

Status of Homeless Women and Children in Karnataka State Based on Census of 2001

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ABSTRACT The present study aims at investigating “Status of Homeless Women and Children in Karnataka State based on population census in 2001. Findings of this article refer to reasons of creating homeless phenomena and particularly homeless women in Karnataka as well as indicating “population and proportion of homeless people during the years 1991-2001”, status homeless girl are under the age of 7 years”, “mean total household size of homeless family”, “literate and illiterate rate of homeless women”, “work participation rate of homeless women”, “express sex ratio of homeless population in major social and economic indexes by districts in Karnataka state”, “refer to number of short stay home for women and children’s home in Karnataka and finally express to “conclusion and discussion about status homeless women and children and recommendation to improve position homeless population and particularly homeless women” .

INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is a social, economic and political phenomenon that needs to be taken up at the global level. It is created by natural calamities like earthquakes, unjust trade practices and political catastrophes. As a result, millions of men, women and children are left with no choices but to live in the open on road side, pavements, in water pipes, under fly-overs and staircases or in the open in places of worship, mandaps, railway platforms, even on trees, etc. So, it is important that governments pay attention to it and they take responsibilities. Countries like India are bound by U.N. Conventions to address this issue. The issue should be pushed in the housing agenda.

On the other hand, homeless people are at high risk for illness and have higher death rates than the general population. Life of a homeless person is never easy and for homeless women, it is especially difficult. Gender, poverty and housing play a major role in creating and structuring women’s homelessness. Men and women have different relationships to homelessness that comes from their different relationships to life at home and with families. Homelessness, for many women, is an initial solution to unsafe housing and homes. These women leave their homes because of physical and/or sexual violence and exploitation. They are homeless in both the short-

term and long-term as a result of either abuse in their homes of origin or abuse in intimate relationships (Ralston 1996).

Women’s poverty also differs from men’s. Men’s poverty is linked directly to low wages in the labor market. Women’s poverty is more complex and relates not only to the labor market but to women’s activities as caregivers. Women’s roles and activities as divorced and separated wives, single mothers and adult caregivers and their dependence on either men or the welfare state to assist them in carrying out their unpaid work combine with discriminatory biases against low-income women. Inadequate housing is often a direct consequence of women’s poverty. (Scott and Lochhead 1997). The total homeless population in India is 78 million, a part of which are women those, who either spent nights outdoors, “in the rough”, or who lived in what they identified as precarious positions. For the women a home is more than roof over one’s head. It is also a place where they, as women, can be safe and secure and have a little privacy and control over their living spaces. Studies reveal dowry deaths, domestic violence, sexual harassment, molestation, rapes and eve-teasing are increasing day-by-day. In 2003, Bangalore recorded the highest number of dowry deaths in Karnataka. According to State Women’s Commission, at least four women die every day in Bangalore. A study made by WHO indicates that in every 45 minutes a woman is raped in India. Of every 100 rape case only 10 cases are reported. (Rajashekara 2005).

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Recent survey carried out by NGO Ashraya Adhikara Abhiyan (AAA) and the Institute of Human Behavior and Allied Sciences (IHBAS), one of India's leading mental hospitals, revealed that majority of the homeless women are in the age group of 16 to 45 years. Results were revealed: a. nearly 70% of the women mentioned that they have no source of income while 19% accounted loss of their slum quarters as a major reason for their homelessness. b. For 2.9% of women, homelessness is because of family disputes. c. Rest of the women reported mental illness or had been deserted by their husbands. The study further indicated that these women met their livelihood by working as contract laborers or by selling small items on footpaths. The condition is so deplorable that one in every six women hover around religious places for food items (Official Home Page of Instablogs 2008).

The agenda report of a Conference of Ministers of Housing, from the States and Union Territories, organized by the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation, states: "It is the ultimate goal of the National Policy on Housing and Habitat, 1998, to provide the basic need of shelter for all, but until such objective is achieved, it is necessary to provide some kind of shelter to the absolutely shelterless urban poor, particularly street children, destitute women and migrant laborers etc." The scheme for providing night shelters for the urban homeless was introduced in 1988-89. According to the government, the scheme was supposed to progress as per demand. This means that the States would put forward proposals, which would then be sanctioned by Housing and Urban Development Corporation Ltd. (HUDCO). By July 2004, HUDCO had sanctioned 99 night shelters across India. Of these, 40 were in Maharashtra (Official Home Page of Frontline 2008).

However, the government has done precious little to build a comprehensive policy on urban homelessness or even conducted a proper census of the homeless. But in India, people have unequal chances of owning or renting their own home simply because they have unequal access to resources of all kinds. Money, social, economic and cultural background, stability in family/home life, in whatever form that might take (single parent, multi-parent, cross-generational parenting), with adequate finances and resources to meet daily needs, do not guarantee future success in finding a home and living outside poverty.

Though the "social processes" such as class, culture/ethnicity, gender, education, family beginnings and family dynamics do not guarantee successful individual housing solutions for women who are on the street, they can be significant in how successful we are in finding a home or at risk of becoming homeless.

You read and hear in news, every year thousands of homeless persons die in India due to lack of shelter. Whereas based on Constitution in India, every citizen of this country should get practical and realistic access to basic shelter (Article 21); and National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) must control the state government, protect human rights and recommend measures for their effective implementation (Rajashekara 2005).

On the other hand, women are vulnerable groups in the society. The Indian Constitution contains certain provisions in respect of women's rights. But laws are not implemented really. Women have remained invisible to everyone including planners, policymakers and people.

Thus, a comprehensive national policy is required to provide the basic need of shelter to all. Also to expand and improve programs to get more women out of the vicious circle. They can obtain safe and peaceful place for themselves and their kids.

In this study, the author attributes analyzing the socio-economic aspects of the homeless women from the scope of statistical center of India reflected by general census of 2001 in Karnataka State, because with overall identification of them could be opted efficient steps toward diagnosis of this disadvantaged community and also can help there to planners and decision makers.

POPULATION OF HOMELESS WOMEN IN THE KARNATAKA STATE

Homeless households were defined in Census: "Households who do not live in buildings or census houses but live in the open on roadside, pavements, in hume pipes, under flyovers and staircases, or in the open in places of worship, mandaps, railway platforms, etc. these people are treated as houseless households". According to census 2001 in Karnataka state 26,057 households are homeless. A comparison reveals number of homeless households is reducing from 30,433 households to 26,057 households during 1991-2001(-14.4%). When we

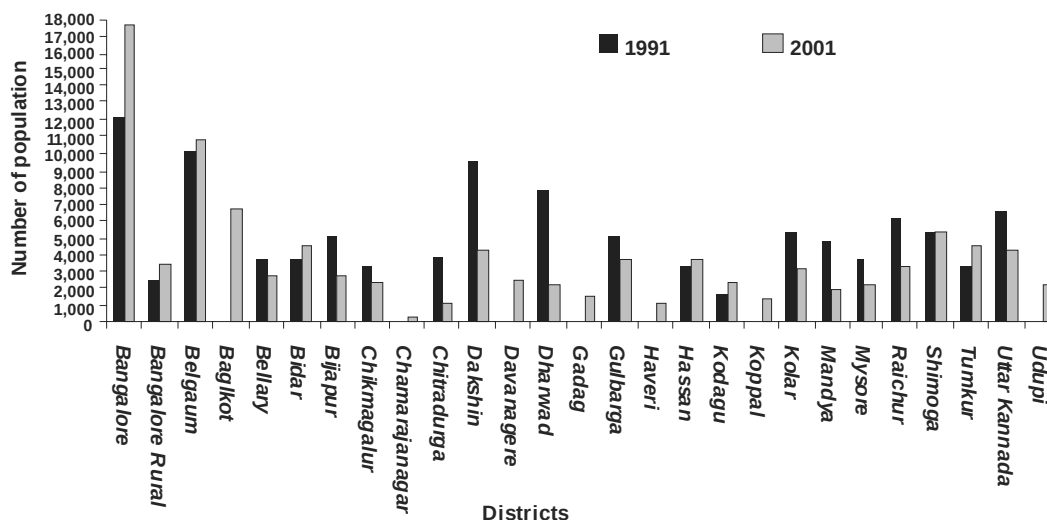


Fig. 1. A Comparison of Homeless Population during 1991-2001 in Karnataka State

Sources: Census of India 1991, General Population Tables. Part 11-A. Series=11. Director of Census Operations. Karnataka.Bangalore. Census of India 2001. Primary Census Abstract Total Population: Table A-5,A-6,Houseless Population. Series 30. Director of Census Operations. Karnataka. Bangalore.

compare population of homeless households, statistics indicate a declining rate -4.4% (population from 106,935 peoples to 102,226 peoples in reducing) (Census of India-Karnataka 1991 and 2001). On the other hand, Karnataka could provide acceptable and affordable housing just for 4.4% homeless population in some districts and they could decline this problem in the some districts especially big districts.

Figure 1 shows that the number of homeless population is increasing as its rate is in Bangalore (46%), Bangalore Rural (39%), Belgaum (6.7%), Bidar (21.6%), Hassan (16.9%), Kodagu (47.2%), and Tumkur (40.5%) districts (Census of India-Karnataka 2001).

Also, according to census 2001, of the total 10,232,133 households by condition of census houses occupied, 43.9% has been reported as "Good", 51.2% as "Livable" and 4.9% as "Dilapidated" (Census of India-Karnataka 2001). These numbers of households where living in "Dilapidated" houses surely need immediate attention too.

The mean of total household size of a homeless family in census 2001 is 3.9. In the rural area it is 4.2 and in the urban area it is 3.5. According to census 2001 in all the 11 out of 27 districts have recorded mean total household size is lower of 4 peoples. These districts consist of

Gadag (3.9 peoples), Uttara Kannada (3.8 peoples), Udupi (3.6 peoples), Bangalore (3.3 peoples), Bangalore Rural (3.6 peoples), Mandya (3.4 peoples), Hassan (3.9 peoples), Dakshina Kannada (3.5 peoples), Mysore (3.7 peoples), Chamarajanagar (3.4 peoples). Of course, according to census 2001, 3,767 homeless households have population 7 people and above (Census of India-Karnataka 2001).

Table 1 depicts that of total homeless population in census 2001, 44,267 are women, out of which 27,936 are living in rural areas while 16,331 are living in urban areas. Among the districts, Bangalore has reported the largest number of homeless women (6,969 population) followed by Belgaum (5,030 population), Baglkot (3,186 population), Shimoga (2,368 population), Bidar (2,153 population), Tumkur (2,022 population), Uttarkannada (1,703 population), Hassan (1,686 population), Gulbarga (1,641 population). In the remaining districts, the number ranges from 1,467 in Raichur to 137 in Chamarajanagar (Table 1).

Table 1 shows that, 19% of homeless women are under the age of 7. We could express 8,438 women as children who need special attention and service. Sex ratio among homeless children under the age of 7 is 938. It expresses inadequate condition of health and survival for girl children. In the rural areas, homeless girl children (under

the age of 7 years) are 66.5% and in the urban areas are 35.5% in Karnataka.

In other words, they are street children who live on the streets and live with their families. They work on the street and may become involved in scavenging, begging, hawking, prostitution or theft to aid their basic survival. Popular images of street children show that they are vulnerable to abuse, at risk of poor health, exploited by older children or adults. Comparing the various districts of the State, it is noticed that the highest proportion of girl children under the age of 7 years is recorded in the Belgaum (12.5%), in Bangalore (12.2%) and in the Baglkot (8.9%).

As per 2001 census, literacy rate for the homeless women of age 7 years and above in the Karnataka state is 14% and remaining are illiterate (86%). Sex ratio of homeless literacy population is 343 which are lower than the total of literate population in Karnataka state (Sex ratio 723). In the rural areas, literacy rate of homeless women are 46.7% and in the urban areas are 53.3% in Karnataka. Comparing the various districts of the

state shows the highest proportion of literacy rate of women is 34.6% in Bangalore.

According to Table 1 in all the 23 out of 27 districts it is recorded that literacy rate is lower than 5%. The statistics above indicate homeless women have not been able to take full advantage in the society.

According to the census of 2001 in Karnataka, of the total homeless women population of 44,267 the number of homeless women as workers is 21,250. In other words, 59% of the homeless women of Karnataka constitute workers. Sex ratio of homeless working population is 558. According to the definition of the Census 2001, 75% of homeless women are "Main Worker" and 25% Marginal Workers".

While, 75% of them had participated in any economically productive activity for a period of more than six months, at any time during the reference period of preceding one year and 25% of them had worked for less than six months during the reference period (Census of India 2001).

Based on Table 2, nearly two-third of the

Table 1: Population and proportion of homeless women by population in the age group 0-6, Literates, Districts, Karnataka 2001

Districts	Women		Population in the age group 0-6		Literates	
	Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent	Count	Per cent
Karnataka State	44,267	100.0	8,438	100.0	6,196	100.0
Belgaum	5,030	11.4	1,054	12.5	484	7.8
Baglkot	3,186	7.2	748	8.9	326	5.3
Bijapur	1,271	2.9	272	3.2	92	1.5
Gulbarga	1,641	3.7	337	4.0	192	3.1
Bidar	2,154	4.9	473	5.6	311	5.0
Raichur	1,467	3.3	319	3.8	55	0.9
Koppal	677	1.5	157	1.9	44	0.7
Gadag	675	1.5	125	1.5	62	1.0
Dharwad	1,017	2.3	163	1.9	111	1.8
Uttar Kannada	1,703	3.8	304	3.6	205	3.3
Haveri	523	1.2	110	1.3	47	0.8
Bellary	1,278	2.9	246	2.9	98	1.6
Chitradurga	507	1.1	125	1.5	63	1.0
Davanagere	1,138	2.6	219	2.6	170	2.7
Shimoga	2,368	5.3	436	5.2	235	3.8
Udupi	712	1.6	126	1.5	111	1.8
Chikmagalur	1,058	2.4	187	2.2	112	1.8
Tumkur	2,022	4.6	402	4.8	218	3.5
Kolar	1,470	3.3	259	3.1	203	3.3
Bangalore	6,969	15.7	1,030	12.2	2,144	34.6
Bangalore Rural	1,449	3.3	256	3.0	211	3.4
Mandya	803	1.8	126	1.5	87	1.4
Hassan	1,686	3.8	320	3.8	178	2.9
Dakshin Kannada	1,478	3.3	286	3.4	179	2.9
Kodagu	889	2.0	156	1.8	108	1.7
Mysore	959	2.2	178	2.1	134	2.2
Chamarajanagar	137	0.3	24	0.3	16	0.3

Source: Census of India 2001. Primary Census Abstract Total Population: Table A-5, A-6, Houseless Population. Series 30. Director of Census Operations. Karnataka. Bangalore.

homeless women (15,193) in Karnataka are employed in the rural areas and the remaining work in the urban areas. A remarkable part of them works as agricultural laborers and cultivators.

Table 2, shows the highest work participation rate (WPR) of homeless women has returned from Bangalore (13%) and Belgaum (12%). Two districts of the WPR of homeless women are between 8.5 to 5% (Baglkot and Shimoga respectively). The rest is less than 5%. In general, with regard to the above data, firstly, the majority of homeless women workers in Karnataka state are employed primarily as agricultural laborers and cultivators. Secondly, a part of them are employed in the unorganized sector, i.e. in household industries, petty trades and services, buildings and construction etc. Thirdly, a significant part of them are recorded as unskilled work sources.

CONCLUSION

Over 52 million of India's population lives in Karnataka state. Infrastructure is inadequate and

often poorly maintained. Poor population not only lives in bad living conditions but also do not have access to economic opportunities. This problem has created homeless phenomena in the society.

According to census of 2001, 19.3% of population is homeless in Karnataka State. Proportion of homeless women to total homeless population is 49.1%. Studies have documented the high burden of illness among homeless people due to severe poverty and often inadequate access to health care, domestic violence, usual accommodation unavailable, financial difficulty, relationship/family breakdown, drug addiction, etc. Although a part of homeless population is related to women, who is called vulnerable stratum in the society, relatively little attention is paid on this subgroup. As in schemes, the Directorate of Municipal Administration, Minister of Housing and Human Development Report 2005 in Karnataka need to pay attention publicly to gender and human development, poverty and income, poor alleviation, housing for poor and municipal servants, urban poverty alleviation and

Table 2: Work participation rate of homeless women by Districts, Karnataka 2001

Districts	Total Workers		Cultivators		Agriculture Labourers		Household Industry workers		Other Workers	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Karnataka State	21,250		302		6,963		950		13,035	
Belgaum	2,546	12.0	20	6.6	1,862	26.7	48	5.1	616	4.7
Baglkot	1,794	8.4	17	5.6	1,566	22.5	52	5.5	159	1.2
Bijapur	565	2.7	11	3.6	210	3.0	24	2.5	320	2.5
Gulbarga	679	3.2	12	4.0	273	3.9	67	7.1	327	2.5
Bidar	959	4.5	10	3.3	385	5.5	45	4.7	519	4.0
Raichur	671	3.2	7	2.3	305	4.4	78	8.2	281	2.2
Koppal	244	1.1	3	1.0	68	1.0	39	4.1	134	1.0
Gadag	341	1.6	8	2.6	124	1.8	27	2.8	182	1.4
Dharwad	511	2.4	5	1.7	160	2.3	28	2.9	318	2.4
Uttar Kannada	953	4.5	4	1.3	63	0.9	28	2.9	858	6.6
Haveri	188	0.9	3	1.0	33	0.5	11	1.2	141	1.1
Bellary	643	3.0	6	2.0	424	6.1	23	2.4	190	1.5
Chitradurga	171	0.8	2	0.7	35	0.5	7	0.7	127	1.0
Davanagere	530	2.5	6	2.0	197	2.8	43	4.5	284	2.2
Shimoga	1,244	5.9	17	5.6	505	7.3	28	2.9	694	5.3
Udupi	400	1.9	2	0.7	35	0.5	16	1.7	347	2.7
Chikmagalur	559	2.6	5	1.7	54	0.8	30	3.2	470	3.6
Tumkur	882	4.2	16	5.3	104	1.5	43	4.5	719	5.5
Kolar	559	2.6	22	7.3	124	1.8	28	2.9	385	3.0
Bangalore	2,771	13.0	25	8.3	60	0.9	151	15.9	2,535	19.4
Bangalore Rural	749	3.5	25	125.0	99	5.3	37	77.1	588	4.5
Mandya	456	2.1	11	55.0	73	3.9	22	45.8	350	2.7
Hassan	918	4.3	23	115.0	78	4.2	40	83.3	777	6.0
Dakshin Kannada	864	4.1	2	10.0	3	0.2	23	47.9	836	6.4
Kodagu	596	2.8	0	0.0	21	1.1	3	6.3	572	4.4
Mysore	397	1.9	37	12.3	82	1.2	8	0.8	270	2.1
Chamarajanagar	60	0.3	3	1.0	20	0.3	1	0.1	36	0.3

Source: Census of India 2001. Primary Census Abstract Total Population : Table A-5,A- 6,Houseless Population. Series 30. Director of Census Operations. Karnataka. Bangalore.

the like. Action Plan for combating trafficking in women and children was allocated just to eight state homes for women in difficult circumstances; 11 reception centers to render temporary shelter; 24 short-stay government homes in all Karnataka state. The Indian Constitution contains certain provisions in respect of women's rights in Article 15(1) and (2), Articles 23 and 24, Article 51A(e) (Rajashekara 2005)

The results show that 17.1% of homeless population are under the age of 7 (17,432), while, the number of homeless girls are 8,438. They are vulnerable to abuse, at risk of poor health, exploited by older children or adults etc. Additionally, children who are abused experience severe disruption during their childhood which often prevents them from obtaining adequate levels of education and training. So, this group of population need special attention and service. While in the Action Plan for combating trafficking in women and children, is allocated only 45 children's homes (19 for girls and 26 for boys), there is an exclusive home for the mentally retarded children.

As per 2001 census, literacy rate for the homeless women of age 7 years and above in the Karnataka state is 14% and remaining are illiterate (86%). Sex ratio of homeless literacy population is 343, which is lower than the total of literate population in Karnataka states (sex ratio 723). While there are laws (Article 15(4)) in India that say girls must be educated. This provision refers to all citizens, castes and tribes in the country. But are the laws really implemented? If this provision is performed correctly, this suffered stratum can utilize more job opportunities in public employment and they can alter their social and economic positions.

According to the census of 2001 in Karnataka, 59% of the homeless women of Karnataka constitute workers. Sex ratio of homeless working population is 558. Also, firstly, the majority of homeless women workers in Karnataka state are employed primarily as agricultural laborers and cultivators. Secondly, a part of them are employed in the unorganized sector, i.e. in household industries, petty trades and services, buildings and construction etc. Thirdly, a significant part of them are recorded as unskilled work sources.

While if the government really implements Articles 15(1) and 16(2) in the society, as a result, the government can earn an income at least equal to the poverty line.

In general, with regard to schemes of the government we could understand the government has no definite policy on homeless population and especially homeless women and children in Karnataka state. There are grave crisis of housing in this state. This is a violation of human rights.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Karnataka state can take the following actions:

- Making an organization responsible for the poor and homeless population, from a legal perspective.
- Performing a comprehensive national policy to deal with urban and rural homelessness, the ultimate goal being to provide the basic need of shelter to all.
- Funding, expanding and improving programs to get more women out of the vicious cycle so that they may look after their and their kids future by means of government agencies, non-profit organizations and other groups.
- Providing some kind of shelter to the absolutely shelter less population, particularly street children, destitute women etc.
- Allocating special budget to Municipal Corporation and Department of Housing Strategy.
- Implementing and adequately funding children's program.
- Providing services that adequately address the needs of individuals living with mental health issues and addictions.
- Providing educated facilities for all homeless population, particularly homeless women and children.
- Attempting to implement adequately and correctly Articles related to support of women and children.
- Providing adequately job opportunities to homeless women and street children.
- Increasing shelters of homeless population and specially, for homeless women.

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