

# Bridging Educational Gaps: Unveiling Challenges and Nurturing Potential among Children in Jammu's Slum Areas

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## Abstract

Good Education for slum children is a ground-breaking initiative created by the Indian Women and Child Welfare Trust that aims to provide the underprivileged and marginalized, out-of-school and educationally backward children in urban slums with a safety net of education through a creative strategy. The initiative recognizes the nation's concern about improving learning outcomes and universalizing elementary education as being of the utmost importance. Quality education is a distant dream for thousands of children living in urban slums because of their extreme poverty. The mission of quality education for slum children is to realize this ideal and significantly improve the lives of the children. Five slum regions are located within Jammu city, which was the sole focus of the current study's population. Three slums were chosen to represent the population of children aged 5 to 15: Radhika colony, Kasim Nagar, and Chand Nagar (two of which were notified and one of which was not). A total of 150 children were included in the sample. The information was gathered with the assistance of local government units, slum leaders, and Anganwadi personnel (Supervisors and helpers). Details about each of these slums were acquired separately. The main findings of the survey included information on the educational status of school-going children of slums of Jammu region and the reasons for their low enrolment and dropout from schools.

**Keywords:** Slum-children, education, backward, underprivileged, marginalized, population, survey

## Introduction

Slum environments pose significant challenges for residents, particularly children. Despite these hardships, slum communities often exhibit strong social and economic networks. Childhood in slums deviates from conventional perceptions of innocence and uniformity, as children navigate difficult living conditions while assuming multiple responsibilities within their households and communities. These areas frequently lack essential amenities such as proper sanitation, clean drinking water, and designated play spaces. However, this does not eliminate childhood experiences but rather shapes them differently, requiring children to adapt to adverse conditions. The well-being of children—encompassing health, nutrition, education, and protection—is directly linked to the quality of their living environments and their access to essential services. Thus, incorporating child-centric strategies into slum development programs is crucial. (Ezeh, Oyebode, Satterthwaite, Sartori & Lilford, 2017).

Ensuring access to quality education for children in slums is a transformative initiative aimed at alleviating educational disparities. The program strives to bring children who are out of school or

educationally disadvantaged under the umbrella of learning through innovative approaches. Given the economic hardships faced by these families, formal education often remains inaccessible, making targeted interventions imperative (Jagannathan, 2001).

One of the primary challenges is the lack of preschool facilities that foster school readiness. Many children in slums lack proper identification documents, such as birth certificates, which are required for school enrollment. Without access to education, these children encounter severe obstacles in securing employment and improving their future prospects. They are also more vulnerable to health risks and social exclusion. This study seeks to examine the educational landscape of children in Jammu's slums by assessing school enrollment trends and investigating the reasons behind low participation rates in formal education.

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### **Review of Related Literature**

Research on slum communities has consistently highlighted an awareness of education's importance among marginalized groups. Aggarwal (2003) found that parents aspire to break the cycle of educational disadvantage by ensuring their children receive higher education. However, due to household constraints and inadequate school environments, dropout rates remain high, and only a few students attain academic proficiency.

Gilbert (2009) emphasized the need for targeted policies to prevent the unregulated expansion of slums and the associated urban housing crisis. Without appropriate interventions, deteriorating living conditions perpetuate cycles of poverty and hinder educational access.

Dharamrajan (2010) highlighted the inadequacies in early childhood education, emphasizing that despite policy advancements, limited attention is given to foundational learning experiences. His study calls for systemic changes to improve educational provisions in urban settlements.

Madon and Sahay (2011) explored the impact of unplanned urban growth on education, identifying barriers created by informal settlements. Their research underscores the need for structured educational programs tailored to children in slum communities.

Chatterjee (2012) examined childhood experiences in slums, describing how inadequate infrastructure and restricted living spaces affect children's developmental opportunities.

Gul and Ganai (2016) discussed the exclusion of tribal communities from educational opportunities due to socio-economic barriers. Their findings align with studies on slum populations, which reveal similar patterns of marginalization.

Abuya et al. (2017) investigated the role of parental education in influencing school completion rates in slums, noting disparities linked to socioeconomic status and migration patterns.

Kouser and Bhadra (2021) analyzed the effects of border conflicts on children's rights, emphasizing disruptions in school attendance and learning continuity.

Gullo and Ammar (2022) demonstrated that children from low socio-economic backgrounds face distinct developmental challenges, reinforcing the need for targeted early learning interventions.

Lim et al. (2024) explored the determinants of early childhood education, emphasizing the impact of maternal education and household conditions on learning outcomes.

### **Operational Definition of Slum**

The definition of Slum adopted for J&K (Slum free city action plan, J&K) is an adjacent region with 10-15 households that exhibit characteristics of a slum, including but not limited to: any material other than concrete is the predominant roof material there is no drinking water source on the census house's property, no restrooms are located on the grounds of the census house and No drainage or open drainage facilities are available. Slums can be found both in the centre of Jammu City and in its surrounding suburbs. The town has experienced an unprecedented spatial expansion in tandem with population growth brought on by forced emigration from time to time and urban to rural areas. The majority of the slums are located near bus stops, train stations, and other locations where these poor people were first given employment. The sampled population in the slums is primarily made up of either intra-or inter-state migrants.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are:

1. To assess the educational status of children of slums of Jammu region.
2. To assess the status of school going children of selected slum areas.
3. To find out the reasons for low enrolment/ dropout of children from schools.

### **Research Methodology**

A Survey based methodology was used for collecting data in the present study.

**Population:** The population of the present study is confined to Jammu city, wherein there are five slum areas in Jammu itself. Three slums: Radhika colony, Kasim Nagar and Chand Nagar (Two Notified and one Non-Notified) were selected, covering the population of 5 years to 15 years children.

**Sample:** Fifty percent of enlisted beneficiaries were selected for the proposed study. A group of 150 poor and educationally backward children in rural/ urban Slums were covered.

**Collection of Data:** A pre-tested schedule cum questionnaire was used to collect the primary information. Secondary data was gathered from several locations. The data was collected with the help of local bodies, heads of the slums and the Anganwadi workers (Supervisors and helpers). Each of these slum's details were obtained individually.

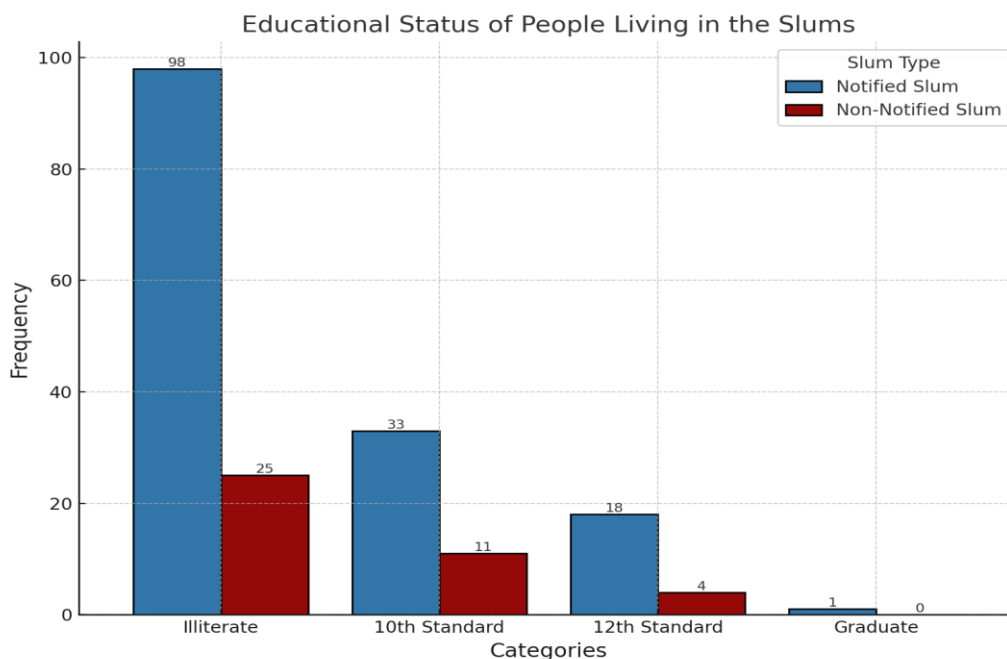
### **Results and Findings**

The findings are based on the survey conducted in a sample of three urban slums in Jammu city. The present report contains information on the educational status of different households of sample respondents, community status of different households, no. of family members, occupational status, monthly Income status, status of school going children of selected slum areas, reason for low enrolment/dropout of children from educational system, educational institutions involved in educating slum children.

**Objective 1: To assess the educational status of children of slums of Jammu region.**

**Table 1: Educational Status of People Living in the Slums.**

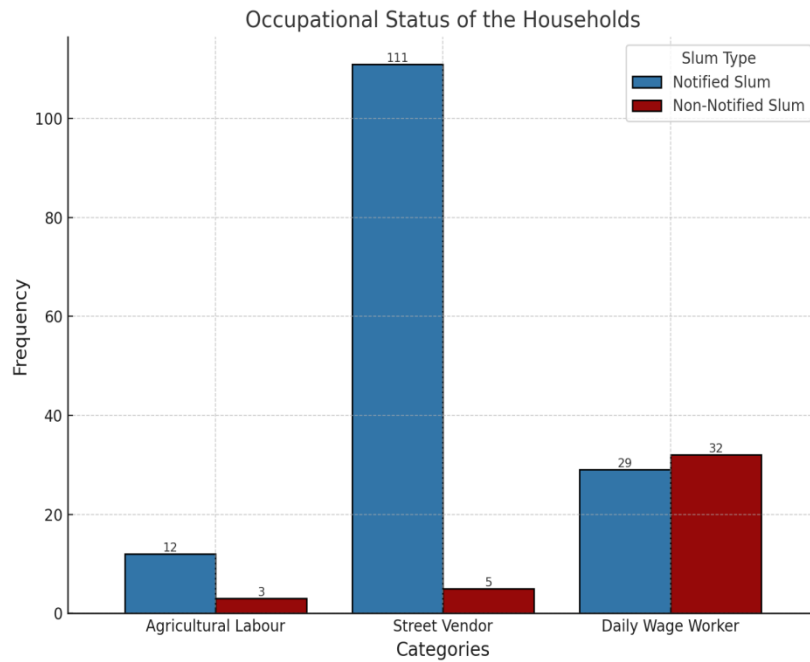
S. No.	Particulars	Notified Slum (n=50)		Non-Notified Slum (n=40)	
		No.	In Percent	No.	In Percent
1	Illiterate	98	65.33	25	62.5
2	10 <sup>th</sup> Standard	33	22	11	27.5
3	12 <sup>th</sup> Standard	18	12	4	10
4	Graduate	1	0.66	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>



The educational status of 3 out of 5 slums in Jammu was surveyed. Out of these 3 sample slums, 2 were notified and 1 was non-notified slum. According to data in Table 1, of the 150 sample inhabitants, 65.33% were illiterate in the slums that had been notified, compared to 62.5% in the non-notified slums. In the notified slums, there were 22%, 12%, and 0.66%, respectively, of people with a high school, 12<sup>th</sup> grade and graduation degree. The proportion was lower in non-notified slums, as data seems that 27.5% of persons passed in the tenth grade and 10% passed in the twelfth. Nobody with a degree was discovered in a non-informed slum.

**Table 2: Occupational Status of the Households of Sample Respondents.**

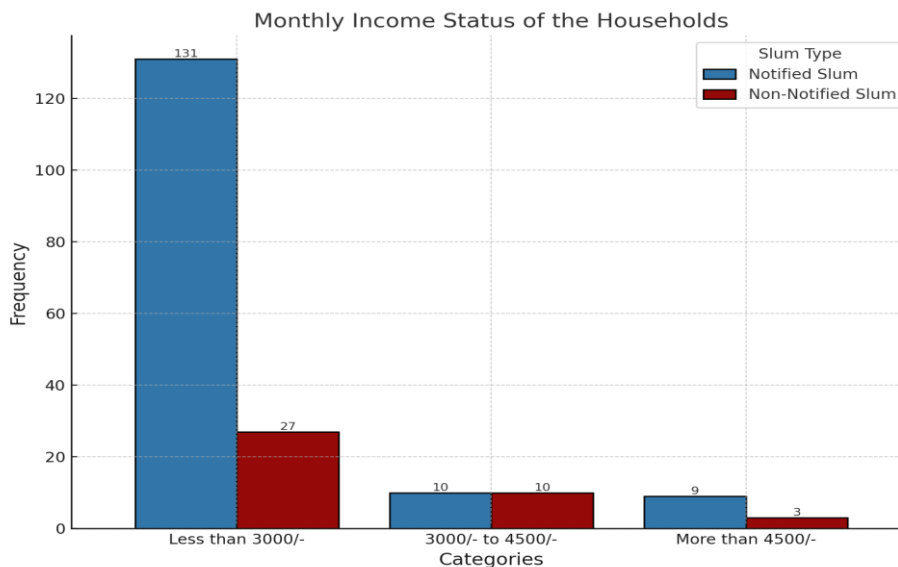
S. No.	Particulars	Notified Slum (n=50)		Non-Notified Slum (n=40)	
		No.	In Percent	No.	In Percent
1	Agricultural labour	12	8	3	7.5
2	Street vendor	111	74	5	12.5
3	Daily Wage Worker	29	19.33	32	80
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>



Data in Table 2 shows that 74% of street vendors, 19.33% of daily wage workers, and 8% of persons in notified slums work in agriculture. It demonstrates that the bulk of people living in unregistered slums work as labourers, masons, carpenters, etc. 7.5% of the population works in agriculture, 12.5% are a street vendor, and 80% is a daily wage worker.

**Table 3: Monthly Income Status of the Households of Sample Respondents.**

S. No.	Particulars	Notified Slum (n=50)		Non-Notified Slum (n=40)	
		No.	In Percent	No.	In Percent
1	Less than 3000/-	131	87.33	27	67.5
2	3000/- to 4500/-	10	6.66	10	25
3	More than 4500/-	9	6	3	7.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>



As seen in Table 3, the bulk of the population lived as either street vendor in notified slums or daily wage workers in non-notified slums. Of these households, 87.33% had monthly incomes of less than 3,000/-, while 6.66% had incomes between 3,000/- and 4,500/-. In known slums, just 6% of families make more than 4500/- a month. In a non-notified slum, 67.5% of households have a monthly income of less than 3,000/-, 25% have a monthly income of between 3,000/- and 4,500/-, and 7.5% have a monthly income of over 4,500/-.

**Findings of Objective 1**

Education is crucial to the social development of a society. The slum residents' general level of education is low. They don't enroll their children in school. They do not spend money on schooling because of their low economic level. Low levels of education are a hindrance to working and making money. They are working as informal laborers and making less money since they lack educational facilities. Low earnings or poverty have a negative impact on both schooling and life quality.

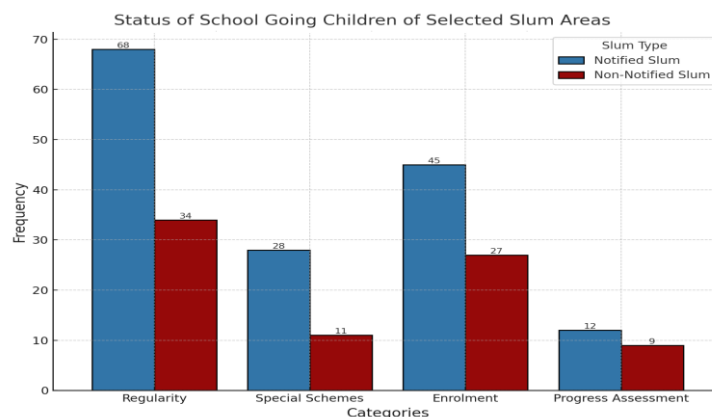
People who live in slums typically lack literacy. They are thus involved in low-level economic activity. They make less money than other people. Due to lower economic levels, individuals typically don't eat nutritious meals. Children in slums suffer from malnutrition.

Income and quality of life are connected. With growing income levels comes a higher standard of living. Income improves the standard of living and expands access to better health care, education, and other amenities for slum dwellers.

**Objective 2: To assess the status of school-going children of selected slum areas.**

**Table 4: Status of School Going Children of Selected Slum Areas.**

S. No.	Particulars	Notified Slum (n=50)		Non-Notified Slum (n=40)	
		No.	In Percent	No.	In Percent
1	Regularity of going to school	68	40	34	66
2	Special schemes availed for the education	28	72	11	89
3	Enrolment of children into school	45	55	27	73
4	Visit to schools for assessment of children's progress	12	88	9	91
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>



Data in Table 4, shows that, of the 100 children in notified slums, 68 attended schools regularly, compared to 40 who attended irregularly, 28 who had taken advantage of special schemes, 45 of whom had been enrolled in other schools, and 55 who had not been properly enrolled. In a non-notified slum, out of 100 children, 34 attended schools regularly, 66 irregularly, 11 had taken advantage of special schemes, 27 children were enrolled in different schools, and 89 were not properly enrolled. During the conversation, it was revealed that, between notified and non-notified slums, only 12 and 9 parents used to visit schools to check on the progress of their children, while the remaining 88 and 91 never did.

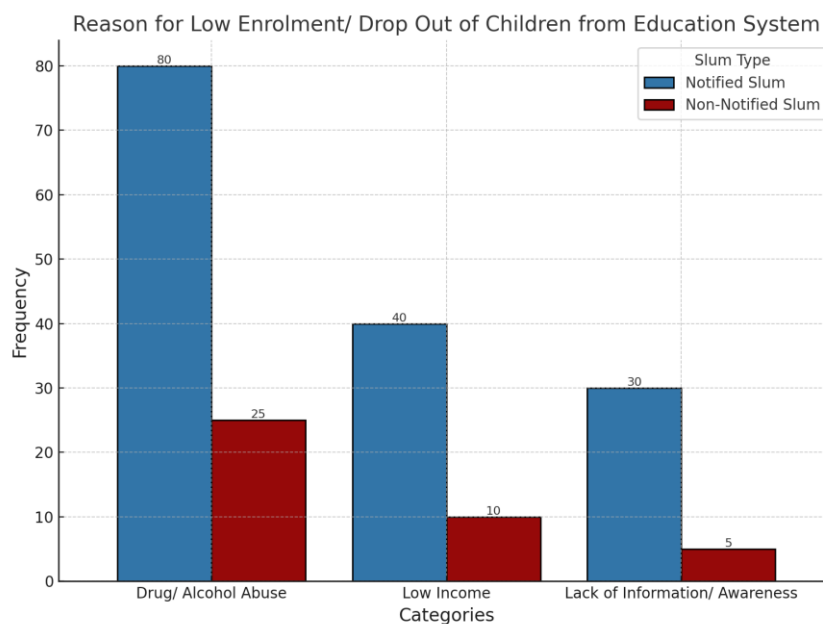
### Findings of Objective 2

The information show frequently children in the chosen slum regions attend school. Even in schools, teachers do not give each student their full attention because the majority of parents are either everyday employees or actively involved in their households. Therefore, a big part of the reason why children drop out of school is due to both the atmosphere in the slum and the school. The majority of these children are first-generation learners, which is a crucial reality since it means their parents can't successfully mentor them. Parents cannot evaluate the efficacy of the schools. Children are frequently held responsible for their lack of interest in academics. It was discovered that parents rarely visited schools to know about their children's performance. For the assessment portion of their children's progress, they rarely bothered.

### Objective 3: To find out the reasons for low enrolment/ drop out of children from schools.

**Table 5: Reason for Low Enrolment/ Drop Out of Children from Education AI System.**

S. No.	Particulars	Notified Slum (n=50)		Non-Notified Slum (n=40)	
		No.	In Percent	No.	In Percent
1	Drug/ Alcohol abuse	80	53.33	25	62.5
2	Low income	40	26.66	10	25
3	Lack of information/ awareness	30	20	5	12.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100</b>

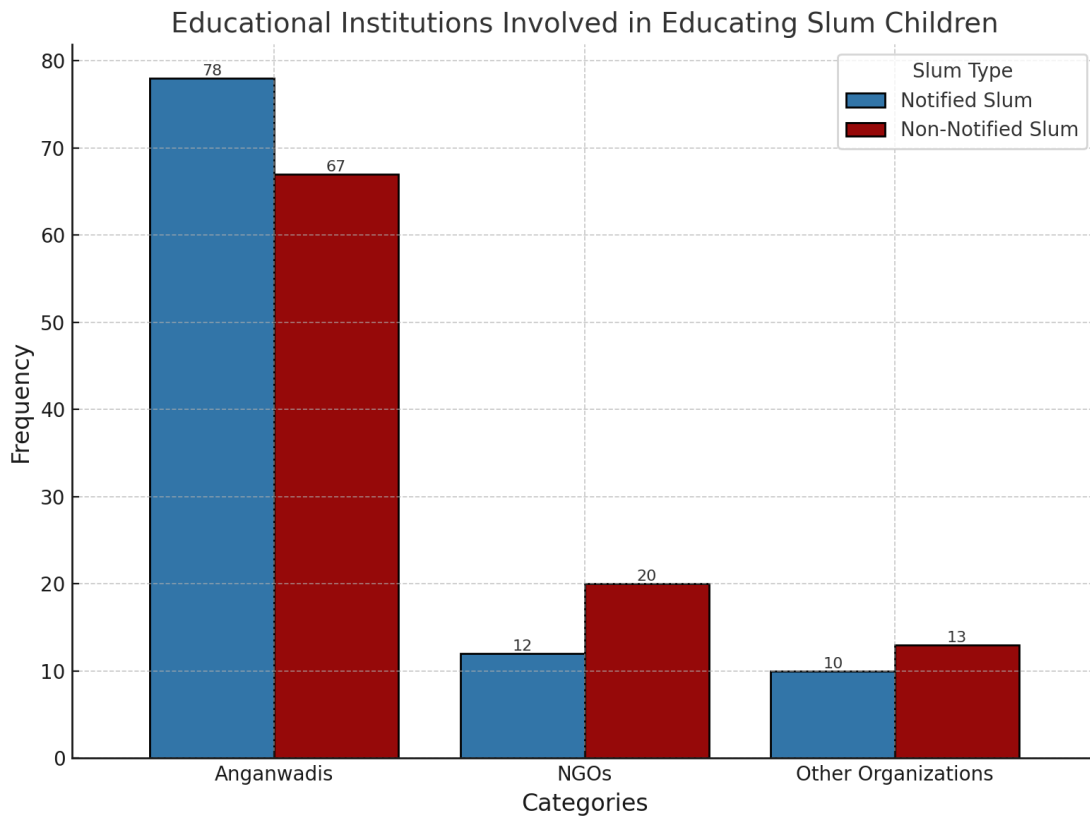




The majority of individuals in slums are illiterate, as seen in Table 1. According to the available data in Table 5, 53.33% of the people living in the notified slums used drugs or alcohol. 20% of them lacked knowledge and awareness, while 26.66% had poor incomes. In contrast to this, 62.5% of persons were discovered using drugs or alcohol, 25% had low incomes, and 12.5% lived in unregistered slums and lacked knowledge or awareness.

**Table 6: Educational Institutions Involved in Educating Slum Children.**

S. No.	Particulars	Notified Slum (n=50)	Non-Notified Slum (n=40)
1	Anganwadis	78	67
2	NGOs	12	20
3	Other Organizations	10	13
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>40</b>



Data in Table 6 shows that 78 Anganwadis, 12 NGOs, and 10 other organizations are actively working in notified slums, whereas 67 Anganwadis, 20 NGOs, and 13 other organizations are participating in non-notified slums, according to the information acquired on the groups operating in these slum areas.

### Findings of Objective 3

While the majority of women work as domestic helpers, the majority of males work as daily wage workers. It was discovered during a conversation with residents of the slums that the COVID-19 expansion and lockdown are to blame for the unemployment of many males in this neighbourhood. The environment of the slum was especially harmful for children due to the chronic unemployment that had



decreased their standard of life and caused many unemployed people to turn to gambling and alcoholism. All these factors have an adverse impact upon the educational growth of the children.

A vast gap still exists between the aspirations of both parents and children and the level of education being provided by government and private schools; it was discovered during discussions with parents and children in the slums about the criteria pertaining to educational quality. Parental dissatisfaction with the educational organizations' system was quite high.

### **Suggestions of the Study**

1. Educational Awareness training programmes should be conducted in the slums to orient the parents about the importance of education, however it plays a key role in creating equitable society that is well-educated and equipped with relevant skills, attitudes, and knowledge which is needed for the overall development of society.
2. Parents should be oriented about the universalization of elementary education; the government has started numerous projects and programs. In accordance with the National Policy of Education's tenets, the government has implemented a number of programs to guarantee that everyone receives an equal education.
3. Training programmes about the various schemes should be conducted. These schemes improve access to good education by expanding good schools, to promote equity and to improve the basic quality of education. Few schemes for elementary education in India are:
  - a) Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)
  - b) National Program for Education of Girls at Elementary Education (NPEGEL)
  - c) Mid-day Meal Scheme
  - d) Right to Education (RTE) Act
  - e) Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao
  - f) Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalay

### **Implications of the Study**

The lack of adequate data on children in slums is a major difficulty in understanding their problems from the right perspective. Contextually the problems of children in the slums of the Jammu region are specific concerning the child's right to survival (health), right to development (education), right to participation (social) and right to protection from exploitation. The socio-economic-health and educational data provide ample evidence of their exploitation and discrimination.

The educational scenario of children in slums is dismal. They could not avail the opportunity of entering the portal of learning due to the lack of affordability, availability and accessibility of education. The intervention of NGOs could not bring out a substantial change in the quality of education. Nearly 50 percent of children in the slums of these are as have never been enrolled. Out of 50 percent enrolled, only 5 to 8 percent reach class ten. Enrolment in higher education is almost zero.

Right to Development: 'No Child Left' uneducated between the age of 6 to 14 years. Brilliant children should be identified and enrolled in private institutions. Cost of their education should be borne by the government. 'Open School' should come forward to bring the drop out into the mainstream of schooling. Short-term vocational courses for dropout should be organized so that they could be absorbed gainfully. It should be mandatory on the part of implementing agency to get each child registered at birth.

Infrastructural facilities in the educational institutions (Anganwadi schools) have to be provided. Learni-

ng and games materials for the children should be demand driven as well as relevant to their growth and development.

Quality education is not available to marginalized sections of society on account of their inability to afford it. It has been observed that “economically hard-up parents soon discover that attendance in schools for one year and even two years has not meant any substantial improvement in the generic level of awareness of their children or the content of their learning. Such a realization has sometimes led to the decision that it would make better sense to withdraw the children from school and to put them to work in fields or workshops, here by adding immediately to the household income.’ Therefore, quality of education should get the topmost priority.

Space for games and sports facilities should be made available either in the institution or in the slum areas, where children can participate in various physical activities.

The children of slums should be provided opportunities to express and explore their creativity, talents or skills. The spirit of competitions should be developed among the children of these areas by participating in national or international day celebrations.

Participation in various camps or in educational tours has been found prerogative of privileged class studying in the private schools. Children from slums should also have the chance to travel to other regions of the state for trips and camps.

Participation in various camps or educational tours has been found prerogative of the privileged class studying in private schools. Children of slums should also get an opportunity of going for camps and tours to other parts of the state. It is also incumbent upon the family to take the primary responsibility for meeting their children’s physical, emotional and intellectual needs and for providing moral guidance and direction. Community, educational institutions, religious organizations, health and service centres, and NGOs should come forward in creating an environment that is supportive of children in slum areas. Outcomes of Action-oriented programmes should be measured in terms of behavioural changes in children of slums. Extreme economic insecurity, the constant threat of survival, and the lack of educational facilities should not come in the way of the development of children in these areas.

## Conclusions

In our sample slum areas, there is a sufficient supply of schools and a sizable demand for education among families from various economic categories, as was covered in the sample survey section. Slum children require extra care during their elementary school years because of their inferior socio-economic condition and vulnerability. These kids lose interest in their academics and drop out of school since they don't find a welcoming environment there. In most institutions, this issue is reflected in the decreasing number of students who enroll in the next class each year.

The survey findings above demonstrate that not all slum children will necessarily attend school as a result of the development of schools in the neighborhood. The environment is the most significant component that influences a child's learning period. No matter how many schools are built, if the fundamental living circumstances of a slum are not improved or provided, it is impossible to establish an environment that is conducive to the child's learning. This means that the problem of low academic achievement and ultimate dropouts will continue. In addition to terrible living circumstances, children in slums also do not receive a high-quality education. Class sizes are massive, the schools are overcrowded, and the inadequate student-teacher ratios are concerning.

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