

Community Survey at ThakkarBappa Colony, Kurla (East)

A Report on Community Survey- ThakkarBappa Colony

Introduction

A team of teachers, along with the D.T.Ed students visited ThakkarBappa Colony for a community survey on 16th and 17th of February 2017. The main aim of the survey was to find out the socio-economic background of the people and also the educational background of the school going children. This report is based on personal observations and interactions of teachers as well as students with the community.

Location

ThakkarBappa Colony is located in the east of Kurla. It is located at a very central place and is close to the Kurla Railway station and the national highway. This place is well connected to the Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus and other important places in Mumbai.

Population

Most of the people belong to “Regar” and “Marwari” community of Rajasthan. When we enquired about the migration of these people, we were told that the Kutchi and Marwari people came and settled here in 1950 just after the independence during the partition of India. Almost 50,000 people have settled here and the population of this community has increased since then.

Occupation

The main occupation of the people is making shoes and supplying them to all parts of India. We observed that almost every household was engaged in this business. Men, women, children, old and young people all are involved in the process of shoe making. Initially the shoes made were sold only to the wholesale markets but now some of them have opened their own shops. Varieties of handmade shoes are sold in these shops. It is a productive slum.

Income

Almost every family earn ten to fifteen thousand every month.

Housing

Each home and living area is extremely crowded and small. Rooms are of approximately 10/10 area and are situated very close. We saw some tiny rooms with up to 24 people living inside. The rooms were so tiny that when all people were laying down side-by-side, their bodies were covering the entire width of the floor space. There are no kitchens, living rooms or toilets either.

Nothing that we saw around the homes was clean. Pipes were broken and pouring dirty water into the kitchens and the streets. There are open drains and gutters which are the source of swarms of flies and mosquitoes. Kids were walking barefoot on top of dumpsters. Stray dogs and goats and cows were pooping on people's doorsteps. Mothers were doing laundry on the dusty sidewalks.

The houses have lofts in which the other members of family stay. These lofts are built on the top and usually have a narrow staircase to go upstairs. These lofts either have tin roofs or plastic sheets. The houses are so congested that we do not get air to breathe and due to improper ventilation the area stinks a lot. Though the houses are small, people do their shoe making work in the same room where they live, cook food and eat. We also observed that the people are not bothered about the cleanliness of the surrounding as their houses are surrounded by open garbage and heap of the leather pieces, which is a rich source for the germs to grow. It was chaotic, hot, dirty and smelly. The environment for nearly all people is extremely hazardous and unsafe, which leads to diseases and fatalities. Many of them suffer from asthma and other respiratory diseases.

Drinking Water facility and Toilets

As the municipal water is available only for an hour in a day, people are not able to keep their surrounding clean.

Toilets

The Municipal Corporation has built public toilets in the colony. People make use of it. But as these toilets do not have sufficient water supply and the people have to carry the water each time. Many of the toilets have no doors. There are also paid toilets some people make use of these toilets.

Schools and Education-

Schools near the Thakkar Bappa colony are-

1. Thakkar Bappa BMC School
2. Adarsh Vidyalay, Chembur. (Private School)
3. Shatbdi Sohala Sahakarnagar BMC School.
4. Swami Vivekanad High school. (Private School)

The Thakkar Bappa BMC School has a good infrastructure and also has a good playground. It is a Hindi medium school with both morning and evening session. The morning session is up to

7th class and the evening if for grade 8th and 9th. The older children help their parents in shoe making during day time and attend the school in the evening.

Children from ThakkarBappa Colony go to ThakkarBappa BMC School and ShatabdiSohalaSahakarnagar BMC School. A few students also go to Swami Vivekanand High School.

Most of the parents were not happy with the ThakkarBappa BMC School and complained that the teaching process is not done properly, parent teacher meetings are not held regularly, discipline is not maintained properly and so they prefer the private schools. When we enquired about the B.M.C. school's educational system, the parents said very casually that, even if the child don't study, he/she is promoted to the next class and even the child doesn't attend the school, there are no issues, the child is never detained in the same class. One of the mothers said, "uskotho kuchnahi aata hai firbi har saal pass ho jathi hai". The children somehow reach class 9 and then leave the school as they are unable to cope up with the higher education.

Some parents also said that the teachers in B.M.C. school abuse the children and use abusive language. So they do not attend the school.

Health issues-

All family members are involved in shoe making business. As this work go on at home, many of them have symptoms of breathing issues, cough, eye pains, headaches, dengue, malaria etc. This is due to the poor hygiene and improper disposal of leather material, handling of raw material and fumes produced by industrial resin. The area of the colony is very filthy and dirty. People are busy making shoes and overlook the hygiene of the surrounding area. People get treatment from the roadside (untrained and unprofessional) doctors. We were shocked to see that one of the residents got his ear cleaned from this "gavthi man" (unskilled person). (Ref. the video).

Other observations and experiences

People use abusive language, for instance, as we have seen a person who was drunken walking with his grandson using abusive language. This shows the culture which they instil in their children.

Reported that some of the teachers in the BMC schools even use abusive language with students

Conclusions

- Generation to generation there is no improvement of the people with reference to living standards, social, and economic conditions. Grandparents were doing the shoe making

and living in the colony and the coming generations also doing the same job and living in the same place. The poverty is being transferred from generation to generation.

- There are very serious health issues in the colony due to the poor hygiene and improper disposal of leather material, handling of raw material and fumes produced by industrial resin. The area of the colony is very filthy and dirty.
- Even though all the family members are involved in the shoe making they earn very less. If the children are not educated and taken care they will never improve and poverty will continue and it will be economic liability and burden for the nation

Suggestions-

- The ThakkarBappa Colony is situated at the centre of city. This place can be made use for some better purposes if the authorities can allot them a place in the MIDC where they can work in a proper environment. And a separate residential complex in the suburban areas of Mumbai. So that the people can escape from this harmful environment.
- The people should be made health conscious by various activities like street plays and posters by NGOs as well as by school teachers.
- Health drives should be carried out by private and government hospitals regularly to avoid health issues. Proper diet management should be advised to the women who are highly anaemic.
- The municipal corporation should inspect the BMC schools regularly and see that the teachers are doing their jobs properly. This is essential because many parents have complained about the teachers and the way the school functions.
- Sufficient water supply should be given so that people can maintain hygiene and cleanliness.
- Women who are engaged in shoe making should be counselled by doctors to take proper care of their health because they do all the work in their kitchen (shoe making as well as cooking).The women and children are constantly in touch with the fumes of the industrial resin which causes many health problems. They should be trained properly.
- There should be residential schools for the children. Since these parents do not care for their children and their studies at home residential schools will help to improve the learning of the children.

Observations of the Students-

Following are their observations-

1.SayyedTatheer Fatima-

According to Tatheer, the people were not cooperative and were unaware of the name of the school to which their children were going. The colony is very dirty and it was very difficult to enquire and get the questionnaire filled because the place was very congested and stinky. People earned money by hard work and all the family members were involved in shoe making. To meet their two ends it was necessary for them to work for 12-14 hours a day.

2. Daina-

Daina was amazed to see the varieties of shoes, and sandals made by the people but at the same time she said she felt sad because every member in the family- kids, old people, men and women were engaged in the work. When she enquired about the BMC school to which their children go, she was told that nothing much happens in the school. Teachers do not teach basic things and the children are promoted without learning basic things. Grown up children cannot do basic additions. Due to this reason, many people have stopped the children going to the school and these children help the household industry, shoe making. So in spite of having free school, the children and the community is not getting the benefits of schooling.

3.SuganthiMurgan-

Most of the children go to ThakkarBappa BMC School which was near to their place. She observed that many children had left the school and the main reason was poverty. They were made to help their parents in shoe making business. She also told us about the health and hygiene of the people and the dirty surroundings like the open gutters, garbage heaps, unclean toilets, filthy rooms etc.

According to her, the basic reason for lack of education is poverty and the sub-standard level of education in BMC schools. Children were just promoted to the next class and finally when they fail to cope with the higher classes, they leave the school.

5. Pridiya Fernando-

According to Pridiya, ThakkarBappa Colony can be called as a huge shoe making industry. The slum areas was very congested and over populated. People never maintained cleanliness and were just involved in shoe making. The houses were very small (10/10) and 6-10 members stay in such a small area. Families with their relatives all stayed in these small rooms with lofts on top floor.

6. Steffitha-

She said she visited 20-25 houses and all were very small and congested without ventilation and light. The people did the shoe making work in same room where they live. The rooms were filled with the strong smell of the chemicals of industrial resin. Due to such unhygienic conditions many had breathing problems and their hands get stiffened due to the chemical they use. Even the surrounding area of this place is filled with garbage, plastic bags, leather pieces and open gutters .

Most of the children go to ThakkarBappa BMC school . Parents have many issues about this school, but they send their children as they do not have any other option. According to her, people do not dispose the leather pieces properly and due to which disease spread rapidly.

7. GouriMurgesh-

People stay in the filthy area and never bothered about their health and hygiene. They stay in very small houses and congested locality. It was very difficult to sit in their rooms to ask questions. They carried the shoe making work in their kitchen and were unaware of the risk of chemicals they used to make the shoes. Due to improper ventilation the problem gets aggravated. Children go to the ThakkarBappaBMCschool, some parents want to admit their children in private school as the BMC school teachers do not teach well.

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