

The Challenge of Slums: Socio-Economic Disparities

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Abstract—The paper sheds light on the findings from a survey carried out by the Informal Settlement Development Facility. This attempted, for the first time to identify unplanned areas spatially in all the urban centres in Iran. Result of this study showed that, about 16 percent of the active populations in Ghale chenan are jobless or seeking a job, about 1933 of people are retired or physically disabled supported by different welfare organization. At present, one of the important problems in Ahwaz is, its water contamination, due to the flow of hospital, industrial, and domestic sewage in the Karron River which supply drinking water of residents. The very important point repeatedly occurring in the case of vulnerable, poor, and disadvantaged strata especially the youth of Ghale chenan is illiteracy and unemployment. They were doing stores robbery, blocked of the main road of Ahwaz to Mahshar on heavy vehicles like Lorries and trucks by extortion and armed robbery. Several reports indicating of such armed robberies. In fact not only the education but also income levels of residents of this slum is very low. Women due to traditions and customs and socio-cultural aspects of their own community are facing sever cultural and social limitation.

Index Terms—Slum , Illitracy, Vulunerable, Health.

I. INTRODUCTION

The world is rapidly urbanizing and 2007 marked the first time in human history that the majority of humans have been living in urban areas [1]. In fact, the urban population is expected to grow to 4.9 billion by 2030 while the rural population will decrease by 28 million [2]. Much of this growth in cities is fueled by the growth in their respective urban slum populations, with almost half the residents of developing economies and up to 78% in the least developed countries living in such areas [3]. Accordingly, the population of slum-dwellers worldwide grew to 1.2 billion in 2008 [4]. Hence, the existing poverty has given birth to a number of other social problems such as gender injustice, addiction and crimes. The complexity of the term poverty and vulnerability has forced to view poverty from different dimensions. Socio-economic poverty, human and cultural poverty and so on have become current. Living conditions for the vast majority of slum dwellers are deplorable, with high rates of malnutrition, communicable diseases, and exposure to violence. In other words it refers to informal areas suffering from problems of accessibility, narrow streets, the absence of vacant land and open spaces, very high residential densities, and insufficient infrastructure and services [5]. Actually the term 'slum' not only suggests indecent and miserable living conditions but also implies

other important aspects such as informality [6]. The majority of these areas are developed in contradiction to building laws and planning regulations, as residents build houses on state-owned land or on privately-owned agricultural land without getting permission to build or fit in with land use plans, it is considered illegal or informal settlement and sometimes slums in Iran. As in other Third World countries, the dominant strategies for housing and service provision for [Iran's] urban poor include slum upgrading and site and service schemes. However, the efficacy of these strategies has been limited by ambivalent government attitudes to irregular settlements [7] and to the fact that "in the eyes of the political elite, the administrator, and the professional, upgrading is not attractive for political display. As a result, infrastructure development lags behind the population growth particularly in the low-income areas [8].

The upgraded areas are too low a standard to be good show pieces" [9]. Due to inefficiency, fiscal difficulties, poverty and market failure; the state, the private sector (both formal and informal), and community self-help efforts in recent decades have failed to meet poor people's needs, thereby creating room for voluntary sector actors such as NGOs [10],[11]. However, national and local states play an important role in urban housing and service provision in developing countries. In many countries, states have had a legal and social contract to provide services in return for political support[12], [11]. Moreover, basic urban services (e.g., potable water and sewerage) become the preserve of the state by default because they are public goods whose benefits cannot be kept from non-contributors once provided [13]. Hence, it is imperative to consider Ghale chenan as one of the disadvantaged districts of Ahwaz.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study is based on visual survey, photographs, field recording and observation of several existing places. Due to the lack of information from literature, the objective of this paper is to make available knowledge in the field of communal situation (poverty, sanitation and facility), concerns of slum dwellers. In this pursuit a case study was conducted in one of the slums attached to Ahwaz. The final decision on the actual number of households selected and their location took into consideration the actual situation on the ground through consultations with the Division Administrators, Local Council Leaders and field observations.

Ghale chenan is located on the South west of Ahwaz. Its area is about 910545m² and it is consider as one of the slum area of Ahwaz. This surveillance study had a population of 13800 & 2000 households, of which 7034 (47%) were children in the age of 0-15 years, 4833(38%) were in the

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age group of 16-64 years and 1933 (15%) were above of 65 years old. Most of residents are immigrants that have come to Ghale chenan in last 10 years. The main reason of immigration to this area is that the lands here are too cheap so the ones who cannot buy in other urban area have come to this slum area to live. In this slum area a treatment center was established for the purpose of surveillance health. The sample was based on the number of households in Ghale chenan. The randomization was based on the type of infra structural facility, the household income level , the family's head (male, and female) and the way they try to meet different basic needs in this slum area.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Actually the root causes of slum formation include long-term failure of governments to implement structural plans, to enforce development control and to provide effective services.

TABLE I: NUMBER OF STATE SCHOOLS & STUDENTS IN GHALE CHENAN

Level	No. of Schools			No. of Students			No. of Classes		
	Boys School	Girls School	Total	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys Class	Girls Class	Total
Primary	1	1	2	756	890	1646	18	18	36
Intermediate	1	1	2	530	220	750	14	14	28
High school	0*	0*	0*	250	200	450	0*	0*	0*
Total	2	2	4	1336	1310	2846	32	32	68

It could be seen from table that, just one boys and girls school is available for students, which mean, this school is working by shift, morning for girls and afternoon for boys respectively. There is no high school for girls and boys in Ghale chenan. Therefore the students (girls and boys) must go to other cities near by for study in high school. Thus, parents wouldn't allow their daughters to go to other nearby cities for high school education. Hence there are many social problems which girls are facing to achieving their higher education. The establishment of a girl high school in Ghale chenan would prevent many social harms cause of the lack of security in passage of girls to city and bring about tranquility for the inhabitants. There is also an adult school as literacy movement center in Ghalechenan , which have 4 classes and 20 students for each class. Educational status is not high in this slum. It is worthwhile to mention that, in this slum area about 7000 of people are illiterate,

There is no doubt the lives of the poorest households are deteriorating on daily bases where their numbers are increasing steadily. The main social issues such as gender , security, women, disability ,and unemployed youth attracts the social scholars' view for depth study. In fact empowering individuals to participate social, cultural and economical context and strengthing their ability to stay out of poverty, co- ordinating interventions in primary health care, gender equity, water and sanitation, pollution control, housing, generating income and education are the most important projects which should be taken on to account.

IV. EDUCATIONAL STATUS IN GHALE CHENAN

Education levels in this slum is low, because of no accessing to high school due to distance, insecurity, family fanaticism, cultural lag and family illiteracy most of the girls drop out school unwillingly. The number of schools and students in Ghale chenan (2005) appears in Table I.

3000 women and 4000 men respectively.

Educational institutes in primary and intermediate schools have shortcomings in regard to room capacity, water cooler and air-conditioner, while this province is the hottest region in Iran. The other problem the inhabitants are facing in regard to education was the low knowledge of teachers. In fact, newly trained teachers are selected by Educational Office to teach in such regions; thus, the level of knowledge among students is not comparable with that of Ahwaz students. Furthermore, equipped intermediate and high schools labs are not sufficient, most of the materials presented in classrooms are theoretical, and laboratory activities are lacking in all slums. This unsafe area are characterized by being subject to life threat, or having inappropriate housing, or exposed to health threat or tenure risks.

TABLE II: THE CLASSIFICATIONS OF EMPLOYEES IN GHALE CHENAN

	Population	Percentage	Main Activity	No.	Percentage
Employed	2500	20 %	Husbandry	60	52%
Unemployed	2000	16 %	Farmer	40	35%
Total (Em/Unem)	4500	36 %	Staff	15	13%
Total Population Ghale-chenan	13800	-	Total	115	100%

V. UNEMPLOYMENT, INCOME AND VULNERABILITY

According to these data, about 16 percent of the active populations in Ghale chenan are jobless or seeking a job, about 1933 of people are retired or physically disabled supported by different welfare organization. Most of the people in this village work in ahwaz. People are economically poor. As we notice here nearly 2000

unemployment in the village. There is not enough land & natural resources in this area so most of the people work as manual worker in steel company.

The majority of the vulnerable and poor people of Ghale chenan are involved in retailing and business transactions in the region. The monthly family income was recorded interms of the Iranian currency of Rials.

The exchange currency rate is 1US\$ 9000 Rials. (Approximate). For the purpose of socio-economic condition of residents, monthly family income were further divided into three family income groups, respectively. The groups were based on the lower, the middle lower, and the upper lower quartile values of monthly family income. The categories were as follows:

Family income group I: (10%) of inhabitants Rls. 1,500,000 to 2,500,000

Family income group II: (60%) of inhabitants Rls. 2,500,000 to 3,500,000

Family income group III: (30%) of inhabitants Rls. 3,500,000 to 4,500,000

It means (10 %) of total population lives in below poverty line (BPL) and population on poverty line (OPL) were (60 %). Many Ghale chenan inhabitants are supported by different charity organizations like Imam Relief Committee, Welfare Organization, and Martyr Foundation. Hence there is no doubt the lives of the poorest households are deteriorating on daily bases where their numbers are increasing steadily in this area. Further, agricultural lands around the slum, are not own by residents, so there isn't any agricultural cultivation and related industries in this area.

Therefore, without going into the detailed account of the socio-economic parameters, it can be concluded that the slum households were economically deprived compared to other areas. Significantly higher number of subjects from such households also reported that they could not afford adequate quantity or proper quality of regular hygienic and food. They were also found to consume basic needs and nutritional food less frequently than the residents of the city. Lower consumption of proteins in this population, might be a proxy indicator of very acute economic stress. The lower consumption of the other three items is due to their higher price in the local market. Hence it was found to be associated with food insecurity. Therefore, without going into the detailed account of the socio-economic parameters, it can be concluded that the slum households were economically deprived compared to other areas. Significantly higher number of subjects from such households also reported that they could not afford adequate quantity or proper quality of regular hygienic and food. They were also found to consume basic needs and nutritional food less frequently than the residents of the city. Lower consumption of proteins in this population, might be a proxy indicator of very acute economic stress. The lower consumption of the other requirements is due to their higher price in the local market. Hence it was found to be associated with food insecurity.

It is worthwhile to mentioned that, the problems which repeatedly occurring in the case of vulnerable, poor, and disadvantaged strata, especially the youths of Ghale chenan is illiteracy and unemployment. Therefore due to mentioned reasons mostly the youths, doing stores robbery, blocked of the main road of Ahwaz to Mahshar on heavy vehicles like Lorries and trucks by extortion and armed robbery. Several reports to police indicating of such armed robberies and burglary. Sometimes, the sense of contradiction and hostility towards the local government is so severe that Ghale chenan inhabitants embark on extensive protests and complaining about deficiencies in the region to the

government. In other words, it seems that ignoring people's requests in the region would lead to the violence of such tribes against government and increase hostility towards the local state. In this regard, members of Islamic Council who are mainly selected through the votes of inhabitants also not pay much attention to this poverty site of Ahwaz.



Fig. 1. Youth gathering in unhygienic area due to lack of recreational centers

VI. SLUM ENVIRONMENT, SOCIO- ECONOMIC SITUATION

The major contributors of the pollution load in urban slums into the environment are excreta, grey water and solid wastes [14], [15], [16], [17], [18]. Slums in developing countries lack basic sanitation services due to poor accessibility, lack of legal status and financial resources [19], [17], [18] as well as lack of supportive infrastructure [20]. The main sanitation challenges for slums are the ways of enhancing demand for sanitation, the sustainability question and the institutional structures and arrangements for up scaling and replication by other practitioners [21], [22]. Settlements in this slum area have merged largely unplanned and unregulated, and therefore lack basic infrastructure and social amenities. As the population of these areas continues to increase, the inability of the local authorities to provide basic services is becoming a serious problem. Therefore the supply of services is limited. Almost all houses have access to electricity, while the supply of other services such as water and sanitation varies from one area to another. This type represents about high range of informal urbanization in Iran. Unfortunately neither non-governmental actors and community based organisations have stepped into the void left by the official governments, nor anyone have taken admirable initiatives to serve the slum dwellers by providing them with enhanced infrastructure and sanitation options.

Compared with central and northern regions, most streets are dusty with no sewage disposal canal. The sewage and toilet wells of some houses directly flow into soiled gutters of streets and then into empty spaces around houses. These canals after getting filled and overlapped would lead to the main dusty canal leading finally into a big ditch called "water source" in the west of the region. This big ditch is the accumulation center sewage and domestic garbage that has strongly contaminated the environment and is the

reproduction and accumulation place for mosquitoes and harmful animals like mouse threatening people's health. The other important point pertains to garbage disposal at margins of streets, inhabitants accumulated wastes in free and wide areas and putting fire on garbage, with this view, it is the only way to stamp out of them, which brings about environmental pollution.

Thus, Waste disposal services are sparse, resulting in hazardous conditions that promote infectious diseases.



Fig. 2. The problems emanated from sewage accumulated with domestic garbage scattered at empty spaces resulted to environmental pollution

It is widely recognized that improvements to water supply, infra structure, sanitation, higher immunisation rates and better levels of nutrition among other solutions would dramatically reduce health problems of people. Hence these are the very solutions that could roll by government. This slum area like most of other slums in Ahwaz has ethnic & tribal origin. The main parts of this tribal group are Arabs. Most of the slum inhabitants work in the city (Ahwaz). Their language is Arabic and Persian, and their religion is Islam. They live in tribal groups and bear their own traditions and customs. Socio-cultural aspects of a community play an important role in utilizing, operating and maintaining family relation, education, infra structure and sanitation systems. Religion, culture, belief, needs and preferences play important role, particularly in terms of functioning, culturally to remove the barrier for women. Women's' social and cultural status in this slum is very low and most of the pressure burden on women and girls. The women and girls are facing sever cultural & social limitation.

Date cooperative company is mostly runs with women & girls work force; their job is to remove date kernel, packed them and send the date package to market. Taking into account that, most of them (women and girls) are poor, illiterate or with elementary degree and their age is 15-45 year. They are supported by imam khomeini emdad committee or welfare organization. Khouzeestan's date basically either use as a good for export or raw material for the industries but most of that, exported to abroad, especially western countries. The problems emanated from sewage accumulated with domestic garbage scattered at

empty spaces have led to unfavorable environment. The Poor groups in Ghale Chenan consisted, Jobless and the youth seeking for job 6700 (62%), Poor housewife women 150 (1.4%) and the aged, the retired, and the handicapped inhabitants supported by charity organizations 3950 (36.6%).

VII. CONCLUSION

Slum areas are characterized by posing risks to life, health and tenure or having inappropriate housing. These risks might be due to the buildings experiencing severe deterioration over time, being located in a hazardous site or exposed to damaging health condition such as lack of safe drinking water or basic sanitation. Survey findings indicate many cases in which slum areas such as Ghale chanan were not part of unplanned areas, and inner urban pockets in the city core with severe deteriorated conditions

The high poverty and unemployment rate especially among the youth as a severe problem threatens the security of the site and the nearby township. As aforementioned, many riots were manifested by the youth to fulfill their goals. The lack of economic facilities and resources to pave the ground for productive employment for the youth has not only helped up the poverty trend but also increased social harms like drug addiction among the youth. And from nutrition point of view, people are not experiencing a suitable diet in regard to protein-rich foods and vitamins. The problems emanated from sewage accumulated in a dangerously threatening way amid houses accompanied by domestic garbage scattered at empty spaces have led to unfavorable environment. The drinking water is the other problem ranked first in importance. The deficiency of educational sites especially a girl high school & primary school that persuades drop outs. As afore mentioned, commuting to Ahwaz is difficult for some families to accept; there is also some bigotry for girls leaving homes. Moreover, equipping educational units with cooling systems and etc. is the other problem. The method of domestic garbage collection and its being put on fire in free spaces amid houses leading to environmental pollution. The lack of sufficient and suitable sports, cultural, and recreational facilities for the youth. The supply of transportation means for Ghale chenan inhabitants to travel to Ahwaz is considered to be among the other needs. They do not transport people of Ghale chenan at nights.

Thus, our study has demonstrated some indication of health insecurity and poorer hygienic conditions in the poorly constructed households. It can also be suggested that community area type may be used as a good visual indicator for targeting the relatively more life situation vulnerable section of similar populations in a low socio-economic set up. The facility and life condition type as indicator of SES may be especially useful in cases where developmental agencies have very limited resources. This study presents a more accurate figure of the number of people in urgent need of development and improving their living conditions. Slum areas require programs to develop unsuitable shelter conditions, and programs to legalize tenure in areas of instability. Survey findings also indicated that some Ghale

Chanan areas are not included in any of the official records or formal statistics. Slums are mushrooming and policy makers seem not to be willing and able to serve their inhabitants. Slums are mushrooming and policy makers seem not to be willing and able to serve their inhabitants.

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