with parents were not called and no formal meeting of the community's leaders with the school teachers took place. The local corporator had until recently not visited the school or taken any interest in the welfare of the school. The few parents who seemed both vocal and aware of school rules and regulations sent their children to aided or private schools outside the settlement.

Based on our survey and interview details, our study noted that more mothers (83.3 per cent) have visited the school than fathers (22.92 per cent). However, mothers rarely come to discuss issues related to their children's education with the teacher. Most often they come to leave messages for their children, or drop off keys or younger siblings in the class. The lack of involvement of fathers in the school is often attributed to their absence from the area during the day. However, the responsibility for children's schooling is typically seen as that of the mother. In most families it was the mother who supervised the child's schooling and arranged for the required money. Yet mothers had little or no clout in the overall community power structures and were not active in improving the conditions in the school.

According to Jaya, one of the teachers, teacher-community relations are not very strong because most parents are daily-wage labourers

and are unable to spare time to meet the teachers and enquire about their children's progress. Hence, teachers do not force parents to come and meet them as they know that the parents will lose a day's wages if they report to work late.

The recent initiative to form a School Development and Monitoring Committee met with limited success. Unlike the SBC, the SDMC consists of parents whose children are attending school. At the first SDMC meeting conducted on the 28th of September 2001, parents discussed the need for a playground and toilet facilities near the school and resumption of the meal scheme. Though privately many parents are not satisfied with the functioning of the school, this issue was not discussed in the SDMC meeting.

CLASSROOM TRANSACTIONS

The combination of inadequate space and poor class management has led to chaotic and noisy classes. Standards I and II, especially, where there are more than 40 children in each class, are noisy and unmanageable. Children stroll in and out during class hours and amidst the din the teacher is barely audible. The absence of an *anganwadi* in the settlement means that many children bring their younger siblings, some as young as a few months old, to the class. Not only are such children distracted by having to take care of their siblings during the lessons, but the younger children are also restless and frequently move in and out of the classrooms.

Standards III and IV have fewer children and when taught by Jaya and Lakshmi are more organised and disciplined with the children obeying

the teachers. Both these teachers make use of the board, various charts and other teaching material to explain concepts. Children are asked questions during the class to assess their level of understanding. Lakshmi and Jaya make use of the surroundings to explain the lessons so that the children are able to grasp the concepts better.

Yet, on the whole, the classroom transactions are limited in their ability to engage all students or to cater to the differing requirements of the students. Based on observation of different classes over a period of three months, the following features of classroom transactions in the GLPS were noted:

- Rote teaching method, that is repeating after the teacher, is the predominant way of teaching all the non-mathematical subjects. In most cases, issues or themes are not explained or elaborated. Few examples are drawn from the children's immediate lives.

- The 'chalk and talk' method continues to be used more than any other form of explanation. Most often children are asked to copy from the board or from the textbooks.

- Children are given little or no independent attention. This is particularly so in the case of children who are slow or have been absent and are unable to grasp issues or ideas.

- Teachers of Standards I and II resort to casual and mechanical ticking while reviewing or assessing children's work. Very often mistakes made by the children in their notebooks go uncorrected.

- Children do not ask many questions during class. They are largely passive, taking in what the teacher has to say and copying down answers from the board.

MODES OF CONTROL

Teachers resort to a range of methods to control students. The most frequently used methods, especially to maintain silence and order are threats and beating. As Lakshmi admits, "We have so many children in a class. It becomes very difficult for us to keep them quiet. The only way we can get them to keep quiet and listen is to beat them." The teachers also appoint a class monitor to "take care" of the class when they are away. Yet, classrooms are most often disorderly with children strolling in and out. Corporal punishment is widely prevalent in the school, and is the reason cited by many children for dropping out.

Though other teachers also resorted to corporal punishment to enforce obedience among students, there was a general sense of understanding and tolerance for the students' behaviour. Lakshmi with six years of teaching experience believes that a balance between love and firmness is the only way to teach children. "If you beat often they will stop coming. If you don't reprimand them, they will not learn. It's a delicate balance to maintain." Generally sympathetic to the children and their life conditions, she notes, "Many come to school without food. We don't feel like punishing them if they haven't done their homework or are unable to concentrate."

TEACHERS AND THEIR IMPACT ON SCHOOLING

The role of teachers is singularly important in influencing the condition and functioning of schools. The teachers' attitude largely determines *their impact, either positive or negative, on the school. One teacher,* who is unpopular with children and is largely lax about her teaching responsibilities, says about herself, "I was not happy to be posted in a slum school. But now I'm used to it. Children here are not disciplined. They have to be beaten. Without beating they won't understand and behave in class." Such an attitude, where the children are seen as inadequate and the posting itself as punitive, accounts for the inadequate attention that she pays to the children and her general reluctance to contribute to the improvement of the school.

Two other teachers are, however, very empathetic to the conditions in which the children live and are grateful for the fact that they have jobs. As one of them notes, "it is because of these children that I have a job and a salary to take home. I consider it my duty and responsibility to teach. Initially, I did not like to come here but now I have grown fond of the children." This teacher and her friend, who largely concurs with her about the children and the settlement, are conscientious about their responsibilities to the school and to the children. Not only are they regular, they are also considerate in their interaction with and treatment of children.

Despite their sympathetic and supportive attitude towards students and their families, most teachers do not play a pro-active role in ensuring that children attend school or complete their schooling. In

many ways, teachers accept poverty as a condition that puts most students at a disadvantage, and are not able to devise ways and means to retain children in school or to intervene to ensure that parents do not withdraw their children from school. They see children as victims of circumstances, for whom they as teachers can do little or nothing to assist. While they are empathetic they do not extend extra support or guidance to children who dropout or are withdrawn by their parents to perform domestic chores or join the labour force.

Accepting high dropout rates as inevitable also means that teachers do not regard their own inputs and the functioning or malfunctioning of schools as factors that force children to drop out of schools. Several children who had dropped out indicated that they did not find school interesting or engrossing enough to continue to be there. Older children who had left school also indicated that little or no effort was made to encourage them to return.

In addition to these factors that accounted for a lack of deeper engagement with children and their problems, there is now the increasing marginalisation of teachers by the State bureaucracy and its programmes and policies. Two recent programmes, though intended to enhance skills and provide support for teachers, have initiated trends in which the role and contribution of teachers may actually be eroded. Teachers find the new teacher training programmes interesting, but they are intimidated by the emphasis on following specific methods of teaching. As one teacher noted, "I am now afraid to teach. There were methods that I was comfortable with. I wanted to teach in a manner that I had learnt. But with the emphasis on songs and activities

for children, which I am not very good at, I am losing confidence in myself." Another teacher considered the new teaching methods to be relevant only for some subjects. As a result of such impressions or assessments by teachers, the new teacher training programmes remain largely exercises that are not fully internalised by teachers. More specifically, such programmes do not encourage teachers to build on their own talents, orientation or skills.

Another programme that further marginalises teachers is the Community School Adoption programme[31]. The GLPS of Vahana Nagara has been 'adopted' by a private school in the ward, which has built a classroom for the settlement. In addition, a teacher from the private school visits the GLPS once every month. She inspects the records (attendance) of the school and also checks the condition of the rooms. While the GLPS teachers are accommodating and cooperative during these inspections, they are increasingly dependent on the inputs of the private school to manage their own school. Instead of building on the initiative of teachers and enabling them to be more responsible for the management and functioning of their schools, the new programmes erode the confidence and the sense of responsibility of the teachers.

THE WORLD OF OUT OF SCHOOL CHILDREN

Little girls sweeping and mopping floors, washing clothes or dishes in front of their homes, carrying water from the public tap, cooking and

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[31]Samudaya Datta Shale,or Community Adopted School, has been started by the Government of Karnataka as a way to enhance the larger community's contribution to government schools. Individuals, corporate houses, organisations or even private schools are encouraged to 'adopt' government schools and contribute to their infrastructure or to the development of teaching and learning.

cleaning, and taking care of younger siblings. Boys scurrying around, running errands, taking care of petty shops or rushing off to work in garages and hotels. These are the sights that meet a visitor to any of Bangalore's 'slum' or poverty areas. In Vahana Nagara alone, the NIAS household survey indicated that 30 per cent of the 2106 children, that is 632 children of school-going age, were out of school. Detailed information from the Child Focused Schedules and interviews provided the following profiles of out of school children.

NEVER ENROLLED

Vahana Nagar has only a limited number of children who have never been enrolled. Of the 63 out of school children who were interviewed in detail for the study[32], only 14 per cent were never enrolled and two per cent had enrolled but are not attending school.

This is largely due to the fact that there is a widespread demand or urge for education and most parents do take the trouble to enrol their children. In addition, the recent emphasis on school enrolment and the enrolment drives conducted by the education department have also enhanced school enrolment.

The reasons for not enrolling emanate largely from conditions of absolute poverty and from displacement or family troubles. Among the children who were interviewed, 33 per cent said their families had not been able to afford schooling. These were typically families

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[32]From the 632 children who were out of school, 10 percent were selected for detailed interviews and were drawn from a sample representing different genders, ages (6-14 years) and family backgrounds.

whose income was irregular and where the fathers ran petty shops (30 per cent), or were construction workers (25 per cent) or semi-skilled labourers (17 per cent). With a majority of fathers not being self-employed, the chances of being out of work are more. As a result, many families, which depend solely on the man's earnings, are forced to send school-going children to work. Even if families do not send their children to work, school-related expenses take up a significant proportion of their income.

The children of families with seasonal and fluctuating employment and incomes had fewer opportunities to be enrolled in school. In addition, 11 per cent of the children had not enrolled as they were either migrants who had come to the city in the middle of the school year or had migrated out at the time of enrollment.

DROPOUTS

A significant number, 81 per cent of the out of school children interviewed had dropped out of school. Among them, 60 per cent cited family-related reasons for being unable to go to school, while 30 per cent cited school-related reasons. Of the family-related reasons, 20 per cent of the children cited financial problems or sudden economic crisis as the reasons for dropping out, 15 per cent cited migration of the family as the reason[33] . While more boys have dropped out than girls, parents withdrawn girls to look after siblings and take care of the house.

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[33]Other family related reasons were: withdrawal for domestic responsibility, illness of adults in the house.

That dysfunctional government schools eliminate a large proportion of children is indicated by the fact that 73 per cent of the children who had dropped out had attended government schools while 10 per cent had attended government-aided schools and 2 per cent had attended private schools.

Citing school-related reasons, 15 per cent said they were bored with school while 5 per cent cited ill-treatment by the teacher and 10 per cent cited distance of school from home. For parents and children who cited distance from school, the problem related to attending schools that were outside the settlement. In such cases it was not distance per se but the inability of little children to cross the roads on the way to school and the associated dangers that that accounted for their being withdrawn from school. Other reasons for dropping out are migration of the family and language problems.

GIRL CHILDREN

A striking difference in the education opportunity of girls and boys is the fact that most boys opt to drop out on their own, while girls are withdrawn by the family. Fifty-six per cent of the out of school children who were interviewed were girls. Most of them were withdrawn by their parents so that they could help out with domestic chores such as collecting water, washing clothes, and taking care of siblings. Among all the out of school children, it was only girls who said they had not been enrolled due to family responsibilities. Girls are also integrated into the domestic production process, especially in piece-rate work

such as rolling *agarbattis, beedis* or tailoring in the house. Unlike boys, girls rarely roam around, play or do odd jobs for wages. Since 40 per cent of mothers are domestic servants and 11 per cent work in cottage industries, we see a number of girls accompanying their mothers to work. This "accompanying" serves as the initiation into labour in most cases as the girls are not paid extra for helping their mothers and yet are seen as trained in the work and therefore become employment worthy.

PARENTS' ATTITUDE AND CHILDREN'S EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES

While the reasons for being out of school are largely attributable to the family and household-based disadvantages and to the dysfunctional schools, a small percentage of children are denied the opportunity to be in school due to their parents' attitude. A comparison between the occupations and incomes of parents of school-going and out of school children indicates that lack of a stable income is not the only family-related reason for children to be out of school. An equal number of parents of school-going children work as coolies at construction sites or as vendors. However, parents of school-going children seem very determined to educate their children despite low incomes. Single mothers, both widows and those who had separated from their husbands or had been abandoned, were particularly keen on sending their children to school. They take on extra work, get loans, convince their children about the importance of schooling, and their perseverance seems to account for the better record they have of keeping their children in school.

However, some parents of out of school children do not seem inclined to send them to school. Some of them believe that schooling is a waste of time that can instead be spent mastering a job – like that of a carpenter, mechanic or tailor. Though not a substantial number, such parents value jobs and training more than basic education. "What will he do studying? At least if he begins to work soon, he'll learn the job well", says Nagamuthu's father, Ramaswamy. At present, 10 year old Nagamuthu is neither in school nor employed. Twelve year old Satyavani's mother Kamakshamma, says, "I need her to work for the money. We need the money to eat. If she goes to school, then how will we manage?"

More than the parents' occupation or income levels, it was their aptitude and orientation that impacted on the children's education opportunity. Parents who considered education to be important and did not devalue it in any way were those who persisted in ensuring that their children were in school. Such parents saw education as a way out of their current living conditions and as a way to ensure a better life for their children.

Literate Parents, Illiterate Children

An example of how erosive and debilitating migration to the urban slums can be is evident among new migrants from skilled and service caste groups (potters, weavers, and smiths). Many of them have lost their livelihoods and occupation in the rural areas and are now part of the urban informal economy and the casual labour force. Though many of these adults, especially the men, have received basic education,

and some have studied up to high school, they now face a variety of problems in sending their children to school. As a result, there are families among whom the younger generation is illiterate. A range of factors such as language barriers, lack of information on schools, disenchantment with education, and the children's own dislike of school account for this. Ten-year-old Sundari wishes to go to school but the language barrier and economic instability prevent her parents from sending her. Her father who has studied up to Standard V in Tamil Nadu says, "She cannot understand Kannada and there is no one to teach her. What the teachers teach in school is very difficult for her to understand. We also need her to stay at home and look after the other kids. I sell vegetables. What I earn is enough for a day. I cannot afford to send her to school."

In some instances, the children are not interested in attending school and prefer to work and earn, thereby contributing to the family's income. "I do not like going to school because we have to do homework. I enjoy playing in the ground with my friends and spend my time playing marbles near my house. Sometimes I go with my father to sell vegetables but we have to walk a lot with the cart so I do not want to go," says twelve year old Manikantan. Asked what he wants to be when he grows up, he says, "I want to work at the construction site. They pay well, so I can earn lot of money." His father, Ayyanar, is also a vegetable vendor who has now become a construction worker. He and his wife have studied up to Standard II. He complains, "I tried sending him to school but he refuses to go. I cannot force him. He does not do any work either. I have sent him to the tailor shop, to the petty shop, to the construction site, and even

to the garage but he refuses to stay on in any particular job. I have given up on him."

In addition, some parents were disillusioned by the fact that they had not received jobs or that education had not improved their lives and therefore did not consider education worth pursuing. "I have studied till the second standard. I did not even get the job of a peon anywhere. Now I sell vegetables or work at construction sites. I came from Tamil Nadu in search of an "office" job. Everywhere I was shown the door. So I do not want my son to waste time studying. Let him learn to work and earn enough," says Mani's father, Elumalai.

CHILDREN IN LABOUR

Children in Vahana Nagara perform a range of work. Of the 190 children who are engaged in wage labour, 41 per cent are employed as garage helpers, coolies, and construction labourers and 11 per cent are engaged in production activity such as petty shop-keeping and *agarbatti*-making, The percentage of boys is higher both in home-based production activity and in formal employment. Twenty-one per cent of the children, all girls, are employed as domestic servants, while 27 per cent, all boys, are employed in offices, shops and hotels[34].

While 24 per cent of the families use the children's wages to buy their daily food, 8 per cent use it to repay loans. Though 76 per cent of

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[34] Another 21 percent of the children reported doing miscellaneous work such as occasionally cleaning dishes, working as loaders and helping their parents, for which they received remuneration.

the out of school children who were interviewed said they do not support their siblings, 8 per cent said they support their siblings so as to enable them to attend school. While many of the children do not state it explicitly, older children often act as parents to their younger siblings. Many work to ensure that their brothers or sisters go to school, sacrificing their own education opportunities. As several of these working older children noted, they wanted their younger siblings to go to school so that they could have a "better life than now".

Our data for the area indicates a higher dropout rate for poor urban boys than girls. This is linked to the fact that the boys are absorbed early into the urban informal and tertiary economy. Some boys voluntarily drop out of school, when their families are in difficult circumstances. Such boys tend to internalise the role of providers and often act as the breadwinners of the family. There are many families where the father had either abandoned the family or had met with an accident that suddenly rendered him unfit for work. One of the teachers at the GLPS pointed out that the high drop-out rate for boys is linked to the importance placed on earning. "For children, earning is a matter of great pride. Even if they are mechanics or domestic workers they think they are old enough to earn their livelihood. They think that they don't need to study."

Most of the children, however, do not work every day. Occasionally, some of the children, especially boys, are employed for temporary work at Rs 50-100 a day. Casual and part-time construction work is considered lucrative as it fetches up to Rs 100 a day. However, children also noted that it is very strenuous to work at a construction site.

Babu, age 12, said that their "hands and feet get burnt because of the cement. We get blisters while mixing cement and cannot eat or sleep at night because of the pain. Our body aches carrying heavy loads up and down the site."

CHILD LABOUR IN DOMESTIC WORK

Rashmi leaves her home for work at 6:30 in the morning and returns at 10 in the night. She is employed by a family to do housework and also baby-sit the child of the house. Rashmi works seven days a week - she sweeps and swabs the house, washes the dishes and the clothes, goes to the market for vegetables, fruits and other provisions and is care taker to her employer's 10-year-old son. Rashmi herself is 12 years old.

Rashmi's mother had borrowed Rs 6000 from her (Rashmi's) employer to buy land in Tamil Nadu. In return Rashmi will have to work without pay till the money is repaid. Her mother says that in the last 3-4 years, there has been no decrease in the amount owed.

Rashmi complains that her employers beat her and refuse to give her a holiday on Sunday. Initially she attended the night school for girls but now because of her work timings she is unable to attend any school. She says she would like to go to school, study, and become a tailor, but because her mother has to repay the money she has borrowed, she has to work as a maid.

"NOWHERE CHILDREN"

Despite the fact that so many children were engaged in domestic work or had formal employment, a majority of children who were out of school were not employed, and can be considered to be "nowhere" children, that is children who are neither in school nor in employment or wage work[35]. In the survey conducted by NIAS, 21 per cent of the children were "nowhere" children. Similarly, according to the survey conducted by the NGO *Paraspara*, of the 9737 children interviewed in Malleswaram constituency, 36 per cent neither go to school nor are involved in wage labour.

Attention to the number and presence of such 'nowhere' children is important as they indicate that dysfunctional schools and not poverty alone, account for such children being out of school. There are several groups or gangs of young boys between 8 and 12 years of age who have dropped out of primary school and while away their time playing, troubling other children and occasionally doing household chores. They also work occasionally at construction sites or perform odd jobs for a range of wages that can go up to Rs 50 per day. Since they are mostly unoccupied such children loiter around the areas and many of the boys are considered to be a nuisance to their own families and to the other residents.

These observations indicate the extent to which children are caught between a dysfunctional education system, their parents' disillusionment and social disadvantages.

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[35] D.P.Chaudhri, A Dynamic Profile of Child Labour in India. ILO. New Delhi. 1999.

URBAN POVERTY AND EDUCATION DEPRIVATION

There is an urgent need to recognise the prevalence of education deprivation in urban poverty areas and the impact it has on the living conditions of large numbers of children. While general and macro-level data do not capture such area-specific conditions, detailed study and location-specific surveys indicate the widespread and severe problems in the education opportunities of children in urban poverty areas. Dysfunctional schools combine with persistent household poverty to account for the elimination of children from the education system. Household poverty and stress combine with dysfunctional schools, insensitive teachers and inadequate state support to retain children as labourers in the city's growing informal economy. Lack of enforcement of the prohibition of child labour then acts as an incentive for industries and the service sector to absorb these educationally deprived children into conditions of low paid and often hazardous and tedious labour. Though education deprivation may be only one of the forms of disadvantage that children in poverty face, it is a disadvantage that reinforces other social handicaps and the economic marginality in which they live.

Schools in poverty areas must be able to function in a manner in which they can override children's family- and community-based disadvantages. Education deprivation is compounded by inadequate food and parental attention, lack of a congenial environment for learning, and the inability of the school system to compensate for individual and collective disadvantages faced by the children. The failure of the larger social and political systems and the State to

address these issues leads to the perpetuation of education deprivation and hence the perpetuation of economic and social inequalities. Schools must play a counteracting role and teachers along with community leaders and parents must be expected to enhance the education opportunities of all children. Such a perspective must be premised on the idea that every child, irrespective of its social and economic background, must receive education.

SUGGESTIONS

I. Supporting schools in urban poverty areas

There is an urgent need for the State to implement a state-wide programme that focuses on developing schools as central institutions in the settlements or communities in which they are located. In this context, it is necessary for the State to develop and implement programmes that suit the requirements of the communities and settlements that schools cater to. Given the multiple disadvantages that children in poverty, especially those in the urban poverty areas, suffer from, there is a need for the State to play a pro-active and supporting role that goes beyond providing a mere structure called school. Schools should then be centers that not only educate children but also play a multiplicity of roles such as providing nutritional, medical and emotional support for the children.

Special attention should be given to ensuring that schools actually function regularly and teaching takes place. A range of supplementary programmes such as midday meals, supply of text-books and note-books, uniforms, medical check-ups and support are all required on a continuous basis and should not be contingent on populist policies.

II. Strengthening decentralised school administration structures

If a sense of ownership of the school is to be developed and the community is to play a larger and more responsible role in elementary

education, then the role and responsibilities of the structures, namely the School Committees, and the School Development and Monitoring Committees must be clearly defined and promoted. Parents and members of the community should be given training so that they can serve on these committees. Such training should include dissemination of information regarding their right to call for meetings (and not wait for the Headmaster to do so), to look into records, to hold the teachers accountable, etc. The idea that the role and contribution of members is limited to organising school programmes on Independence Day and Republic Day needs to be dispelled. Members need to be re-oriented more strongly on issues such as child rights, on the structural, socio-economic and cultural constraints within society and the community that keep the marginalised out of school. The training should also provide them with examples of successful models adopted by other wards or zones for stemming the dropout rate and for devising practical and feasible solutions.

III. Prohibiting Child Labour

To stem the growing body of child workers in the city, it is important for the State to strictly implement the Prohibition of Child Labour Act in all sectors and to simultaneously improve the functioning of schools. Rehabilitation of child labourers costs the government four times the amount that it costs to provide primary education[36]. Instead of bearing the double burden of providing infrastructure for primary education which is wasted by under-utilisation and then paying again for creating

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[36] UNICEF. State of the World's Children. 1999.

infrastructure to rehabilitate the child, the State needs to establish a system that brings all children into a common education system. The State needs to adopt a muti-sectoral approach to implementing the Prohibition of Child Labour Act and ensuring that children below the age of 16 are not employed. Only stringent measures against employers, in both the formal and domestic sectors, will ensure that the number of child workers in the city decreases. The media should be used to disseminate information about the illegality of employing child labour.

IV. Enhancing Girls' Right to Education

Though dropout rates for boys are higher than for girls, the fact that more girls are withdrawn from school by parents and burdened with domestic tasks and responsibilities are factors that need to be addressed. In addition to incentive schemes for girls, it may be important to encourage teachers and School Committees to periodically review the attendance of girl children and to issue notices to parents who retain their daughters at home.

V. Re-orienting Teacher Training

Teacher training and education programmes should include aspects of re-orienting teachers' attitudes and their relations with the community and students. Teachers must be made conscious of the need to have a better understanding of the social and cultural backgrounds of the parents and children. While teachers are not sensitive to this dimension of the culture of the parents, they seek to be tolerant and understanding of practices such as child marriage, bonded labour, etc. which affect the educational opportunities of

children. Both training and policies need to revise this contradictory orientation of teachers. The importance of being sensitive and tolerant of the culture and personality of parents must be integrated into the teacher training programmes. At the same time, teacher training must emphasise the importance of not accepting as legitimate and excusable the personal and cultural factors such as early marriage, gender bias and parental neglect in sending children to school.

Teacher training should introduce new teaching-learning methods and pedagogies and enable teachers to adopt and practice them, while at the same time encourage them to develop and practice their own styles of teaching. Teachers should be encouraged to become members of associations that enhance teaching abilities and to subscribe to journals and magazines on teacher education.

VI. Improving Supervision and Review of Schools

State inspection and supervision of school infrastructure and functioning needs to be fine-tuned. While the new "school co-ordinator" is expected to check teacher attendance, maintenance of registers and records and the functioning of classes, the relationship between the co-ordinator and teachers needs to be qualified. Teachers should also be able to relate to the co-ordinator as a supporter who will help alleviate some of the school-related problems they face. Schools also need to be guided and supervised on issues such as the use of teaching-learning materials, development of teaching aids, the quality of the education being provided, training of teachers, etc. Further, the school co-ordinator could play a key role in encouraging and developing linkages between members of the community and the school.

VII. *Anganwadi* and Children's Crisis Fund

There is an urgent need for *anganwadis* to be set up in the urban poverty areas. Unlike rural areas in Karnataka, many of which do have *anganwadis,* there are very few *anganwadis* in the urban areas. An *anganwadi* will relieve teachers of the extra and distracting children in the classes and will also enable the older siblings to learn in class.

Many children are withdrawn from school when a parent, especially the father, dies or when there is a crisis in the family. Assistance, especially monetary and in kind, should be given to such children to ensure their continued attendance in school. A child-in-distress fund should be available at the Block Education Officer level to which teachers or members of the Education Committees should be able to apply.

VIII. Ward-level Awards for Schools

One way to sustain school standards and quality is to initiate awards for schools at the ward and zone levels. Schools can be evaluated for their functioning, attendance levels, maintenance of infrastructure, teachers' performance and children's achievement levels. These awards can be publicised and they can act as internal mechanisms for establishing quality and standards in schools.

IX. Decentralised Data Collection

Data collected through micro-planning, information regarding accessibility of schools, infrastructure needs of each school and dropouts (their conditions, whether they are working or not) needs

to be collected and held at decentralised levels, such as the school and the ward. Teachers must be encouraged to collect and retain data on out of school children. Details on the allocation of resources, supervision and functioning of schools should be part of the data base on schools. Data on schools with low enrolment and attendance should include details about the socio-economic background of the schools, reasons for low performance, etc. The data can be updated through six-monthly reviews and inputs from headmasters/ headmistresses and the school committees. Every school should also have details about the number of school-age children in the school zone and details about those not attending school.

This report is based on field research conducted
in Bangalore, Karnataka and is part of a study
conducted by NIAS in six different states in
India. The conditions of school and experiences
of elementary education deprivation among the
urban poor are highlighted in this report.

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