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**A Global Level Opportunities and Challenges in Urban Slums: A Review of  
Socio-Economic, Environmental and Policy Perspectives**

**Dr.R. Kurinji Malar\***

**Abstract**

Urban slums, a significant and growing feature of global urbanisation, are impacted by poverty, inequality, and poor living conditions. More than a billion people live in slums worldwide, which are characterised by poor housing, a lack of basic amenities, overpopulation, and vulnerability to environmental threats. Slums are now crucial to tackling socioeconomic issues and sustainable urban development as urbanization picks up speed, especially in emerging countries. Slums are places of hardship, characterized by systematic neglect, and resilience, where people adjust to live and prosper in harsh circumstances. These two realities are reflected in slums. They are influenced by the intricate interactions of sociopolitical marginalization, local governance deficiencies, and global economic influences. Slum residents' main problems include limited access to healthcare, education, etc. Attempts to address the issues of slums are increasingly relying on inclusive, participatory methods. The necessity for comprehensive policies that reconcile economic growth and equity is highlighted by the global conversation on slums. Important tactics include encouraging participatory urban planning, strengthening access to necessary services, and formalizing property rights. Against these backdrops, this review article focuses on the main drivers of slum formation, living conditions and challenges in slums, socio-economic dimensions, community and social networks, policy responses and recommendations, global and regional perspectives, and future directions.

\*Assistant Professor, PG and Research Department of Economics,  
Sacred Heart College (Autonomous) Tirupattur 635 601, Tamil Nadu, India  
Email: [kurinjibdu@gmail.com](mailto:kurinjibdu@gmail.com)

## Introduction

Due to population pressure and urbanization every developing economy is facing several problems such as different types of pollution, global warming, deforestation, poor quality of drinking water and different environmental issues. One of the important reasons for urban slum is urbanization. Slums were established during the 1850s and 1890s. According to the 2011 Census, 5.41% of India's population lives in slums. Because to increased urbanization, the total slum population now stands at 65,494,604. The population of women in slum areas is 31,526,401, compared to 33,968,203 men. The once uneasy were persuaded by rapid urbanisation, which led to the development of slum areas and the growth of city infrastructure. Most people living in slums are migrants. Overcrowding, filthy surroundings, and a lack of basic amenities like sewage and garbage disposal facilities, adequate water supply, poor housing construction, inadequate ventilation, road and electricity infrastructure, traffic, and small house sizes are all characteristics of slums.

**Low socioeconomic status is a problem in slum areas.** However, slum dwellers contribute significantly to a country's growth, either directly or indirectly. Slum dwellers deal with a number of problems every day. Living conditions have an impact on people's health. The health and nutritional welfare of slum dwellers are among their main concerns. The government has launched several initiatives and yojanas to improve slums since the second five-year plan. But they don't know about all of this since they don't know enough. Unskilled labourers with low pay make up the majority of slum workers. A lot of them are temporarily employed. Houses in slum areas seem to have very congressional architecture. People are in a very difficult situation. Growing urbanization is one of the main factors contributing to the expansion of slum regions. Slums are typically caused by failing government policies, disorderly neighbourhoods, inadequate management, faulty land levels, unhygienic circumstances, a lack of financial

systems, corruption and manipulation, ignorance, and a lack of political will. Physical pollution, a lack of solid waste water treatment facilities, and a lack of essential utilities like access to safe drinking water make people in slum areas more prone to illness. The way of life of the slum dwellers seems to be a catastrophe. Slum areas typically have an unclean and dirty background. Infections, fever, cold, several skin conditions, Dengue fever, and malaria are among the ailments brought on by environmental factors. Despite just being in urban areas, their living conditions are appalling.

### **Projects on Slum Development in India**

**National Slum Development Programme (NSDP)** was implemented in 1996 to provide loans and subsidies to states for the rehabilitation of slums based on their urban population. **The Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP)** was an Indian government effort aimed at improving the living circumstances of slum dwellers by converting slums into new dwellings. The plan aimed to improve the socioeconomic level of slum inhabitants by providing skill development training, job opportunities, and access to social services. The government provided qualifying slum inhabitants with financial aid in the form of subsidies and loans for house building, infrastructure development, and other relevant activities.

**Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – “Housing for All (Urban)”**, which began in 2015, aimed to offer central aid to implementing agencies through States and Union Territories in order to provide housing to all slum inhabitants by 2022.

**Slum Areas (Improvement and Clearance) Act**, passed in 1956, aimed for mechanical improvement or total eradication of slums. It grants entire authority to declare any slum, as well as opportunities for reform or elimination of poverty.

### **Review of Earlier Studies**

**Drivers of Slum Formation:** In their 2010 report *The State of the World's Cities*, UN-Habitat highlights the structural problems that contribute to the rise of slums, including overcrowding, poor sanitation, and inadequate housing. It encourages inclusive urban governance and pro-poor policies in order to accomplish sustainable urbanisation. A critical analysis of the growth of slum communities in the Global South was presented by **Davis, M. (2006)**. He contends that the expansion of informal settlements has been made worse by neoliberal economic policies, migration from rural to urban areas, and poor urban planning. Davis issues a warning about the ecological and humanitarian concerns that unchecked urban expansion poses.

Davis (2006) criticized neoliberal urbanization in *Planet of Slums* as the main cause of the global spread of slums. He draws attention to the systematic disregard for slum dwellers, who experience abject poverty, a dearth of amenities, and marginalization within official urban economies. His work underscores the socio-political inequalities that fuel the global slum crisis. **Sanderson (2000)** explores the impact of globalization on slum development, emphasizing how economic restructuring often leads to displacement and the growth of informal settlements in developing nations. **Alamgir (2009)** observed and assessed the livelihoods of Dhaka's slum inhabitants. Various sorts of measuring tools are employed to calculate the livelihood status of slum inhabitants, such as yearly average earnings, consumption patterns, and economic and social standing. The methods stated above indicate that rural-urban migration is a major force behind social change in addition to being a significant contributor to economic progress.

A field survey and in-person interviews with slum residents were used to collect the data. To determine the likely factors influencing migration, the collected data were assessed using a logit model and customised regression analysis. Primary data was acquired using an interview schedule and a field survey of 75 homes in randomly chosen Coimbatore slums (Kamarajapuram, Ukkadam-CMC colony, and Ambedkar Nagar). Finally, people's attitudes towards healthier living should be improved by appropriate intervention and educational activities.

**Bhattacharya et al. (2016)** highlight the pressing need for integrated urban health policy by focusing on health disparities in slums. They draw attention to the ways that substandard living conditions contribute to global health inequalities. In *Rebel Cities*, **Harvey (2012)** criticised neoliberal urbanisation for increasing urban inequality, including the rise of slums. He emphasises the "right to the city" as a collective demand made by urban underprivileged groups, including slum dwellers, in an effort to transform urban environments. In *Cities with "Slums,"* **Huchzermeyer (2011)** challenges the criminalisation of slums and makes the case for a rights-based approach to urban development. She argues that slum dwellers should have a legal and political say in urban development.

### **Living Conditions and Challenges in Slums**

Mnitp (2013) looks into the housing problems in the slums of Enugu City, Nigeria. The residents of these impoverished neighbourhoods are starting to worry a lot about housing issues. This report provides a thorough assessment of the housing difficulties and their condition in Enugu City's slums. Dilapidated dwellings should be restored by addressing any offending faults in order to offer pleasant living conditions for the residents. Urban development initiatives should include improvements to the socioeconomic characteristics of the residents.

Latif (2016) investigated the socioeconomic and health conditions of people living in Dhaka's Kalyanpur slum. Food and housing insecurity, unsanitary circumstances, inadequate or nonexistent drainage and sewerage, a lack of educational facilities, and a lack of utility services like gas, electricity, and piped water delivery are just a few of the issues that this study helps identify in slums. According to the report, people living in slums were denied basic necessities. Both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used in this investigation. 68 randomly chosen slum residents in the Kalyanpur slum region provided primary data for the quantitative approach. According to this study, urban health was immediately impacted by low

socioeconomic status and a lack of urban services, especially for the slum poor in the nation's largest cities.

Uttara, Periphery, Dhaka people's living conditions were determined by Rahman et al. (2015). According to this report, a slum is an urban informal settlement with a high population density that is defined by poor housing, dirt, and a lack of reliable sanitation services, clean water, electricity, and other necessities. Determining the livelihood situation of slum dwellers and making recommendations for bettering their living conditions based on the study's findings are its main objectives. They analyzed this study using SPSS software. Bhattacharya et al. (2016) highlight the pressing need for integrated urban health policy by focusing on health disparities in slums. They draw attention to the ways that substandard living conditions contribute to global health inequalities.

Karn *et al.* (2003) investigated the connection between Mumbai's urban slums' living conditions and health. According to the study, slum dwellers' water-related illnesses are caused by a variety of factors, including unclean drinking water, unhygienic living conditions, inadequate personal hygiene, and unclean food. Residents of slums are especially affected by poverty and environmental factors. According to the study, people's rates of illness were influenced by their personal cleanliness, sanitation, literacy, and income. The study showed how socioeconomic and environmental factors affect urban poor people's health.

A scoping review of the socioeconomic, hygienic, and nutritional conditions in Indian slums was conducted by Rani et al. (2019). The socioeconomic status of slums is included in this study. Sanitation and hygiene in slums, and slums' nutritional conditions. This study's main objective is to expose the despair of Indian slum dwellers. Investigating the various forms of deprivation, suffering, and unhappiness in slum communities is the main objective of this study. They used secondary data for their data sources. Finally, they conclude that slums lack basic utilities, are populated by ignorant people, and have a very low level of living.

Satterthwaite (2005) looked into urban strategies that addressed the environmental and socioeconomic issues that slum dwellers faced. Pelling and Wisner (2009) examined how susceptible slums are to natural catastrophes, emphasising the value of community resilience and adaptive solutions in lowering risks. Olsen et al. (2010) conducted research on the experiences of slum dwellers in Chennai during the 2008–09 economic and environmental crises. It covers the elements used to calculate Chennai's slum economy, such as homogeneity, class and status, variety, slum dweller income and debt, and changes in economic situations. The qualitative comparative analysis (QCA) approach formalizes the rationale behind qualitative analysis. Their analysis consists of three steps. First, to make the diversity and complexity manageable, they classify jobs, the majority of which are in the informal economy. Second, they examine economic trends during the era of environmental and economic damages. Third, they utilize QCA to compare the experiences of subgroups of households to those of a matched subset of people.

Kulasekhar and Dasaratharamaiah (2020) conducted a study on the socioeconomic circumstances and other aspects of slum dwellers' lives. The survey found that the lack of essential services disproportionately affects people living in slums. Investigating urbanisation and the growing number of slums in Indian towns, assessing socioeconomic circumstances, evaluating living conditions, and learning about educational standards are the main objectives of this study. Sen (2015) found that slum inhabitants in the Basirhat Municipal area of West Bengal have extremely poor socioeconomic circumstances overall. Socioeconomic characteristics like age, education level, male-female ratio, family size, occupation, and yearly income were all taken into consideration in his article. One important factor in defining the socioeconomic characteristics of the home is thought to be education. Slum dwellers do not have access to formal education institutions in their communities. Several NGOs and organisations work to provide informal education to the majority of slum dwellers, although they lack official education.



Sufaira (2013) conducted research in Kannur Municipality on the socioeconomic circumstances of urban slum inhabitants in Kerala. This study looked at the association between living environment and health status, basic amenities, savings, access to radio and television, and poverty line categorization. She conducted the investigation using both primary and secondary data. According to the survey, slum inhabitants' dwelling conditions are awful, with no latrines or bathrooms. As a result, it is argued that the socioeconomic status of slum inhabitants is extremely poor. Chandramouli (2003) has depicted the socioeconomic realities of the Chennai slum. Literacy level, indicators used in socioeconomic research include things like demographics, house types, dwelling room counts, ownership patterns, drinking water facilities, electrical and drainage facilities, separate kitchens and cooking fuel types, and radio and television facilities. We can infer from the information above that people living in Chennai's slums have a poor social status and substandard living conditions.

Bino and Rani (2019) have highlighted the socioeconomic status of slum residents in Tirunelveli District. Their study examines occupation, education, resident status, and kind of residence in addition to the relationship between monthly income and monthly expenses. Both primary and secondary data were used in the investigation. 560 respondents provided primary data via the field survey approach. Data was gathered using a framed questionnaire. Numerous journals, books, periodicals, publications, and newspapers were used to gather secondary data. They utilized the SPSS programme to examine and interpret the data.

A comparative study on the standard of living in the slums of Coimbatore city was carried out by Bhagyalakshmi and Thomas (2018). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the social isolation and contemporary conditions of slum dwellers. The report claims that the quality of living in Coimbatore's slums ranges from low to very poor. The study's final conclusion is that how we handle the problems and challenges of urbanisation and uneven growth will determine humanity's future. The study is based on both secondary and primary data. Secondary statistics are gathered from the Census and District Urban Development Authority (DUDA) in Coimbatore.



Elangovan (2023) used a multivariate technique to investigate the socioeconomic status of the slum inhabitants of Chidambaram town. The main objectives of the study are to ascertain the number of participants, demographic characteristics, social characteristics, economic situation, standard of living, educational attainment, and degree of employment. In order to investigate the socioeconomic characteristics of slum inhabitants in and around Chidambaram town, this study primarily focuses on Multivariate Statistical Analysis (MSA).

Sethuramalingam (2022) conducted study on the scenario analysis of the Nagar lock slum in Chennai. He observed that slum areas which are located in Chennai, slum population, ownership of lands, types of slums, slums on river margins, slums on road margins and railway border lines, scattered hut settlements and planned hut settlements. He concluded that the increasing infrastructure provisions such as roads, development of industries, raising population, and ports are the main causes for raising slum areas in Chennai.

Turner (1976), in his groundbreaking research on self-help housing, argues that slum dwellers are capable of overseeing their own progress. Instead of implementing mass resettlement, he supports measures that encourage small-scale housing renovations.

Ravallion et al. (2007) tied urbanization to poverty reduction, advocating urban strategies that balance economic growth and equity. They emphasize the importance of slum redevelopment programs for achieving sustainable urban growth.

Markandey (2011) researched the socioeconomic situation of Hyderabad's slums. This study discovered that slum populations exist in absolute numbers in the city's western regions. Investigating demographic parameters including slum population density, concentration, growth rate, gender ratio, reliance, and literacy in different regions of the city are the main objectives of this study. These are assessed from both a directional and core periphery standpoint. A thorough questionnaire technique was used to gather the data for this investigation.

Agarwal and Taneja (2005) observed that slum populations have grown more quickly as a result of greater urbanisation. He found that there are variations among slums because of a number of factors, which causes slum children to face varying degrees of health burden. Given the differences in susceptibility amongst slums, an urban child health program should create community-responsive and context-appropriate methods to enhance the health of children living in slums.

### **Global and Regional Perspectives**

Arimah (2010) studied how common slums are in Sub-Saharan Africa and ascribed their growth to bad governance and institutional shortcomings. The socioeconomic factors contributing to the growth of urban sprawl and informal settlements in Latin America were studied by Aguilar and Ward (2003). They stress that integrated regional planning is required to overcome these obstacles. Sivaramakrishnan (2011) examined the role of governance in urban slum management. He argues that urban planning in India often neglects informal settlements, leading to a proliferation of slums. He advocates for inclusive urban policies that integrate slums into city planning.

Omole (2010) perceived a study in Akure, Nigeria to examine an evaluation of the housing condition and socioeconomic status of slum inhabitants. The study found that respondents' socioeconomic status, assessment of housing quality, assessment of infrastructural facilities, assessment of the environment, and associated impacts on inhabitants. This study was conducted using both primary and secondary data sources. Analysing the housing circumstances and socioeconomic standing of Akure's slum dwellers is the aim and scope of this study.

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### **Behavioral Health Determinants**

Nejad et al. (2021) conducted a scoping review on the key social determinants of the health of slum dwellers. Emphasising the importance of social determinants of health in enhancing slum health is the main objective of this study. Finding the essential elements and aspects of social determinants is the study's main objective. This study explores whether social factors influence health status in the same way as physical factors do. Utilising the PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses Extension for Scoping Reviews) tool, the scoping review was conducted.

Bhardwaj and Pandey (2021) carried out a cross-sectional research of five slums in Varanasi city to investigate the socioeconomic state of slum inhabitants. The study investigates the effects of socioeconomic characteristics such as income, education, and profession. Then obtained primary data using predesigned questionnaires, and then used Kuppuswamy's socioeconomic class to demonstrate the position of slum families. According to the findings, the majority of slum families have neither high nor low incomes.

Jogdand and Naik (2013) conducted a study about Pattern of behavioral disorders among urban slum inhabitants aged 6 to 18 years. In addition to shedding light on the patterns of behaviour concerns among slum residents aged 6 to 18, this study attempts to give a thorough picture of the conduct that parents or children's careers regard to be problem behaviour. This research classified behavioral issues as antisocial problems, habit problems, personality problems, psychosomatic problems, educational challenges, and eating disorders. They

employed the direct questionnaire approach to acquire primary data. They discovered that the frequency of behavioral issues was extremely high among slum residents aged 6 to 18.

Mandal and Rahaman (2019) noted the Socioeconomic Profile of Slums: A Study from Berhampore Town, West Bengal. The study observed that the demographic features, Sex composition, literacy rate, caste system, monthly income, occupational, house conditions, drinking water, sanitation of the slum dwellers. The major aims of this study are to measure the distribution of people in slums and collected both primary and secondary data and argued that the living circumstances of slum dwellers are extremely important.

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