



ISSN Print: 2394-7500
ISSN Online: 2394-5869
Impact Factor: 5.2
IJAR 2016; 2(5): 1162-1166
www.allresearchjournal.com
Received: 26-03-2016
Accepted: 30-04-2016

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A demographic insight of a level & pattern of slums in Ahmedabad city

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Abstract

It outlines how urbanization has led to a significant increase in slum populations due to insufficient housing from Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). The study highlights the persistent issue of slums in Indian megacities, with Mumbai, Kolkata, and Chennai facing substantial slum growth due to factors like migration and agricultural instability. Using data from the 2001 Census, the paper describes the demographics and socioeconomic conditions of Ahmedabad's slums, comparing them to other cities in Gujarat and India at large. The paper presents detailed statistical data on slum populations and growth trends, underscoring the linkage between urban expansion and slum proliferation. Key findings include the relatively high percentage of Ahmedabad's urban population living in slums, and the city's demographic challenges, such as a notably low female-to-male ratio. The study also discusses governmental and municipal responses to slum conditions, which include relocation initiatives and infrastructure improvements, though it critiques these efforts as insufficient.

Keywords: Slums, slum dwellers urbanization, female-to-male ratio

1. Introduction

1.1 The Context

It has been the experience of many countries including India that the process of urbanization creates positive as well as negative externalities. This urbanization leads to a high intensity of migration which creates tremendous pressure on Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) in terms of housing and public utility services. Since these ULBs are not in a position to provide proper housing facilities to these migrants it generates slums in cities. Among the many problems associated with urban growth, an increase in the proportion of slums and squatters especially in metropolitan and other large cities has been the prominent problem.

The fast growth of urban population, spread of urban areas, and surge in secondary and tertiary activities have all led to problems of housing. The worst sufferers are the poor. Especially the accumulated backlog in urban housing, along with housing needs for additional population has aggravated the problem further, resulting in the proliferation of slums and squatter settlements. (Sarala R, 2008) ^[8] The problem of growing slums, rise in the population of cities and increasing pressure on the urban space and infrastructural services have for decades been attendant features of the changing urban socio-economic context of the country.

Slums in the mega cities of India show an increasing trend due to fast urban growth. For instance, Mumbai which is known as the commercial capital of India has the highest slum population (49 percent), Kolkata with 33 percent, has the second highest proportion of slums dwellers. This increase in the slums population is due to migration from the neighboring states. Failure of crops in many districts of Tamil Nadu has contributed to rise in slums population in Chennai (26%) which is in the third place. Hyderabad, Delhi and Bangalore are followed with 17, 19 and 8 percent respectively (Supriti, S., and Ramanathan, R., 2002) ^[9].

Generally, such kind of slums locations are inhabited by poor and their growth has often occurred independent of any surge in prosperity through large scale industrialization. Hence, the level of urbanization and the rate of urban expansion may not always be caused by the 'push' from the rural area due to significant changes in the mode of production in agriculture... (Das, 2007) ^[3].

Placed within this context, the present study aims at portraying the growth of slums and slum

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dwellers in Ahmedabad city. However, the limitation of this study is that as Government of India has not published the data for slums for 2011 so here, the data from Census 2001 has been considered. But before examining the problem in depth, it would be essential to clarify the concept of slums.

2. Theoretical Framework

Despite substantial literature available on urban planning and problems in the country as well as in the world, it becomes difficult to spell out the definition of slums in clear terms. The term 'slum' is defined differently in various countries of the world depending on the socio-economic condition of the society. Different authors, Commissions, Acts and Census in India define such locations differently often in a broad and unclear fashion. For instance the Slums Act, 1956 defines slums mainly as "the substandard structure of housing, overcrowding, lack of ventilation, zero or near zero sanitary facilities all conspiring to promote slums life which defies health and morals". (Census of India, 1951).

According to Census of India, 2001 "a slum is a compact area of at least 300 population or about 60-70 households of poorly built congested tenements in unhygienic environment, usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities." (Census of India, 2001). The definitions of slums give an

idea about some peculiar characteristics of such settlements. Usually slums are characterized by the lack of basic needs such as proper housing, drinking water facility, health care centres and sanitation. Bakde admits that poverty, inability of Government and Urban Local Bodies, soaring price and rent laws, population explosion, continuous migration of rural population to urban areas are some responsible factors leading to the phenomenal growth of slums in cities. Moreover, slums were given different names at different places like 'Katrass' in Delhi, Chawls & Jhopadpattis in Mumbai, Bustees in Kolkata etc.

Given such various sets of meanings, it appears that the definitions of slum have been varying based mainly on (i) purpose; (ii) the context and (iii) the time of the study. After a detailed discussion on the meaning, definition and problem let us turn to the magnitude of slum.

3. Magnitude & Pattern of Slums

For the first time, the census 2001 has collected data regarding the slum settlements in all urban centres with population of 50, 000 plus throughout the country. The total slums population in the country works out as above 40 million accounting for 13.98 percent of the total urban population and 3.91 of the total population as against 1.3 million (7.12%) of the Gujarat State and 0.40 million (16.68%) of Ahmedabad city of the total urban population.

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of Slums – A Comparative Study of India, Gujarat and Ahmedabad City

Region	Total Population	Urban Population	Slum Population	Percentage of Slum Population to total Population	Percentage of Slum Population to total Urban Population	Sex Ratio	Literacy Rate
India	1028610328	288054954	40297341	3.91	13.98	875	63.62
Gujarat	50671017	18899377	1346709	2.65	7.12	811	56.02
Ahmedabad City	2433835	2433835	406018	16.68	16.68	681	67.46

Source: Census of India, 2001: India, Gujarat State and Ahmedabad.

The states reporting high share of slum population to total urban population are Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Haryana, constituting 25.9, 25.1 and 23 percent of the urban population respectively. The main reason for this high share may be the failures of public management and scarcity of financial and technical capacities. However, the slum statistics of States prove that there is a positive correlation between urban growth and slum population. Some big cities are examples of this. (Census of India, 2001).

With the changing industrial situation and growth of its economic activities, the city of Ahmedabad has not only attracted a large amount of capital, but also a very big number of migrants from within the Gujarat State as well as from neighbouring states of Maharashtra and Rajasthan as well from far regions of Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. An overwhelming majority of these migrants live in slums and other informal settlements. During the early 'seventies' and 'eighties', the proportion of slum to the city population did not record any significant changes. Also during this time, annual growth rate of the

population was 6.7 and 7.5 percent respectively. However, during 1982-83, the growth in the slum population growth rate was as high as 21.4 percent. This growth has been remarkable especially since the area of the city during the time remained the same. (Supriti & Ramnathan, 2002) ^[9]. Here it should be noted that in terms of the spatial distribution most of the slums in 1983 were located within the old city and along the roads and railway lines. (Core consultants, 1983). A study carried out by ORG group projected that around 3.42 lakhs slum people constituting 26 percent of the city's population, was living in slums of Ahmedabad by 1993. A detailed socio-economic study on slums of Ahmedabad city showed 4.34 lakhs of people living in slums of Ahmedabad city in 1993. (Sarela, 2008) ^[11] Available statistics on slum by SMC reveal that the population living in the city slums was around 4.91 lakhs by 2001 forming 20.17 percent of the city population at that time, while by 2005, the share nearly has remained the same (20.32%). The absolute figure of these slum dwellers increased to 5.69 lakhs

Table 2: Growth Trends of Slum Population in Ahmedabad City (1973-2005)

Year	Total Population (in Lakhs)	Average Annual Growth Rate (in %)	Total Slum Population (in Lakhs)	Average Annual Growth Rate (in %)	Slum Population as per percentage of total population
1973	5.3	-	0.92	-	17.35
1982	8.5	6.7	1.54	7.5	18.11
1983	9.2	8.2	1.87	21.4	20.32
1992	15.7	7.8	4.34	14.6	27.64
2001	24.34	6.1	4.91	1.4	20.17
2005	28.00	3.7	5.69	3.9	20.32

Source: 1) ORG (1985); 2) Core Consultants (1983); 3) Das Biswaroop (1994); 4) SMC (2006)

Looking to the table 2 one can certainly say that more or less the population of slums to the total population remains same at 18%. During the same time, the average annual growth rate of population was 6.7 and 7.5 percent respectively for the city and its slum pockets. During 1982-83, the growth in the slum population was as high as 21.4 percent as against 8.2 percent growth of city's population. This growth was remarkable since the area of the city during the time remained the same. Subsequent rise in the population had partially been due to substantial increase in the area of city and bringing the peripheral area under the Corporation limits. The average annual growth rate of the slum population during this time was 14.6 percent as against 7.8 percent of the city population. Here the point to be noted is that the growth rate in the slum population has declined during 1992-2001 and 2001-2005. This has been due to some slums being relocated and many incoming migrants

locating themselves in slums and other informal settlements outside the city limits. In short, it appears that over a period of time though there has been a fluctuation in the average annual growth rates of total population and total population of slums in absolute terms both city's population and slum population have been soaring gradually. Ahmedabad's slum population is one of the highest in the country. This proves the hypothesis of positive correlation between urban growth and growth in slums and slum population.

In addition, the proportion of the slum population to the city population was 16.68 percent in 2001 which was highest as compared to other cities of Gujarat State. Rajkot comes second with 15.56 percent followed by Bhavnagar (15.52). Jamnagar has the least percentage of slum population of 5.51 percent among the municipal corporations of Gujarat State.

Table 3: Slum Demography of Municipal Corporation of Gujarat (2001)

Municipal Corporation	Population 2001	Slum Population			% of total population	Sex Ratio
		Persons	Male	Female		
Ahmedabad	3520085	439843	237582	202261	12.50	851
Surat	2433835	406018	241524	164494	16.68	681
Vadodara	1306227	107289	56936	50353	8.21	884
Rajkot	967476	150552	79741	70811	15.56	888
Bhavnagar	511085	79315	41670	37645	15.52	903
Jamnagar	443518	24457	13071	11386	5.51	871

Source: Census of India, 2001

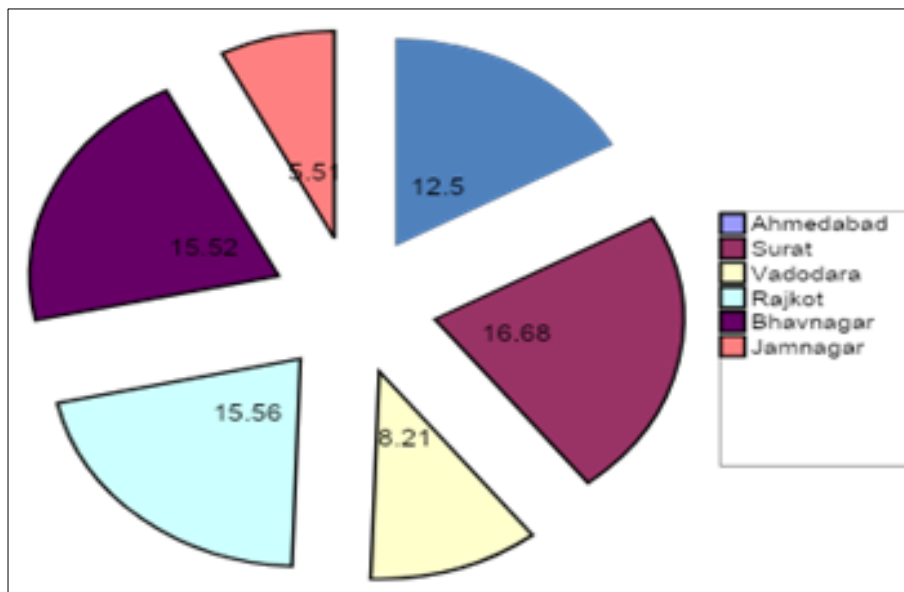


Chart 1: Slum demography of major municipal corporations of Gujarat (2001)

At the same time looking at the sex ratios of slums in these Municipal Corporations of Gujarat, it can be seen that Ahmedabad has an alarmingly low sex ratio (681) among these six municipal corporations. A large influx of single male migrants has been observed which resulted not only in the formation of slums but also disturbing the social balance in the city.

The city presents a wide range of activities in various industrial and commercial sectors. Moreover, as per a study by Sarela in 1993, as many as 80 percent of the slum dwellers in the city of Ahmedabad had come from regions outside Ahmedabad and did not originally belong to it. (Sarela, 2008) [11] Here, the non-specific migration plays a significant role in raising the number of slums in

Ahmedabad. From within Gujarat, they have mainly come from Rajkot, Bhavnagar, Mahesana, Patan and Kheda, Panchmahal districts and from outside Gujarat they came from as far as north-eastern and southern most states in the country like Orissa, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. It is important to note that most of the districts sending migrants to Ahmedabad are least developed areas in the country and are also characterized by low literacy rates and high poverty ratios.

While analyzing the growth of slums in numbers in Ahmedabad city, data reveal that there are 312 slums in the city (2006) in which about 6 lakhs (20.32%) of total population lives. During 1961-66 there were 133 total number of slums in Ahmedabad city i.e., at almost 3 percent

of average annual growth rate the number of slums in Ahmedabad city has increased during 1961-2006 (see Table 4) this situation strengthens a hypothesis that urban growth and growth in slum go together.

Table 4: Growth in the Number of Slums in Ahmedabad City (1960-2006)

Period	Number of Slums Added	Cumulative Total
Upto 1960	-	79
1961-66	54	133
1966-72	46	179
1973-78	41	220
1979-84	50	270
1985-90	24	294
1991-95	0	294
1995-98	-5	289
1999-2001	18	307
2005-2006	05	312

Source: Ahmedabad City Development Plan, (2006-12), Ahmedabad

Furthermore, the slum locations have been selected mainly by nearness to work site by these migrant workers and availability of patches of land along the road and rail tracks, adjacent to factory walls, and low lying areas and canal banks. The density in all the slums of Ahmedabad that existed before 1994 is significantly high, making them

congested and unhygienic. Out of 312 slums in the city, 124 are within and around the city wall, 85 are along transport corridors and a significant number 51 slums exist in the interior area of the wards (see Table 5) of various zones.

Table 5: Location of Slums in the Ahmedabad City (2001)

Locations	Number	Percent
Within the city wall	92	30.0
Outskirts of city wall	32	10.4
Along transport corridors	85	27.7
Along or near river banks	19	6.2
Near old settlements	28	9.1
Interior areas of wards	51	16.6
Total	307	100.0

Source: Ahmedabad City Development Plan, (2006-12), Ahmedabad

The spatial distribution of zone wise slum settlements shows that the growth in slum population has been highest in Southern zone of Ahmedabad city with 2045 average population per slum. The south-east zone recorded as much as 39.76 percent (i.e. almost 40 percent) of zone population and 5.46 percent of the total population of Ahmedabad city. This zone also has dense pockets in the city having a large number of work-sites, markets as well as production and processing units of power looms, often as a part of the 'informal' sector of the city's economy.

Table 6: Zone Wise Slum Settlements in Ahmedabad city (2005)

Zone	No. of Slums	No. of Slums HHs	Slum Population	Percentage to Zone Population	Percentage to total population	Average Population per slum	Average per HH
Central	28	9001	45005	10.88	1.84	1607.32	5
North	47	8869	44345	13.26	1.82	943.51	5
East	45	12000	60000	10.32	2.46	1333.33	5
West	42	10078	50390	20.11	2.07	1199.76	5
South	50	20450	102250	31.94	4.20	2045.00	5
North west	77	26609	133045	39.76	5.46	1727.85	5
South-West	23	6648	33240	16.64	1.35	1445.21	5
AMC	312	93655	468275	19.24	19.24	1500.88	5

Source: Ahmedabad City Development Plan, (2006-12)

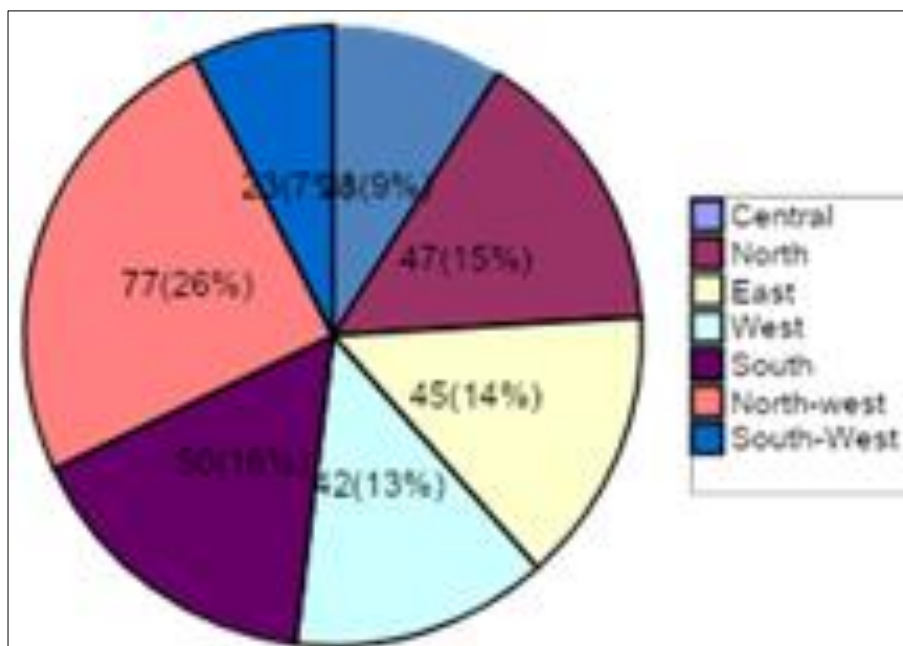


Chart 2: Distribution of slum settlements in various zones of SMC (2005)

At the same time, development of new slums could not be avoided by SMC due to easy access to open space in South and South-east zones of Ahmedabad city. Sixty-four percent of the public land has been encroached upon by slums in the city, with 44 and 20 percent respectively belonging to the Corporation and Government. This could be the reason behind the addition of new slum pockets in the city. AMC is providing more percentage of land for these slum dwellers to get the tag of zero slums in coming years. AMC has taken up the task of relocating slum dwellers residing on the banks of River Sabarmati to newly constructed houses for economically weaker section of the society in Ahmedabad city. This is being done to step up construction work of the embankment and ultimately make Ahmedabad 'zero slum city'. This is not a new thing for Ahmedabad as in some large cities, the slum wings of development authorities undertake this responsibility. At city level, apart from the state housing boards, development authorities take the major responsibility of designing and executing housing programmes. In Gujarat, Surat & Ahmedabad etc. cities undertake these housing projects. In its efforts to resolve the problems of slum, particularly the Health Department of AMC, is doing some work on this line. But all these appear to be more adhoc and crisis driven rather than based on long term strategic objectives concerning the city in totality. (Engineer, 2004) ^[4].

A study made on the health status on the slum dwellers reveals that people living in the slums of Ahmedabad have no access to some basic health amenities. They do not have any access to toilet facility and have to defecate in open spaces. Many of them do not know the correct symptom and line of treatment for diseases. They are even ignorant about HIV/ AIDS. On an average one pregnancy per house hold in these slums results in miscarriage and abortion. Research scholar of this study also noted that Urban Health Centres (UHCs) of the AMC remain highly underutilised (7.6 percent) in these areas and a suitable intervention to improve the utilization rates of public health services is called for. (Acharya, 2006) ^[1].

Government Measures

The studies by Punalekar (1995) ^[6], Kazi & Prasad (2001) ^[5] shows the socio-economic conditions of "slumdogs" of Ahmedabad city. All these studies highlight the vulnerable situation of slum dwellers. But unfortunately there were very little efforts made by the Government official except identifying the goals and objectives for slums improvement. It is only in last few years AMC is seriously doing the efforts for improvements of slum dwellers. Around, 48 slum pockets were covered under the National Slum Development Program. The Gujarat Municipal Finance Board has been sanctioning loans/ grants under this program to upgrade the existing environment in slums. Besides this, AMC is also administrating a few centrally sponsored programs for the poor and slum dwellers under various schemes viz., Integrated Child Development Scheme, Urban Community Development and Urban Basic Services for the poor. But lots have to be done in this regard to make city as "zero-slum" city. The proportion of slum population is a major indicator of city's growth. But though this population plays a major role in urban growth, their living conditions are pathetic. This has been an unfortunate story of informal sector all over India.

Concluding Remarks

As Karl Marx rightly observed that it is the duty of social scientists to understand and interpret the changes, but more important is to bring the change in the conditions of the poor and the economic system. The studies so far at different levels have proved that the fast growing cities have positive and negative externalities. One negative externality clearly seen so far is of slums and slum population. This is clearly proved in case of Ahmedabad city. As per available data, over a period of time the slums and slum population have increased in Ahmedabad city. This is mainly because of migration. In the last few years this population has increased. Ahmedabad city's slum population is second highest in Gujarat. In spite of the efforts made by the Government lots have to be done to improvise the conditions of slums & slum dwellers.

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