

Living Rough

Surviving City Streets

A Study of Homeless Populations in Delhi, Chennai, Patna and Madurai
For the Planning Commission of India¹

Part Two: City Reports

Delhi City Report

by Archana Rai

Chapters

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1 Introduction

“In 2008, the world reaches an invisible but momentous milestone: For the first time in history, more than half its human population, 3.3 billion people, will be living in urban areas. By 2030, this is expected to swell to almost 5 billion. Many of the new urbanites will be poor”

(State of World Population, 2007 unleashing the Potentials of Urban Growth, UNEFPA)

Even after sixty years of independence poverty remains a key challenge for the Indian policy makers. According to 1999-00 estimates 25% of the Indian population lives below poverty line (In Deaton, “Adjusted Indian Poverty Estimates for 1999-2000”, cited in ‘In search of Change: Urban opportunities, Vulnerabilities in Uttar Pradesh, presented in World Bank). The above data does not in any way convey that efforts have not been taken to reduce poverty, but more efforts have been made to reduce rural poverty, urban poverty has been given a low priority by policy makers. The reason for it are not difficult to discern, till the mid 80’s poverty was mainly concentrated in rural areas and hence effort were directed towards it, however by mid 70’s migration of poor people from rural to urban areas in search of better job opportunities had started. In the initial stages urban migrants come from certain pockets and districts where rural poverty was high and where migration was a result of historical and geographical processes. In these, caste and agricultural poverty played a crucial role, but later on migrants not only started coming from poorer pockets but also from different areas and from different background. The traditional reason of being landless and thus being forced to migrate in search of livelihood and being prosecuted due to being lower in caste hierarchy do not apply in the present context, as migration now is not dependent on the above two factors. The effect of the above process was; shift of poverty from rural to urban areas, moreover this trend was more marked in metros where opportunities are available. The magnitude of rural-urban migration can be judged by the fact that according to the census of 2001, 20.5 million people moved from rural to urban areas in 90’s (Lall, Selod and Salozi in “Rural Urban migration in developing countries”, Development Research Group, World Bank, Washington, 2006). The increase in the rise of

The above two trends; that world will become increasingly urbanized and that urban poverty has not decreased but due to pull and push factor the rate has slightly increased had compelled policy makers and development practitioners alike, to delve into the phenomena of urban poverty, homelessness and the processes of urbanization of poverty.

1.1 Demographics

Delhi is considered one of the most populous cities of the world; one of the main reasons for this could be found in its burgeoning population, during 1991-2001 Delhi witnessed the population growth from 9.4 to 13.8 millions, witnessing 47% decadal growth rate in population. According to the official records (2004) at present the population of Delhi stands at 13.22 millions, out of which 32 lakh is likely to be slum population. According to Planning Commission survey 9.4% of the population of Delhi falls within the category of urban poor. However Economic survey (2004-05) states that 6% of the population of Delhi comes under the category of ‘very poor’ and 28% of the population can be classified as poor.

This sharp rise in population in Delhi has also meant increase in urban poverty in Delhi, to an extent can be attributed to rise in intra state migration to Delhi and mainly rural migration from underdeveloped and poor regions of India.

The migration data for 2001 shows that Delhi witnessed high migration rate, rough estimates surmise that approximately 5 lakh people migrate to Delhi every year; of which majority are poor and come in search of work. If one analyzes the data on migration, it becomes apparent that migration and urban homelessness is strongly co-related with poverty and search for better opportunities.

A planning commission survey points out that population classified as poor is more among the migrants. Major influx of migrants comes from the BIMRAU states (exception being Haryana- in this case migration is related to minimal distance).

1.2 Distinction between rural and urban poor/ homeless

At the outset it is important to distinguish between urban poverty and rural poverty, the central difference between both is that of level and degree of integration with the market and globalized economy. For the rural poor, dependence is less on markets and more on traditional livelihood patterns, nonetheless market forces also effect them. On the other hand urban poor are completely dependent on the market economy and thus also to the vagaries of lows and high's of labour market. Shocks like loss of work due to macro economic causes add to their vulnerabilities, thus though the remuneration are better urban poor live in a highly fluid situation. Secondly urban poor as a category are heterogeneous; socially, spatially, and economically (Marraine fay, 2004), thus it is far more difficult to address issues of homelessness and poverty among them in a uniform manner.

Whereas the rural poor have wide variety of social networks on which they can depend at the time of crisis, for the urban poor such social networks are fragile, the reason for fragile social network is due to the heterogeneous nature of the urban poor population. The difference in region, background, age and living pattern are the main inhibiting factors in the formation of strong social networks, added to it is the fact that urban poor are highly mobile category, which do not allow for formation of social networks. However the above assertion does not mean that social networks and linkage do not exist, it has been found that rural migrants belonging to the same localities maintain communication with each other but in a very loose manner.

1.3 Lack of Reliable Estimates of Urban Homeless in Delhi

Although rough estimate of urban poverty for Delhi exist, (that are often at variance and highly underestimated), even though such rough estimates exist for urban poor, no such authoritative estimates exist for the homeless population of Delhi. The reason behind lack of enumeration are multiple, however there are three reasons that are central.

1. First reason is due to apathy and negligence of homeless people due to lack of political voice and powerlessness. The political apathy is further heightened by the fact that enumeration of urban homeless will lead to a situation in which they had to be covered under social and food schemes. Thus it is not only political indifference but also a conscious effort to invisibilise homeless population.
2. Estimation of homeless people becomes further complicated due to very nature of 'homelessness'. Homeless people as category are extremely mobile with no permanent address or identification. The above problem was validated by the case studies undertaken, in almost all the case studies it was noticed that homeless people not only move across different part of the city but also inter-state as well as intra- state migration. (such migration are often seasonal and motivated by desire for better employment opportunity, to escape harassment by police and dislocation by Government).

3. Although the above two reasons are external to homeless people, the third issue for lack of appropriate figure of urban homeless are inward directed. Even with in the category of homeless people there exists hesitancy among them to be classified as homeless. Such denial exists due to lack of self worth among the homeless people. The consequence of the above is that the state of homelessness is perceived by the homeless people as their own creation and due to their own incapacities and thus in many cases do not want to be counted as homeless.

Owing to intense pressure from the non governmental sector, for the first time in 2001 census, country wise enumeration of urban homeless people was undertaken. The finding of the survey estimated that country wide urban homeless people comprise of 285.3 million people. (Census, 2001) The figures of the findings were hotly disputed as it highly underestimated the number of homeless people.

In the context of Delhi, no such official census has been undertaken and there exists a 'census silence'. Though DDA in 1985 estimated that the houseless population of delhi in 1995 was 1% of the total population. More realistic attempts to estimate the number of homeless people in Delhi have been undertaken by NGO's A survey piloted by Aashray Adhikar Abhiyaan (2000) put the number of urban homeless in Delhi to be around 52, 765. Another study conducted by Lokayan (2002) came up with the finding that 22% of the Rickshaw pullers in Delhi are homeless. (www.naredco.org). According to Centre for regional and urban excellence, New Delhi, homeless population in Delhi comprises of 1 lakh people. if we go by demographic trend, urban poverty and urban homelessness in Delhi will increase as 20001 census for the whole country predicts that 41% of the population will be urban by year 2021, from this we could make a rough guess that majority of them will be urban poor who do not have enough opportunity and migration seems to be the best strategy.

Majority of the urban poor and homeless in Delhi comprise of people who come in search of better opportunities so that they can escape the grinding poverty at home. Most of migrants who come in search of job are without any proper skill and thus employment for them is restricted in areas where specialized skill are not required, and thus have jobs with low remuneration. Lower remuneration also means that the most of the urban poor either on the streets or unauthorized slums. Even in the category of migrants a minority lives in urban slums are mostly those who have been in city for a longer period and are in a relatively better condition. The overwhelming majorities of urban poor live on the streets and keep on shifting their base, with no permanent place which they can call their own.

The urban poor who are not homeless live in periphery of the cities where the living condition are unsatisfactory and with lack of basic infrastructure. Their condition is further aggravated by food insecurity, unsafe drinking water, lack of sanitation, impermanency of job and defined space, leading to a situation of multiple vulnerabilities and a situation of permanently living on the edge. The impact of the above create a condition wherein proneness to physical and mental disease is high and consequently low life expectancy. The fragility of their lives could be well understood by the fact that even a small shock triggers a livelihood crisis for them.

It is also important to take into account that urban homeless or urban poor are not a heterogeneous category but are comprised of different section, worst placed among them socially ostracized, socially, economically marginalized, single women, old and disabled people. In fact in most cases migration of people belonging to above categories is due to being at the periphery of the society. These people are also those who are chronically poor due to exogenous condition created by society.

2 Background and Profile of Urban Poor: Socio Demographic Condition and Characteristics

Beizzati. Dishonour. This was the overriding feature of her life, as Saroja recounted it, without sentimentality or self-pity. 'To live on the streets – beizzati. The policeman beats you with his baton – beizzati. Any ruffian sits next to you and runs his hands on your body – beizzati

(From 'Surviving in the Street' by Harsh Mander)

Urban Poor and Homeless

In Delhi, Homeless are mainly migrants and comprise of daily wage earners, employed in casual labor, migrants who have come in search of employment, rickshaw pullers, construction workers, vendors, rag-pickers, transport labourers, trade workers (street vendors) beggars and destitute people, disabled people, mentally and physically ill people, people who have been abandoned and people who have left their home due to poverty and violence. Within the women homeless category, employment opportunities are severely limited as they are excluded from physical work like rickshaw pulling, and thus mainly comprise of construction workers, rag pickers, beggars, vendor of female items, sex workers and domestic workers. Homeless street child comprise of children engaged in rag picking, vendor mainly working on streets, working in Dhabas and small hotels, cleaners, as helpers in small shops and shoe polishers. Urban homeless females child are mainly engaged in profession like rag picking, street vendors and sex workers.(it is not unusual for a female child of 12 years to be involved in sex work)

Urban poor are also migrants but their economic condition is slightly better than that of homeless people and mainly comprise of slum dwellers, who are engaged in occupation like casual labor, security guards, vendors, factory and mill workers, construction workers, hawkers and domestic servants.

The condition of urban homeless is worse than that of urban poor as the distinction between both the sets is to do with 'roof on the head'. For urban Homeless people the biggest challenge is to find a place which they can call their home and to which they return after work. The basic issue here is that of citizenship and recognition by the state, urban poor though at times not recognized by the government still have the hope that they would eventually be able to avail the basic services granted to citizen like ration card, voters id that will later help them in availing food and social security schemes. In the case of urban homeless even this hope does not exist as they lack permanent address and sleep without roof on their head.

Almost all the homeless people in Delhi are migrants, thus migration is a common thread that joins most of the homeless people, also demographically the majority of the migrants belong to the states adjoining Delhi, with few migrating from Orissa and southern states. One striking feature was that though the majority of males belonged to the states adjoining Delhi, the same could not be said about the women and females; in the case of females long distance migration was more common.

In the case of children, especially young ones who had run away from home due to physical violence and other family tensions, migrating to Delhi was not an obvious choice, it was more to do with catching any train or bus available at that time. Qasim a 16 year old boy came to Dehi at a very young age, he recalls that:

Qasim remembers taking a bus from his native place and coming to old Delhi Bus station.

However for the elder males Delhi was the destination of their choice as in their case the decision to migrate was a conscious one for the sole purpose of earning money, better employment opportunities and economic prospects. Migration to Delhi for elder males in search for job prospects was also guided by the presence of some villages in the city or relatives who were working. Also elder males had migrated to Delhi due to For the females again the situation was different, in many cases they are wanderers who had traveled a lot and had come to Delhi not by making a conscious decision.

For most of the adolescents males Delhi was a conscious choice, but here the motive was not earning money or better employment opportunities but attraction to glamour of big city.

Methodology

The study report in various cities had tried to focus on different groups of urban homeless people, so that we are able to get a more nuanced and diversified data. Keeping this perspective in mind, In Delhi we chose to focus more on the homeless children and adolescents as in Delhi, the reason being that Delhi has larger number of homeless children and adolescents or are more visible than in other three cities Madurai, Chennai and Patna. In accordance with the above, kind of purposive sampling was undertaken and therefore in the study report there is a bias towards children and adolescents.

The sample of the survey was small and hence we need to point out at this stage that the findings of the survey are merely indicative of certain trends but we cannot make any generalization based on these findings.

Table 2.1

Socio Demographic breakdowns of the homeless individuals interviewed (age and Sex)

Age	Sex		Total	
	Female	Male		
0 -10 years	6	2	8	8.6%
10 - 18 years	14	30	44	
18-30 years	5	12	17	47.3%
30 -50 years	11	6	17	
50 and above	7	0	7	18.27%
				18.27%
				7.5%
	43	50	93	

Out of the 93 interviews conducted of homeless people; gender wise breakup confirms that more males (54%) are homeless as compared to females (46%).The gap between both the categories is that of 8%, from it however we simply cannot infer that chances of being homeless and male is more as considered to that of female. Before making

any inference we have to be cautious about the reason for homelessness; in the category of males homelessness to an extent is due to conscious effort that is to migration and search for better employment and economic opportunities, In the case of females and especially single women reasons for homelessness are not a result of conscious decision, but directed due to externally induced factors like abandonment, separation and forcible eviction by family. Thus from the data we can conclude that homelessness is not a male domain per se and secondly reasons for being homeless for males and females; adult and non adult are different and multi casual .

Still there are rare instances that negate the above conclusion, one such case is that of an old married female, who has migrated for better earning opportunity while her husband who is old and invalid stays at their native place. Buddham Bai migrates every year for few months to Delhi to earn money. Means of earning money for her is through soliciting alms and living on charity. Once she has collected enough money, Budham Bai returns to her native place.

Analysis of the above data on the basis of adult and non adult(below 18) homeless population, it was found that children and adolescents are more susceptible to homelessness than adults, where as 56% of the children and adolescents (0-18 years of age) were homeless, the percentage for adults was 44. Higher percentage of homeless young and adult males within the age group of 10 -30 years points towards conscious migration for better opportunities not only for themselves but also their families. However one has to be little cautious while interpreting the data, as 10-18 years is also the age where the 'pull' factor dominates- attraction to city life also could be one of the reasons for it. In this set of data one also has to take into account the other reasons for homelessness, homelessness for an adult male arises due to a set of different conditions than that of non adult male child, and important among them is to send money home.

Further disaggregation of the data on homeless children on the basis of gender, it is found that more male children are on the streets as compared to female child. Out of the 44 male and female falling in the age group of 10-18, 13 cited family abuse as the main reason for leaving home, within this 10 male child as compared to 3 females. The above trends lead us to important insights; that of comparative mobility of male child vis a vis girl child and that child labor in the public domain mainly comprises of male child. However from the above data we cannot say that child labor is a phenomenon limited to males as our data was primarily directed towards homelessness, and thus could not take into account girl child working as domestic servant.

Age wise break up within the female category shows that the maximum number of homeless belonged to the age group of 10- 18(32%) and only 11.6% females belonged to the category of homeless in 18-30 age group. The reason for this could be two pronged; first of all it goes on to validate the phenomena of urban migration as male dominated, especially so when it comes to able bodied males and children who have ample opportunity to engage in diverse manual occupation. Secondly we can also infer from the data that due to chronic homelessness whole family along with their grown up daughters stay on the street. This observation is further validated by the fact that out of the 14 females belonging to the category of 10-18 years, twelve of them lived with their families. Further analysis of age wise breakup of female respondents showed that there were 7 homeless women who were 50 and above, on the other hand we did not find any males within this age group. The above could be a result of selective sampling, however it also shows that vulnerability and powerlessness of women increases with old age and can be linked to abandonment by family members.

In the category of males, it was found that overwhelming number of homeless males belonged to the age group of 10-18 years and constituted 60% of the total male homeless population. However in contrast to the females belonging to the same age group,(in which case it was also found that maximum number of homeless females belonged to the same

category) we found that family support was minimal. As opposed to the females where it was noticed that 86% of females in 10-18 age group lived with their families, in the case of males, the figure was 26.7%. If we compare it with females, only one third of males stayed with their families. This above point goes on to further corroborate that migration was stronger pulling force in case of males and so was leaving their homes.

Table

2.2

Marital Status (sex, and age)

SN	Marital status(above 18)	Sex		Total	
		F	M		
1	Never married	1	16	17	41.46%
2	Married and staying with spouse	10	1	11	27%
3	Married and not staying with spouse	7	1	8	19.5%
4	Divorced	-			
5	Widowed	5		5	12%
6	Cohabiting(monogamous)	-			
7	Multiple Partners	-			
	Total	23	18	41	

Data on the marital status of both males and females above 18 years of age showed that only 1 adult women was never married, on the other hand 16 men (88.89%) adult men were never married. In the category of married and staying with spouse we found 10 (43.48%) adult women and only one adult man. From the above data we can surmise that marriage as an institution is more important for homeless women as it offers them physical security as well as respite from sexual abuse.

The above data shows that marriage for an adult homeless men is difficult where as the same cannot be said about women. However we have to be a little cautious in interpreting the above data as many women who might have been partners and not married would have claimed to have been married. The above could have been done either to ward off social stigma or for the reasons of security and sexual exploitation. According to our data, we found only 5 widows as homeless (11.63% of all adult women). Though at first glance the data seems inconsequential but it goes on to show that widowhood as one of the ground for homelessness.

Out of the 23 adult women interviewed almost half of them were married and living with their spouses, in this category we also found that two girls were married. In the category of males who had migrated in search of jobs prefer to leave their families behind. It was also noticed that 8 women who were married but were not living with their spouses. It could be inferred that abandonment as a reason is one of the important factors for homelessness a in the category of widowed women, there were five women who had been rendered homeless due to widowhood. Thus widowhood as a category is one of the most powerless.

The process of abandonment of widows is best exemplified in the case of Saroja Devi. *Saroja Devi - a widowed woman with a daughter came to Delhi after her in laws and brothers refused to give her any share in the property. Left with no choice Saroja Devi moved to the Hanuman Mandir complex and live there*

Table 2.3

Breakup on basis of Religion, Sex and Age

	Religion		Sex					
			Males			Female		
			Adults	Non adults	Tot	Adults	Non adults	Tot
1.	Hindu	64	15	23	38	14	12	26
2	Muslims	24	2	8	10	8	6	14
3	Sikh	1	1					
4	Christians	---	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total	89	18	31	48	22	20	40

Religions wise breakup of the data shows that majority of homeless people were Hindus and Muslims respectively 68.81% and 25.8%. Thus in the case of religion the compositions of homeless people more or less replicates the macro pattern. Breaking down the above data on the basis of age and sex shows that whereas more men were homeless in the category of Hindus (38 men as compared to 26 females), in the category of Muslim more females were homeless as compared to males(10 males as compared to 14 females). Further dis-aggregation of data showed that in both Hindus and Muslims, more adult females are homeless than female children adolescents.

The opposite pattern was discerned for males in both religions; it was found in this case more male child and adolescents lived on the streets than adults. Thus we can infer from the above that male children are more disadvantaged and there chances of being homeless are more than adults.

In the data collection we could not find caste wise trend on homeless population, unfortunately did not give us any indication as the respondents caste.

In the region wise analysis of the homeless people or from where do they migrate, there was a preponderance of homeless people belonged to states that are lagging in development and have very little job opportunities. Majority of the urban homeless came from Uttar Pradesh, followed by Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi. Though, reason behind migration from Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Bihar could be understood in terms of lack of opportunities. Migration from Haryana could not be understood merely in terms of lack of opportunities; here two factors that are crucial are porous borders and

“Hamari jagah kahan hai? Kahin nahi hai. Phir dar lagne se kya hoga?” (Where is our space? No where. Then what good will come out of being scared).

Table 2.4

Place of Sleep

SN	Place of sleep	Number of respondents	Percentage
1	under staircase	2	2.2%
2	Under ledge of shops or homes	3	3.4%
3	In Market Corridors	8	9%
4	Railways Platform	14	16%
5	Bus Stand	2	2.2%
6	Courtyard or places of worship	20	23%
7	Drainage Pipes	0	
8	Government night shelters	3	3.4%
9	Deserted / Abandoned buildings	1	1.1%
10	Non- Government ,night shelters	1	1.1%
11	Pavement /road –sides	19	22%
12	Road dividers (centre of the road)	0	0%
13	Parks	8	9%
14	On bridges	0	0%
15	On flyovers	1	1.1%
16	Under bridges	0	0%
17	Under Flyovers	3	3.4%
18	At your workplace	0	0%
19	Any Other	2	2.2%
18	Not reported	6	6.8%
19	Total (valid Answer)	87	

The word homeless in itself conveys that homeless people are those who do not have shelter on their head, or they lack permanent address; a home to which they can return to and call their own. In order to find out, where do homeless people live, a part of the questionnaire was devoted to identify places where homeless people live or where

they sleep in the night.

The data for the above gives us a comprehensive knowledge of where the homeless people prefer to stay in the night or go for shelter. In order of ranking the most preferred place for sleeping was courtyard of places of worship, 23% people preferred sleeping in courtyard. The second preferred location was road side pavement 21% of people responded that they sleep on road side pavement. The third preferred place was railway platform, 16% homeless people preferred staying there.

Courtyard of places of worship was the most preferred destination for women(11) and(11) children as it was perceived to be one of the safest place due to large number of people staying there and offered certain level of protection from physical and sexual abuse. Pavement as a place to sleep was preferred more by women and children/ adolescents, 12 children slept in the placement and 14 women preferred to sleep on the pavement, in this case also safety was sought due to large number of people sleeping on the pavement. In this also women belonging to age group of 10- 30 preferred it more. Railway platform was preferred more by children than adult women and male, we found that 10 children slept and lived on the railway platform. One of the reasons for strong preference to live on the platform was because it offered not only place to sleep and safety from inclement of weather but ample opportunity for work and relatively higher degree of food security (foraging food from train).

Though sleeping in public places offered security due to numbers and relative safety from physical and sexual abuse, but it also meant lack of sound sleep due to the public nature of the place and unsanitary condition. In such conditions it is expected that homeless people would not be able to get uninterrupted sleep, our findings validated the above hypothesis.

Table 2.5

Main reasons for uninterrupted Sleep

SN	Reasons for uninterrupted sleep	Number of Respondents	Percentage
1	Noise	8	13%
2	Street light	0	
3	Police chasing out	6	9.6%
4	Police brutality	20	32%
5	Physical abuse	2	3%
6	Sexual abuse	2	3%
7	Health problem	1	
8	Depression	1	
9	Personal problems	0	
10	Craving for addition	0	
11	Hunger	0	
12	Fear	5	8%
13	Air pollution	3	4.8%
14	Working in the night	2	3%
15	Inclement weather	2	3%
16	Mosquitos	3	3%
17	Health problems	1	
18	Any other	6	9.6%
	Valid answers 62		

The main reason cited for uninterrupted sleep by homeless people was due to police chasing them, 32% of the people cited police brutality as the main reason for not being able to sleep properly. In the night when homeless people are sleeping police find the best time to count the homeless people and dislocate them. Police chasing them, often in the name of safety or VIP movement not only lead to interruption in sleep but also looking for place where they can sleep. The second reason cited by homeless people was high noise level, the ongoing traffic in the night leads to disturbed sleep especially for those who are sleeping on the pavements. The disturbance in sleep for the people sleeping in pavement is also due to the lurking fear of being crushed by moving vehicles. Due to the reasons cited

above, out of 92 valid answers, 51% replied that in the last past week they have not had uninterrupted sleep due to reasons mentioned above.

The case study of Vijay illustrate additional conditions that lead to uninterrupted sleep for, Vijay is a porter whose work mainly starts at night as in the day time due to heavy traffic it is difficult to carry wares in handcart. It is only after the nights work is completed that Vijay gets time to sleep.

Social Assets / Relationship of Homeless people

One of the familiar image associated with homeless people and street children is that of a person who stays in city without any bonds and lack of relationship. Result of our survey and case studies suggest the opposite; urban homeless attach great value to friends and their relatives, it is not uncommon to find group of urban homeless people staying in groups and form small communities- communities that do not follow caste and religion lines. This is one of the main reasons that homeless people are found in clusters, even people who have migrated in search of job prefer to live with other people than to stay alone.

Social grouping and community for urban homeless people not only holds emotional and psychological value but are also are a great source about the knowledge of employment opportunities. Thus at times such grouping provides necessary information about the availability of work and also as a lot from where partners could be found for working together. The importance of ‘informational networks’ could be gauged by the fact that at times there is en-mass migration of workers at times from Delhi to Noida, Greater Noida or Gurgaon to work as construction labourers and vice versa. Such work opportunities are available due to social networks.

At times it happens that usually all the members of the family migrate and also migration leads to a cascading effect especially in the villages from where people have migrated and thus a small community is established. In certain cases people are dislocated from their native place and often migrate together. But it is not always that traditional and old ties bond homeless people, at times new relationships are forged. 47% of the respondents told us that they have formed new ties in the city and have made relationships with friends on their own. In fact 52% of the urban homeless respondents told us that they do not have any blood relative or spouse staying with them on the street. In the 0- 10 age group 5 out of total 6 girl child stayed with their relatives on the street, similarly in the age group of 10-18, twelve females had their blood relative that were also homeless, similarly boys in the age group of 0-10 had blood relatives living on the street. However in the age group of 10- 18, only 8 boys had blood relatives on the streets and others did not.

Homeless people attach lot of value to family and staying together with their own family, Lakshmi a 14 year old girl whose family was dislocated from jamuna pusta slums, discontinued her studies, in spite assurance from her teacher that she will be looked after in the hostel. Lakshmi chose to stay with her family and has no regrets about it and says, “Nahin, mujhe bhi laga ki mummy se dil hategi nahin” (I would miss my mother) and she needs me to be with her.

To understand the dynamics of forging new relationships based on being placed in similar situation, we found that homeless people tend to rely on each other and strong friendships are formed. 16% of the male respondents who had no relatives on the streets told us that they have adopted relatives or people whom they treat as their own, the trend of adopted relative was more prevalent among adolescents and out of eight males who had adopted relatives, and seven were boys. In the category of women we found an almost equal distribution between girls having adopted relatives

and women.

The relationship formed by homeless people most of the time are long term and enduring, however in the case of children, relationships are often transient, these relationships are short lived due to many reasons, important among them are change of location, feeling of being exploited (especially if friends are of different age group). The other reason for transient relationships in certain cases is due to the basis of relationship, if the relationship is not one that is based on emotional bonding but on economic and financial criteria then they do not survive. Also social networks fail at times due to mobility factors, since rural migrants are governed by economy, at times people move away from their groups for better opportunities.

Qasim a young boy who does rag picking in his ten years of homelessness had made many friends, but most of his friendships have been short lived. At first he befriended Sonu a older boy with whom he used to do ragpicking but later on the friendship turned sour as he felt exploited on money matters and division of work, this circle of making friends and partners on the basis of work went on for Qasim and none of these friendships survived. Qasim however says that there exists a strong 'we feeling' among the children who work on the railway station.

On the other hand the relationships formed on the basis of emotional bonds are more enduring, Saroja Devi a homeless widow and Rampriya – much older women had adopted each other as mother and daughter – a relationship that has survived two decades.

Forging friendship with other people also leads to the issue of trust; that is how substantive such relationships are? On the issue of whether they trust other people who are their friends on the street 36.3% of the respondents applied in the affirmative, nevertheless such bonding existing more among adult men than any other sub category. The other issue which was quite relevant was that of positive relationship with non homeless people, 29% of the respondents ascertained that they do have positive relationship with non homeless people. In this category also adults were able to forge relationship with non homeless person more than people belonging to other category.

Celebration of festival and gathering are also a pointer of vibrant community, on the question of whether they celebrate festivals or not, 70% of the respondents replied in the affirmative. The strong social bonds that homeless people form with each other is also reflected in data on procurement of food when there is no money, 20.5% of the homeless people responded that when there is no money they depend on their community and friends for help.

Education

Societal and public perception often takes homeless people and children as illiterate, to test the above, through the questionnaire we tried to understand different dimensions of literacy with regards to the homeless people and small children. In this we found that 65.30 percent of the homeless population was not literate (literate here would mean that people can read and write) and 34.6% were literate. In the illiterate category where as 52.94 of the adults were illiterate, for children and adolescents, the figure was comparatively less at 47.06%. Within the category of children illiteracy was more pronounced in the age group of 10-18 years (35%) as compared to the age group of 10-18 years where we found that 23.53% of the respondents were illiterate. A gender wise breakup shows that illiteracy is higher in females as compared to males. It was found that more than half of the female respondents were illiterate (52.94%) as compared to males but it was not a substantial gap. The male illiteracy level stood at 47.06%, thus in the entire male respondent, literacy was higher than 50% as opposed to females.

With in the females illiteracy was highest in the age group of 30 to 50 years, in this age group 33% of the females were illiterate. In the males also illiteracy was higher in 30-50 age groups. In the male children however two factor stand out, one is that between the age group of 0-14 , 9 children were school drop outs and hence had certain level of education but dropped out due to various reason. we also found that nine children with in the same age group were pursuing informal education through the aid of NGO's.

Occupational Profile

In public perception there exists an entrenched belief that urban homeless and street children are 'beggars' and do not want to take up any work, our finding show different result.

Out of 93 homeless people interviewed we have 77 valid entries, in which we found that not all homeless people and street children are in receiving alms and charities. More often than not, begging is an option that is taken up when no work is available.

The life history of Shabir- a disabled man illustrates his, inspite his disability Shabir never wanted to live by soliciting, when his brothers usurped his property he came to Delhi, at cannaught place he set up both shop and home for some ten years. He earned enough to eat by selling the incense sticks, and slept at night at the same spot, his iron trunk firmly tied by a chain to the railings of a shop.

Table 2.6

Breakup on the basis of Primary Occupation

Sn	Primary Occupation	Numbers	Percentage
1	Street vendor	4	5.19%
2	Casual daily wage labor	11	14.29%
3	Construction worker	0	
4	Passenger richshaw puller	6	7.79%
5	Rickshaw load puller	2	2.60%
6	Handcart puller	0	0%
7	Handcart pusher	0	0%
8	Hammal	1	1.30%
9	Commercial sex worker	0	0%
10	Live by alms/receive charity	18	23.38%
11	Rag picking	9	11.69%
12	Shoe Polisher	2	2.60%
13	Scavenging and Street cleaning	-----	-----
14	Dealing in Drugs	-----	-----
15	Professional blood donor	-----	-----
16	Domestic Worker	4	5.19%
17	Garage worker or cycle repair mechanic	1	
18	Home maker		
19	Student	5	6.49%
20	Gambling	0	
21	Any Other	15	19.48%

The three main occupations that homeless people and street children undertake in order of priority are- living on alms and charity (23.38%), though it does seem to be a highest figure, but it also tells us that more than 75% of homeless people and street children do not live on charity. The second most preferred work was comprised of 'other activities' (19.48%), other activities mainly included working in the hotel, selling groundnuts and working in shops. Such work

are transient and seasonal in nature and signify extreme insecurity, people falling in this category were also the one who were more prone to falling on charity. The third most common work that homeless people undertake is casual daily wage work. Further breakup of the above data shows that more adults (12) live on charity than children (6), and people falling within the age group of 30-50 years constituted majority of people who live on charity.

Small children view soliciting as a secondary profession and to be taken up when no work is available, Qasim a 16 year old boy, who is homeless from last ten years does rag picking at the railway station and forages for food from the train only when he does not have enough money.

Our data goes on to validate that most of the homeless people do some kind of work and are willing to take up work when ever chances are available. It is only when other avenues are closed or due to their physical condition they are unable to work, then only homeless people resort to begging or become dependent on charity and alms. Our result on the days of work available to the homeless people offers some insights on homelessness and beggary.

Table 2.7

Number of Days works available

	Number of days work available	Number of people who worked for that period	Percentage
1	Full month	30	34%
2	15 days	11	12.3%
3	10 days	2	
4	5 days	3	
5	No work	35	39%
6	None of the above	8	
	Total	89	

Out of 89 valid entries we found that for majority of homeless people that is 39% work was not available to the homeless people and in few cases it was available for 2 or 3 days.

However we found that in 12.3% cases work was available for the period of 15 days, we can conjecture from this that people who mostly fell in the category of construction workers undertook such work as the nature of work is so that it guaranteed few days of uninterrupted work. 34% of the people reported that they get work for full month, these people belong to the category of homeless people who work in hotels and shops.

Breakup of the above shows that 15 adults and 15 children and adolescents were able to get full month work. In this also children and adolescents belonging to the age group of 10-18 were in majority that is 15 of them. Children belonging to the age group of 0-10 did not get work and only 3 old people were able to get work for the whole month.

Thus when it comes to work we find that there is a positive bias towards homeless people belonging to the age group 10-30 years as they are considered healthy to take up physical labour. Gender wise breakup shows that only 5 women were involved in full month work; three belonged to age group of 50 and above (mostly engaged in cooking) and 2 adolescents' girls. Thus even in the sphere of homelessness bias towards homeless female is more pronounced, leaving them with no option but begging.

In the category of 15 days work, 15 people answered in the affirmative, on dis- aggregating the data it was found that more children than adults are able to get work fifteen children and seven adults respectively; gender wise two women were able to get work for 15days in comparison with nine men.

Within the category of 10 days work, we got only two affirmative replies that of one women and one child. If we analyse the breakup in totally, picture that emerges is one that only able bodied males are preferred when it comes to work and that women as a category find it difficult to work.

In the case of no work, the data result showed that 20 children and 15 adults were without work and depended on charity and alms.

Table 2.8

Current daily income

Sn	Current Daily Income	Number of people	Percentage
1	<50 Rs.	33	42%
2	50-100 Rs.	28	36%
3	>100 Rs.	17	22%
4	Valid answers (tot)	78	

Table 2.9

Current Daily Expenditure

Sn	Current Daily Expenditure	Number of people	Percentage
1	<50 Rs.	50	60%
2	50-100 Rs.	28	34%
3	>100 Rs.	5	6%
4	Valid answers (tot)	83	

From the above table, it is clear that the income of most of the homeless people is more than or equal to what they earn, Homeless people who earn less than 50 Rs. comprise of 42% of the homeless people and spend almost all of it. However contrary to the popular perception homeless people are able to save some amount of money. For example

42% of the people have daily income of Rs.50 however if we look at the daily expenditure chart, it can be noticed that 60% of homeless people have expenditure of Rs. 50 per day. Thus even though there is a small amount of data discrepancy on valid answers, still homeless people save money. Maximum amount of money is saved by people who are earning more than Rs. 100 a day; it was found that 17 people earned more than Rs. 100 a day but only 5 spend more than Rs 100. Looking at the above data, we can surmise that homelessness in this case has more to do with sending home money as much as possible sending home.

Breakup of the data on income shows that earning less income is age specific. The data showed us that 20 children were being paid less than 50 Rs. On the other hand the figures for adults stood at 13. Similarly gender wise also more women were found working for less than Rs 50 than men(22 women and 11 men).

For the current daily expenditure, the expenditure for both adult and children exceeded their income, this trend was more pronounced in children and adolescents. More adults earned 50-100 Rs. than children (adults- 19 and children -9) also more men earned 50-100 Rs. than women (20 men and 8 women).

Related to the above issue is whether homeless people are able to save money or all their income is spend on expenditures .It is an accepted dogma that homeless people are not able to save money and other assets because of the very nature of their living conditions. With no safe place to keep their belongings, it is often thought that saving as a life skill is absent in homeless people. our survey findings contradict the above hypothesis. To an extent, it is true that urban homeless children who are runaways do not save money and lack assets, but the same cannot be generalized for each category of homeless people. if one looks at the arguments rationally then it is apparent that urban homeless save –even if its miniscule, if that would not have been the case, how do we explain their coping mechanism during economic shocks.(here we have to remember that economic shocks are more common among urban homeless due to the vagaries of market and contractual nature of work). Thus some category of urban poor save money and assets but the form of savings is different due to constraint of being homeless.

Saving becomes crucial especially when the focus is on migrant workers who constantly need to send money home. Out of 89 valid answers, 43% of homeless people affirmed that they save money and 57% said that they do not save money. Breakup wise it was found that 18 adult and 18 children send money home, in the age group of 10-18, we found that seventeen children and adolescents send money home and in the age group of 18-30 eleven people send money home. The above is crucial finding as it is often thought that children belonging to the above age group are run away or have left home for the lure of city. Conversely the phenomenon is one where children belonging to 10-18 age group are migrants who have migrated not only to escape extreme poverty individually but also for improving economic condition of their family (mother, father and siblings). For the 18-30 age groups the money send to home is more to take care of their immediate families. the other surprising fact that came up was that, it was not only men who send money home but also homeless women, in the category of women 15 women send money home and majority belonged to 10 -18 age group. In the category of men falling within the age group of 10-18 eleven male children and adolescents send money home.

Since the income of most of the homeless people depended on opportunity available to work, it is quite difficult for them to send money on regular basis. Out of the sample of 86 people, eight respondents told us that they send money home regularly and 12 send money on irregular basis. 65 homeless people told us that they do not send money home. In the category of homeless people who send money on regular basis, it was surprising to note that more children and adolescent send money home than adults. Six children/adolescents and six adults affirmed that they send money on

irregular basis. Here also the earlier trend of people falling between the age group of 10- 30 send money irregularly is repeated. In the category of homeless people who do not send money home majority were children. The cause behind it are many fold, first of all children in many cases do not earn enough that they could send money back home, the minority of children who send money where the one who had been consciously send to city to earn money. The second reason for not sending money home was due to reason that they have run away from home and would prefer a state of anonymity. Thirdly many of the street children are into some kind of substance abuse, most common among it is addiction to correction fluid and they spend a substantial amount of their income on it. For example Qasim a street child earns about 100 to 150 Rs per day by rag picking, at times his income goes up to 200 Rs. some days .But he spends a maximum part, about 50 Rs, of his income daily on the sniffing fluid. Even if we take his daily income to be around 150, he spends 33% of his money.

The primary source of recreation for urban homeless people comprised of watching street and road side entertainment, 23% of the homeless people surveyed told us that road side entertainment was their major source of recreation; in this it could be a play, a fight or even watching a kaleidoscope or just the way life goes on. The second major source of entertainment or recreation for homeless people comprised of watching television in the nearby dhaba or where ever they could get a chance to watch it and 18% of the respondent answered in affirmative. 16% of the respondents said that watching movies in cinema theatre was a major source of recreation for them, but since watching cinema meant that one has to have money to purchase tickets it was the third major source of recreation. Listening to the radio was also one of the sources of entertainment for the urban homeless and 10% said that there primary source of entertainment was listening to the radio. In the category of others playing cards emerged as a major source of entertainment.

Table 2.10

Recreation

Primary source of recreation		
1	Watch Television	18%
2	Watch Movie in a Cinema Theatre	16%
3	Street Play/road side entertainment	23%
4	Listening to the radio	10%
5	Any Other	2%
6.	None	17%
7	No Answer (Missing)	14%

However what were far more pronounced in this data was not what there primary source of recreation was but the missing data (in which people did not give answer) and data under the category of none. 17% of the homeless people said that they do not have any primary source of recreation or entertainment and another 14% did not answer it. If we merge both the categories 31% of the people did not list any primary source of recreation. This 31% emerges as the largest category and is a compelling portrait of life on streets, that recreation and entertainment is a costly affair to be held by few.

Table 2.11

Secondary Source of Recreation

Secondary source of recreation		
1	Watch Television	11%
2	Watch Movie in a Cinema Theatre	8.602%
3	Street Play/road side entertainment	6.4%
4	Listening to the radio	27%
5	Any Other	13%
6.	None	4.3%
7	No Answer(Missing)	37.6%

Secondary sources of recreation were concerned with the second choice that is what the respondents did for recreation if the primary source of recreation was not available. the limited option available to the urban homeless becomes clear in that 38% of the people either did not answer or had nothing to say. Listening to radio which figured as primary source of entertainment for only 10% of the people, was the single most important source of entertainment, when it come to secondary choices. The other secondary source of recreation which figured prominently was under the ‘any other’ category, in this also playing card was the most important source. The reason for the importance of listening to radio and any other source was due to lack of money to make choices. Both these choices do not require money to be spent so we could make a fair assessment as to why they were considered important choices.

Access to Public Services

Homeless people as a category in reality do not exist for the Government; this is evident in denial of any kind of basic infrastructural facilities to homeless people, in name public taps, community shelters and public toilets exist, however their condition is pathetic and homeless people prefer not to use it. Clean drinking water is basic facility that is hardly available to the homeless people, though officially speaking public taps exist but the supply is often erratic and at times non existent.

Table 2.12

Sources and access to drinking water

Sn	Source of drinking water	Number of respondents	Percentage
	Not reported	1	1.07%
1	Roadside taps	74	79%
2	Shops	1	1.07%
3	Tankers	7	7.5%
4	Any other	10	11%
	Total	93	

One of the best indicators of how much importance does a welfare state gives to populace at large is measured by the social service and the infrastructure it provides to the powerless people. Urban homeless people are one such category that are not only homeless but also powerless. The level and degree of basic infrastructural services provided to the urban poor are negligible. Drinking water is one of the main services that are essential to all the populace whether they are poor, homeless or rich. It has been observed that 34% of the urban poor do not get water from the government sources and have to make their own arrangements (Kundu, 'In the name of poor: access to basic amenities' sage 1993).

Table 2.13

Problems faced in getting drinking water

Sn	Problems in getting drinking water	Number of respondents	Percentage
	Not Reported	49	54%
1	Distance	8	8.9%
2	Have to wait for long	11	12%
3	Have to Fight for it	3	3%
4	People tell us to leave	4	4.2%
5	Any Other	15	16.7%
	Total	90	

The condition of urban poor is slightly better when compared with urban homeless. Due to the very fact that urban homeless do not have fixed address and keep on moving, finding water source itself becomes a difficult task. It was face lot of reported by 12% of the people interviewed that standing in queue and waiting for even one bucket of

water is the main problem faced by them, the cost of waiting for water are not only limited to access of water but also opportunity cost and the time foregone in collecting water. 9% of the respondents relied that distance of hand pumps or taps is one of the main obstacle is assessing water. Due to problems in assessing drinking water, 19% of the homeless people rely on other sources of water like private supply, supply by tankers and buying from shops. However even after facing problems 79% of homeless people prefer to take water from the roadside tap even though their work time is diminished as then they do not have to pay for it. Even then 7% of the people rely on tanks and shops for water supply.

Facilities for toilet is another important service that Government is expected to provide to all its populace, however in Delhi there is an acute shortage of toilet and even if they are present, the conditions are unhygienic and homeless people prefer not to visit them and as a result homeless people often have to defecate in public or pay to the private toile owners. Thus defecation becomes a crucial issue for homeless people and especially women. The above sample of 92 homeless people in Delhi shows that due to lack of toilet facilities for urban homeless, 16% defecate in open space. 9.7% of them defecate in private toilet and 8.6% on pavement space. 7.6% of the respondents use temple toilet. Disaggregation of the above data on the basis of sex shows that 62.8% of the female respondent used public toilet, 5% used to defecate on the pavement and 13.95% defected in open space.

Table 2.14

Place for defecation

Sn	Place for defection	Number of respondents		Percentage	
		M	F	M	F
1	Open Space	9	6	21.43%	14.29%
2	Pavement	6	2	14.29%	4.76%
3	Public toilet	22	27	52.38%	64.29%
4	Night Shelter	0	3	0.00%	7.14%
5	Private Toilet	5	4	11.90%	9.52%
6	Any other	0	0	0.00%	0.00%
7	Temple toilet				
8	Not reported				
	Valid answers84	42	42		

In the case studies we noticed that homeless people who belong to the lowest strata of homelessness and suffer from chronic poverty (who depend on charity and soliciting, are old, invalid and single) affordability is an issue. For defecation purposes they use public toilet or open spaces, where they do not have to pay. Buddham Bai an old woman tells us that she goes in the bushes to defecate as even Rs. 2 matter.

In the context of civic amenities, urban homeless do not have suitable places to bath, the lack of personal space for bathing leads to a situation wherein males as well as females are forced to bath in the open. Out of 85 respondents it was observed that 53% of them bath in community bathing space and 17% at public taps. 30% of women within the total respondents bathed in community bathing place and other took bath at public taps. Buddham Bai bathed occasionally and that too at community tap, since she has to pay Rs. 2 for the use and also walk a long distance.

Table

2.15

Place of Bathing

Sn	Place of Bathing	Number of respondents		Percentage	
		M	F	M	F
1	Public taps	10	3	20.83%	7.89%
2	Community bathing places	24	13	50.00%	34.21%
3	Night shelter	4	6	8.33%	15.79%
4	Any other	10	16	42.11%	42.11%
5	Valid answers 86	48	38		

Facilities related to bathing and defecation were not always free, at times homeless people had to pay to avail such basic services that ought to be provided free of cost by the State.

Table 2.16

Paying for basic services

Sn	Basic services	Number of people who paid	Percentage
1	Drinking water	5	5.3%
2	Defecation	31	33.3%
3	Bathing	21	22.5%
4	Sleeping space	1	1.07%
5	Bedding	2	2.15%
6	Others	5	5.37%

From the above table, it is obvious that homeless people had to pay for basic services, in the case of drinking water 5.3% of the people had to pay for it, but what we cannot overlook is that people who did not pay for water were drinking unsafe and unhygienic water. For defecation 33.3% of the respondent had to pay for it, in this too 64 % of the women had to pay for it, same was the case for bathing here also women were forced to pay for bathing place as it was not safe for them to bath in the open.

The data on sleeping space and for bedding could not be read as final, since both these needs are weather dependent. The survey was undertaken in summer and hence provided homeless people with the option of sleeping out in the night without bedding and enclosed spaces, however in winters the scenario changes totally and the number of homeless people paying for bedding and sleeping space goes much higher.

State, Homeless people and Citizenship

Citizenship in the broader sense means that a State's citizens have all the rights accorded to other citizens, in the case of homeless people the concept of citizenship has not been imbued by the State itself. Two basic documents that are widely perceived as a document of citizenship- ration card and voter's card were not available to overwhelming majority of homeless people. The reason often cited by the authorities is that due to unavailability of permanent address, it is not possible to issue homeless people both the documents.

While analyzing the data below we have to keep into mind that our study report was biased towards urban homeless children and therefore in many instances possession of ration card did not apply. To understand the State's response to homeless people, inquiry was made regarding ration card and voters card (which acts as an identity proof)

Table 2.17

Possession of Ration Card

Sn	Ration cards	Number	Percentage
1	Yes, with city address	6	15%
2	Yes, with village address	3	7.5%
3	Yes, but its pawned	1	2.5%
4	No	26	65%
5	Not aware of it	4	10%
	Valid num 40		

It was not astonishing to know that only 15% or six people out of forty had ration card with city address. We can surmise that people having ration card were not homeless but urban poor as having a permanent fixed address is one of the conditions of possessing a ration card. 7.5% or three people out of 40 adults interviewed had ration card with village address, this fact is also not surprising as migrants who come for work routinely go back and their ties to the city are limited. Added to the above difficulty is not having a permanent address, which makes them ineligible for ration cards. What was surprising was that 65% of the people (26) did not possess ration card at all, that is neither in village nor in cities. 10% of the homeless people were not even aware of ration card (4 people) and thus they did not try to get it. However the level of awareness about ration card was quite high as 90% of homeless people knew about it and also coveted for it. But in this case awareness did not translate into getting a ration card.

Table 2.18

Possession of Voters card

SN	Posses voters card	Number	Percentage
1	Yes	2	4.8%
2	No	34	82%
3	Not aware of it	5	12.1%
4	Valid entry	41	

Voter's identity card is a relatively new form of identification document; its importance can be estimated from the fact that not only does it allow one to become permanent resident of the city (although in India, formally there is no concept of regional citizenship, but owning it places the claims of people firmly on the government). In a valid sample of 41 adults, only two adults answered in the affirmative and possessed voter's card. 82% of the adult homeless did not possess voter's identity card and 12.1% said that they were not aware of voter's card. In total approximately 94% of the adult population did not have voter's card and 75% did not have ration card.

The consequences of the above are that not only they are denied of basic services available to the citizens of Delhi and are consequently kept out of the social and food related policies that are needed by them. Not having any kind of identification means not being able to claim BPL or APL status, antodaya status and other services available to the poor people. The other menace that homeless people face is that of perpetual threat of being forcibly displaced or dislocated from the place of their stay.

However one heartening fact that emerged from the above was that majority of the homeless people are aware of the existence of ration card and Voter's identification, 90% of the people in our sample were aware of ration card and 86.8% were aware of voter's card. But the flip side of the argument is that even if majority of adult homeless are aware of ration card and voter's id, due to their powerlessness and homelessness they are not eligible for it. Thus awareness and knowledge in all cases does not lead to fulfillment of claims.

Homelessness Reasons

Table 2.19

Breakup of the reasons of Homelessness

SN	Reasons for Homelessness	Numbers	Percentage
1.	Extreme poverty	33	38.37%
2	Need to send money home	4	4.65%
3	Mental illness	5	5.81%
4	Substance Abuse	0	0.00%
5	Abandonment by family	5	5.81%
6	Absence of family	7	8.14%
7	Family abuse	13	15.12%
8	Social persecution	1	1.16%
9	Mentally challenged	2	2.33%
10	Attraction to glamour of city	3	3.49%
11	Cannot afford to rent house	1	1.16%
12	Stigmatizing illness	0	0.00%
13	Natural calamity	0	0.00%
14	Unemployment	4	4.65%
15	No demand for traditional skills	0	0.00%
16	Any other	8	9.30%

Though widely it has been accepted that two main reasons that lead to homelessness are: search for better opportunities and escape from extreme poverty (push factors).. In certain literature, reason for migration and homelessness are described in terms of ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factor. Push factor is same as that of escape from poverty, in such instances motivation for migration arises to escape the rural environment characterized by poverty. Our data also corroborates the hypothesis as 38.37% of the total respondents said that extreme poverty was one of the main reasons for homelessness. 13 respondents replied that family abuse was one of the main reasons for leaving their house, in it interesting to note that only 3 women had left house due to violence, however 10 males cited it as the main reason for leaving the house, in this eight were children and two young man. The findings are crucial as they do tell us that violence is not often perpetrated against females and that male child is equally at the risk of it. Need to send money home as a reason was identified by four males, this goes on to corroborate our hypothesis that migrants often

stay homeless to send money back home so that they can support their families. Mental illness as well as mentally challenged and mentally ill people are often shun out of their homes and families due to the stigma attached to it, in this category we found six people who cited mental illness and being mentally challenged as one of the main reasons for homelessness. 5.8% of homeless people gave abandonment by family as one of the main reasons for homeless, a gender wise break up shows that all of the respondents were women and are thus more prone to abandonment by family due to their powerlessness.

It was also interesting to note that only 1 person replied in the affirmative that reason for homelessness are due to social ostracisation faced him. Mental illness as a reason for homelessness was cited by 5 respondents; out of this 2 were females and 3 males.

Dislocation as a reason for homelessness, though not cited in the questionnaire becomes quite crucial in the context of Delhi. Large scale dislocation of slums in an attempt to beautify the city has led not only to change in status from urban poor to urban homeless, but also has caused great deal of psychological trauma and anxiety.

Lakshmi a 15 year old girl who lives on the street behind Hanuman Mandir had lost all hopes for the future. Her only good memories are that of past when she used to stay with her parents and siblings in Jamuna Pushta slums. With no option remaining she has moved to living on the street. She fondly remembers her days in the slum saying “apna ghar tha, saaf sutre they, na koyi rokna, na koyi tokna....wahan zindagi sahi thi, yahan zindagi jeene se tho na jeena acha hai”. (when we had our own home , we used to be clean, there was no one to stop and harass us, life was better over there , at this place it is to die then to live).

‘Pull factor’ is often seen as one of the reason for homelessness wherein it is the attraction of the big city pulls people towards it. It was found that pull factor as a reason for homelessness was more common among adolescents; three adolescent males reported that it was the pull factor that motivated them to come to the city. We encountered one adolescent boy who had repeatedly run away from home because of attraction of the city and the relative freedom that city offered. Qasim says that he ran away from home because of “*My curiosity to have good food, interest in money which I am earning from rag picking and my enjoyment and realization of freedom are the main reasons for which I keep living at the streets and station*”.

Table

2.20

Breakdown of years of homelessness

SN	Years of Homelessness	Sex		Total	Percentage
		M	F		
1	Less than one year			11	12%
2	1 to 5 years			24	26.3%
3	5 to 10 years			18	19.7%
4	More than 10 Years			38	38.46%
				91	

Interface with the government as 'un-social elements'

When it comes to interface with law and peace enforcing agents in the government, Homeless people are taken as illegal elements that need to be weaned out of the city. Due to the above reason police brutality and harassment is more common for homeless people. Though we have to be cautious in claiming that police is the only body that harass them, being visible face of harassment they are often taken as the primary cause, Harassment occurs at all level by MCD, NDMC and other bodies that deal with homeless people.

To comprehend the level of brutality and understand how the process of illegalization and criminalization works together to create an inhospitable situation for the homeless people(Harsh Mander, 2005), a sub section of the survey was designed to understand the processes that lead to denying them dignity .

Table 2.21

Custodilisation and Homeless people

SN	Reason for arrest	Number	Percentage
1	Living on the street	11	15.2%
2	For begging(alleged)	10	14%
3	Any Other	4	5.5%
Valid Number 72			

Severe insensitivity and apathetic behavior of Police could be well understood by the fact that a 70 year old single female has been arrested twice for begging and living on the street. Due to the entrenched belief that adult males falling in the age bracket of 18- 35 are living on the street on their own volition and do not want to work, Most of the people arrested for all the three reasons fell in the above category. Our data shows that there is a slight difference in number of people arrested for living on the street and for alleged

Begging. An analysis of arrest due to living on the street as well as for begging shows those in most cases homeless people were booked on both the charges. The congruity between cause of arrest shows that in Government mindset living on the street is considered synonymous with begging.

At times police brutality is directed more towards children and adolescents than older homeless people. One of the main reason for this is due to concentration of street children on places that are highly visible and for police street children stick out as eyesore.

Qasim an adolescent boy has repeatedly been harassed by the police and had been picked up for rag picking, for the first time Qasim was send to Delhi Gate Jail, which is a delinquent home for children. Qasim further tells us that police once or twice a week carries out a raid to pick children from the railway station on the pretext of begging. The children who are arrested are brutally beaten up by police and are send to delinquent home- that means a future without hope.

Qasim case study also throws light on issue of substance abuse by homeless people and especially youth, though we did not get any reply on whether substance abuse was present however Qasim openly admitted that he sniffed correction fluid and also that majority of street children were addicted to it.

For homeless women custodilsation takes the form of incarcerate them in beggars’ jails ironically named as ‘Gandhi Kutir’ for up to three years. Saroja adopted mother has been twice jailed in Seva Kuteer in recent years.

It is generally recognized that poor health and homelessness are related and that homeless people are more prone to poor health due to variety of factors, important among them are lack of access to basic amenities, lack of clean drinking water, unsanitary living conditions, unhealthy work environment and long hours of work. In addition to the above factors there vulnerability is increased due to lack of proper and nutritious food.

Table

2.22

Breakup of disability data, age and gender wise

	Males		Females		Total
	Adults	Non Adults	Adults	Non Adults	
Disabled	1	2	2	3	4

The total number of valid answers for disability were 91, in this it was found that in the category of adults (both male and female) only 3 adult people responded as being disabled, for non adults (adolescents as well as children), it stood at 5.

Age and gender wise breakup of the data shows that out of 22 adult female entry (30-50 years) only 2 adult females accepted that they suffered from disability. For the females belonging to non adult category (0 -18 years), three reported to be disabled and all three belonged to the 0-18 year age group. In the category of males, only 1 adult in the age group of 30-50 years reported to being disabled. For the non adults 2 males reported as having disability in the age group of 10- 18. One would have expected that disability would be more prevalent among children and old people, however our findings were contrary to it, the maximum number of disabled people in both male and female were found in the age group of 10-18

Table 2.23

Type of Disability

SN	Type of Disability	Number	Percent
1	Blindness	1	12.50%
2	Hearing impaired	1	12.50%
3	Deaf Mutism	0	0.00%
4	Mental handicap	1	12.50%
5	Mental illness	2	25.00%
6	Polio	1	12.50%
7	Paraplegia	0	0.00%
8	Amputation	0	0.00%
9	Malunited Fractures	1	12.50%
10	Leprosy induced deformities	0	0.00%
12	Other	1	12.50%
	Valid Answer 91	8	

A comparison

SN	Reasons for Homelessness	Numbers
1.	Extreme Poverty	33
2	Need to send money home	4
3	Mental illness	5
4	Substance Abuse	
5	Abandonment by Family	5
6	Absence of Family	7
7	Family Abuse	13
8	Social persecution	1
9	Mentally Challenged	2
10	Attraction to the city	3
11	Cannot afford rent	1
12	Stigmatizing illness	-
13	Natural calamity	-
14	Unemployment	4
15	No demand for traditional skills	-
16	Any other	38

On comparison of table 1.4 reason for homelessness, with types of disability we find a certain level of discrepancy as 7 people have cited reasons for homelessness due mental illness and due to being mentally challenged, but in the above table only 3 people have answered in the affirmative about mental illness and mental disability. Deciphering the above data leads to the conclusion that there seems to be tendency to notice and acknowledge physical disability which is visible. On the other hand, mental disability is often not visible (except in extreme cases) and thus is usually not acknowledged as disability. Thus disability per se is only physical disability that is starkly visible. Though widely held perception is that physical as well mental disability is exploited by homeless people for sympathy especially those engaged in begging. Our data tells us other wise, physical as well as mental disability is stigmatized in the category of homeless people also. We could also argue that mental disability is highly invisibilised as well as stigmatized and therefore we got variance in the data, homeless people like any other member of society seemed to be biased towards mental illness.

Table 2.24

Assistance

Help and assistance			
Total number of Respondents		93	
Valid Answers		92	98.5%
1	NGO	17	18.47%
2	Religious Organizations	2	2.17%
3	Government officials	0	
4.	Government officials in individual capacity	1	1.08%
5.	Single Individual	8	8.6%
6	None	64	69.5%

Our findings suggest that Government did not provide any kind of assistance to the urban poor, in place of government civil society and civil society organization provided some kind of assistance. In this a percentage wise breakup shows that 18% of the urban homeless were provided some form of assistance by the NGO and 8% were provided assistance by single individuals. an overwhelming 70% were provided no assistance at all . the other crucial issue was that the assistance whenever provided was not in a systematic form but in a haphazard charity format. Two respondents reported that they have been helped by NGO and three respondents have been assisted by single individuals, in all the cases assistance was given in form of clothes and blanket.

Worst experience of being Homeless

Living on the street itself is living in a state where one does not know what is going to happen tomorrow, but still we found that there are various dimensions attached to living on the street, for urban homeless male street is relatively better off then a female who has to face sexual harassment. For an old woman and man on street the worst experience will centre around falling ill and death. In this section we have tried to capture two worst experiences of being homeless for different subsection of urban homeless. in all the life histories the two most common worst experience of being on the street related to not having a space of their own – a place which they can call their home and second was anxiety about the future.

Anxiety about Future

Laksmi is a 14 – 15 year old girl, she lives on the streets behind Hanuman Mandir in Delhi, earlier she used to live in JJ colony near Jamuna Pusta , but once it was demolished she lives on road. Living on the streets had made laksmi tough, but has also left her with constant anxiety about the future, though she says that she doesn't think of the future much. She leaves that to her fate – “pata nahin kismet mai kya likha hai” – she says.

Addiction

Lakshmi says 'bad things' happen on the streets; even though she feels quite safe as her family is with her. Most of her friends (who were also in the slum and going to school with her earlier) are now addicted to 'solution' (thinner). She thinks it's not good to be addicted, but still likes her friends and plays with them. Sometimes, boys in the area trouble her by forcing her to sniff 'solution'; but she has still managed to stay away from getting addicted. Her friends, both girls and boys, protect her when such instances happen.

No place to call my own

Budham bai is an old woman who has a home in Karvi (Uttar Pradesh) but poverty forces her to migrate for some months and beg on the streets. She travels alone, lives alone, she is a woman and she is old. However, Buddham Bai, says, "Hamari jagah kahan hai? Kahin nahi hai. Phir dar lagne se kya hoga?" (Where is our space? No where. Then what good will come out of being scared).

Old age and health

With age and low nutritional intake, Buddham bai complains of various aches and pains, particularly backache and leg aches. She cannot even walk without support. Her legs have swellings and lumps at various places

Illness

Ratul ran away from his home, he is twelve, now he lives on the street. On bad days, some eat at dargahs or temples, and younger ones even forage for food in rubbish heaps. Not surprisingly, they frequently fall sick. Illness is a time of trial, because no government hospital will admit these urchins in sullied clothes. But they do not go hungry in these times, because others in their gang invariably buy them food and take care of them

Drugs

Ratul, like most street children, was introduced to the easy but deadly escape from pain and loneliness offered by soft drugs early in his days on the streets of Delhi. Thinners are readily available at any stationery shop for Rs 25 a bottle. Shopkeepers know that the children who buy these are not using them for painting, but they do not hesitate to sell to the street urchins who flock to their stores. Two bottles are enough for a day for one child. They soak a rag and inhale the fumes of the solution, and it transports them to a world free from hurt and violence.

As drug addiction is common among children living on the railway platforms, Qasim also sniffs fluid (correction fluid). *Qasim told us that correction fluid which they sniff is very dangerous and is the reason why he is having a pain in his chest usually. He also told that he tries repeatedly to get rid off it but still he cannot do it.* It is also very difficult as most of the children are sniffing this fluid at this station and if someone even escapes from it he again indulges in it when he sees others sniffing. There is much influence among the children living at the railway station.

Place to call home

Vijay is a young man who by choice became a urban homeless, he had lived a life of vagabond and does not mind that but somewhere the dream lurks. The dream of having a roof in the case of Vijay is propelled by insecurity about shelter or a place to sleep.

The Old Delhi Night Shelter remained for several years the one stable anchor in Vijay's life in Delhi. When winter was vengeful with bleak and icy winds, or the streets were awash with the monsoon sludge and garbage, he always had the night shelter to return to. Besides, the whole year, he would use the toilets and baths of the shelter

Does he think that he will continue to live the same way that he does now on the streets of Delhi? Twenty years have passed, he says. Who know what the next twenty years have in store for me? My father left a small piece of land in my name in the village. It was the only part of our property which was not acquired for the Gwalior airport. Maybe I will be able to return to it one day. Maybe I will be able to build on it my home. Maybe that is where, with my mother, I will spend my last days. Under a roof, within walls that I can call my own home. May be.

Harassment by Police

Vijay pays the policemen a daily bribe of 20 rupees in order to run a small cigarette stall under a tree close to the night shelter, which he operates in addition to casual wage work, the staple of his income. Over the years, he has run through many trades, sometimes selling tea, or snacks, or chapatis, but each time, despite his daily allurements to the men in khaki, and at least two or three times a month to the municipal staff, within months it invariably comes to pass that his wares are confiscated by the municipal office

Dishonour

Saroja devi is a woman who lives on the streets of delhi, she ran from her in laws place to Delhi after she became a widow and came to Delhi twenty years back with her two daughters.

Beizzati. Dishonour. This was the overriding feature of her life, as Saroja recounted it, without sentimentality or self-pity. ‘To live on the streets – beizzatti. The policeman beats you with his baton – beizzatti. Any ruffian sits next to you and runs his hands on your body – *beizzatti*’.

Roofless existence

She longed for some stability, some permanence, some dignity. Therefore, when a woman slumlord offered to sell her a shanty in a slum not far from Hanuman Mandir, she readily gave her remaining savings, a few thousand rupees. She moved into a shanty with her children, and continued to sell flowers outside the temple.

But only months later one day, government bulldozers arrived suddenly brutally and razed the entire slum settlement to the ground. It was government land, she was told. They were illegal squatters with absolutely no rights. The woman who had sold her the shanty disappeared. She took with her the life savings of many dispossessed people.

Police Harassment

For Qasim like other boys on New Delhi Railway platform, police harassment looms large, The Railway Protection force Personnel working at the New Delhi railway station carries an operation of arresting children who live and work at the station once or twice a week which are fixed. The children who get arrested these days are beaten up very harshly and some are sent either to delinquent homes or linked with some NGOs like SBT(Salam Balak Trust) and Prayas working there from long time. To get rescued from this operation almost all the children living and working at the station don't enter the station these days. The children call these days as “ Chaapa din”

Best Experience while Being Homeless

For many people, being homeless is the only option however many homeless people, especially for children, women and disabled people, being homeless at times provides a better escape from the exploitative and stigmatizing condition in which they lived.

Ratul, Qasim, Jai , Saroja Devi all had their own homes, but circumstances forced them to live on streets and

platforms. Budham Bai has a home, but due to abject poverty she seasonally migrates to city so that she can survive when she goes back.

Earlier we had alluded that in spite of being a moving or a floating population, homeless people do have social asset in the form of friends, adopted relatives whom they can count on, a kind of support that they lacked at home.

Ratul ran away from home due to atrocities meted at him by his father, now Ratul finds that father figure in Obhra bhai, a pickpocket in the New Delhi station. Ratul explained: "He protects us from older bullies, buys medicines for us when we are sick, and discourages us when we inhale solution and other drugs. 'I was on this platform since I was younger than you,' he tells us. 'I know this world. If you take to drugs, you will never escape to a better life. You will die here. I will not let this happen to you'.

Companionship is formed among people who are different and yet they support each other and become adopted relatives. Saroja Devi and Ramapriya are two such companions in their anxiety ridden homeless state.

It was during those months of desolate loneliness that Saroja met Rampyari, a crabby eccentric older widow who shared the community spaces of the temple compound. They cannot say who was initially drawn to whom, but Rampyari was kind to the twice-breaved mother, and Saroja in turn began to take care of the older woman.

These two profoundly lonely women, each without family or home, decided to adopt each other as mother and daughter. It is a sturdy unwavering bond that has survived more than two decades of the vicissitudes of life on the streets. It is typical of many such alliances that are formed between despised people in the world of the cities' pavements, sturdier in loyalties, more tolerant of idiosyncrasies, and more tender in giving, than most biological relationships. I recall a street boy who adopted a disabled old man as his grandfather: he would carry him long distance on his back, and for years save from his own earnings in rag-picking for food, medicines and even the older man's addictions.

Between Saroja and Rampyari is another of these unlikely unions of the streets. Rampyari is a widow from Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, proud of her Rajput origins. Her husband used to work in the railway police. He and her sons were killed in a murderous family feud, and Rampyari found her way eventually to the courtyard of Hanuman Mandir in Delhi to survive on her own.

Saroja, on the other hand, dark skinned and of gaunt frame, fluent only in her native Telegu, is everything that Rampyari with her surviving vestiges of upper caste. North Indian arrogance, looks down upon. 'I don't know what she is', Rampyari told us. 'A Madrasi', she said disparagingly. 'Maybe an isai. Maybe a kasai. Who knows?'. An isai is a Christian, a kasai a pejorative word for a Muslim. But one day it happened that Saroja gave her tea. They began to take care of each other. Saroja called her mother. And their kinship was sealed.

Shabir is an old man who solicits he has befriended by a tea-stall owner, young enough to be his grand-son. When the boy saw the railway policemen occasionally harassing Shabir, he suggested to him to drag himself to sit next to his tea stall whenever there was a police raid. He would tell the policemen that Shabir was his customer. The boy joined us when we were talking to Shabir. I have to pay the police people 800 rupees every month as bribe to run my tea-stall, he told us. They will not touch Baba, he said cockily, because they are in my pay and they know that he is my friend.

What impressed the youthful tea-stall owner most initially about Shabir was that although he was a disabled beggar, he insisted on always paying for his tea. It is one of Shabir's many rules that he will not beg in the area that he has made his home.

Greatest Felt Need

Shelter

In all the life histories and survey, inspite of differences of age and sex, two needs and aspiration of almost all homeless people were same, one was having a roof on their head and the other was that of dignity- dignity to work on the streets without harassment from government officials. It was also noticed that most of the urban homeless people had tried their best to create a shelter for themselves, in illegal colonies and shanties, but their efforts have been thwarted by the government.

Lakshmi's family was evacuated from Jamuna Pusta and reallocated to a place which did not have any kind of amenities to speak of. Thus ultimately they had to be on the street. Similarly saroja devi got a shanty for herself which was later demolished by the municipal authorities.

Shelter and a place to call their own alludes all the urban homeless people, their greatest felt need is to stay somewhere safe- a place free of drugs, police harassment and in many cases free of sexual exploitation that they go through.

Working and living with dignity

Perhaps one of the greatest myth that exists is that urban homeless or a wide section of them do not work and live on alms, the reality however is contrary to it, in almost all the cases soliciting was the last option and was undertaken when there were no avenues left.

The above is not only true for adults but also for children. Most of the children do rag picking but they aspire to get educated and do something with their life. Their aspiration ranges from learning computer to training in tailoring and becoming a mechanic, any work that gives them dignity.

Qasim told that all the children in the families should be given education, they should be given good food and clothes, they should have access to recreational activities like T.V, playing etc. and more importantly there should be no family quarrels.

Harassment and inhuman treatment by the GRPF and the police is lived in reality, even though urban homeless people, even children work mostly as rag pickers they are often harassed and beaten badly by the authorities- beating that not only hurts them physically but leaves an emotional imprint and means losing their self confidence and facing humiliation. Most of the urban homeless people did not expect much as a long term dream they wanted to do something legal so that police harassment is stopped.

3 Food, Nutrition and the Urban Homeless

Food and Hunger

The present century has been marked by increasing urbanization; a shift from rural areas to metropolises due to the belief that ample work opportunities are available. Thus the shift from rural hinterland to metropolis is often motivated by better opportunities and to ameliorate their livelihood and food insecurity. Though cities offer better income and job scarcity is less, but the following benefits are outweighed by the detrimental conditions like unsanitary working conditions, food insecurity and malnutrition. One of the main variables that determines hunger and food insecurity among urban poor and homeless is the kind of work/employment that they undertake, thus it is the context of livelihood that determines whether they are escaping hunger or getting further enmeshed in food insecure situation. In case of homeless people who earn on day to day basis and are highly dependent on market, most of them are dependent on casual and temporary jobs that are not only seasonal but also temporary. Thus food insecurity/ security for urban homeless people is directly dependent on lows and highs of labour market. From the above it will be fair to conjecture that demographic shift (from rural to urban and especially in case of poor people) is not only leading to urbanization of the country but also urbanization of food insecurity and hunger.

Urban homeless people are more prone to food insecurity and hunger than their rural counterparts; however we need to take into account that the nature and sources of food insecurity and hunger are distinct for both categories. Urban homeless people usually go through spurts and phases of food insecurity, depending on the vagaries of market and employment thus food insecurity manifests itself in transitory manner; on the other hand for rural poor food insecurity and hunger is often chronic in nature.

The problem of food insecurity and creating food related safety nets for urban homeless is further compounded by the fact that very few studies exist that have tried to measure causes, reason and magnitude of hunger among urban poor and practically no studies exist for the urban homeless in same situation. Even the studies done on hunger among urban poor are beset with problems- most common among them is that of viewing urban poor cross cutting different regions, cities and towns as one category (Laura de Brular; 2005, World Bank). However the reality is not so; hunger and food insecurity are not uniform among all cities, one of the reasons for it is that even though wages are more in metropolises as compared to small towns, expenditure is also higher than small cities. It has been reported that expenditure in metropolises is higher by 50% when compared with small towns (World Bank, 2005). Thus though income for an urban homeless would be higher in the metropolises so would be expenditures and thus food insecurity will be more pronounced.

Urban homeless are heterogeneous category and comprise of various sections and subsections of people, and hunger and food insecurity is more prevalent in certain categories of homeless people, who either do not come under the purview of food and social security schemes due to being homeless or those who are old, disabled and children and hence not able to earn much.

It is true that urban homeless people are able to earn more than their rural counterparts but unlike rural poor, urban homeless people spend 60 to 80% of their daily expenditure on food items. It has also been noticed that eating pattern and the kind of food consumed by urban homeless varies from day to day basis, depending on how much they earn and whether they earn at all (Ruel, Haddard and Garret, 2002, IFPRI Discussion Paper, No 139,

Washington).

To understand food insecurity and magnitude of hunger faced by homeless people and homeless street children; a separate set of questions were drafted, taking into account their food insecurity/ security condition for a period of two days. The aim was to understand their eating pattern, dependence on particular kind of food items and their coping mechanism in relation to hunger and food insecurity.

Table 3.1

Breakdown of kind of food consumed on the day of interview

Items consumed	Breakfast	Meal	Dinner
Empty Stomach	4	25	23
Only tea	6	2	1
Biscuit/Rusk/Etc	46	0	0
No vegetable/dal (only rice or roti)	7	13	15
Proper food	30	53	54
Not reported	0	0	0
Total	93	93	93

From the table, we can discern that out of the 93 respondent only 30 felt that they have had a proper and nutritious breakfast, though the number of homeless people who went hungry in the morning is less (10, if we take only tea into consideration) but healthy and filling breakfast was not eaten that is if we go by the standard of normal breakfast. 53 people said that they have consumed full and proper meal during lunch and 54 had proper meal during dinner time. But we cannot say that people who eat proper meals during lunch time also get proper meals at night; there can be cases where people get only one proper meal a day. However 25 people went empty stomach during lunch time and 23 reported to have gone empty stomach at dinner. thus out of a sample of 93 people 23 people were empty stomach at least during one meal a day, which comes to around 27%. In addition it has to be remembered that less than half of the people interviewed had proper and filling meal, and around 43% had to do with partial meal or no meal.

On the day before the interview we find similar trends however more people had proper food during the two main meals, except for breakfast, where number were slightly lower than the day of interview. One reason for this could be due to work availability, since having proper food for the homeless and street children depends on day to day earning, thus on the day when work is not available proper food would be substituted by partial meal or no meal. Thus by comparing both the tables we could understand the linkage between hunger, food and availability of work.

Table 3.2

Breakdown of the food consumed on the previous day

Items consumed	Breakfast	Meal	Dinner
Empty Stomach	3	16	24
Only tea	8	0	0
Biscuit/Rusk/Etc	50	1	1
No vegetable/dal (only rice or roti)	3	14	10
Proper food	29	62	57
Not reported	0	0	1
Total	93	93	93

The other important insight that the data offers is linked to the eating habits- when one is working and when one is not. As we know that a large chunk of homeless population depends on casual work and most of the time they have to go in the morning for that, thus missing breakfast on work days is quite common. Thus one of the main causality for urban homeless people is a shift of food preference and diet pattern, from the table above it is apparent that food preference are entirely different from what these people were used to (rusk, biscuit etc).

Table 3.3

Source of Meal on the day of interview

Source of meal	Breakfast	Meal	Dinner
Not reported	5	27	33
Purchased	62	43	41
Religious places	16	11	8
Begging	4	3	2
NGOs	1	1	
Foraging in railway station	3		2
Self cooking	2	8	7
Total	93	93	93

Table 3.4

Source of meal on the previous day

Source of meal	Breakfast	Meal	Dinner
Not reported	6	16	27
Purchased	66	43	40
Religious places	14	21	9
Begging	4	3	4
NGOs	1	2	
Foraging in railway station	1	1	3
Self cooking	1	7	10
Total	93	93	93

The shift from rural areas to urban areas is not merely a spatial shift but it also leads to change in eating pattern. Homeless people often depend on outside for meal, as being homeless means lack of cooking space, lack of place where one can keep her belonging. The data for the day of interview as well as previous day shows that majority of homeless people purchased meal and especially breakfast, eating at religious places where meal is served as Prasad or charity is the second option, begging third and foraging railway station is the last option for getting food. Self cooking of meal though does not figure prominently for breakfast, but it does so for meals and especially dinner. The reason behind not cooking breakfast regularly is again related to the nature of work undertaken. At night homeless people are usually free to cook for themselves and prefer to cook on their own, if they are not exhausted. Also for the night meal homeless people cannot rely on religious places since most of the religious places shut down in the night. However the central cause is time constraint faced by most urban homeless people; due to exigency of getting work for the day reaching the job market early in the morning is imperative for them. Casual labourers like construction workers, painters, carpenters usually have to reach before 8:00 so that they are 'picked' up by the employer for the day. Thus preparing food is not priority and it's easier to purchase food.

Ratul a 14 year old boy who stays on the streets of Delhi with his friends and takes up diverse occupation like rag picking and other seasonal occupation like working with caterers, selling tickets, cleaning taxis and buses. Most of the time Ratul and his friends purchase cooked food, however at times when there is no money, Ratul and his friends eat at dargah, temple or forage for food.

Hunger among the homeless and street children is one of the bitter tragedies of life. Hunger for homeless people is directly related to their earning or begging on day to day basis. There can be days when homeless people can afford three meals a day and there are days when they do not have enough to eat and go hungry. Thus for homeless people availability of food depends on multiplicity of factors.

The tables below attempt analyze the intensity as well as meals skipped in two days; on day of interview and the previous day. While interpreting the data we have taken into account hunger as not having enough food or proper meal. Homeless people who have had food but not proper and full meals are counted as hungry for the survey.

Table 3.5

Number of times without proper food in last two days

Sn	Intensity of Hunger	Number of respondents	
1	One time hungry in two days	19	38%
2	Two time hungry in two days	20	40%
3	Three time hungry in two days	9	18%
4	Four time hungry in two days	1	2%
5	Five time hungry in two days	1	2%
		Total: 50	

Table 3.6

Number of times without proper food but had tea or little quantity of snacks

Number of times without food (tea taken)		Numbers	Percent
1	One time hungry in two days	20	38%
2	Two time hungry in two days	1	
3	Three time hungry in two days	5	9.7%
4	Four time hungry in two days	23	44%
5	Five time hungry in two days	3	5.7%
	Total	52	

Out of the total 50 valid entries it was found that 40% of the people had experienced hunger two times in a week, while 30% of the respondents had gone hungry once in two days. It is often that food taken in insubstantial amount is considered as meal, however we have to distinguish between proper meals (filling meal) and having a little amount of food. Drinking tea is a form of coping strategy prevalent among the homeless as it diminishes hunger pangs. Thus to get a correct picture of its very important to understand the role of tea and other kind of substitute taken to compensate for proper meal.

Out of the 52 valid responses, it was found that 44% of the meal have gone without food for at least one meal in a day, 38% have had no food(proper meal) once in two days.

Table 3.7

Frequency of eating nutritious meal

SN	Number of time when the respondents had food with vegetable or protein (or any thing else than cereals) in two days	Number	Percentage
1	One time	23	25%
2	Two time	49	53%
3	None in two days	21	22.5%
	Total	93	

While trying to understand the levels of intake of nutritional food items, our data shows us that proper meal for homeless people means two meals that are filling. The issue of nutritious meal is not significant for them. The rationale behind the above is first of all nutritious meals are expensive as compared to simple roti and rice. It is not that homeless people do not realize the importance of nutritious meal, but the issue is that its beyond their daily means. It also depends on the availability of cash, if there is enough money than they do go for nutritious meals but mostly they eat what ever is affordable. The motivation for eating cereals is also due to the cost factor and especially so for migrants who want to send as much money as possible to their homes. The third reason had to be found in their daily fluctuation of income, if they have earned enough money than they take proper meals. Thus lack of income is the man deterrent in having full and nutritious meal.

However awareness of health and trying to ward off illness impels them at times to have nutritious meal comprising of proteins and vegetables, as the opportunity cost of falling sick is greater than not having proper meals. Out of 93 respondents it was found that 53% of the homeless people have at two nutritious meals in two days. 22.5% of the respondents answered that they had not had any nutritious meal in the last two days. Similarly 25% had one full and nutritious meal comprising of proteins just once in two days.

Longest Period without food

Sn	Longest period without food (Days)	Days without food	Number of respondent	Percentage
1	One days	1	14	28%
2	Two days	2	19	32%
3	Three Days	3	10	17%
4	More than four days		8	13.5%
5	Four days	4	2	3%
6	Five days	5	3	5%
7	Six days	6	1	
8	Seven days	7	1	
9	Ten days	10	1	
10			59	

In our endeavor to understand the phenomenon of transient as well as chronic hunger among homeless people for a period of one month it was found that, out of valid sample of 59, 32 % of the homeless people have gone without food for two days. 28% of the respondents revealed that they had gone without food for one day and 17% for three days. It was shocking to know that 13.5% of the respondents have gone hungry for more than four days.

From the data above we can infer that food insecurity is quite high among homeless population, there lives are marked by transient phases of hunger, which hare quite frequent. The phenomenon of transient hunger is directly related to employment and money earned. In seasons or days when there is no work available like monsoons, extreme climactic conditions, and intense security that acts as an impediment and whose first victims are vendors. For the homeless involved in begging situation of hunger arises when religious places are closed or during certain days when less charity is given by people. The data on days without food aptly tells us how severely and totally dependent urban homeless are on market and especially labour, thus any shock; whether induced by external factor or internal factor leads to food insecurity.

Table

Breakdown of food procurement when no money

Sn	When no money for food	Number	Percentage
1	Religious places	36	51%
2	Community members/ friends	16	20.5%
3	Remain hungry	15	21%
4	Parents/Spouses/blood relatives	8	10%
5	NGOs	1	
5	Stealing	1	
6	Begging	1	
	Total	78	

Out of the valid sample of 78, the results showed that for 51 % of the homeless receiving free food from religious places is undertaken and is the most preferred means for procuring food without paying. It is interesting to note that 21% of the people prefer to stay hungry than depend on charity from religious places, relatives and community members. 20.5% of homeless people depend on community members and friends for food.

Shabir is a disabled man, who sits near the peer baba mazaar, The Sikh owner of a small dhaba spoke to him one day and asked him his life-story. Hearing it, he offered to feed him every night at his dhaba, and this arrangement has continued over the years.

The number of homeless people who depend on stealing, begging and NGO support is miniscule as out of 78 respondents only 1 in each category. Thus again contrary to the popular perception even in times of dire need stealing is considered as an option only by few people.

The most important coping strategy that homeless people follow, when they do not have money to purchase food or to cook food is reliance on other sources where they do not have to pay for food, Such coping strategy are followed in dire circumstances when other option are closed. It has to be noted that even those homeless people who do not depend on charity in the normal course of time have to depend on it when all possibilities are exhausted.

Eating habits when money is available

Eating habit when there was lot of money depended on the choice of individuals and thus were varied, but most of them replied that they eat more food and good food. By good food the respondent did not mean healthy food but tasty food. Since our main sample was drawn from the children, many of the replied that they eat ice creams, toffees and different kind of sweet.

Older respondents replied that when they have money they cook food and especially non vegetarian food. However 22% of the respondents replied that there is no difference in their eating pattern and they eat what they always eat. 76% people did reply that they eat better food when they have more money.

On the issue of what do they eat when they are not well and how do they manage to get food, divergent answers were given, but thing that was clearly visible and marked was reliance on social network and how these networks becomes an asset during illness. 31% of the respondents relied on their friends or relatives for food during illness, this in many cases was in terms of borrowing money and paying later. 25% of the respondents told us that they buy food from the money that they had saved and saving thus was the main source for them during period of illness. 14% of the respondents answered that they either beg for the food or eat from langar and approximately 14% of the people simply did not eat food and waited to get better.

Table 3.10

Percentage of daily expenditure spent on food

Sn		
1	Less than 50%	25%
2	More than 50% and less than 60%	22
3	More than 60% and less than 70%	16%
4	More than 70% and less than 80%	6.25%
5	More than 80% and less than 90%	9.37%
6	From 90% upto 100%	12.5%

Access to food and security schemes

The survey was also geared towards trying to ascertain whether the food and livelihood based schemes are able to make any positive difference in the life of urban homeless people.

The scheme on which we focused were Public Distribution System, BPL, Antodaya, Old age Pension, Annapurna, ICDS, NMBS, Wage employment scheme and old age pension. it would be important to point out that since the survey was biased towards urban homeless children and adolescents many of the schemes did not apply. However even with in the small sub set of adult urban homeless people, who were basically migrants, very few had PDS cards.

Table 3.11

SN	Ration cards	Number	Percentage
1	Yes, with city address	6	15%
2	Yes, with village address	3	7.5%
3	Yes , but its pawned	1	2.5%
4	No	26	65%
5	Not aware of it	4	10%
	Valid num 40		

We can say that PDS was the only scheme which had a small impact on the urban homeless people. There was just one case wherein migrant homeless women had antodaya card with village address. The survey did not find even a single old person getting old age pension as not only old people lack the required document but also that they do not have any permanent address.

4 Health Status

“In the urban context, poverty and vulnerability can be related to three distinctive characteristics of urban life: Commoditization (reliance on cash economy), environmental hazards (spreading from density and hazardous location of settlement and from exposure to multiple pollutants) and social fragmentation”

Moser, and Garcia, 1996)

Health Conditions

To understand the magnitude of general health of homeless people and street children, a questionnaire was administered regarding their health condition. In addition to it the questionnaire also made an attempt to understand the relationship between ill health and work. The questionnaire on health and well being was directed towards answering two types of queries;

- The first part was directed towards one month recall period and attempted to understand the general health condition in a short duration of time and a given day
- the second related to a year recall period and tried to understand the long term impact of illness on the well being and work of homeless and street children.

Out of the 93 interviews, 42 respondents reported symptoms and 51 respondents reported no serious ill health within the last month but majority reported multiple symptoms of ill health.

Table

One Month recall period checked with Symptoms

Sn	Symptoms of ill heath	Numbers
1	Pain	76
2	Fever	19
3	Cough	10
4	Breathlessness	6
5	Injury	6
6	Neurological symptoms	6
7	Metabolic Symptoms	5
8	Dental symptoms	6
9	Chest Pain	5
10	Joint Pain	11
11	Stomach Pain	5

The general symptoms were cited by most of the respondents and in many cases multiple symptoms were cited. Many of these symptoms, though seem inconsequential are portent of long term illness. Breathlessness, neurological disorders, chest pain were often not given much importance by the homeless and street children. The data trends validate the above assertion; it was found that in four cases fever was accompanied by cough with sputum and shivering. The above data also throws light on the unsanitary working and living condition.

Disease and ill health are due to multiplicity of factors and certain symptoms are specific to particular kind of population. On the issue of women and ill health, a different set of questionnaire was administered in this four women out of 23 responded that menstruation is accompanied by severe pain.

Living and sustaining themselves amidst ill health leads to often ignoring these symptom, due to expenses that will be incurred in treatment, due to barred entry from hospitals and even if allowed then lackadaisical treatment given to them. More than often homeless and street children are wary of getting treatment due to rude treatment from the hospital authorities. Total lack of regard for 'minor ailments' is also due to the issue of livelihood as most of the respondent are dependent on daily earning for day to day living . Disruption due to ill heath leads to loss of earning and hunger, thus such ailments are often viewed as irritants and barriers towards earning.

The importance of work in day to day lives of urban poor becomes apparent when we analyze the data based on one month recall period for rest during the time of illness. It was noted that only two respondent took complete rest during minor ailments. 11 respondents worked partially during the period of illness and 13 respondents worked even while they were ill.

Further the data shows that even when bed rest(but not hospitalization) was taken, it was due to total incapacity to work, the main reason for taking bed rest for women were due to bone fracture, high fever and chicken pox. Thus bed rest is only taken when there is no other option available and mobility is not possible. For minor ailments homeless people usually did not take medicines, we only found only four respondents taking medication on their own, without going to the hospital.

The poor health condition of homeless could be understood by the fact that out of a 62 valid answers only 7 respondents answered that they are taking medicine on regular basis if they are not well. Hospitalization seems to be the last resort for homeless people and street children, when the disease is beyond their control then only hospitalization is considered by them. 11 responded answered in affirmative that they have been hospitalized for severe diseases in the last one year.

Due to paucity of money, in four cases hospitalization was required but the respondents could not afford the treatment. In one case the respondent left the hospital as n proper treatment was given to him. Even though most of the homeless people visited government hospital, they had to spend quite a lot of money on the treatment, ranging from Rs. 500 to 4000.

Table 4.2

Specific Symptoms

1.1. Headache	17
1.2. Low back pain	15
1.2.1. Aggravated on coughing	6
1.2.2. Aggravated in certain positions	11
1.3. Stomach pain?	7
1.4. Chest pain	5
1.5. Joint pains?	11
1.6. For women -pain related to menstruation:	4
2. FEVER	19
2.1. Was there running nose and cough?	6
2.2. Was there shivering and chills?	5
2.3. Was there cough with sputum?	4
2.4. Was there burning during urination?	0
2.5. Was there boil / s or abscess / s?	0
2.6. Was there diarrhea or dysentery?	2
2.7. Was there headache and body ache?	2
6. COUGH	10
6.1. Sputum?	2
6.2. Blood in the sputum?	2
6.3. Fever?	5
6.4. Chest pain?	5
7. BREATHLESSNESS	6
7.1. Episodic / seasonal?	2
7.2. Exertional?	4
7.3. Associated with chest pain?	2

7.4. Increases with lying down?	2
8. INJURY	6
10. NEUROLOGICAL SYMPTOMS	6
11. METABLOIC SYMPTOMS	5
14. DENTAL SYMPTOMS	6

With in the small subset head ache of 32 homeless people , 17 respondents suffered from headache and 16 for lower back pain, out of this 17 reported that back pain is aggravated on coughing.11 respondent reported having joint pain and seven reported having chest pain. Over the last one month 19 respondents reported to have suffered from fever and 6 from recurrent cough and in this 2 respondents reported blood in sputum. Injury and neurological symptoms were also quite common as six people reported to having been injured and six responded in the affirmative when asked whether they suffered from fits, loss of consciousness and weakness in limbs.

one male respondents suffered from genital problems, however the number would have been more but due to sensitive nature of question, some males refused to answer it or where not within the age group in which genital problems are acutely felt.

Three respondents pointed that even while they were not well they continued to work, when asked to describe the symptoms one person had suffered form chest pain, the other two respondent had fever. when asked that whether in the last one year did the respondents had major illness that required them to be bedridden for more than three days, seven respondents replied in the affirmative and all of them either suffered from fever, chest pain or headache. these three illness are the most common sited once by the urban homeless people. The reason for it may lie in heavy back breaking work, asthma or lower immunity. The high level of illness could be gauged from the fact that even though the sub set was small, 7 respondents pointed out that they could go to work for more then seven days in the last month due to illness and 3 respondents could not work for less than seven days. on being inquired as to what did they do for their illness, only 4 respondents took doctors advice and consultation, other respondents took generic medicines from the shops. even though the symptoms recurred for many of the respondents only 2 respondents answered in the affirmative that they are taking regular medication.

In a one year recall period 6 respondents pointed out that they have been hospitalized in the last one year. but we the survey also threw light on the fact that most hospital do not want urban homeless people and that the health system inspite being subsidized costs lot of money, 4 respondents told them that they did not go to the hospital because they did not have the money for it and they cannot afford government hospitals.

Though the subset was quite small, however it was not a purposive but random survey in the sense that people who were suffering from certain diseases were not taken, the subset though small gives one an idea of how common illness and diseases are in urban homeless people, diseases which can have severe repercussion in the future.

Experience of death

For in-depth understanding of health and medicinal as well as medical care available to the urban homeless people and also how do they cope with certain tragedies, a small set of questionnaire was administered to subset of homeless people. Out of a subset of 37 urban homeless people four people have experienced the death of near one, in these two respondents had experienced death of two family member or relative in the last one year. The symptoms that were reported immediately after death were that chest pain, inability to move or stroke and cough followed by vomiting blood. In one case the dying person was taken to government hospital.

5 State, Society and the Urban Homeless

“The city is plagued by the presence of beggars”

Joint commissioner of Police (Traffic) Delhi

Hindustan Times, 2002

The perception of the society towards the homeless has often been that of illegal squatters and people who are merely involved in begging. Further more it is often thought that and are often seen as a burden on the civic infrastructure. More often than not, society judges urban homeless by the negative stereotypes that had been created and thus reproduces and reinforces them in the common mindset. Some of the negative stereotypes that the society has created are that of homeless people as being drug addicts, unhygienic, having diseases, being dangerous and often people whom one should be careful with. There is also a strongly held perception that homeless people do not want to work and are sloth and lazy and are beggars. For homeless women, life is far more difficult, she is considered to be often being ‘loose women’ and a prostitute. At times such insinuation come from family members themselves, Lakshmi a 14 year old girl who is married is constantly told by her mother in law; These are children from the streets (patri ke bachche). They have no morals. Na bahar ka seekhegi, na andar ka seekhegi” (she would not be able to learn even house work or outside work)

When it comes to street children their condition is far more pathetic as being children they are more vulnerable and helpless, they face not only physical abuse but also sexual harassment. Added to it the stereotype that such children are aggressive however if we analyze the actual situation we realize that these children are not villain but victims of crimes. Thus its not crime that worries the homeless people rather how to protect themselves from violence and crime.

Analyses of the words that are used to describe homeless people and street children aptly convey views and perception that society has towards them. The words used to refer to homeless people and street children are vagrant, tramp, trash. A study undertaken by Graham Tipple of New Castle University, England (Graham Tipple and Suzzane Speak, 2006) identified 7 common categories of perception held by society towards the homeless and street children, these are:

- Villains
- Beggars
- Mentally ill
- Immoral
- Transient
- Helpless
- Loners

Research that have been done on homeless people have found that homeless people are more often than not victims than one who commits crime, it has also been repeatedly affirmed by researchers that it is the negative attitude towards homeless people that criminalizes them

Through our study, we have tried to do a reality checks and our finding are opposite to the common stereotypes that

are held about them. People do not become homeless due to laziness but are forced by unavoidable circumstances to be people with no fixed addresses.

Though the majority of societal opinion is against the homeless people and street children, but still we could not generalize from the above, there are cases where certain section of the population does not view street children and homeless people only from the lenses of negative stereotypes

Society's perception of homeless people finds echo in the perception of State officials who are themselves part of the society as it is the perception of the society that informs the policy makers and influences the policy outcome as well as content of the policy. In the context of homeless people there attitude though guarded is often hostile.

Though we could not generalize from a small sample of interview that we took from government officials we could easily conclude that in the context of Delhi there seems to be a hurry to invisibilise the homeless population. This has gained more momentum if we take into account the impending common wealth game looming large over Delhi.

A Government official in the Ministry of Urban Development told us 'we have to keep up with the image of India on the march... we could not let them spoil and mar the commonwealth game, we have to shift them before the games start'

There also exists a strong feeling among the Government establishments that homeless people do not want to relocate themselves to permanent locations, 'they do not want to shift to permanent houses as that for them would mean giving up their work, but if we have to maintain the infrastructure of the city, such changes are required'. Thus there exists a strong feeling that even if homeless people cannot be thrown out of the city, they should be separated and kept out of the visible limits of the city. It is not that homeless people are averse to shifting to such places, but it is due to the example of forced location relocation to Bhawana (which lacks infrastructure that homeless people do not want to shift, added to this is loss of livelihood that demands them to be present within the city limits).

One government official in the ministry of food supplies pointed out that 'it is not within the policy limits to give ration cards to the homeless people, the Ministry has to follow the policies and norms laid down for the distribution of ration cards. Homeless people are not able to fulfill the criteria's and changing these rules will require a massive amount of effort. It would also not be taken kindly by the political bosses'.

A government official in Delhi police on the grounds of strict anonymity stated that petty crime situation to a vast extent is attributable to homeless people and since they are a moving population it is very difficult to catch them. 'Even in serious cases often it is the moving and invisible population that commits such crimes and due to anonymity it is difficult to track them'. On the whole the thrust of the entire argument made by him/her was that most of the crime within the city was attributable to them. When we enquired about the plight of street children, the approach was entirely negative 'these are the children who later become pickpockets, petty criminals and gradually take to hard core crimes'.

The negative and hostile attitude towards the homeless people is best exemplified by the views of officials in New Delhi Municipal Corporation, Given the sole task of beautifying and maintaining the lutyens zone in Delhi, Homeless people who have no permanent place to sleep are considered as nuisance and hurdle in maintenance of New Delhi, one official said that 'how can we even think of making the city beautiful, when in the night the whole place turns

into a squatter zone, it would be best to send them off, but we cannot do so due to political pressure'. To boost his/her case the officer claimed that 'if there is no political motivation than we can weed them off in a day, they have not only made the city a squatter zone but have put tremendous pressure on the infrastructure of Delhi- like water and electricity... almost all of them use illegal electricity connection and we are incapable to check them'.

Thus we could say that it is not only the society but also the state functionaries that have a hostile and at best indifferent attitude towards homeless children. What was astonishing was that at large there exists an entrenched belief that homeless people do not want to work and are involved merely in begging. However we did find out that an overwhelming majority of homeless people had either worked in the past or are working at present. Also that since homelessness in Delhi is a migration based phenomena, most of the homeless people are involved in casual work.

6 Annexure: Case Studies

Case Study 1

Dignity in the face of all odds

Lakshmi is about 14-15 years old. She lives on the streets behind the Hanuman Temple in Old Delhi. She lives with her mother and her six siblings. Lakshmi is the eldest. Her father is around but mostly in an intoxicated state as he is addicted to smack. As Lakshmi puts it, “My father is mostly in ‘nasha’ and when not so, he comes and beats up her mother for money.” Her mother is now pregnant with her seventh child. Lakshmi and her sister, divide their time between begging for alms at the temple and rag-picking at the nearby market. Her mother also begs at the temple and stays there taking care of the other children.

Lakshmi doesn’t think of the future much. She leaves that to her fate – “pata nahin kismet mai kya likha hai” – she says. Her life was not always the same though. She remembers happier times, when she was still living in the JJ colony at Jamuna Pushtar. They had a home then, her father was a rickshaw puller, she and her sister went to school in the slum, they had friends who they played with and her mother stayed home with her younger siblings. Her whole world was shattered when one day they received a notice setting a date for the demolition of the slum she was living in. Hers was one of the slums demolished a few years back as part of the slum demolition campaign of the Government of Delhi.

Once the slum was demolished her family was ‘rehabilitated’ in Bhawana, where they were given a small piece of land. However, the area was so inhabitable that Lakshmi’s father decided to sell it. With no option remaining moved to living on the street. She fondly remembers her days in the slum saying “apna ghar tha, saaf sutre they, na koyi rokna, na koyi tokna....wahan zindagi sahi thi, yahan zindagi jeene se tho na jeena acha hai”.

Even now Lakshmi has a set routine, although every different from waking up in the morning and going to school everyday. Tuesdays, Saturdays and Sundays she spends in the area around the temple asking for alms. Sometimes they even earn up to Rs.200 a day. Mondays and Wednesdays she and her sister go to the nearby market area as rag-pickers. They collect all that they find and sell in the evening to the ‘kabadi wala’. On good days they make about Rs. 100. On Thursday and Friday, they go ‘home’. Home for Lakshmi is now one room that they have rented for Rs. 600 a month in Malkaganj. Her family spends two nights in a week there, while the rest of the week is spent on the streets behind the temple. The money they earn is spent mainly on the rent, food for the entire family and the rest is taken away by her father. Her mother tries and hides whatever she can and saves it.

Lakshmi says ‘bad things’ happen on the streets; even though she feels quite safe as her family is with her. Her mother is fiercely protective of her children and ensures that they are not harmed in any way. Most of her friends (who were also in the slum and going to school with her earlier) are now addicted to ‘solution’ (thinner). She thinks it’s not good to be addicted, but still likes her friends and plays with them. Her friends also tell her to keep away from substances and that she is lucky to not have got into it. Sometimes, boys in the area trouble her by forcing her to sniff ‘solution’; but she has still managed to stay away from getting addicted. Her friends, both girls and boys, protect her when such instances happen.

Lakshmi’s mother has a very strong influence on her. She tells her all the time to be careful not to get into bad habits.

She shares her despair with her and at the same time tells her that she is a child and needs to be happy and play. She gives all the children time to play and tries to work very hard so that they don't have work. She dreams that her children will have a future that is different from hers. Lakshmi on the other hand is a pillar of strength for her mother. She argues with father when he beats her mother. She says that many a times he is so ashamed that his daughter scolds him that he doesn't come back for many days. She feels that as the eldest daughter this is the least she can do for her mother.

Once when Lakshmi was still living in the slum, and the slum was about to be demolished one of her teachers approached her mother saying she would take Lakshmi with her and keep her in her home. She said that Lakshmi could help her with housework, while she would ensure that Lakshmi is educated. For a while Lakshmi thought this was not a bad idea. But her mother was very apprehensive about being separated from Lakshmi and did not let her go. I ask her if she regrets not going, as she would probably not be staying on the streets if she had gone with her teacher, whom she also liked very much. Lakshmi says with no regret, "Nahin, mujhe bhi laga ki mummy se dil hategi nahin" (I would miss my mother) and she needs me to be with her.

Recently there was another major event in Lakshmi's life, which she feels was probably worse than the slum demolition. This time however she decided to fight. Lakshmi was married off a couple of months back to a man about ten years older who lived nearby. Her husband's mother saw Lakshmi near the temple and decided that she must be her daughter-in-law. She pestered Lakshmi's mother to get her married to her son. Although both Lakshmi and her mother felt that she was too young to get married, they eventually gave in to the pressure in the hope of a better life for her. Her mother-in-law promised that she would take good care of her.

Soon after, Lakshmi moved to live with her husband's family. His family lived in the outskirts of the city where they had a small piece of land on which they did some farming. In the house were her husband, her parents' in-law and her husband's younger brother and sister. It was a whole new life for her. She was expected to help in the farming activities, cook, clean and do the entire house work etc. She was not trained to do all this and could not cope. Her mother-in-law abused her all the time because she didn't know how to do these things. In a matter of fact manner, Lakshmi says, "I have been living on the streets for such a long time. We eat what we get as alms, from the temple and what we buy from around here. How will I know how to cook and run a house, when I don't even live in a house". Her brother in law also teases her and harasses her all the time. Her husband wouldn't harass her but wouldn't support or speak up for her.

Soon after being married, Lakshmi had to face the shock of having to sleep with her husband. She says that the first time he came to her, she ran away in fear. But her mother-in-law explained to her that this was one of the things she must do as a wife. She didn't like it most times, but didn't say anything. What really hurt Lakshmi though was when her in-laws insulted her and her sisters saying, "These are children from the streets (patri ke bachche). They have no morals. Na bahar ka seekhegi, na andar ka seekhegi". She refused to take this lying down and fought back saying that they shouldn't have come after her and asked her hand if this is what they thought of her.

Last month was 'sawan' and Lakshmi was sent to visit her mother for a few days. Lakshmi shared her angst with her mother and they decided that she needn't go back to her husband's house if they made her so unhappy. Lakshmi's mother says, "When I can take care of six children, one more is not a burden. I got her married thinking it would give her a better life. But if she is unhappy, there is no reason for her to go back. When they come to take her, I simply refuse to send her back". Quite ironically, for Lakshmi the streets are now a better option than the one chance she got

to move to a 'real home'!

What struck me most about both Lakshmi and her mother (who I met briefly after speaking to Lakshmi), was the dignity and self-respect they lived with. Pushed to such most hard circumstances, I don't know how many of us would be able to do so.

Case Study 2

Migration

I could smell Buddham Bai before I could see her. Covered with layers of dirty clothes (once white), with smell of dried urine, entangled salt and pepper like hair put together to form a careless bun. Her pink nail polish flashed against her dark, wrinkled hands. At the age of 65, her smile was as innocent as a child's. Probably the only thing that didn't look roughened by life's tests.

Buddham Bai belongs to Karvi village of Chitrakut district in Uttar Pradesh. However, she has been on travel for last 15 years. Most of her time is spend in Kalkaji mandir in New Delhi, however, she also boasts of having travelled to almost all places of Hindu religious significance in North India. She stresses that she has travelled as far as Badri and Kedarnath and that too alone. Just today she was preparing to leave for Haridwar to attend and make some money at Puranmansi mela there.

Buddham Bai remembers nothing of her childhood. She just remembers of a little baoli of a village beyond Yamuna, near Allahabad where she used to show her diving skills as a child. She was married soon, and had several sons and daughters, all of whom are married and residing in village except for a son who stay in Faridabad. Her only brother passed away recently and her maternal property was usurped by relatives. Buddham Bai burst into silent tears and trying to gasp for breathes with her mouth.

She tells me that her family has 5-6 acres of land in village. However, there is no water to irrigate it. When rains fail, as they do frequently, there is no food. Her husband, though old and invalid now, is too proud to beg; she says nodding her head sideways in mild disapproval. He wants to stay in the village and die. What else can she do in a situation like this, asks Buddham Bai and continues talking.

She lives in city for many months, collects money by soliciting alms and lives on charity. When she collects what she thinks is enough money, she takes a trip to village to arrange for her husband's living. Her husband does not have any ego issues in living with the money hat his wife begs for him, only that her wouldn't beg himself.

Life in city is not easy. She does not use sulabh facilities as they cost 2 Rs everyday and she cannot reach to it with her old broken leg. She uses a tap on the roadside for all her needs. She goes to defecate in the bushes that surround the temple. It's risky, for they found the dead body of a girl last week in there, but she has nothing that anyone would kill her for.

She travels alone, lives alone, she is a woman and she is old. I feel scared for her. However, Buddham Bai, says, "Hamari jagah kahan hai? Kahin nahi hai. Phir dar lagne se kya hoga?" (Where is our space? No where. Then what good will come out of being scared).

Buddham Bai is not allowed to sit in the main temple premise and solicit for money and food. She has to be contended with a space on the varandah outside. Rakhi, the leader cum manager of all the beggars in the temple complex, as appointed and recognised by temple authorities, does not allow her to sit inside the temple. To have a space there, one has to make a payment of 5Rs a day. Buddham Bai earns only about 10-20rs a day. She cannot afford to pay 5 Rs out of that to Rakhi. She cannot run or even walk and persuade devotees and loses in competition with other beggars in the temple. Most of the devotees give only 50 paise coin. Buddham bai saves them all carefully; “athani de jate hain, yahan to chalega nahin, Punjab main ja kar chalayenge” (This will not be accepted here, will use it in Punjab).

Back in the village, her family has an Anntodaya ration card. It is used by her sons. Neither she and nor her husband have pension, as they belong to Kurmi caste, the one that is not favoured by the high caste panchayat leaders of the village. Buddham Bai quickly specifies that though a low caste, she is not an untouchable. In the village she does not even have water touched by a dalit, however, in Delhi, one can't survive with these notions so she compromises.

Buddham Bai loves to eat spicy food, and a lot of pan and supari. Her mouth is full of blisters due to this. However, this is the only preferred food thing that she is able to afford.

With age and low nutritional intake, Buddham bai complains of various aches and pains, particularly backache and leg aches. She cannot even walk without support. Her legs have swellings and lumps at various places. She goes to the nearby free government dispensary and finds its services up to her satisfaction. Just that she has to pay for rickshaw fare for every visit there.

Buddham Bai prefers to be in the village during rains and winter months. There are inexplicable problems that they face in both these seasons, she says. Varandah gets full of rain water and chilled air blows through it in winters. She and her companions in the varandah have to cross the road in the middle of the night, during rains and huddle under the flyover. As she has problems walking, her sufferings are multiplied and she gets drenched even before she can reach there. Many times she has slipped while crossing the road during rains, and each time she has just been lucky in the last minute to escape accident.

She exonerates her sons from all the blame. They have no money for themselves. How can they then be expected to feed their parents. Sometimes when she wants them to come and meet her in the city, they do so, but there is an implicit understanding that she will reimburse them for the travel cost.

Many a times when the flow of visitors in the temple is low, a further fewer number of them look at the beggars in the varandah, she does not receive money or food very often. She eats only what she gets out of charity and saves her cash for taking it along in village. Many a times, she has to be contended with only one meal a day. However, usually she is able to manage two half meals a day. On the day I met her, she planned and missed her lunch in Delhi and carefully packed the food that she had, to be taken to Haridwar and eaten there. Food in Haridwar is more expensive than in Delhi. For just two puris and aloo sabzi, they have to pay 20-25Rs there, she explains.

Case Study 3

Braving Every Day

It is a freezing winter night on the streets of Delhi. Through the swirling smog, on pavements, side streets, road dividers, under bridges, in subways, shop fronts and lofts of staircases, in railway platforms and bus stations, one can dimly make out the huddled forms of sleeping children. If one cares to count, the numbers on any night would cross 50,000 — children who live, work, play, eat, fall sick, fight and love, despair and dream, all under the open sky.

One of them is Ratul Das, a boy of 12, who sleeps with other homeless children around the water tank in New Delhi railway station. For most of the five years since he left his home in Shantipur, a small town in Kamrup district of Assam, this has been his only home.

Like many children who flee their families to escape intolerable abuse, Ratul is unwilling to talk about precisely what drove him from his home. But one night at the age of seven, he walked away decisively from his truck-driving father, mother and two younger brothers, never to return. It was an act of incredible courage for a child so young, echoed and repeated in the lives of tens of thousands of street children who decide at very young ages to bravely escape violence and abuse in their homes — alcoholic fathers, physical and sexual violence — by fending for themselves, at whatever cost.

Other children leave home so that there is a little more food for those they leave behind. Some earn to send money to their families. A few are on the streets only because they have no one in the world, having lost their parents to sickness, hunger or disaster.

Ratul walked along the railway track near his home, and boarded the first train that left the station. He alighted in Alipur in Cooch Behar. He had Rs 200, which he had stolen when he ran away from home, and bought food from the stalls. He lingered at the platform itself, and watched children, some older, some younger than himself, earning money by selling water to passengers in plastic bottles which they filled at the public taps in the station. Their clothes were grimy, often oversized shorts or trousers held up by little more than a string tied around their thin waists. They seemed carefree, with ready laughter; they walked with a swagger, and sparkling eyes shone through their grubby faces.

Ratul's money ran out in a few days, so he decided to also try his hand at selling water in bottles left behind in railway carriages. Some of the boys in the station beat him up, but an older boy, their leader, restrained them and said that he was like one of them. They welcomed him into the gang, and taught him their trade. The bottles sold at Rs 5 each, and he easily earned around Rs 50 a day. At night, they slept on the platform, and three or four boys shared a sheet to cover themselves. They gave their savings to the stall owners for safekeeping. There was no place to store their clothes, so they would wear the same clothes until they were so dirty that they would throw them away and get a fresh set.

A couple of months later, some of the boys in the gang decided to go to Delhi, for the adventure, and because the earnings were better.

Ratul decided on impulse to go with them. They took a train first to Howrah, and then to Delhi.

Before long, Ratul learnt to earn his living by rag-picking, starting out in the early hours of the morning, with a huge sack often bigger than his own small frame, with separate pockets for bits of paper, cloth, plastic pieces, scraps of iron and other trash. At the end of the day, he sells his daily foraging to wholesale waste traders near the Shiela cinema bridge, who in turn sell to recycling units.

Some of Ratul's friends also take up other seasonal occupations like working with caterers in the wedding season, reserving places in the trains during vacations, selling cinema tickets at higher rates, cleaning cars or taxis, buses or lorries, even trains, as vendors for tea and food stalls, apprentices in roadside automobile repair garages, carrying loads and shoe polishing. Contrary to common prejudice, only one in ten street children begs for a living, and most of these are very young. Even fewer beg as part of organised gangs.

Most of the food Ratul and his friends buy are at food stalls. On bad days, some eat at dargahs or temples, and younger ones even forage for food in rubbish heaps. Not surprisingly, they frequently fall sick. Illness is a time of trial, because no government hospital will admit these urchins in sullied clothes. But they do not go hungry in these times, because others in their gang invariably buy them food and take care of them.

There is no place to play games like other children, but Ratul and his friends always find ways of having fun. Street entrepreneurs have set up makeshift video parlours, especially on lanes where they sell their rags and waste. These are nothing more than a space marked off by faded curtains with a television set. For Rs 5, you can watch as many films as you like. The parlours are packed with the rejects of the city, street boys and lonely migrant workers, rickshaw-pullers, head loaders, construction workers, watching raptly Hindi cinema interspersed with pornographic films.

Ratul, like most street children, was introduced to the easy but deadly escape from pain and loneliness offered by soft drugs early in his days on the streets of Delhi. Thinners are readily available at any stationery shop for Rs 25 a bottle. Shopkeepers know that the children who buy these are not using them for painting, but they do not hesitate to sell to the street urchins who flock to their stores. Two bottles are enough for a day for one child. They soak a rag and inhale the fumes of the solution, and it transports them to a world free from hurt and violence. But it also destroys their lungs, rendering them vulnerable to TB. Many children graduate to hard drugs like smack, but Ratul has steered himself away. He knows that for those who succumb to smack, it is virtually the end of the road.

I asked Ratul who was the finest adult he knew. He did not hesitate. It was Obhra bhai, a pickpocket in the New Delhi station. I must confess to have been startled by his choice. Ratul explained: "He protects us from older bullies, buys medicines for us when we are sick, and discourages us when we inhale solution and other drugs. 'I was on this platform since I was younger than you,' he tells us. 'I know this world. If you take to drugs, you will never escape to a better life. You will die here. I will not let this happen to you.'"

There are winter nights when all of us drive past the huddled forms of children sleeping on the streets without a thought, let alone a word of love or dreams for the children's future. I realise then that Ratul was probably right when he chose the pick-pocket over all of us.

Case Study 4

Choices on the Streets

For the greater part of two decades, the only home that Vijay Singh has known in Delhi has been the dusty pavements near the Old Delhi railway station. Most nights he has spent under a starless gray sky dulled by smog and harsh city lights. It is this profoundly lonely public space around which he has built his life these many years, a space that he shares with more than a hundred thousand anonymous homeless men and women, boys and girls who live their lives out on the streets of India's capital city.

The congested medieval walled city of Delhi, spanned by six historical gates, accommodates within its aging alleys, crumbling footpaths and overgrown parks, more than thirty per cent of Delhi's homeless people. It is a vibrant economic hub of the city, which never sleeps. For homeless workers like Vijay, wage work as hammaals-porters – is available mainly at night, when the dense and feverish daytime throng of rickshaws and cars, travellers and shoppers give way after darkness settles, to trucks and hand-carts for loading and unloading merchandise in its burgeoning wholesale markets. The railway station handles 188 passenger trains and innumerable through each day and night, more than any other in the world. Night is therefore the time for work, but also the only duration for a few hours of sleep, when small stretches of the footpath or the central verge of the highway are silently occupied by legions of tired bodies stretched out precariously, to steal a few hours of unsteady tenuous rest, amidst the unrelenting glare of the street lights, the diesel fumes and dust raised by trucks and the constant danger of speeding drunken car drivers.

It is on these pavements that Vijay has grown from a runaway teenager to a middle-aged man, with a wiry, strong frame, intelligent and alert eyes, black, close-cropped hair and a ready smile. Resolutely without self-pity, as he talks about his life, he returns over and over again to his dreams and ambitions, which he describes endearingly using the English word 'choice': 'Yeh mera choice tha'.

Vijay Singh grew up in a village close to Gwalior city. His 'choice' was above all to educate himself, but circumstances did not allow him to study beyond the second class. His father was murdered under mysterious circumstances, when Vijay was a boy of twelve, his sister five years younger, his brother an infant in his mother's arms. Their agricultural land was acquired to build the Gwalior airport. He looked for work, at the airport construction site, and at factories, but he was turned away for being too young. His widowed mother struggled to bring up her children by cleaning dishes and sweeping homes in Gwalior city.

Young Vijay abandoned forever, his dreams of books and reading. He replaced them with another 'choice', to go to the big city of Delhi, to earn money, to establish a business, and to provide for his impoverished family in Gwalior. His mother should not have to slave, his sister should marry well, his brother should have the chance to study that Vijay himself had missed. These were Vijay Singh's 'new choices', which led him to the streets of Delhi.

But this journey was to begin first in Bombay. One day, some two years after his father's death, Vijay without taking leave of his family, left with a friend for Bombay. His companion was a couple of years older than Vijay, and had traveled to Bombay earlier. They had money only for railway tickets to Baroda, and there they emerged at the railway station. They were sleeping in a public park, when a policeman caught them and locked them up for three days. It was the first time both had seen the inside of a police station. When they were released, Vijay's shaken companion decided to return. But Vijay was determined to go on to Bombay. He begged a small hotel owner to buy his watch, and with some seventy five rupees that he paid Vijay, he set out for Bombai.

For two days, he scoured the city, on foot or ticketless on a local train, in search for work and a place to live. In the end, desperate with loneliness, he spotted two young boys sleeping on the pavement outside Dadar station. He told them his story, and asked for their help to find work. We clean the windscreens of cars and taxies at road crossings, they told him, and ask the drivers for money. They gave him a yellow cloth, and invited him to join them. He began work from the next day, and money started coming in.

He rarely stayed in one place, with one group of boys. Instead he moved compulsively around the metropolis, and when he had extra money, visited the film city, saw movies, and explored all the tourist locations and markets of the

city. The days were fine, Vijay recalls, but at night as I lay on the pavements, a pain would grow within my chest. Is this any kind of life? To wash cars, eat, sleep on the streets? There are days when the rain does not stop in Bombay for three days in a row, four days, even a week. I recall sitting once in an abandoned tempo vehicle for four days, soaked, cold, alone, miserable without food. From time to time, the police would catch us and lock us up in the police station. The lock-up would be closed from all sides, so many of us crowded in a tiny space, no windows, beaten by police sticks, released after several days.

Two years passed, and Vijay decided that Bombay was not the city for him. He took a train to Delhi, to begin life all over again. Within days of his arrival in Delhi, he found work in a dhaba, a modest roadside restaurant for railway passengers near the Old Delhi station. He worked through the day, and slept at night in the dhaba itself, on the floor below the wooden tables.

He saved money, about five thousand rupees gathered over a period of six months, and decided to visit, after more than three years, his family in Gwalior. It was a sentimental moment, the memories of which he still treasures. His mother was overjoyed to see him again, and the entire village gathered to meet him. His mother begged him to stay back, but he reasoned with her. What would they eat? How would they live? He was earning enough now to regularly send money home. She would have enough money to bring up his brother and sister. He did not want her to struggle any more.

His mother let him go.

Back in Delhi, the owner of the dhaba where he worked died, and his family sold the shop to a transport company. A whole string of transport and travel companies sprang up alongside, replacing the food stalls. Vijay found work as a porter, loading merchandise on the trucks and baggage on to passenger buses. He continues this work until today, earns well enough to eat, and regularly saves money to send home, a few thousand rupees every six months.

But with the sale of the dhaba he was once again on the streets. If he hired a room to live in, he would have to spend money on rent and travel to work. There would be nothing left for him to send to his mother in Gwalior. So it was to be the pavements outside Old Delhi Station instead that he would make his only home in Delhi.

Vijay's 'choice' of a dwelling on the streets for the sake of his family in village, resonates the choices of thousands of others who sleep on the pavements of Delhi each night. A survey of homeless people in Delhi in 2000 by Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan, a dedicated group of young people working for the rights of homeless people, confirmed that contrary to what many people assume, no more than 4 per cent of homeless adult people in Delhi are destitute and unemployed. More than 70 per cent migrate to the city from the countryside because of desperate poverty, in search of work. About 26 per cent find casual wage work as loaders and porters, 33 per cent ply rickshaw and hand carts, and 7 per cent work in food stalls. Three out of every four homeless persons in Delhi maintain links, like Vijay, with their families in the villages and towns, and almost 60 per cent save money and send it to their homes. So, like Vijay, they choose homelessness, in order that their families survive in the lands of their birth.

Close to where Vijay loads merchandise and baggage on to trucks and buses, is a night shelter run by the government. For over a hundred thousand homeless people, the Delhi government runs over 14 night shelters, with a maximum capacity of 2,937 people. In other words, night shelters provide a roof for not more than 3 per cent of all homeless people in the city. There are none for women, or migrant families. Of the government shelters, the largest is the one near the Old Delhi Railway Station, at the vicinity of where Vijay works. It was the first night shelter opened by the

government in 1964, and in winter and the rains, its four large halls are crowded well beyond its official capacity of 514 persons. The facilities are elementary. For a fee of six rupees a night, bare common mats are spread out on the floors in each of the shelters on which men sleep, body against body, ragged blankets are provided for the winter, and there are common toilets and bathing places, erratically cleaned but always in demand.

Vijay uses only the toilets and baths, but otherwise prefers the independence of sleeping under the open sky. Outside the shelters, private contractors called thijawalahs rent out quilts and plastic sheets for five rupees a night. Iron cots are lined up in the corridors outside shops, for a rent of fifteen rupees per night.

However, the blaze of the street lights, and the clamour of traffic and loaders working through the night, is unremitting. It is ganja which gives Vijay the peace he needs for a few hours of sleep. But this is often disturbed by policemen, who beat sleeping men, women and children on the streets routinely on their feet and shins.

Even as we spoke together for many hours, Vijay admitted that he was intoxicated with ganja. I have smoked ganja for so many years, the time has come when I do not know whether I am sober or high – he says. I need the ganja because it alone brings me solitude. There is no place I can go to, in order to escape the din, the hordes, where I can be by myself. Where I can think, be at peace, be at rest. Only when I smoke my ganja, I can be alone even in a crowd.

The Old Delhi Night Shelter remained for several years the one stable anchor in Vijay's life in Delhi. When winter was vengeful with bleak and icy winds, or the streets were awash with the monsoon sludge and garbage, he always had the night shelter to return to. Besides, the whole year, he would use the toilets and baths of the shelter. And many men, who worked as truck-loaders, rickshaw pullers, casual workers, or railway porters, had lived in the shelter for several years. Young street boys whom Vijay would take from time to time under his wing would always have the assurance of a roof in the night shelter. One separate hall was reserved for street boys. The shelter, decrepit, unclean, basic, crowded, dirty, still became to Vijay and so many who lived in and around it, the closest they had in Delhi to a home.

Then suddenly, without warning or notice, in July 2000, 36 years after it was opened, the night shelter was abruptly closed down. It was converted into a detention centre for 'illegal' Bangladeshi refugees. For 500 to a 1000 men and boys who had slept every night on a few square feet each of its floors, as their only defence against the cold and rain, it was like being rendered more profoundly homeless all over again. They spilled back on to the surrounding overflowing pavements, where they passed a bitterly cold winter in 2000.

This was not the only night shelter to be closed down. In May 2001, the night shelter at Turkman Gate was closed down. A few months later, in September 2001, the shelter at Meena Bazaar near Jama Masjid was also shut, as part of what was described by the authorities as a 'beautification' drive.

The activists of Aashray Adhikar Abhiyan slowly galvanised Vijay Singh and his friends to fight this injustice. They came together on a platform for the first time, which they called the Beghar Sangharsh Samiti (Homeless People's Struggle Committee). Another group came up at Jama Masjid, which gave itself the name Yuva Ekta Manch (a Homeless Youth Group). These motley groups of dispossessed men met to discuss how to deal with the closure of even the new legal spaces that government had concerned to homeless people. On 19 September 2001, they decided to organize a demonstration. A group of 70 homeless people marched to Rajghat, and took a pledge of non-violent resistance. Among them was Vijay. The group then proceeded to the office of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi

where they sat in a dharna. In scale and participation, it was a modest protest. But for the homeless people who joined in it, it was the first time they felt able to demand their rights from the state.

Less than a week after the agitation, but about months after its abrupt closure, the government relented, and the night shelter was restored. In the winter of 2001, the doors of the night shelter at Old Delhi Railway Station were reopened, and it is teeming again with several hundred slumbering men and boys on any night. For Vijay, there is a quiet sense of triumph, Beghar Sangharsh Samiti, and they are determined to keep it alive to secure a better life for the homeless workers and street children who live within the walled city of Delhi. They propose now to ask the government to hand over the management of the night shelter to homeless people themselves, so that they can convert it into a place of dignity and rest.

Vijay pays the policemen a daily bribe of 20 rupees in order to run a small cigarette stall under a tree close to the night shelter, which he operates in addition to casual wage work, the staple of his income. Over the years, he has run through many trades, sometimes selling tea, or snacks, or chapatis, but each time, despite his daily allurements to the men in khaki, and at least two or three times a month to the municipal staff, within months it invariably comes to pass that his wares are confiscated by the municipal office. He has befriended a lawyer, who is uncompromising about his fees (two hundred rupees a hearing), but is otherwise supportive and effective. The last time, in June 2001, Vijay had to pay 950 rupees as fine to the municipal authorities after the exertions of the lawyer, to get his cigarette stall released. But the money from sales had disappeared and the materials were half destroyed.

On a night that we spoke together, the cigarette stall was thriving under a tree, even close to dawn. Instead of Vijay, a young boy sat at the stall. He has come from Bengal, Vijay told me. He has no one to take care him, so I asked him to sit at the stall. Whatever he earns he can keep, and he can stay as long as he likes. It is often that Vijay takes care of young boys who start life on the streets in the way that Vijay himself had two decades earlier.

Despite his 'choice' for his brother Raju, and the money that he regularly sent home, Raju grew up unschooled in Gwalior. Afraid that Raju too would end up on the footpaths like him, Vijay brought him to Delhi. He arranged for him to learn work at a garage at Kingsway Camp. Raju has learnt the trade of a car mechanic and Vijay hopes to set up a garage for him. His sister was married a few years ago. They found decent people, who agreed to take no dowry. For his aging mother, he is still able to send money home regularly.

Vijay remain virtually unlettered, yet he has emerged as a reluctant leader of other homeless men, and he speaks like a philosopher of the streets, acutely observant, analytical, caring but carefully unsentimental. He has views that are entirely his own about everything – politics, the state of city and the country, the prime minister's performance, ethics, religion. Vijay refuses to complain about his life, and says that he has no grievance against God. He has given me a healthy body, two eyes, two hands, two feet, a good mind, what more can I ask for?

But he is uncompromising that he will never marry nor raise a family. I cannot let my child have a life like the one that I have led, he says quietly. I cannot. I am content instead to see my brother have a family, and a home. This is enough for me.

Does he think that he will continue to live the same way that he does now on the streets of Delhi? Twenty years have passed, he says. Who know what the next twenty years have in store for me? My father left a small piece of land in my name in the village. It was the only part of our property which was not acquired for the Gwalior airport. Maybe I

will be able to return to it one day. Maybe I will be able to build on it my home. Maybe that is where, with my mother, I will spend my last days. Under a roof, within walls that I can call my own home. May be.

Case Study 5

Surviving the Streets

In the heart of New Delhi, in Connaught Place, is a Hanuman temple to which devotees throng at all hours of the day and night. In the murky shadows of the temple courtyard, between makeshift stalls of incense, flowers and prasad, or in its dim corners, live under the open sky homeless women, many of whom have known no other shelter for years, even decades.

It is a shrivelled community of tough badly battered survivors. Women of all ages, gather there every night, in begrimed frayed sarees. Some are alone, others tend sick, disabled, drunken male partners, still others fiercely protect their children in the spaces of the temple courtyard which are their homes without roof or walls. Street children wander around, bringing cheer and mischief. Older men grope for the women's unprotected bodies in the uneasy grey darkness of the city's night, and the policemen intermittently assault them with their batons and taunts. I will always remember the distraught faces of a clutch of these women late one night, because two policemen had confiscated and set fire to the tiny grubby bundles of their entire life's belongings. Tempers always seem to run high in the temple courtyard, as women quarrel or a man suddenly smashes an empty bottle on a woman's head.

It is extremely difficult to get to know these women. Their lives are so brutally unremittingly public, and yet encased in hard, defensive shells. There are many widows among them, or abandoned wives, or women who survived and escaped violent partners. Some are children of street women, or older street girls. You find some women who are almost always utterly in a daze, drunk or drugged. Some talk compulsively, but the conversation typically is disjointed and inarticulate. Others are withdrawn and resolutely silent, hiding untold grief. Almost without exception, they display diverse symptoms of some or the other form of mental distress. It is almost impossible for any of them to survive long on the streets without resort to casual sex work or intermittent begging, to supplement their efforts to subsist by petty pavement trade or occasional wage labour.

And yet, if you persist long enough in this unlikely community of the dispossessed, you recognise these to be women of extraordinary valour in the daily grimy battlefield of their utterly besieged lives. For a woman whose only home is the streets or open city courtyards, the inhospitable biting chill of winter nights or the foul deluge of India's city monsoons are the least of her trials. Saroja Devi should know. The streets and temple courtyards of Delhi have been her only home for more than thirty years.

Beizzati. Dishonour. This was the overriding feature of her life, as Saroja recounted it, without sentimentality or self-pity. 'To live on the streets – beizzatti. The policeman beats you with his baton – beizzatti. Any ruffian sits next to you and runs his hands on your body – beizzatti'.

Saroja Devi spoke readily about her life, but it was difficult for me to piece together the story of her life from the scattered fragments that she shaped with her staccato words. She was born in a village in distant Guntur in Andhra Pradesh. She has faded memories of an uneventful childhood. Her father, the village pradhan, drank heavily and died early. Her mother was kind of her and did not beat her. She was married off at the age of 15 to a soldier. By 20, she was a widow.

All that she recounted about her husband was: ‘Woh English peeta tha’, or that he drank English liquor, not country toddy like the others. She repeated this many times. Most of their years of marriage, he spent at the borders or battlefronts, while she lived with his mother at their home in Hyderabad.

She does not recall which war he died in. But what she does remember was that she was stretched in bed, in a stupor of malaria fever, when men in uniform brought home his ashes. She donned the coarse white of a widow, and resolved never to marry again. Her soldier husband left her two young girls, to bring up alone.

With the girls by her side, she returned first to her parental home. Her father by then was dead of too much drink, and her brothers refused to give her a share of their father’s agricultural land. She fought bitterly with them, and eventually left the home of her birth, never to return.

Her next destination was Bangalore. She struggled through many fragile tiny enterprises, making agarbattis, candles and matchboxes. But there was never enough money to feed her children. Her savings were rapidly depleting. She met a woman who advised her that her chances were far better in the thriving metropolis of Delhi. She had never travelled north of Delhi, and knew only a smattering of Hindi. But she bravely decided to take the plunge.

Alighting from the passenger train at Delhi railway station nearly 30 years ago, it was not long before she found her way to Hanuman Mandir and its bedraggled collective of forlorn women. Her daughters and she lived mainly by begging and selling flowers.

She longed for some stability, some permanence, some dignity. Therefore, when a woman slumlord offered to sell her a shanty in a slum not far from Hanuman Mandir, she readily gave her remaining savings, a few thousand rupees. She moved into a shanty with her children, and continued to sell flowers outside the temple.

But only months later one day, government bulldozers arrived suddenly brutally and razed the entire slum settlement to the ground. It was government land, she was told. They were illegal squatters with absolutely no rights. The woman who had sold her the shanty disappeared. She took with her the life savings of many dispossessed people.

So Saroja Devi returned once again to the temple courtyard, and its community of the solidarity of the luckless. The years were the worst in her life. First her elder daughter died. The government nurse said it was jaundice. She managed to admit her to the government hospital ward one day, and she was dead the next. It was not long before her younger daughter fell from a tree, which she had climbed to pluck its jamun fruit. The child lingered in agony with broken limbs and festering wounds in the overcrowded public hospital for six months. Her mother did all she could to try to save her life, but in the end this child also succumbed.

It was during those months of desolate loneliness that Saroja met Rampyari, a crabby eccentric older widow who shared the community spaces of the temple compound. They cannot say who was initially drawn to whom, but Rampyari was kind to the twice-bereaved mother, and Saroja in turn began to take care of the older woman.

These two profoundly lonely women, each without family or home, decided to adopt each other as mother and daughter. It is a sturdy unwavering bond that has survived more than two decades of the vicissitudes of life on the streets. It is typical of many such alliances that are formed between despised people in the world of the cities’ pavements, sturdier in loyalties, more tolerant of ideosyncracies, and more tender in giving, than most biological

relationships. I recall a street boy who adopted a disabled old man as his grandfather: he would carry him long distance on his back, and for years save from his own earnings in rag-picking for food, medicines and even the older man's addictions.

Between Saroja and Rampyari is another of these unlikely unions of the streets. Rampyari is a widow from Rae Bareilly in Uttar Pradesh, proud of her Rajput origins. Her husband used to work in the railway police. He and her sons were killed in a murderous family feud, and Rampyari found her way eventually to the courtyard of Hanuman Mandir in Delhi to survive on her own.

Saroja, on the other hand, dark skinned and of gaunt frame, fluent only in her native Telegu, is everything that Rampyari with her surviving vestiges of upper caste. North Indian arrogance, looks down upon. 'I don't know what she is', Rampyari told us. 'A Madrasi', she said disparagingly. 'Maybe an isai. Maybe a kasai. Who knows?'. An isai is a Christian, a kasai a pejorative word for a Muslim. But one day it happened that Saroja gave her tea. They began to take care of each other. Saroja called her mother. And their kinship was sealed.

Together, the two women set up a small way-side stall, under a peepul tree on the pavement in front of what Rampyari described as that 'very tall glass building', the LIC sky-scraper in Cannaught Place. For years, they sold a variety of trivia – rudrakas from Haridwar, maps of India and Delhi, trinkets, flowers, newspapers. The bulk of their clients were foreign tourists. They would return at night to sleep outside the Hanuman Temple. Sometimes worshippers would give them money. In winter, there were always people who distribute blankets.

If there was one thing that women of the streets of Delhi are most frightened of, it is van named ironically after Gandhiji's ashram Seva Kuteer. The van carries raiding squads that round up people who live by begging and incarcerate them in beggars' jails for up to three years. Women have to be alert and nimble on their feet to escape their periodic maraudings. However, Rampyari is ageing and therefore has been twice jailed in Seva Kuteer in recent years.

Saroja was distraught when I spoke to her because her mother was the beggars' jail, serving a year's sentence. Apart from her husband drinking 'English', it was a theme to which she constantly returned as we spoke. 'We must find a way to get her out', she kept telling me. She visits Rampyari every week at the beggars' jail, and carries her favourite fruits and sweets, wrapped in her saree edge. She also smuggles in bundles of bidis for Rampari to smoke a privilege, for which she had bribe the caretaker. With her characteristic stubborn resolve, Saroja even managed to meet the Chief Minister of Delhi, Shiela Dikshit, to petition her to release her old mother.

Meanwhile, Saroja's fortunes have changed. Activists from an organisation for homeless people in Delhi, Ashray Adhikar Abhiyan, met the women in Hanuman Mandir through long nights over more than a year. The women said that they wished most of all for the security and dignity of some roof over their heads. There was no shelter for homeless women anywhere in Delhi. The organisation joined hands with the YMCA and Bangla Saheb Gurudwara, and built a small shelter called Anugraha for the women without any home. The gurudwara provides them food, the YMCA subsistence wage work in the vermiculture pit.

For the forty women who have found an abode in Anugraha, it is the only home they have known for several years. The facilities are austere, but together they keep it clean, their bundles of belongings neatly piled beside their floor mats. The walls are decorated with pictures of gods and places of worship of all faiths. The women still quarrel and

grumble, but the mercurial violence outside Hanuman Manderi which was integral to their daily lives is at bay. A few women have small children, who are now smothered and nurtured in this new sisterhood of sanctuary.

Saroja Devi would be content, if only she could free her mother and tend her in their new home. ‘The best thing about Anugraha is that you can have within its walls a full night’s undisturbed rest’. For all the years of their lives on the streets of Delhi, the women who live in Anugraha had stretched their wearied abused bodies on dusty grimy pavements, but every time they closed their eyes, the unspoken medley of terrors would never cease to loom, of assault by drunken unknown men, or wandering policemen, as well as the unending din noise of traffic of a city that never sleeps.

The shelter in Anugraha above all assures her of a full night of unmolested, undisturbed sleep. There is today little more that she asks for life, except her mother’s freedom.

Case Study 6

Paying For His Tea

He is one among the few hundred people who sleep in and around Nizamuddin Railway Station in New Delhi each night.

Amidst the medley of transit passengers who stretch out on streets or their bed-rolls in the platform awaiting their trains, are the regulars, mostly men and boys but also some women, who have made the railway station their home. There is no sign of them during the rush of travelers through the day. But once darkness falls, even though trains continue to come and go, the platforms and all the open spaces around the station gradually and silently fill up with people who are cut away one way or the other from their roots. There are street children, beggars, street sex workers, leprosy patients, drug addicts, abandoned old people – a whole separate world of persons without a roof and people to take care of them, a microcosm of the unseen underbelly of the city. They have an uneasy relationship with the police and railway officials who on occasion evict them, sometimes brutally. They do not resist, but wait patiently for a few days, and then slowly, almost imperceptibly, they are back again. They have no other home.

Amongst the regulars at Nizamuddin Railway Station that one can, on most nights, find is Shabir Singh, who lives by begging. He is a paraplegic, unable to move around on his feet. Instead, his strong arms bear his weight as he deftly drags himself each day around the city.

As we visited him at his permanent corner under a tree outside the station, he greeted us courteously. He wore nothing except striped blue underwear, his lifeless feet tucked below him, his head of hair full but grey, his age impossible to estimate. His belongings were squeezed into a small faded cloth bag.

Gravely, he took out small sheets of cardboard from below him where he sat, laid them out for us, and invited us to sit on them. As we talked, he insisted on calling for cups of tea from a nearby stall. It was as though he was entertaining us in his drawing room. Even though he had no home, begged for a living, could not walk without support, and wore few clothes on his body, our overwhelming memory of him after we left him, was of his dignity.

During his childhood, neither his parents nor he could have dreamt of what fate held for him. The youngest of four brothers and one sister, Shabir’s was a happy, carefree childhood. Their twelve beeghas of canal-fed fertile alluvial

land in their village in Mainpuri district of Uttar Pradesh was more than enough to feed the large joint family. His two older brothers were recruited to the military services. The army recruitment team came to the village itself to include into its ranks healthy young men. It was assumed that Shabir would also join the army like his brothers.

He was fifteen when, in fraction of a second, his life changed forever. His brother had bought an orchard from the old village landlord. Shabir playfully climbed a tree, to cut firewood. In that fateful moment, his foot missed its step, he slipped and fell crashing to the ground. His spine snapped, and he was crippled for life. He would never walk again.

His father had died a year earlier, but his mother with the help of people from the village, did all that they could to ensure that he got medical help. They even ensured that he was taken to the large government hospital in Delhi, Safdarjang, where the doctor x-rayed his back, but was able to give them no hope. His mother continued to tend him, but when she died some ten years later, she was broken by the certainty that her son would never be able to use his two feet to walk again.

Shabir was now in the hands of his brothers. His eldest brother, who had by then retired from the army and returned to the village, badgered him to give up his share of the agricultural land that they had inherited from their father. It is no use of you, he told him. You will never be able to cultivate it, and you will never have a family whom you will have to take care of. All that you need is some food and clothes, and a roof over your head. That I will always give you. Why don't you transfer your share in the ancestral property to me?

The villagers joined him brother in persuading him. He eventually relented, and regrets it this day. His brother sold away their shares of the ancestral land, bought a house in the city, and moved away, turning his back forever on the village and his disabled brother Shabir. One brother who remained to take care of the fields, reluctantly fed Shabir but he made him feel all the time that he was an unwanted burden. Shabir decided eventually to move away, and not have to depend on anyone to take care of him in future.

There were many in his village who had learned the electricity repair and fitting trade, and had found work in government departments in Delhi. They observed Shabir's predicament, and urged him to move to Delhi with their help, and to start a new life. They pooled some money, and bought for him an initial stock of agarbatti incense sticks, and a small trunk to store money and his belongings. They took him to Delhi's main market, the colonial Connaught Place, and found him a place next to a pillar in the circuitous corridor in front of one of the elegant shops.

It was there that he set up both shop and home for some ten years. He earned enough to eat by selling the incense sticks, and slept at night at the same spot, his iron trunk firmly tied by a chain to the railings of a shop.

But Delhi began to change in these ten years. Addicts of smack and members of petty criminal gangs began to threaten him and demand money. Finally he decided to close shop and return to his village. Maybe his brother would have had a change of heart. Maybe he would accept him more generously now.

He found his brother older, but he had taken to drink and was even more foul mouthed. His brother's sons were fond of him, and urged him to stay. But Shabir could not bear the shame of being treated as a burden, and decided to return again to the city of Delhi.

This time, there was no support. He tried once gain to ply his trade in Connaught Place, but he was too vulnerable in its harsh night world. He decided instead to live now by begging. Over the years, he has developed a routine. Outside the Tughlaqabad Railway Station is the Peer Baba Mazaar, a small Muslim Sufi Shrine. He sits outside it with his begging bowl. He has become a familiar sight for passers-by, who call him Baba. The Sikh owner of a small dhaba spoke to him one day and asked him his life-story. Hearing it, he offered to feed him every night at his dhaba, and this arrangement has continued over the years.

Shabir catches the 11 o'clock night local train to return to Nizamuddin Railway Station, to his little corner of the pavement under the tree outside the station. There he settles down to sleep. In the morning, he drags himself to the neighbouring Gurudwara, where he gets tea and breakfast. He takes the 3:20PM train each afternoon to his 'work station' in Tughlaqabad Station.

At Nizamuddin, he has been befriended by a tea-stall owner, young enough to be his grand-son. When the boy saw the railway policemen occasionally harassing Shabir, he suggested to him to drag himself to sit next to his tea stall whenever there was a police raid. He would tell the policemen that Shabir was his customer. The boy joined us when we were talking to Shabir. I have to pay the police people 800 rupees every month as bribe to run my tea-stall, he told us. They will not touch Baba, he said cockily, because they are in my pay and they know that he is my friend.

What impressed the youthful tea-stall owner most initially about Shabir was that although he was a disabled beggar, he insisted on always paying for his tea. It is one of Shabir's many rules that he will not beg in the area that he has made his home.

The years are passing for Shabir. Except for his brothers, he has no complaints against anyone. Yet an unspoken fear is that he will have to continue to beg until his dying day. My brother's son, my nephew, really loves me, he told us repeatedly. Maybe he will take care of me when my brother is no longer there, he adds wistfully. Maybe.

Case Study 7

Life on a Railway Platform

Qasim a 16 years old boy, engages himself in a difficult occupation of rag picking at New Delhi Railway station. Qasim is living a life without his family on the streets and platforms of Delhi from 10 years. A child of 7 years is cared and nourished always in the lap of mother and is protected and attended keenly, but Qasim at seven was on the streets, experiencing a life shorn of care and affection. At present Qasim is 16 or 17 years old but the cruelty and harshness have aged him beyond his real age. Qasim face bears scratches his skin is hard, dry and pale and his hands bear the mark of multiple cuts and bruises.

Qasim left home when he was studying in class 2nd and came to live in Delhi- a city too vast and totally unknown to him. Qasim is quite circumspect about the reason for leaving his home, he just says that he does not remember why he left, what he tells us is that he was only 8 years. On hindsight he says It is also difficult for him to recall the real reason for leaving home as it has been quite long time (more than 10 years).

Qasim recalls how he reached Delhi, he remembers taking a bus from his native place and coming to old Delhi Bus station. Qasim After reaching to bus station at the day time, Near the bus station, he saw a Lady teaching a group of children near bus station and he came closer to observe them. The teacher was working for a NGO, the name of which

is not known to Qasim, and when she saw Qasim standing alone and observing them, she talked to Qasim for some while and motivated him to come for center, a residential place meant for homeless children. In the center Qasim was offered good food and T.V. for entertainment. Qasim fondly says, "the food was very delicious" at the centre. In the next few days the same teacher interacted with Qasim for a longer period of time and persuaded Qasim to contact his home. Qasim recalled a phone number of school where he was studying at his native place. The teacher then informed the Qasim's family through that school and the Qasim's father came and took Qasim back to home.

Qasim's family back home included his mother, father who is a shopkeeper, his younger brother a student of 7th class and his older brother who is a tailor. His family has been migrated from Jharkhand and shifted to the Border area of Delhi and Haryana. Other than the house in Delhi, they have also a house in Jharkhand with some acres of agricultural land. When I asked Qasim, "why his family migrated when they had a house and also agricultural land in Jharkhand". Qasim doesn't know the actual reason because at the time he left his family he was just 7 years old. However, Jharkhand is an area where poverty flourishes and migration to the town is nothing new and in search of better livelihood people from Jharkhand migrate.

Though Qasim was taken back but he remained at his home only for 7 days, once again he left his home and this time he came to New Delhi Railway Station. Qasim reached the station at evening and he sat down on the stairs of railway platform. A small child is sitting alone at the railway platform draws attention as it is obvious that the child might be having some problem. Same happened with Qasim and some persons approached Qasim and enquired about him and they finally tried to motivate him to come for center of Prayas, but Qasim was reluctant as he was afraid of getting exploited. There is nothing unusual about the fear that Qasim was having as the streets and platforms are the most common places of exploitation where small children get easily harassed in one ways or other. However, when Qasim saw other children like him sitting in the vehicle of Prayas, he also became willing and he finally went to the center maintained by Prayas at Jahangerpuri. In the center Qasim was given new clothes to wear and food to eat. Again Qasim puts it as, "the food was very delicious". In the subsequent days Qasim was enrolled in a MCD school by the Prayas personnel. Qasim says, he was happy in the center as he used to get food, education, clothes and most importantly recreational activities like T.V. watching. After a period of few years when he was studying in 5th class he fell down the stairs in the Prayas center and got one of his arms fractured. The Prayas personnel got him dressed, medicated and now they contacted his family. This is the second time when his father comes and takes Qasim back to home again. Now Qasim was enrolled in a private school in class 6th and after few years Qasim passed 8th standard and gets a certificate but other schools did not accept the certificate. The private school where Qasim passed his 8th class was not registered. Qasim said that his grand father took some money from his father to get a recognized certificate for Qasim, but they just waited and his grandfather didn't do that. Now the Qasim was lying idle at his home and he was sent to learn Cutting and Tailoring. Qasim went there to learn cutting and tailoring only for 15-18 days and he left that because he was interested in studies. Now he was sent to his grandmother's home which is in Bagalpor Jharkhand, from where he was also sent to his aunt's house. Qasim says, my parents sent me there just to engage me as I had left my home two times already. Qasim stole some money from his aunt and came back to his home town. Qasim was lying idle at his home and one day he sits in a train coming to Delhi and in the evening he returns back to his home in the same train. Qasim didn't take tickets also. Qasim said that when he did it for first day he found it enjoyable and then he continued it daily. Qasim says, after coming back from his daily tour in trains he used to discuss this with his friends, with enough pride.

In this way he used to come to Delhi railway Stations where he usually observed children engaged in rag picking. Qasim said that he was feeling that the children doing the rag picking at the railway station might be having some

shelter where they stay during night. One day Qasim asked a child, “where they are living and what they are doing?”. Once he found such children had no homes and rag picking provides them good dividends he also tempted to start rag picking. Qasim tried it for one day for two hours and he earned Rs. 80/- Usually the children living at the railway stations ate the food left over in the trains, which is good and delicious what most of children living there say. Qasim said that he thought that he could earn a lot of money and could enjoy life with much freedom and money, even he could also contribute to his family and the food got from trains is also so delicious. Thus Qasim ultimately left his home came to old Delhi first where he stayed in a Gurdwara for two days and with other children living also on the streets he moved finally to New Delhi railway Station.

At New Delhi railway station initially Qasim started doing rag picking with a child, whose name is Pahadi and was also living at railway platform, as partners. They remain in the group for a period of one year. Usually Police working at the railway stations arrest the children who does rag picking at the stations and either sent the children to delinquent homes or link them with the NGOs working for the street children. Same happened with Qasim and was arrested by Police in the allegation of rag picking at the railway station and Qasim was sent to Delhi gate jail, which is a Delinquent home meant for delinquent children. However, a person who used to be a teacher of Qasim in Prayas made him free from the delinquent home. Qasim said, “when the teacher saw me coming out from the police van at the jail, I told him that I came to Delhi for some work and now I was waiting for the train at the railway station to go home back but police arrested me with other street children in a misconception that I am also a rag picker. The teacher then talked to police and they let me free”. Qasim once again went to the station and again he was arrested by the police but this time his family was informed. The father and uncle of Qasim came and took Qasim back to home again but Qasim again left home after some period and again came to live on New Delhi railway station for doing same work and engage in same activities.

Then Qasim came across one another older child named as Sonu and they started doing rag picking together as partners but this relationship ended only in a small period because Sonu was rude to him and used to take money from him without returning. With the passage of time Qasim started working with Kaloo and then Suraj. At railway station Qasim is called by his nick name “Alam”. Most of the children living at the streets hide their actual names and they change their names when they move to some new place.

It is a common practice at the railway station among the street children engaged in rag picking that they work in groups of two's as partners. There are different ways of dealing and sharing the benefits in such practice. One way is that the two partners share the earnings equally on daily basis but the most common practice is that they give some part of their earnings to one another when either of them had not earned anything due to any reason. They also share the food either got from the trains or purchased. This is a very good and fruitful coping mechanism for the reason that if one of the partners doesn't earn or felt diseased he need not to borrow money or to be hungry, his partner provides him the required money or the food. But it was unfortunate for the Qasim as he got most of the partners who were older than him and exploited him in one way or other way. Qasim said that he likes suraj only among all the partners ever had as suraj was good in partnership.

The children also borrow money from one another in cases of need and then return back. They also borrow money from the shopkeeper where they sell all the collected materials of rag picking. The children at the railway station usually live in small groups ranging from four to fifteen children, but all the children are involved in same occupation of rag picking. However, there are two broad groups at the entire station of New Delhi. One group is residing at the platforms from 1 to 6 and another group resides through 7 to 12. This divides the entire station in two regions. This

division of platforms have a great influence also over the children. The children living at platforms 1 to 6 don't go for rag picking at the platforms 7 to 12 where the other group resides which limits themselves to 7 to 12 platforms. There is also a strong "we feeling" among the children living in same group. If a child of one group faces any problem from the other group, the children of his group comes to help him. Similarly there are small groups at the platforms who live together and share a common place but in this case there is no limitation for doing rag picking. For instance children of 1 to 6 platform can do rag picking at any platform from 1 to 6, and same is the case at platforms 7 to 12.

At New Delhi railway station some older children try to express power over the younger ones either by giving orders to them and expecting them to follow or by taking some money from them. Due to the same rudeness faced by Qasim on the platforms, he shifted from one platform to other platform and finally Qasim reached platform 12 where almost 10-15 children are living together and are cooperative to one another to a great extent. Here Qasim is working individually and independently. This is the place where I met Qasim.

The police working at the new Delhi railway station carries an operation of arresting children who live and work at the station once or twice a week which are fixed. Those children who get arrested these days are beaten up very hardy and some are sent either to delinquent homes or linked with some NGOs like SBT (Salam Balak Trust) and Priyas working there from long time. To get rescued from this operation almost all the children living and working at the station don't enter the station these days. The children call these days as "Chaapa din"

As drug addiction is common among children living on the railway platforms, Qasim is also sniffing a fluid (correction fluid). Qasim said that this correction fluid which they sniff is very dangerous and is the reason why he is having a pain in his chest usually. He also told that he tries repeatedly to get rid off it but still he cannot do it. It is also very difficult as most of the children are sniffing this fluid at this station and if someone even escapes from it he again indulges in it when he sees others sniffing. There is much influence among the children living at the railway station. Qasim earns about 100 to 150 Rs per day and even his income goes upto 200 Rs some days. But he spends a maximum part, about 50 Rs, of his income daily on the sniffing fluid like other children do.

One another important fact is that the daily schedule of the children living at the railway Stations are governed by the train timings usually by the arrival times of trains. When trains are arriving from different places to the New Delhi railway Station, all the children are engaged into only one activity and that is collection of water bottles/ rag picking in trains. As trains arrive mostly at two times a day, in the morning (from 6.00a.m—12.00/1.00p.m) and in the late evening (8.00 p.m—10.00/ 12.00 p.m) and thus the remaining time of the day is managed by these children in a way that all other activities are undertaken smoothly. Quite ironically, the trains are late which brings changes in their daily schedule accordingly.

Qasim likes, " playing cricket, watching T.V and playing with video game." But he neither has much time nor space to play. However there is a small place outside the new Delhi railway station, which is basically a road, where some street children play circket sometimes. Some employees of Railway police station Force (RPSF) also join them. Near the station there is a small slum where a person has kept a T.V and a C.D player and operates it like a theatre whereby these children pay 5 to 10 Rs for watching one movie. There are also some shops where video games have been kept available for playing and a small money about 5 Rs/hour is charged. Qasim also manages to watch movies sometime either in Cinema or within that slum, plays video game at the shop, and joins other children to play circket near the station. But there is no regular schedule for these activities.

Qasim told the person he ever liked is Deepak, one of the friends of his childhood, who was older than him and was studying in a higher class. Deepak used to discuss what he had heard and learnt from the school with Qasim and especially he was sharing with Qasim some tips of how to speak English.

When I asked Qasim why he left home number of times? Qasim said, "My curiosity to have good food, interest in money which I am earning from rag picking and my enjoyment and realization of freedom are the main reasons for which I keep tracking my life at the streets and station." Qasim further added that he didn't think about his future and nobody also told him what to do and make him realize about his future and the situation which he is facing now.

Qasim told that all the children in the families should be given education, they should be given good food and clothes, they should have access to recreational activities like T.V, playing etc. and more importantly there should be no family quarrels.

Qasim is not also comfortable with ragpicking also. I was talking to Qasim and a train arrived at the station I asked Qasim whether he wants to leave to collect empty water bottles in the train. Qasim told me that he doesn't go for rag picking in this train because this is the train which goes to his home town and there are persons sitting in the train who know him and if they found him doing ragpicking they definitely convey it to his family and his relatives that their child is doing ragpicking at the station and it is something which makes them feel ashamed.

Qasim told me he wants to save money and when he will save few thousands of rupees then he will go home for some period and after he left with nothing at his disposal he will come again because he cannot earn there. Qasim tries to save money from his daily earnings and some days he saves some part of his money but at the end of a week or a month he left with nothing because in cases of illness and during raids from police he couldn't earn and has to invest his savings to support his life.

Qasim's struggle of life has made him more experienced, mature than his age, quick in decision making, and completely self-reliant. But still Qasim is not satisfied with all these. Qasim is now interested in computer and wants to learn cutting and tailoring. It is quite strange when Qasim was sent to learn cutting and tailoring he didn't continue to go there but now he wants to join the same thing. This might be due to the reason that Qasim now views the same thing as a means of sustainable livelihood.

Qasim has no money saved, all that he earned at railway Station by rag picking was invested either in drug addiction or in something else just to support life. He seems to be much conscious about his future and puts it as, "My suggestion to all those who came out from their homes and are living on the streets is that they should live in some residential centers/shelter and learn some skill that will enable them to stand on their own shoes and they shouldn't focus on short term earnings"

This is all that which Qasim experienced in his life at railway stations and now he feels sad about his previous decisions of leaving home, then not joining cutting and tailoring and coming to live at the railway station to earn money. And it might be due to this realization that Qasim shifted to the hostel of Aman Biradari in the mid of March, 2007 and wants to learn some skill. I met Qasim in the hostel, he is happy now and he said, "baya, yahaan sahi hai, dance sikhate hain, acha khana milta hai, T.V dekhte hai aur cricket khelte hain" Qasim had also left the sniffing of correction fluid.

What struck me most from the interaction with Qasim is that we feel embarrassing to wait for an hour at railway station when train is late, but the children living at railway stations manage their daily schedule with the train timings and when train is late their entire daily schedule gets changed.

Case Study 8

Building a Future

Jai² ran away from his home in Nepal, when he was in class ninth, like any small town poor Nepalese boy, when he ran away his dream was to become a mechanic and an electrician as he was good at his work. He had thought that while working as an electronic repair man he would be able to earn enough to send some money back, after all Indian currency has more value and his family's impoverishment will be curbed.

Jai's early memories are imbued with happiness, joy, bitterness, hard work and hunger. In snapshots he remembers his elder brother taking to watch cinema, the love of his mother, father and elder brother. He also remembers how his family had risen from abject poor to relatively better of status in the village, through sheer hard work of his parents. With all these memories, he also remembers, rather too vividly with pain and bitterness, the gradual but steady fall from being better off and becoming poor again.

Jai's mother worked as a vendor of small items of necessity, in the early days, every morning after preparing food she used to carry a huge 'tapoli' (basket) on her head and traverse the mountainous path, going home to home to sell the wares. His father worked as a construction labourer, but with three children it was difficult to make ends meet. Jai's parents did not want their children to live in poverty and face the same condition in life that they had faced. Keeping this end in mind Jaiprakash, his two elder brothers and parents all worked and saved money. Eventually Jai's father started working as a contractor, it seemed that family fortune were about to get better and it happened eventually.

With the saved money and taking loan from the bank by mortgaging their little piece of land the family was able to open a grocery shop. Jai remembers with trepidation, probably because of what happened afterwards. When the shop was opened Jaiprakash was in class fifth, he tells us that before the shop he worked as a labourer and side by side studied, but once the shop was open, his parent told him to concentrate on studies and stop working. The only work that he did was, sometimes helping in the shop, when there was a lot to be done, especially during festival time.

The shop brought prosperity to the family, but the prosperity was short lived, as Jai's middle brother; Prabhu had fallen into bad company and bad habits. Earlier when there was no shop he used to work and spend all the money on himself, but now the shop provided him with opportunities to siphon off the money and indulge into alcohol, gambling and watching cinema. Jai tells us that his parents were too simple to even think that their own son will take out the money from the shop. Jai's father and mother, who had worked hard till now took a secondary role and let Prabhu take care of the shop. His father was also doing construction work and his mother began to take care of the house and long needed rest from work.

In the meantime, the shop started showing losses and eventually the family came to know that they have defaulted on paying the loan money to the bank. In the mean time Parushram, the eldest brother of Jaiprakash got married and for that also the family had to take loan. The situation became so bad that the shop had to be closed but still the loan amount had to be paid, the eldest brother understanding the problems of the house when to work as toll collector but he could not save enough to take the family out of the situation they were in.

2 Name changed to protect the identity of the person.

Jai was in ninth standard, he was working as labourer, a part time mechanic of radios and other electronic goods. Jai proudly tells us that he was so good with repairing radios and TV that people used to call him from other villages also to repair electronic goods. In the meantime Jaiprakash met a man in his village who promised him that he will get him a job at an electronic shop in Delhi. For Jai it was the opportunity that he was looking for, he wanted to help his family but could not do so staying in the village and he had also heard that one rupee of India was equal to two Nepalese rupees.

One day, without informing his parents or brothers, Jai took a train to Gorakpur and then to Delhi. In Delhi he met with the person who had promised him a job, the person took him to two or three places but he was refused work on the grounds of Jaiprakash being too young. at this Jai tells us that he was so thin that no body believed him to be more than twelve year old.

After few days of struggle, jai found a job as a repairman on his own calibre, but the long working hours and most importantly abuses from his employer made him leave the job. Jai at this point says , “ jobs was important to me, in fact my employer liked me also, but when he used to get angry he used to abuse me in a way that made me selfless”. Then immediately in a serious note he says, “patri pe reh kar mee maa, behen ki gaaliyan nahi sun sakta huan” (even after living on platforms I can take everything but abuses directed towards mother and sister). Jai goes on to explain that at times his employer used to give he a light beating, but that was tolerable as long as he left my family in piece. His employer understood it well, but not his father, who one day went on abusing Jai. Jai left the work as an electronic mechanic that day. earlier also Jai was living on New Delhi railway station but now he had no work neither the inclination to do any work.

Jai survived on ‘Patri’ by ragpicking, collecting bottles and on and off,that is irregular intervals he took up electronic repair work which was his passion, but then he says people do not trust him and therefore never gave him work on permanent basis. On the platform Jai got addicted to smack, an addiction that devoured all the money that he had earned for the day. Deep inside however he was aware that this is not what he had dreamt for, life on platform was in certain ways good, he could sustain himself by working as odd hand but there were rigours and anxiety also of not knowing what tomorrow holds for him. All the time they (jai and his friends) had to be at alert from the GRPF and the police and also have to fend from lot of other’ dirty’ things. One might think that food would have been a problem, but Jai says, food was never a problem as many train had pantry cars and the railway people sell the left over for a small amount of money. However, Jai resorted to it very less, he ate what he wanted from his earning and they were enough for food. At this moment Jai says, that, “when one is on drugs, one does not feel hungry a lot, so food was not a problem”. when there was less money jai and he could not buy smack, jai resorted to glue or correction fluid, which according to him give a high but are not as effective as smack.

When ever Jai thinks about his parents, he feels worthless and guilty for having failed them badly and leaving them all alone in their old age. In spite of running away from home, Jai keeps in touch with people who are from his own village, he regularly goes to meet them and ask about how his parents and brothers. He does not know why he does it, when he knows that only bad news awaits him, he never hears anything good, the last time when he met someone from his own village he came to know that his home has been auctioned off by the bank authorities, the same house in which he was born. But what is worst for him is when he came to know that his old mother has again started selling knick knacks in a tapori... Jai says in a worried voice, now she is not young, she is old, its brings tears in my eyes to imagine her traversing the mountainous path and going from house to house selling ...

Jai, though always asks about his family from the people of the village, he never tells them where he lives or what he does, Jai says , “what do I tell them that I live on the platforms, so that my parents will be more unhappy”. he lies to them and says that he is doing fine and working in a electronic repair shop, at least it will bring some moments of peace to his parents, that one of the boys is doing well...

Now jai lives with children in a home called umeed , and the favorite past time for him is repairing the TV and radio, he says that he wants to be a electronic mechanic but first he will complete his education.

Chennai City Report

by R. Kumaran and V. Manikandan

Chapters

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1 Urbanisation of Chennai

If Tamil Nadu is the most urbanized state in India today, with 43.86 % urban population (2001 Census), it is because of the century old development in “Chennai-pattanam”. Since the beginning of last century the Chennai-pattanam, has acted as the epicentre, which has attracted most of the migrant population from both rural and urban areas, inside and outside Tamilnadu.

The city was founded in 1639 by the East India Company and in due time it came under direct rule of British due to strategic reason. Then during the British period Chennai, with a port, railway connection, military road and trunk road connection, conducted one-half of the total sea borne commerce. Since then it attracted migrant people from all over south. The strong infrastructure created in British period helped it emerging as a strong manufacturing centre after independence.

In this period the gravity of the epicentre in Chennai gathered momentum in Tamilnadu and remained powerful till 1980s. It was only during late 1980's that many towns like Madurai, Coimbatore, Salem, Tiruchy, Tirunelveli and Erode emerged and weakened the inflow into Chennai. Before that most of the rural to urban migration bypassed underdeveloped semi-urban areas and settled in Chennai. However since last decade the epicentre of migration and urbanisation in Tamilnadu has shifted to Coimbatore- Erode- Tirupur belt and the pressure on Chennai has reduced quite significantly.

However Chennai is still the largest city and urban agglomeration in the state. It still is the fifth most populated city in the country.

Population in Cities, 2001

Name of City	State/ Union Territory	Population		
		Persons	Males	Females
Greater Mumbai	Maharashtra	11,914,398	6,577,902	5,336,496
Delhi Municipal Corporation (Urban)	Delhi	9,817,439	5,378,658	4,438,781
Kolkata	West Bengal	4,580,544	2,506,029	2,074,515
Bangalore	Karnataka	4,292,223	2,240,956	2,051,267
Chennai	Tamil Nadu	4,216,268	2,161,605	2,054,663

Source: Census of India, 2001, Press Release on Rural - Urban distribution of population - India and states/union territories: 2001, 20 July 2001, New Delhi.

This also means that process of overcrowding unsustainable masses of population in the metropolis had already done much harm to the city (especially lives of significant chunk of less privileged populations in Chennai). A look at the population increase in Chennai from 1901 – 1991 shows that the city experienced enormous population growth

during the decade ending 1951 with as much as 55,3 % migrant population.

Decennial Population Increase 1901 – 1981 of Chennai City

Period	Natural Increase in %	Migration in %
1901 -1911	5.4	7.2
1911 -1921	4.3	5.9
1921 -1931	0.3	22.5
1931 -1941	6.1	29.1
1941 -1951	6.5	55.3
1951 -1961	16.3	5.5
1961 -1971	19.2	27.9
1971 -1981	16.4	10.5

Source: Eric Augements, Housing for poor in Madras, University of Amsterdam, P.26.

Therefore much of the damage was started even before Independence. The age of slums in the Chennai stands evidence to this fact. In 1991 nearly 28 % of population in Chennai lived in slums. The estimates for 2001 do not bring much change in the status. The slum population in Chennai is smaller than only three other cities in India. In other words, the vibrant Chennai with urban shine and thriving industries actually owes its existence to these 28 % of suffering souls and many others left uncounted in the process.

Chennai is one of the high-density cities in India. Its density varies from 180 persons per ha. in Saidapet and Mylapore Corporation zones and 368 persons per ha. In Kodambakkam zone within the Corporation limits and the gross density for Chennai City is 247 persons per ha.

The growing travel demand in the Metropolis has been dictating the need to increase the supply of road space. Implementation of the 1st Master Plan ensured enhancement of road space by way of provision of missing road links, widening of existing roads, removal of bottlenecks in the road network, construction of under passes/over passes, development of mini flyovers, etc.

Chennai Metropolis will become one of the few cities in the world with 10 plus million population in about 10 years (i.e. by 2016). The challenge of Chennai would be to sustain progress in development of physical infrastructure and social development in tandem with economic growth. Chennai remains as an attractive investment destination because of its conducive business environment, relatively better infrastructure facilities and skilled manpower.

2 Basic Profile of Homeless People in Chennai

Reasons Behind the Study

- Not in official records, these people exist without ration cards and voter ids for generations
- No official Statistics about the homeless except for grossly underestimated census and hence not featured in the urban planning and poverty reduction programmes.
- No concrete study that has enumerated this population to understand the condition of destitution and hence Lack of understanding, results in Myths on homeless in minds of planners and common people.

The salient feature characterizing the homeless people in Chennai is that they are mostly families that are here for a variety of reasons. This is unlike in Delhi, where they are largely individuals who have migrated in search of livelihood opportunities and send the money earned thus back to their respective villages where they have left their family members behind. Here in Chennai very few of those whom we met are staying as individuals. In the study conducted by Actionaid India it was found that most of them have made streets their residence for the last few generations. There are families that have been living in the streets for the last four generations. The oldest among them confessed to have reached Chennai in 1911. Some of them have now grown into large kin groups living in

and around the same streets where their great grandfathers set their first family up. They have marked off the streets into domestic zones as belonging to each family.

Apart from these slum dwellers, there are other most vulnerable people in Chennai who do not have shelters over their head. The 1991 census shows that there are 19, 044 persons living under open sky in Chennai. They form 3,957 households and have 10, 597 males and 8,447 females. This figure forms 0.5 % of the population in Chennai. However this is a gross underestimation of the homeless population of Chennai, which flows out from the census methodology itself. The Census of India defines 'houseless' as, persons who are not living in 'census houses'. The latter refers to 'a structure with roof', hence the enumerators are instructed 'to take note of the possible places where the houseless population is likely to live, such as on the roadside, pavements, drainage pipes, under staircases, or in the open, temple-mandaps, platforms and the like. After they get an idea of the location of homeless population in the area, while collecting census information from people in census houses for the whole month, they hurriedly collect the information from the houseless population in a single night, on the last day of census.

However this exercise solely depends on the wish and interest of the enumerator, it is very difficult to ensure that he or she has completed the survey. This is especially so when the enumerator has to enumerate whole night without any prior experience or rapport with these people, who may respond very differently to the census query due to their ignorance.

However according to other estimates by NGOs, there are 11982 households with a total of 40, 533 homeless people in Chennai living under open sky. Among these 11982 households, 2590 units (22%) consist of individuals who live in Chennai without a family here or elsewhere and 9392(78%) units live as a family. The homeless consist of one percent of the total population of the Chennai city. 56 % among them are male and 44% are female. 3

3 Background of the Study

The poorest of the poor are sometimes referred to as destitute. They are the ones that constitute that population of any urban centre who are shelterless as far as a roof is concerned, unorganized as far as labour is concerned, marginalised as far as their rights is concerned and invisible as far as the numbers are concerned. They are not featured in the urban centres planning vis-à-vis infrastructure, access to basic amenities and the long arms of the welfare machinery seldom reach them, as they do not exist as far as official statistics are concerned. They, to the upwardly mobile are the eye sore of the cities, ‘a pain in the system that just needs to be picked and thrown into the sea’ in the words of a very eminent Supreme Court judge in a ruling in the capital city of the country. The stark reality is that there is not a single state run night shelter available in Chennai (apart from the homes that are run under the JJ Act addressing destitute children).

How are we to understand the condition of destitution, to map it against other dimensions of poverty, to make it less nebulous and admit it to political economy? If India is a Welfare State this is the question that needs to be answered. How can these most marginalized be included into the thinking of the city planners and Municipal Administrators?

The first step towards this is the deep research on the homeless in the Chennai whereby the magnitude of the problem if homeless, the process of marginalization and the living condition of the homeless will be surfaced to facilitate suitable intervention strategy.

4 Methodology

The basic aim of the survey was to understand the magnitude of the problem of homelessness. A Research Team was formed to carry forward the survey and study into the living conditions of the homeless in the city. An Interview Schedule was designed towards understanding the demographic details, duration and nature of stay under the open sky, their livelihood opportunities, access to basic amenities and nature of their vulnerability to abuse and violations.

The study has used the previous experience of the field researchers in identifying all the homeless pockets of the Chennai city. It was then decided to select the areas amidst more urbanization, which is apparently the South Chennai. While focusing upon the South Chennai area, places like, Parrys terminal, Rattan Bazar, NSC Bose road, Anna Nagar and Egmore were selected as the homeless population in these places is comparatively more than others.

Selection of the respondents was not done in accordance with any sampling method. It was more of a kind of study which has taken the participation of the homeless people who have volunteered their time for sharing their life with the field researchers. For this study the homeless people were identified and interviewed mainly on pavements (53%). Some were also interviewed while they were before shops and buildings (39%). The rest were interviewed in their dwelling spaces in railway stations, bus stands, hospitals and market places.

Direct interview method was used to collect data through interview schedule by trained enumerators. The interview schedule was administered to the homeless 'unit' on the streets. A family was the largest unit interviewed and an independent individual the minimum. As the number of members in the unit came out through the interview schedule, it also served as a survey of the total number of homeless. A single person/ family was taken to be homeless if he did not have a roof over his head- even as hutment –in the city, but is residing in the city at the time of interview. In order to identify the homeless the survey was conducted between 20:00 hrs and 01:00 hrs. Only those persons who were sleeping or retiring to sleep were taken into account. People working in nights were left in order to avoid double counting and to avoid counting person who would have house. Further the homeless person was identified on the basis of their belongings near sleeping place or hideouts.

The Interview Schedule was designed in the month of March 2006. The study normally occurred between 20:00 hrs and 01:00 hrs in order to cover all the category of homeless people. The enumeration was completed by the 31st of July 2007. The collected questionnaires were entered into a database created in SPSS and was analyzed through simple and cross tabulation.

5 Socio-demographic conditions Of the Respondents

This chapter tries to provide a quantitative outlook to the Socio-demographic conditions of the homeless respondents of this study with needed qualitative inputs. This analysis will lead us to have a basic understanding of the life pattern and living conditions of the homeless people of the city.

5.1 Age, sex and livelihood profile of homeless sample interviewed

A major proportion of our respondents are female (78.75%) as they happened to be more approachable during the visits, and they have special vulnerabilities. It can not be anyway generalised that Chennai's homeless population contains more women folk. Among the male respondents, it is persons below the age of 20 constitute a major portion. It is natural again that the boys were more accommodative of the researchers rather than the men. The research could also get a person of third gender to contribute to the study.

5.1.1 Age and Sex wise classification of the respondents

Age in years	Male	Female	Eunuch	Total and %
20 and below	11	22	-	33 (41.25)
21-40	2	22	1	25 (31.25)
41-60	3	18	-	21 (26.25)
61 and above	-	1	-	1 (1.25)
Total and %	16 (20.0)	63 (78.75)	1 (1.25)	80 (100)

The persons below the age group of 20 constitute the major part of the respondents (41.25), whereas the working class population in the age groups of 21-40 and 41-60 records approximately 31 and 26 percentage of the total respondents. There is only one respondent who is above 60 years old.

This seemingly equal spread of respondents in all the age groups (except above 60 years) represents that the Chennai homeless population lives in families. Unlike many other metropolitan cities where the homeless population mainly constitutes working class men and street children, Chennai has a vast proportion of women living as homeless. This again shows the impact of urbanisation which has forced the rural population to migrate in families.

5.1.2 Have permanent address

Have permanent address	Persons	Percentage
Yes	69	86.3
No	11	13.7
Total	80	100

A great majority of the homeless surveyed (86.3%) responding positively on having a permanent address adds to the observation that the Chennai homeless people mostly live in families. Here they have mentioned the pavements and shop ledges where they presently live as their permanent addresses. Though the place they live in is impermanent, being with their families make them feel a kind of permanency.

This argument can be again strengthened with the following table shows only 7.5% of the respondents are in their present location for less than a year and nearly 60% of them are in the present location for more than 20 years. It also includes the children who have born into streets and have to live the whole of their life on the same.

Though none had any idea about why a particular street or platform was chosen in the first place, their loyalty for the place they live is very intense. Unlike in many other cities, the places of their residence for Chennai homeless are more than functional spaces. It may be due to the fact that they live as families and even as kindred. May be the individual homeless, who is in the city for earning and sending the money back home would keep looking for any functional space that would serve the purpose of night halt and sleep. But in the case of these Chennai homeless their allegiance for the street they have turned into their residences is strong, as many of them we met have lived in the same streets for generations together - both in time and space.

5.1.3 Duration of stay in the present location

Duration in years	Persons	Percentage
Below 1 year	6	7.5
1-10	14	17.5
11-20	20	25.0
21-30	13	16.25
31-40	7	8.75
41-50	5	6.25
51 and above	1	1.25
No response	14	17.5
Total	80	100

“Come what may, we would not change the place unless the alternative proposed is acceptable”, they say categorically. Going by their long history of their residence here it seems that either there was no alternative proposed or, if proposed, they have yet to become acceptable to them.

All the respondents of the study belongs to the scheduled castes (SC) which shows the migration of socially and economically depressed people from the rural areas to attain their salvation in the anonymity of urban society. Though a religion wise classification does not add more meaning to the study, it is to be recorded that 73 out of 80 respondents belongs to Hinduism, with 3 and 4 Muslims and Christians respectively.

5.2 Sleep: location, permanence, etc

It is obviously sleep which fulfils the long day of any human being and the places which the homeless people select to fix their night’s sleep shows their vulnerability to have an independent decision on their sleep.

5.2.1 Place of sleep

Place of sleep	Persons	Percentage
Under Staircase	2	2.5
Under ledge of shops or homes	31	38.75
Market corridors	1	1.25
Bus stands	3	3.75
Pavements or roadsides	42	52.5
At your work place (Dhabas, godowns)	1	1.25
Total	80	100

Place of sleep here refers to the place where shelterless people stay and keep their belongings. Majority of the homeless people (52.5%) stay in pavements and roadsides. These people are left at the mercy of nature, common Man and police. They occasionally put clothes and thatches over their head as roofs only to be looted or destroyed by corporation and after that being chased away by police in nights. Only a few (3%) among our homeless respondents sleep in railway station and bus stands; these are places with overhead roofs that protects them from the extremes of nature. However for most of the pavement dwellers a rainy night means sleepless nights sitting before nearby shops and buildings.

There were a few homesteads having a kind of temporary polythene shelters in the same area. When one of the respondents was asked about them, she was initially with an urge to prove that their family can also afford to have one such but they do not need such an arrangement at that time. There was an unconscious urge from her part to equalizing herself with others who have those temporary shelters. She could finally come out of that notion and revealed that the neighbour who has such a shelter is running a small hotel kind of thing which provides food items

to other homeless people of the same area. Almost all of them own such polythene covers which would be used only at the time of rains and intolerable sunlight. It was also admitted that such covers may not allow them to sleep under the rain but helps them to stand awoken without getting fully drenched.

When it rains more, they have no other way except going to movies for the whole day and come back to their places after the rain is over. They probably come back to their places in the late nights and get sheltered under the shop ledges if it continues to rain. They can not occupy the same place in the day time as the shops would be crowded with the mad urban rush. The polythene sheets are used extensively to cover their valuables, which includes, school books, certificates, ration cards and voter identity cards during the heavy rains.

More than 90% of the respondents have to depend upon the madly/densely populated pavements and shop ledges for their night sleep. This makes them to cravingly wait until midnights to get their sleeping places free of the urban rush.

5.2.2 Problems in having an uninterrupted sleep

Reasons for uninterrupted sleep	Persons	Percent
Noise	16	20.0
Police chasing out	2	2.5
Police brutality	1	1.25
Physical abuse	1	1.25
Health problem	7	8.75
Personal problems (unemployment, Family tensions)	10	12.5
Hunger	3	3.75
Fear	2	2.5
Inclement weather	22	27.5
Mosquitoes	14	17.5
No problem	2	2.5
Total	80	100

Only 2.5% of the homeless interviewed has mentioned of having had an uninterrupted sleep on that last one week of the field visit. Among others a majority complains on the inclement weather as the important hindrance in having an uninterrupted sleep. One fifth of the total respondents specify that it is the noise of the vehicles as the major problem. Also mosquitoes enters the list of problems with nearly 17.5% people state it as a barrier. Personal problems and health problems are the other major reasons. Other factors like, police chasing out, hunger, fear and physical abuse

constitute the problems for the rest. Many of these problems arise mainly due to the vulnerable life on the streets. They can overcome these obstacles to have a peaceful night's sleep only if they are provided with a shelter in a way or other.

Though the initial response for the question on police chasing out was that there is no such incident happens to them. When the question was re-emphasized in other words many of them have agreed that such incidents happen 3-4 times minimum in a year. It happens for different reasons, they say, for construction of new buildings, like toilets, police station, post office, etc., It was then revealed that the eviction is not exactly to use their space for construction but to invisiblise them during the opening ceremonies of these newly constructed buildings. Thus the evictions happen to be shorter in time, for a day or so and they occupy their spaces after the Government funs are over. They adopt different management tactics to pass through these one day evictions. An important tactic among them again is to go for movies for the whole day and come back in the late night by when the police would have left the place. Secondly, they go and stay with their fellow homeless people in other areas of Chennai. There are few who own rickshaws, pack their belongings and carry them in their rickshaws to roam around the city till the eviction drama is over. Others take their belongings with them to get resorted in their friends' streets. They were sure by saying that these eviction dramas never go beyond a day and they would be able to restore their places by late nights of the same day.

5.3 Relationships: kin, biological or adopted, marriage and other liaisons, friends, sense of community, sharing, loneliness

Relationships in a way create a kind of ‘safety net’ for the homeless people who otherwise feel themselves living an altogether unsafe life. Also the relationships of different kinds form the basis for their demeaning moments on the street as it helps them to derive temporary meanings into their long-lived homeless lives.

Nearly three fourth of the respondents have reported of not having any relatives in their native places. Many of them do not even accredit of having a native place of their own. They feel the streets in which they live for years together is their native. It again proves that many of them have come to Chennai and have been living as homeless for generations.

5.3.1 Have relatives in the native place

Have Relatives in the native place	Persons	Percentage
Yes	21	26.3
No	59	73.7
Total	80	100

Still there is a significant portion of the respondents (26.3%) mentioned of having relatives in their native places and 16 out of those 21 have visited their relatives minimum for a time in the last one year.

5.3.2 Living with Blood relations

Living with blood relatives	Persons	Percentage
Yes	52	65.0
No	28	35.0
Total	80	100

As it is mentioned earlier in this report, most of the Chennai homeless population live in families and nearly two-third of the respondents of this study has positively answered for the question on their living with blood relatives. There is also a crucial portion of 35% reported of not living with any blood relatives. None of them has mentioned about any adopted relatives living with as most of them are just dependent upon their families to get the needed emotional support.

A fairly major part of the respondents (43.8%) are unmarried as most of them are persons under the age of 20 years. Among the rest many of them are (30%) married and staying with their spouses and another significant portion are widowed persons, mostly women. There are also reported cases of co-habitation among the respondents in which the only respondent from third gender falls and a small portion is either not staying with their spouse (5%) or got completely separated (2.5%) from their marital relationship. Nearly one-fifth of the married women have recorded of facing domestic violence in their family, either from their husbands, unmarried partners or from in-laws.

5.3.3 Marital Status

Marital status	Male	Female	Eunuch	Total	Percent
Unmarried	13	22	-	35	43.75
Married – Staying with spouse	-	24	-	24	30.0
Married – Not staying with spouse	-	4	-	4	5.0
Separated	-	2	-	2	2.5
Widowed	3	9	-	12	15.0
Cohabiting – Not married but living as monogamous pair	-	1	1	2	2.5
No response	-	1	-	1	1.25
Total	16	63	1	80	100

In Chennai one could see a vast collection homeless having married people who are like themselves. The spouses were met in the respective work places and both the spouses have been occupants of Chennai streets many generations

running. Even the arranged marriages are normally between one homeless and the other and they may be related to each other. There are many streets in Chennai where the entire kindred live in the same parts of the streets. They have carefully marked their own territories from each other so that even in their togetherness there can be distinct homes for each other. The sisters could live together yet their food arrangements are different. Courtship is encouraged among the youth and once married; the young men would form their own families in their parental spaces.

5.3.4 Change of companion in last one year

Change of companion in last one year	Persons	Percentage
Yes	6	7.5
No	66	82.5
No response	8	10.0
Total	80	100

Only 7.5% of the total respondents have mentioned of having changed their companion in the last one year. This in a way reflects the social-security that they avail by living as a family and their basic apprehension to break this comfort-circle.

5.3.5 Have Trust on Friends

Have trust on the friends	Persons	Percentage
Yes	12	15.0
No	66	82.5
No response	2	2.5
Total	80	100

The perceptible lack in the common resources in a way makes the homeless people to be competitive among themselves. It is very much evident in the case of street vendors, rickshaw pullers and casual labourers. Though they pretend to be in a perfect union, when it comes to the question of having trust on their friends, most (82.5%) of them are not being affirmative. Only 15% of the total respondents are ready to say that they have trust on their friends.

5.3.6 Celebration of festivals

Celebration of festivals	Persons	Percentage
Yes	45	56.25
No	35	43.75
Total	80	100

Living in families positively provides the homeless people a greater space to celebrate festivals. This is evidenced as 56.3% of the respondents have mentioned of celebrating festivals. All of them who celebrate festivals do it with their families by preparing feasts and buying new clothes. The rest who do not celebrate festivals also marks a significant percentage (43.7%) of the respondents. Lack of financial resources is mentioned to be the major reason for their not celebrating festivals.

Homeless people of Chennai experience less discrimination on the basis of caste/community. Nearly 58% of the respondents have reported that people of their same community live on the same streets as non-homeless. Still they could not build any constructive relations with them on the basis of their caste as the orientation of urban life is more on economic terms.

5.3.7 Belonging to any community living on the street (as non-homeless)

Belonging to any community living in the same street (as non-homeless)	Persons	Percentage
Yes	46	57.5
No	29	36.25
No response	5	6.25
Total	80	100

They are very clear in saying that their well-being is entirely dependent upon their daily wage and not upon the belongingness to any particular community. None of them have the hope that the people of their same community living in houses would help them. That aspect of life has never been a consideration for them until we directed them to think in such a way.

5.4 Education

Education is still not seen as the solace for their prolonged sufferings on the streets. Unlike their village counterparts, who have hopes in education as a way to come out of the poverty circle, homeless people do not weigh education greatly as a way out from their impoverished situation. For them the livelihood can be earned in many other ways,

which may not necessarily need the support of any academic pursuits.

5.4.1 Literacy level

Literacy	Persons	Percentage
Illiterate	34	42.5
Primary	15	18.75
Secondary	7	8.75
NA (Students)	24	30.0
Total	80	100

The same argument can be again extended as majority (42.5%) of the homeless interviewed are illiterate and nearly one fifth of them can afford to reach till primary school education. Only 8.75% can at least enter secondary school education and who again left the education in the half way without completing their schooling. There are 24 children who go to school but irregularly. Also their parents have no enthusiasm to motivate their children to go to schools regularly. These children are studying in all the levels of school.

5.5 Occupation profile, earnings, expenditure profile, savings, remittances and loans

A basic understanding of the economics of homeless life is important if at all we need to envision their life in a constructive manner. The study has thus tried to analyse various aspects of the homeless economy include their occupation, income and expenditure, savings and loans, etc.

5.5.1 Occupation profile

Type of occupation	Persons	Percent
Street vendor	20	25.0
Casual daily wage worker	4	5.0
Construction worker	10	12.5
Live by alms	1	1.25
Domestic worker	8	10.0
Home maker	5	6.25
Student	24	30.0
Others	2	2.5
No response	6	7.5
Total	80	100

The table shows the occupation of the respondents in the homeless units. It is important to note that the occupation details are of the respondent with whom the Interview schedule was administered and not of all the homeless people. However the figure can be taken as a good approximation of the occupation of the homeless population in the city. Significant portion of the respondents (17.5%) are engaged as casual labourers that involves hard physical labour like coolie work, loading unloading, pulling tricycle and rickshaw, construction work and digging work. While 25 percent of the respondents are self employed and are pavement vendors who sell from flower, fruit, and vegetable to other small articles. Begging as a means of livelihood supports only 1.25% of the respondents. Besides these occupations the significant chunk of respondents (30%) was students. Unless in other cities, many of the street children of Chennai have the advantage of going to schools as they are all living with their family. Only 8 % of the homeless respondents are being domestic workers. In all other cases the employment is highly seasonal in nature and people toil hard during season time to survive during off-season periods.

The nature of livelihood is a major cause of crisis in lives of homeless people. The livelihood choice in case of these people is very limited. Historically, routed into the fate of labouring hard with physical strength, through caste system these people for generations are bound with the occupation as they are never given chance to acquire skills to take a better livelihood option. Leave alone acquiring skills through vocation training; these homeless population even remained untouched by the education system of the state.

Normally the spouses are from the same work places doing same kinds - though not same types – of work. Therefore during the daytime both the spouses work in the same flower-shops where the husband takes care of purchasing of large quantity of flowers and selling whereas the wife weaves them and plaits them into garlands. There are other men who work in the lathe shops where their wives work as water-women or as cleaners of the shop floor. If the spouses are engaged in rag picking then both go about collecting rags. The men who work as loaders have their wives working as errand ladies in the same shops.

5.5.2 Days of available work in a month

Available work in a month	Persons	Percent
Full month	31	38.75
15 days	10	12.5
10 days	4	5.0
5 days	2	2.5
No work	9	11.25
NA	24	30.0
Total	80	100

As it is mentioned, the homeless live a kind of day-to-day life where they need to wage all through month or year to assure their next time's meal. The fact that, nearly 40% of the respondents mentioned of having work for all the days in a month just adds to that observation. One eighth of them have at least 15 days work in a month. There is only a small portion who has work for less than ten days (7.5%).

There are also few people (11.25%) who are dependent on others for their livelihood without having any work to do. Another significant part (30%) of respondents never comes into this categorisation under working days as they are children who go to schools. Exhibited more working days reveal their desperate need to work all the days rather than the so called job assurance. Nothing else except working would really help them in shifting their hunger to the next day. In the hide and seek game of hunger and life, the homeless are just left with a simple choice of waging their war without any ceasefire.

5.5.3 Daily income

Amount in Rs.	Persons	Percent
< 50	19	23.75
50-100	29	36.25
> 100	12	15.0
NA	20	25.0
Total	80	100

Homeless people have repeatedly said that their nights' sleeping without starving stomachs depends mainly upon the income they earned during the day. Majority (36%) of the respondents have mentioned of have a daily income of

more than Rs.50 but less than Rs.100. nearly one-fourth of them earn less than Rs.50 a day and there is 15% of the respondents who earn more than Rs.100. Twenty of them have reported of not having any income and this data can be very well correlated with the total number of school going children (24 in number). It also makes us to realise that some children are also engaged in meagre works to support their family's daily budget. This is only the case of daily income and here one should keep in mind that there are days of no work. This minimum earning, sometimes are the sole source to the entire family, can hardly serve them food in the no-income days. Their innate lack of any kind of mental capital restrict them from seeking better alternatives to increase this income level.

5.5.4 Daily Expenditure

Amount in Rs.	Persons	Percent
< 50	19	23.75
50-100	38	47.5
> 100	6	7.5
NA	17	21.25
Total	80	100

While correlating the data on daily expenditures of homeless people, we see the persons who earn less than Rs.50 and also spend Rs.50 are exactly same, which shows their limited situation of not getting any additional resources to spend over their increasing needs. Otherwise most of them (47.5%) spend Rs.50-100 a day and which is quite necessary to manage their families in an urbanised situation, where the cost of living is high. Their daily expenditures mainly include the cost of food and the service charges to avail public utilities, like toilet and bathroom facilities. Apart from that, the expense for medication is the major expense as on when they happen to go to the private hospitals in case of emergency needs. As they are really vulnerable for many health related problem, their monthly budget needs also an account head to be added for the health expenses.

5.5.5 Borrowings

Amount in Rs	Persons	Percentage
1000 and Below	7	8.75
1001-5000	5	6.25
5001-10000	6	7.5
10000 and above	5	6.25
No Borrowing	57	71.25
Total	80	100

When they lose their battle in earning their much-needed income and when their children are craving for food or their parents demand serious attention on the health front, the homeless people resort into borrowing money as any one of us would do. But the problem arises when they face a situation which hinders them from availing any kind of loans. Nearly three-fourth of the respondents mentioning of having no debts does not mean that they are financially viable without any need to avail loans. It simply refers to the distrust that the moneylenders have on the homeless people. Still there is a significant portion who could manage to avail loans. There are borrowings of less than Rs.1000 and also more than Rs.10000. One common thing among them is the high interest rates in repaying the loans. The interest rate differs from 10-30 percentage per month, which is again very high when compared to the common bank interest rates of the country. There is no other way except paying such high interest amounts as it is the only way for the homeless people in availing loans.

Only 2 of them (2.5%) have reported of having a savings amount of Rs.1000 and Rs.2500 respectively. One keeps the savings money with herself and the other deposits it in chit-funds.

Only 6 (7.5%) of them are sending money to their homes. As many of them are living with their families there arises no need to send money to home.

5.6 Recreation

Recreation really electrifies the dull moments of the homeless people and they always wait for such opportunities to temporarily escape from their homeless spheres through these quantum leaps. As Chennai has developed into an important urban centre of the state (or even of the country), anything which related to the common life is mostly interpreted in economic terms. In the same way the modes to recreate oneself in such an urbanite centre includes a significant amount of cost factor in it. Still, the homeless people can not just restrict themselves from opting for such expenses as that is the only way out they find to enjoy their temporary havens.

As Tamilnadu is a state where people (India as a whole in a way) give more importance to cinemas and even go to the extent of worshipping the film stars as their messiahs, the general trend of absolute attraction towards films is very much evident in the everyday life of any common man. Homeless people too go with it as a majority of the respondents (37.5%) has mentioned movies as their frequent recreational activity. A nearly same proportion has reported that they do not have any kind of recreational activity. The cost factor discussed earlier happens to be the hindering element here.

5.6.1 Most frequent recreational activities

Recreational activity	Persons	Percent
Television	8	10.0
Movie	30	37.5
Radio	6	7.5
Others	5	6.25
None	31	38.75
Total	80	100

There are one-tenth of respondents who watch televisions by standing in front of the shops. A small portion of the homeless people (7.5%) have their own radio sets and listen to the commercial FM stations which are more than ten at present. The rest who have mentioned other recreational activities (6.25%) meant playing with their friends, such as cricket on the streets, etc.

5.7 Access to public services

Homeless people in many ways lack assurance of easy and assured access to public services and neither the state nor the society is ready to guarantee their accessibility. Even the interventions that the non-governmental organisations make are not long lasting as they are prone to sudden withdrawals at times of unavailability of resource, say the lack of funding. It is the role of the state which gets more significance in this juncture, which can be the ultimate actor in providing these services to the homeless.

Drinking water is one of the most important basic needs for any human being. But for homeless people, it poignantly has even more importance at moments as there are times when the water simply serves them as the sole substitute for food. There are instances in homeless life where people just drink water and go to sleep with a 'pseudo' filled stomach. A great majority (93.75%) of the respondents collect their drinking water from the roadside municipal taps. The rest gets it from shops, tankers, etc.,

5.7.1 Source of drinking water

Source of water	Persons	Percent
Roadside taps	75	93.75
Shops	1	1.25
Tankers	2	2.5
Others	2	2.5
Total	80	100

5.7.2 Problems in accessing drinking water

Problems in getting drinking water	Persons	Percent
Distance	12	15.0
Wait for long time	33	41.25
Street clashes	8	10.0
Discrimination	4	5.0
Others	6	7.5
No problem	17	21.25
Total	80	100

Getting drinking water involves a great deal of effort and problems. For many of them (41.3%), it is their waiting for long hours and for others it is the distance and street clashes, which challenge fetching their water needs. As these are public taps, homeless people are mostly given the last opportunity in taking their turn and thus have to wait till all ‘authorised citizens’ (including slum dwellers) fill their pots. We can very well club this factor with the persons who have reported facing discrimination while fetching water. Other problems include the, improper timings of water supply, health factors, etc., It is also notable here that a little more than one-fifth of the respondents have mentioned that they do not face any problem in availing the drinking water.

5.7.3 Place of Defecation

Place	Persons	Percent
Open space	3	3.75
Pavement	1	1.25
Public toilet	65	81.25
Private toilet	9	11.25
Others	2	2.5
Total	80	100

As many of the homeless people live in the densely populated and visibly urbanised areas of the city, the main option available is using public toilets for responding to their nature's call. Though many of the public toilets are poorly maintained and in a way a costly affair, the homeless people still use them extensively as 81.25% of the respondents marked down public toilets as their choice, which is a forced choice. The cost factor is even more with the users of private toilet (11.25%) and the only benefit is that the private toilets are a bit cleaner than the public ones. There is only a very small proportion of respondents who use open space, pavements or other places for the same purpose.

5.7.4 Place of Bath

Place	Persons	Percent
Public taps	29	36.25
Community bathing places	27	33.75
Others	24	30
Total	80	100

A fairly major portion of the respondents (57.5%) opt for bathing at least 2-3 times in a week and two-fifth of them takes bath on daily basis. Apart from their own sense of cleanliness, this really reveals their desperate need to present them in a neat and tidy manner so as to survive in the competitive market, let it be in street vending or casual labour. A major part of the respondents (36.25%) opt for the public taps who are mostly men and among the one-third of the persons using community bathing places, majority are women. There are also 30% of people who use other spaces, such as temporary polythene covers, etc., to take their bath.

5.7.5 Frequency of taking Bath

Frequency	Male	Female	Eunuch	Total	Percent
Daily	6	26	-	32	40.0
2-3 times a week	9	36	1	46	57.5
Once in a week	1	1	-	2	2.5
Total	16	63	1	80	100

When the homeless people can not claim as their right accessing public services, another way shown to them is to pay for availing the same. Though they are not wealthy enough to spare money for availing services, the homeless people still manages to pay as they can not manage without those essential services.

Though many of these expenses seem to be meagre, it amounts really a lot to the homeless as they find it really hard even to earn enough for their food. These kinds of expenses put more pressure in their economic front and require them to do more wage work or to deny themselves as a necessary consequence.

Usage of toilet and public bathrooms are the major things where the homeless people need to make their payments. There are also few people who need to pay for drinking water and sleeping place. The service charge differs from Rs.1 to Rs.10

5.7.6 Payment of Service Charges

Service	Persons	Percent
Drinking Water	8	10
Defecation	58	72.5
Bathing	32	40
Sleeping	2	2.5

5.8 Access to ration cards and Voter ID

In urban setting, identities and indeed legal citizenship are dependent on possessing certain documents. The present study also gave importance in tracing out the status of such possessions among the homeless population of Chennai.

5.8.1 Possession of Ration card

Possess Ration card	Persons	Percent
Yes, with city address	42	52.5
Yes, with village address	8	10.0
Yes, but it is pawned	1	1.25
No	29	36.25
Total	80	100

Due to the recent efforts taken by few voluntary initiatives, the Government officials have considered the need of the homeless people for having a ration card. A little more than half of the respondents possess ration cards and the rest either do not possess or have it with village address which is again can not be used in the places they presently live. Mere possession of ration card still does not assure them any food security as there are noted cases of discrimination against them in the PDS outlets.

Many of them are issued with a ration card very recently and they are yet to start availing the benefits. Many others, who are denied of getting a ration card were made so on the basis of various reasons, like, having no permanent address, there is no government rule to provide cards to homeless, most of them are having the same address, etc. “We are also denied ration cards as the officials fear that we may claim for houses and televisions by showing the BPL cards”, they said.

5.8.2 Possession of Voter ID

Possess Voter ID	Persons	Percent
Yes	38	47.5
No	41	51.25
Not aware of it	1	1.25
Total	80	100

In the same way nearly half of the respondents possess a voter id and the rest are denied by showing their not having a permanent address as the reason. Only one among them is not aware of such an identity card.

Only few old people are availing the old age pension from the Government and others have tried to a great extent and ended up with frustration when asked for bribes to avail their right. They have naturally given up their efforts in getting the service. “We expect only the vulnerable people among us to get such government assistance. We can all otherwise manage our lives even without that”, they were clear in making that statement.

5.9 Reasons and period of homelessness

There are certainly a bunch of reasons which has caused the people to be homeless. It can not be noted that a single reason has made them homeless rather it would be a group of mutually caused factors. But for facilitating interpretation by the researchers, we asked them the most important reason that has caused their homelessness.

5.9.1 Causes for Homelessness

Reasons	Persons	Percent
Extreme poverty	59	73.75
Need to send money to home	1	1.25
Abandonment by family	2	2.5
Absence of family	2	2.5
Cannot afford to rent house	11	13.75
Unemployment	2	2.5
Others	3	3.75
Total	80	100

Nearly three-fourth of them blamed their extreme poverty as the major reason for being homeless and also the others (13.8%) who said that they can not afford to rent a house can be clubbed together with this category. They are not very sure which factor has really driven them to start their life in streets and they are only known of the reasons why they can not go back and live in houses. This again shows that many of the homeless population of Chennai are being homeless for generations or otherwise for longer years and does not really know the root cause which drove them away from their once-lived-ancestral-houses. For a great majority of the respondents (85%), homelessness is a really long lived experience as they are on the streets for more than ten years and many are there since their birth.

5.9.2 Years of homelessness

Years of homelessness	Persons	Percent
< 1 Year	5	6.25
1-5 Years	7	8.75
> 10 Years	68	85.0
Total	80	100

The populations that continuously move into and out of homeless status are far fewer in Chennai than perhaps in Delhi where many of them return to their homes back in their villages and the hinterlands of Delhi periodically. They have a home to return to, despite their longer duration of stay in urban centers. In times of crisis and serious illness these in-and-out homeless instantly return to their homes back home. They, more often than not, carry the moral frameworks and lifestyle orientations of their native places and continue to adhere to them and, what is more, even bequeath them to their progenies. Their wives are total residents of the native places as they stay there till their marriages and sometimes even after that. The arrival of ‘wives of the soil’ in the lives of the many homeless youth only renews their adherence to their native worldview. They continue to live in a moral conclave marked off distinctly from the urban landscapes they occupy for livelihood.

But the majority of the homeless we met in Chennai offer a contrasting dimension to this issue. Excluding the in-and-out homeless we suggested above who are only a minority, the rest never had any sense of home neither in terms of having lived in a structure that can be characterized as a house, nor in terms of having a home back in the villages to return to annually or otherwise. Indeed they do not have any idea of home even in their memory, for they have lived in streets from many generations backwards. They have vivid memories of the changing landscapes of the city and the roads they have lived, but not an iota of idea about permanent roof over their head. Since they have been here from their great grandfather days, gradually their moorings in the villages had been lost, with the present generation (and even the previous one) having never been to any other places other than the streets they live during their entire lives. Some of them told very forcefully that they had hardly stayed in any other places excepting their resident-streets, for more than one day.

5.10 Arrests and incarceration

Custodialisation is the effort normally a state takes to have a say over its unmanageable population. The process makes the unmanageable into manageable and there are other merits that the state enjoy through such an act. In small towns where the homeless population is less, a state can take that effort to custodialise and then invisibilise the state-defined unmanageable sect of the community. But in Chennai where the homeless population expands beyond tens and thousands, the state is really disabled to make any arrests for invisibilising its unmanageable population. There is a real need arises to find out just modes of making these people into full citizens and then exercise state management.

5.10.1 Incidence of Arrest for living on the streets

Incidence of arrest	Persons	Percent
Yes	5	6.25
No	75	93.75
Total	80	100

The argument is conformed by the field study, where most of the respondents (93.75%) mentioned that they have not faced any incidence arrests for their living on streets. Among the five who have faced police accusations, one has

been arrested for one time and other two have faced 3 arrests altogether. For the rest (2 of them), arrest is an every month's affair.

Six of the respondents are arrested for reasons other than living on the streets. Most of them are fake cases against the homeless arrested and few due to their commercial activity on the streets.

5.11 Disability

Only two of them have reported of having any kind of disability. One is for blindness and the other for paraplegia. Anyhow it can not be generalised to the whole of the city homeless population as the study's sample size is too less for making such generalisation. There is another important factor to be kept in mind that the definition of disability is again different for homeless people. They are living in a situation which can be otherwise stated as 'social disability' wherein the difficulties of having 'physical disability' may not be of greater significance. This again makes them (consciously or unconsciously) conceal the facts which can otherwise be treated as the symptoms of having physical disability. Many of the respondents simply disposed the question on disability with an instant 'no' as they really do not want to consider that aspect anymore. They feel their problem is much bigger than mere physical disability.

5.12 Assistance received if any

Thirty among the homeless interviewed (37.5%) have reported of having received assistance from the NGOs. Rest of them have not received any kind of help from others, be it Government or NGOs. The received help is the provision of food and shelter during rainy seasons and vessels and few relief measures at times of tsunami.

5.13 Best and worst experiences while being homeless

Tracing out the history of homelessness can also be done through the collection of the best and worst experiences while being homeless. But many of the respondents of the study, instead of mentioning any particular experience just went beyond to pour out their overall emotions around the experience of being homeless. Thus the exercise has culled out the most advantageous and disadvantageous parts of life on the streets.

In the view of the homeless interviewed, the general merit of being homeless is to enjoy the freedom of moving, i.e., having less restrictions on their mobility. No other advantage is being seen by them in living a shelterless life. Even the mentioned merit of free mobility is seems to be a desperate effort to derive meanings into their abnormal life situation.

On the other hand they have a long list to specify the worst parts of their vulnerable life. Police chasing and beating, absence of privacy and dignity, lack of security, difficulty in keeping adolescent girls on street, demolition of temporary shelters and difficulty during rainy seasons are some of the major 'worst and unavoidable chapters' that all of the homeless people mentioned as a part of their stories. Specified worst experiences of homelessness includes, the ill-treatment of the drunkard husband, fear to sleep on the road, lack of help during ill-health days, death of daughter due to lack of health care, having met with an accident while sleeping on the pavements, etc.

Almost the entire homeless school-going children have complained of not having proper place to read their lessons and do homework exercises in the late evenings. The only respondent of the third gender has complained of the

teasing nature of the public in Chennai. An adolescent girl has grieved of having no facility to take bath.

The visible insecurity and the loss of dignity are the two major things that the homeless life offers to the people living on streets and they have only a single option of battling their infinite struggle for regaining the space which would provide them both a secured and dignified life.

During a focused group discussion, one of the respondent mentioned that present days she is a bit ashamed to be on the streets and tries not to sit towards the roadside while taking food. “Even the casual sights of a third person make us feel dehumanized”, she said. Towards the end of our conversation she again said by showing various parts of their pavements, “This is our hall... that is the kitchen... here is the bedroom and there we have the toilet and sirs this as a whole is our bungalow”. She then added, “You people will feel difficulty to do without electricity and other services. Look at us, we do not have such problems and we are happier than you”.

5.14 Greatest felt need

In a way their greatest felt need to have a permanent shelter is very much visible even without say anything about it. There are certain other needs that the homeless interviewed has put forward to make their lives a little more comfortable one. The most important need among them is to have basic sanitation facilities, toilets and bathrooms in specific. Following that the need to have proper educational facilities for their children and to have basic and proper health care facilities for all.

As most of the Chennai homeless people are dependent on their own wages for day-to-day living affair, many of them have expressed their wish to have continuous work which can also provide them with fair wages. There is a general feel that the assurance of a reasonable income would otherwise assist them to fulfil or at least help them to overcome the other felt needs.

6 Food and Nutrition

Homeless people do not have any idea on the nutritional contents of their food pattern as they are left with limited choices in availing their food, because of financial constraints and the absence of physical spaces to cook their food. It is indeed the search of food which has led many to the streets.

6.1 Food eaten in the last two days: content and sufficiency

Most of the respondents have mentioned that they managed to have sufficient food in the last two days of our visit. Their daily menu starts with the tea in the morning and then the common south Indian food items (like idli, dosa and pongal) as their breakfast. Nearly one-tenth of them have porridge as their breakfast. All of these food items contain adequate nutritious elements needed for a common person. During the morning times, people cooking themselves are far fewer than those who get their food from roadside hotels.

Rice with minimum vegetables is the only important food stuff that is typically part of their lunch. All of them with very few exceptions could manage to get their lunch on both the days. Here again, the number of people who buy it from the shops are higher than those who cook by themselves. Most of them could also affirmatively answer for the question on sufficiency. Nutritional value of their lunch is suspect as it is more of rice without much vegetable or other stuff of rich vitamins. As many of them are not cooking their meals for afternoon, the available food stuff from their fellow homeless shop keepers are just enough to fill up the emptiness of the stomach and not much enhance the nutritional value.

Their supper menu includes the same south Indian dishes with another common item parotta being added to it. Still, rice is the dominating food even at night times. But this time the numbers of people who cook the food by themselves are more than those who buy it from shops. The availability of time and space on the pavement in the nights are factors which allow them to cook and eat food of their own taste. Again the rice factor creates apprehensions on the nutritional value of the food taken during night times. It is also important to note that, most of the respondents have been positive upon the sufficiency of the food taken.

It is obvious that the sufficiency of the food being more important to the homeless people than the nutritional content of it. The common notion of food security is also relies upon the sufficiency is another factor to be noted here.

6.2 Access to special food, cooked food or food cooked by a family member

Chennai's homeless populace who mostly live in families has the advantage of eating self-cooked food at least once in a day. This is also evident as more than half of the respondents have mentioned of cooking their food almost daily. There are only very few people have mentioned of not cooking at all. Even the rest who do not cook daily, go for the making their own food at least thrice in a week. This serves them in two ways as it proves to be economical and secondly it is mostly according to their own taste. Buying food from the shops (which is again run by their fellow homeless people) has an advantage over self-cooking as in the former; they can even get food for credit.

Cooking food by themselves is a difficult task during the rainy seasons as they can not just keep their fire on under

the pouring sky. Also the wet surface hinders them even after the rainy hours.

6.3 Eating patterns when lots of money is available

Though having money to spare is a rare incident in the lives of homeless people, a day when they happen to earn more results in abrupt changes in their usual food pattern. Visiting hotels of fine quality is one among those changes, which they feel allows them to taste delicious food stuffs which are otherwise unavailable. These are the only days when they can also afford to eat non-vegetarian food items. Having more money also persuades them to cook delicious foods in their own places, especially non-vegetarian food. Buying of fruits is an important addition as the result of more money and it is also significant on the nutritional front. There are only few respondents (15%) who have reported that there would not be any special addition or significant change in their food pattern while they have more money. Their justification is that they are ought to save that money for the unexpectedness of expected low or no income days of the future.

6.4 Coping if and when there is no money for food

Managing even one meal in periods of not having enough money is really a challenge for homeless people and they hardly have any alternatives to cope up with such situations. One-fourth of the respondents resorts to borrowing money from other homeless people during such lean days. There are a small portion of respondents who kill their appetite by drinking tea. Another significant percentage of the respondents (12.5%), get helped by their neighbours in the way of sharing the available food. Most importantly majority of them (nearly two-fifth of the respondents) have mentioned of getting assisted by their family members, either parents or grown up children, in getting their stomachs filled even when they do not have money. This is one of the advantageous parts of living as families on the streets.

6.5 Longest periods without food

Many homeless respondents recalled days of no food in all their lives on the streets.

6.5.1 Days of not having food

Duration	Persons	Percentage
One day	34	42.5
Two days	11	13.75
Can not say	35	43.75
Total	80	100

A little more than two-fifth of the total respondents have experienced acute scarcity of food at least for a day in their homeless life. Another significant part of the homeless interviewed (13.8%) mark the same as two days. The rest responded that they can not just count their days of hunger and were not ready to recall their sufferings. The researchers report that they are sure that the rest also would have experienced the days of having no food and their

apprehensions in revealing their personal suffering hardly hide the experienced hunger.

6.6 Food access during illness

Borrowing money is one of the choices that homeless people make during their illness period; so as to avail the much needed food. But majority are mentioned of being assisted mainly by the family members, spouses and either parents or grown up children. There are also few who have accredited the helps from their friends and neighbours in availing food during their illness.

6.7 Daily expenditure on food as percentage of total expenditure also along with amount in rupees

Half of the respondents spend Rs.50 or less per day on their food expenditures. The rest needs Rs.50-100 to be spent for the same. Only one respondent have mentioned of spending Rs.150 per day in getting food for the whole of his family. The spending is mostly dependent upon their daily earnings.

7 Health Status

Homeless people are very vulnerable to health related problems because of their forced life styles. Also the public health care system gives them very low priority.

7.1 Overview range of unique health issues of homeless people

Sleeping in open air, unhygienic food and water, exposure to extreme weather, addiction to habits like drinking, smoking, tobacco chewing etc. makes the homeless people vulnerable to all kind of health hazards.

The homeless interviewed added to the observation discussed earlier in this chapter, i.e., the entirely different orientation of being healthy, as majority of them has mentioned their general health is being good at the time of our visit. Only 13.8% of them were accepting that their health status is poor and the rest (31.3%) has told that it is fair with no major problems.

7.1.1 Status of General Health

General Health	Persons	Percentage
Good	42	52.5
Fair	25	31.25
Poor	11	13.75
No Response	2	2.5
Total	80	100

Status	Sleep	%	Appetite	%	Energy level	%
Good	8	10	28	35	27	33.75
Fair	52	65	40	50	40	50
Poor	18	22.5	10	12.5	11	13.75
No response	2	2.5	2	2.5	2	2.5
Total	80	100	80	100	80	100

When asked about their sleep, appetite and energy level, majority of them stick to the fair status, neither mentioning it good nor poor. That reveals their efficiency to cope up with the unfavourable conditions of being homeless and the

ability to keep up their spirit more alive.

With regard to treatment of health ailments, most of them are dependent for routine ailments on the Government Hospital, where they feel the service has improved in recent days. Still, at times of emergencies they prefer to go to private hospitals despite of the expenses to be incurred. The general feel was that the Government hospital provides good medication as they also get medicines for free.

Seven among the 80 respondents take regular medicines. The majority of them take regular medicines for their illness related to TB and stomach pain. Another two among them were taking medicines in the past for menstrual bleeding and thyroid problem.

Almost all of the child deliveries occurred in Government hospitals and only one has mentioned getting admitted in a private hospital for this.

The quality of treatment in the Government hospital is not much complained against, except few cases of discriminations by certain hospital staffs. Still, many of the respondents feel that the Government hospital is approachable and economic in getting them treated.

7.2 Illness experience

Though the general feel on the general health status was mostly good and fair, nearly one-third (30%) of the respondents have mentioned of being affected by any kind of illness in the last one month of our visit. Importantly 13 among those 23 were unable to wage their labour during the ill-health days and thus were not able to earn their much-needed daily wages.

The symptoms for being ill were of a wide range starting from body ache, leg pain, fever and head ache to heart related problems. One of them had malaria in that last month. There is a noted case of HIV/AIDS and are many old people have reported of being suffered of TB.

Ten of them have mentioned of having difficulty in seeing in the dark, which is mainly the problem of not having food with proper nutritious value.

7.3 Experience of hospitalization

Though there is a general feel-good factor about the Government hospitals, homeless people rarely opt to get hospitalised for ill-health. It is mainly because the days of being in the hospital mainly affects the days of their earnings and thus make them to run short of their hardly adjusted budgets. A little more than one-tenth of the total respondents have mentioned of being hospitalised in the last one year of our visit. Most of them were admitted in the hospitals for the latest and dangerous epidemic chikun-gunya and the rest for TB and leg swelling due to mosquito bites.

Only two among the nine, who were hospitalised, have mentioned of being incurred expenses of Rs.3000 each for their treatment.

There are another four respondents who were advised but did not get hospitalised. The reasons for not getting hospitalised are the missing of earlier treatment records and lack of enough money to spend on.

7.4 Injuries

A significant portion of the respondents (nearly one-tenth) have reported that they are suffering from sustained injuries. Many of them got injured in minor accidents as they do not have a safer place to reside amidst the mad rush of metropolitan vehicles. It is very common that they are not again assisted with any financial help to get their injuries treated. The living conditions of the streets also hinder them from getting the wounds healed soon. Despite of their taking medicines or undergoing treatment, their injuries stays longer by adding to the sufferings that envelop their homeless life.

7.5 Experience of death in someone close

As they live whole of their life on the streets, incidence of death is also an integral part to their homelessness. Besides many unnoticed deaths on/of the streets, there are only four of the respondents have mentioned of having seen the death of anyone close to them. The deaths in fact happened while they were being homeless and among those reported four deaths three are due to TB and one is of jaundice.

Enhancement of health care facilities without any effort to create a safer environment will not be proven effective in case of homeless people. The sustained injuries and deaths due to ill-health among the homeless people reveal the situation which has made them to live not in a safer environment and thus the efforts to increase the health care facilities are ought to be integrated with the efforts to provide them the safer environment and the efforts to ensure their food security.

8 Policy Implications, recommendations and Suggestions

Urbanisation in two ways has caused the homelessness in Chennai. One is the direct attraction in had in the initial period, which again has drawn thousands of rural mass into the city in search of new economic opportunities. Many of the rural areas around Chennai having experienced more dry years and failed agriculture in those days made these people to refuge into the growing industrialisation of the city. This has indeed provided them with numerous direct and indirect employment opportunities, which were then enough to secure their food and not a place to reside in. They have settled down their lives in the streets of the city and gradually adopted into homelessness.

Besides this direct attraction, it is believed that the infrastructural development of then growing urbanisation, such as, four lane roads, electric trains and recent fly-overs have caused more and more indirect evictions which left the native people to be homeless in their own places. It is important here to note that Chennai is a cluster of 'once upon a time' villages, which are merged into the development of a metropolitan city and lost their identities as individual villages. Places like Mayilapoor, Thiruvanmiyur and Thiruvallikkeni having very old temples are still evident for once existed villages. As no one notices a small cloud, which gets melted amidst the colourful evening sky, the history of urbanisation has no traces of these indirect evictions happened during the course. Apart from few old people none of the homeless either know that some of them are the natives of the same place and once had their houses there.

Rephrasing the forgotten history may not help the homeless people to improve their present situation, but it still helps us to realise the humane face that the urbanising phase should have. Any policy level decision to improve the urbanite character of the city should also consider the lives of the poor as well as dependent population living in. This ethical consideration is getting its importance in this juncture as the State Government is now decided to implement the Chennai metro rail project (as it is in Delhi) by pouring in some thousands of crores of rupees. Central Government and few foreign agencies have also agreed to support this new metro project in Chennai. Now the concern is that the project should not only leave any poor people homeless, but also should not disturb the lives of the people who are already homeless in the city. Such an indirect eviction is not a righteous history which can be repeated again.

Any efforts to curb urban poverty should take into account the most vulnerable of the urban poor who even do not have the power to put thatches over their heads to protect themselves. Till now the schemes to alleviate urban poverty have not been effective to reach them, as most of the shelterless do not have state certification like ration cards and voters ID.

However it is important to note that intervention addressing the problem like health and education become meaningless due the problem of shelterlessness. The spatial permanency in terms of tenural security is essential for this population to reap the benefits of these interventions from government and civil society. For example the crores of funds poured into programmes, time and energy of NGOs and State spent for street child becomes nullified, the moment the families of these children are temporarily relocated due to forced eviction. The enrollment of the child in begging in nearby school after tireless efforts is nullified due to relocation and acuteness of poverty due to livelihood crisis resulting from relocation.

Therefore the basic prerequisite for success of any intervention, let it be health, livelihood or women and child empowerment, is tenural security and certainty in terms of shelter. However any intervention aiming to ensure

shelter, which is indifference towards livelihood aspect, would be a great failure. Therefore to change the lives of these shelterless people the beginning should be made with providing a transitional shelter, which does not affect their livelihood.

The present “Night Shelters and Sanitation for the Urban Shelterless Scheme”, partly subsidised and financed by central Government is a good option to be utilised in this regard. The scheme has following components.

- Construction of community night shelters in corporation land.
- Using the existing vacant buildings as community night shelters. (In this case the owner could use the subsidy for the benefit of building).
- These buildings can be used for remunerative purpose in daytime and the income from this can also be used for paying back the loan.
- Using existing operational building as community night shelters. Where at the daytime the business will go on as usual and at night the building will turn into community shelter. (In this case the owner could use the subsidy for the benefit of building).
- The night shelter and the toilets will charge minimum user charge for the maintenance purpose.
- NGOs could be involved for the effective management of the shelter.

At present as many as 114 schemes benefiting over 500,000 footpath dwellers have been sanctioned by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO) in various other parts of the country and the Chennai Corporation has good reason to utilise the scheme. Utilizing this scheme and running community night shelter would just be the beginning of strategic intervention that would enable to address other broad and specific problem of homeless and more importantly to dig out the root cause in terms facilitating value addition in livelihood and hence to get out of the trap of low wage rate. This holistic strategy would make community shelters as development platforms, where the communities would transit to a life with dignity and confidence.

There are also few non governmental initiatives that have taken place for the well being of the homeless people and they are all proved to be inconsistent due to the non-availability of funds and change in staff structure, etc. But these efforts in a way have managed to evolve a kind of co-operative spirit among the homeless people by forming them into associations and self help groups. Many of the homeless women are now into the SHG route and have their own little savings. The associations among the homeless people have facilitated the emergence of the local leaders, who are now half trained to fight for the rights of their fellow homeless people. They are half-trained in the sense; they are suddenly left alone by the sudden withdrawals of the NGOs involved in training them.

Certain non governmental initiatives are now trying to adopt a right based approach by restricting themselves only to the provision of legal support. Here again these organizations are so irregular in performing their task and also not very much convincing of their principle, which has now made the homeless people not to depend very much upon the voluntary sector. But there are still few homeless people who work for these NGOs as community mobilisers and secure some minimum remuneration for their work. Though these initiatives are not being proved as fruitful to the whole homeless community, the general feel is that it is good as at least few among them are able to make some money out of it. Still, the expectations upon the Government support is very much high and has been viewed as the long term solutions for their sufferings.

9 Storied Moments of Homless Life

9.1 Street Child

Mohan was serving the customers in that late evening hour. It was a roadside shop which provides a limited menu for the labour class and the homeless populace of the city. He is a multi faceted employee there. He needs to take the orders of from the customers, needs to serve them the food and also wash the dishes simultaneously. A boy of all levels.

He is not a boy who does not want to go to school as to enjoy the freedom of the streets. He was living with his parents and was going to school with all the learning enthusiasm. When he was in his fourth standard, one of the senior boys of the same school compelled him to be the messenger for his blooming infatuation with a girl of the same school. It was more a threatening than a compulsion. Mohan had then no other way except bowing down in front of the physical power of the senior. But that girl happened to complain about this to the headmaster and there followed an enquiry. Mohan was beaten up along with the senior boy and the punishments continued in the following days. He then lost the whole lot of interest to attend the classes and stopped going to the school.

This in turn made his parents fury and this time they started punishing them in a very conservative way of beating. “They never even tried to understand my problem of not willing to go school and never tried to solve it or at least join me in another school, they jus went on beating me”. It is at this juncture he happened to fell ill and his parents refused to take him to the hospital or provide him the basic treatment. It was in a way due to their financial constraints; still it was more than enough a reason for him to leave the home.

“Homelessness is not a new thing for me. I was born into streets and was initially brought up on the same. I have too many friends who still live on the streets. Our parents got a house very recently and I am not sure how long they can manage to be there. They may also come back to the streets in the near future. I just preceded them”, he tries to justify his coming out and his decision to live in the streets again.

He now has people of his age as friends and also many mentors who help him once in a while, which he feels is a kind of moral support for him to continue living on the streets. He had an incident to immediately quote. “Even yesterday our bhai (muslims are commonly called as bhai in Tamilnadu), offered me some food. He asked my employer to give me a plate of noodles and he would pay for it. Of course I then got it packed”. These are all the helps which make his life journey smooth.

What he did with that food packet offered to him yesterday is a poetic postscript. He went to his friend from there and offered that food to his sick friend. “At least he helped me when I was sick and I should take care of him now. You see, I came out of the house because my parents failed to care me when I was sick. I am thus concerned of my sick friends”.

Anyhow that previous night did not end there as he then had to go to his employer’s home to do the house cleaning work. “Look I am not idle, I have a lot of things to do”, he is very much into his life on the streets.

9.2 AIDS patient

Das is now 29. He could not trace out the exact history to tell us when their family got shifted to the streets. “It might be before one or two generations”, he says. He was not a usual child but. “I wanted to become a Doctor and serve the homeless people of my area whom I saw suffering from various diseases”, unfolds his expired dream.

He was the last child of his parents who had six children altogether, four girls and two boys. He was sent to a missionary hostel and studied there up to seventh standard. “It was then my father died of TB”. That was really an end to his schoolings as his family wanted him to be with them and earn if possible.

He but did not go to work then. He found his enjoyment in playing with the boys of his age and in freely moving according to their wish. “I was also a little worried of my spoiled education too”. He was growing old and tracing out different ways of enjoying the freedom of the life. When he was 16, he happened to be with a certain group of boys who were learning the basics of using drugs. He soon got into the trap. “They were used to inhale a kind of smoke by burning something”, that is his memory of that time.

It was a phase of negative development after that. In a short while he reached as stage that he could not even spare a day without taking drugs. Then came the idea to change the methods of drug usage. “I wanted it more”. There started the habit of injecting drugs which they did in groups. “Injecting was more effective than inhaling”, he opines.

The new habits needed more money and he started stealing from his own family resources. “I used to deceive my parents by telling that I am going to work, but indeed I was not”. But it took not much time for the family to trap the rat of their own kitchen. “By then I was totally out of the family’s control. I was independent altogether”. Though he was independent of the family, he still needed money to get along with his drugs and injections. “I had to look for new ways out. It is then I started engaging myself in stealing and other petty crimes. I was even in a rowdy gang to earn money”. That ultimately led him to live almost an year and half behind the bars.

“I came out of the jail with a weak health condition”. He was 23 then. The life was turning to be terrible as he had frequent sickness of different kinds. He was finally admitted into a hospital by his parents. “There was the fate. I came to know that I am HIV infected as the reports shown that. It was of course a great shock for me”. He suspects that he might have got the disease due to the usage of same injection for drugs.

His parents tried to treat him in different centres. “But none of them proved to be useful. I was getting weaker everyday”. He regrets that he lost the pasture of his life. “I could not even marry as I have this”. It is almost six years since he is affected by this disease. “I sometimes want to commit suicide when my friends ask me about my being weaker”.

He is still not out of the drug usage. He needs it for his mere survival. He also takes regular medicines, which are provided for free in Government hospitals. “I am not sure of living for more years as I can neither afford to have healthy food in this life on streets nor my parents could provide it to me”. He again tries to justify his drug usage by saying, “I am anyhow going to live only for few more days and I absolutely want to enjoy them”

Besides his tragic past, he is now presently working as a peer educator in a Ngo initiative to raise awareness about the AIDS. “I don’t want people like me, who live on the streets getting affected by this disease”.

9.3 Homeless Generation

Mythili is another unfortunate continuum of a homeless lineage. When she was a child, her father was so irresponsible of the family and did care the least for their well beings. “He was a drunkard, never cared of us”, she remembers. Her mother then needed to wage hard to earn the livelihood. “She had a small shop to serve food to other homeless”. When Mythili was 10 years of old, she was sent to Kerala to do household work. “There was a shop owner in front of our residence and one of his relatives wanted a girl to do the household work and I was sent there”. She stayed there, doing household work, for the next six years. She was paid Rs.600 a month and it did really help the family on the economic front. But then her parents wanted to get her married and called her back. It was indeed difficult for her to get again adopted into a homeless life as she happened to live in a house for nearly six years. “There were no public toilets or bathrooms at that time in our area. Taking bath in the early mornings that too in the temporary plastic covers was not that a good affair”, she recalls the difficulties.

Finally she had to adopt herself into homelessness again. It was then she had a love affair with an auto driver of their same area. Her parents had no words to say against, “It was the vulnerable condition of our life then”. She got married to the auto driver and lived only for a short duration. “He left me and went with another girl and I was conceived then, four months...”

There started all her increased miseries. But soon she got another proposal, “Our distant relatives are living on another street of Chennai. One man from there, a distant relative, approached my parents and told them that he wanted to marry me”. Her parents considered it as a good proposal and got her again married to that man. She was 18 then. Unfortunately, that person was already married and his wife left him due to his atrocities. Thus the misery did not end there as it was expected but rather got doubly increased.

She presently continues to live in that relation. She has 2 children, one 3 year old girl and a 1 year old boy. Her husband gives her 50 rupees or so once in two days, which she says hardly enough to feed her children properly. There arise no questions of her hunger. Her parents support her when they have money.

She still faces a lot of atrocities from her husband’s part, “I am not sure what is his problem is. Might be I was previously lived with another man. He is suspicious all the times. I am not even allowed to talk with any men. I am now living for my children. I want them to get good education and get out of this homeless life”. This 21 years old mother has no more expectations from the life.

9.4 Third Gender

Ramdas was born into a family which was living on the streets of Chennai for generations. He was the fourth child in a row of six, four girls and two boys. He was too playful in his early childhood and rarely went to the school. He still managed to study up to third class. He then stopped going to school and his parents too never forced him. “I was not in a position to obey them either”, he remembers.

He was having a peculiar habit in the childhood that he liked very much to play with the girls and not much with the boys. No one did notice that as they were all children at least. But when he did make him up as a girl at his 15, the family got a note and wanted him to stop that strange habit. “But before they could do anything, I came out of their control. By the time I was 20, I had many persons of third gender as my friends”. He also then wanted to become

like them. He felt that as the only solution to drain his emotions. He lied to the family that he got a job opportunity in Bombay and finally left home with two others who also had the same kind of wish.

But they were sent back to Salem (an industrial city in the central Tamilnadu), to undergo an operation to change their gender. They underwent the operation in a temple there and went back to Bombay. He had to be in treatment for the next thirty days and the other persons of the groups took care of him. He changed his name as Saritha and finally became her. The life in Mumbai and after in Delhi was in a way a good chapter of her life as, she had enough income and also a kind of social security there.

After ten years of her stay in north, she came back to Chennai at the age of 30. She had to restore herself in her family and thus into the homeless life. The life turned into its difficult path as she was not able to secure a livelihood. “No one was ready to provide work to me”. She got teased everywhere and finally had to resort in collecting money from the shops (as alms) to get the food. “There are a lot of prejudices over us in this society. We are treated as sinners, as violent people, as sex workers. We are not allowed to use even the public toilets. No ration card, no voter id and no identity at all. Police deals with us as we are criminals. We can not live in peace in total”

It is then one person of the same area proposed her to come and live with him. She accepted it as it seemed to be a good economical deal. But that finally happened to be trap. Now she can not come out of his circle, who also uses her in lot other ways to earn money. “I once even tried to escape to Delhi. He came also there and threatened. Nor my parents could help me out in this situation”

Homelessness adds more hurdles as she can not protect herself now from the vulnerability of getting teased and abused. “I can not think of entering into a life in a home as I could not even think of entering into a public toilet of this city. That is too far a dream my friend”, words of consolation are meaningless here.

10 Annexure

10.1 A Brief account of Few Interviews conducted

10.1.1 Advocate Sudha Ramalingam and Advocate Venkatesh, Chennai Highcourt

Reason for Homelessness

Homeless people are everywhere in the world. It is not only the problem of India. Even in developed countries we can see homeless people. There are lots of reasons for homelessness. Poverty is one of the important reasons, which occurs because the people are not able to make their livelihood from their surroundings. So it is natural that they should move out from their homes to the places where they can earn their livelihood. Poverty is the root cause which leads to all other problems like, migration, family problems, health problems, etc.

Laws and Policies

There is no special law to protect them and special laws are not a solution for their problems. Existing laws are good enough to safeguard them. But it is not practicing in the exact way. State is responsible for not practicing the laws properly. More than new laws and policies what is needed is a humanistic approach, to consider them as equal as any other human being and protect them.

Whether homeless people are problematic?

They are not at all problematic. They are there in the streets for their survival. They are fighting with their life for their survival. In this struggle for survival, they do not have time to create problem for others. Most of the people and officials believe that they are public nuisance, by sleeping, bathing, washing, etc on street. But actually this is not the problem created by these people. But this is a problem created by the government. It is the responsibility of government to provide them shelter and at least common bathrooms and toilet.

Have you helped them in any way?

Yes, one case was filed in the Chennai High Court with the help of the NGOs working for them that not to evict them until they get alternative accommodation. The verdict was in favour of the homeless people that not to evict them till they gets alternate accommodation.

Solution for homeless

No ordinary law, policy or rehabilitation programme can make an ultimate solution for the homelessness. There is only one solution that housing should be made as a fundamental right in the constitution. Another important thing is the house should be provided with in 2 to 3 kilometers of their work place. If they work in Chennai city providing a house in a remote rural area is not the solution. They should be provided houses / shelters, where they are accessible to their livelihood.

10.1.2 M. Nagaraj, Muthialpet Police Station, Chennai

Reason for Homelessness

In Chennai 80% of the people living in street have house. They give it for rental and came out to the streets. They may be coming and to the streets for employment opportunities.

Laws and policies for homeless

There are many laws and policies and nothing can be done because of political intervention.

Problems due to homeless people

There are many problems, due to homeless people. They create, traffic jam, accidents, they will be bathing, washing and doing their primary needs on the roads. In all the way they are disturbance to the public.

Life style

These people work in the streets, earn their livelihood, eat and sleep on the roadside. Most of them feel it is comfortable for them than staying in houses.

Helps

They do not need any help from police. They are safe at their level. They are organized to get their rights also. Even one family holds 3 to 4 ration cards and have more than one vote per person. So politicians also do support them. They want them to be in streets to protect their positions.

Solution for homeless

There is no solution for homeless. There are lot of laws and policies, but nothing can practice because of extreme political pressure. These people are likes to be in street only. If government provides home / shelter, they will not go and stay there. All the rehabilitation and building homes will be a failure, because these people will come back to the street again after some days.

10.1.3 Mr. Mohansundaram, Sanitary Inspector, Chennai Corporation

Reason for homeless

Poverty: Because of poverty they are coming out from their places to the streets to get their livelihood.

Family problems: Because of the family problems they may not be able to stay in their homes. There may be mental and physical torture from other family members and they come out of their home.

Laws and policies

Laws and policies are only for the namesake. If you have power, then you will get benefit from it. In the case of homeless people, they are illiterate so they are being treated very badly by the government, officials and politicians.

What you think about homeless people?

For people like you, and me it is beyond imagination that how terrible is to live in street. In life every one has to meet very bad experience and at the same time good experience also.

One part of life is darkness and another part is colourfull. But these people living in street are in full darkness; we

cannot even see a ray of light in their life. They have born in darkness, live in darkness and dies in darkness.

Whether homeless people are problematic?

Whatever the homeless peoples are doing will be a disturbance to the public. But they are not doing it purposefully.

They are struggling in their life and to live they are doing something. It may become nuisance to others.

Lifestyle of homeless people

Homeless people do not have a particular life style. Each day they live as it comes. Some days they may get food, some days not. They take bath irregularly. The thing is they cannot have or adopt a particular life style.

What corperation is dong for homeless people?

Cooperation is not doing that much things for the homeless people. The government should act on the basis of the felt needs of the people, but here government is doing something without asking or understanding the needs of the people. But corporation claims that they do many things for homeless people.

Solution for homelessness

It is not easy to abolish the homeless and those who are living in street completely. Most of them are street vendors and earning their livelihood from street and nearby areas. So it is very important to consider their feelings that where they want to stay and on that basis rehabilitate or build houses for them.

10.1.4 Karunalaya Social Service Society, Thondiarpet, Chennai

Karunalaya started in 1995 working for street women and children.

Reason for homelessness

As far as Chennai is concerned, most of the people are migrating from different parts to the city in search of a job. They will come to the street and do some small business, like making flower garlands, street vending, etc. With their meager income they may not be able to get a room for rental. So they live in the streets.

There may be new addition to the street people that some new people will be coming to the street. But most of them are by many generations in the street and it possess to the next generation.

If they provide shelter / home also they will not leave the street, because their livelihood is from the street and near by areas. To earn their livelihood they want to be there in the street.

Laws and Policies

There are many laws, schemes and policies. But nobody is interested in practicing that.

Problems due to homeless people

Now it cannot be say that homeless people are creating some problem. They are became a part of the city or members in the city. So no one care about them.

Life Style

Earlier before the intervention of NGOs, their life style was so worse. They were lived in unclean and dirty places without proper food, medical care etc. But now with the intervention of NGOs, they changed a lot and living comfortably.

Help

Karunalaya is helping the street dwellers in many ways like,

- Educating children
- Forming SHGs
- Give training
- Create awareness, etc.

By this way make them to face difficult situation, to fight for their rights, etc. Now they are organized and more powerful than earlier. They are even having bank account and savings.

Changes in their Life after the Intervention of Karunalaya

- Women have become independent.
- Improvement in the number of children enrolling in school.
- Awareness about their rights and other social issue.
- Cooperation among the homeless.
- Improvement in living conditions, etc.

Solution for Homelessness

Solution is nothing but to empower people and make them awareness about their rights. As they are the needy people they should approach the government and authorities and should get their rights from them.

Madurai City Report

by R. Kumaran and V. Manikandan

Chapters

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1 General Picture of Madurai

The City of Madurai was originally built around the Meenakshi temple and it is the seventh largest city in Tamilnadu(after Chennai, Coimbatore, Erode, Salem, Tirupur and Trichy). The city of Madurai is the administrative capital of Madurai district.

As of 2001 India census, the city of Madurai had a city population of 9,28,869 and the urban area population of 1,194,665. Males constitute 51% of the population and females 49%. Madurai has an average literacy rate of 79%, higher than the national average of 59.5%: male literacy is 84%, and female literacy is 74%. In Madurai, 10% of the population is under 6 years of age. There are 968 females per 1,000 males.

1.1 Population decline

Year	Population	Type	Source
1991	940,989	census	official
2001	922,913	census	official
2007	900,998	calculation	

The population decline in the last decade may be accounted for the city's stagnant or no industrial development. Due to the software boom, educated youngsters of the city have no option but to migrate to the cities like Chennai and Bangalore for lucrative jobs.

Madurai's economy was chiefly agrarian. Textiles and tourism contribute significantly to the local economy. However, in the past few years, overt dependence on monsoons, and international competition and cheaper imports have dented the performance of agriculture and textile sectors respectively.

Unlike many other historical cities that have been reduced to small towns, hamlets and ruins in the modern age, Madurai still remains as a "city" and a major regional hub of commerce. However, it is a significant fact that it has failed to achieve the progress it should have and its city ranking has sunk in the past few decades. Successive state governments took no action to develop the city's industry, and even closed some companies like Madura Coats. Economically, the biggest grouse of people is that the city lacks industries. The only remaining textile mill, Madura Coats has also closed down and likely to become a shopping centre / apartment complex. With just Fenner India, a few TVS factories (Srichakra tyres etc) and some small scale factories in Kappalur Industrial estate, the city is far behind Coimbatore / Trichy or even Thoothukudi and Hosur. A new beginning has been made by Honeywell housing a development center here but the city still is far behind Coimbatore in attracting the eyeballs of IT industry. Not only has it failed to attract new domestic and foreign investments, but it has also failed to capitalize on its inherent strengths.

Many blame the state government for limiting industrial development to northern Tamilnadu, Chennai and its adjacent

districts in particular, and cite this as the reason southern Tamilnadu is industrially underdeveloped. While this claim may not be totally invalid, the main reason Madurai is industrially underdeveloped lies in the fact that there is a definite lack of initiative, endemic casteism and poor self-esteem amongst the local populace. The elite and professionals who ought to guide their fellow citizens into the new economy shrug away from their responsibilities, and worse, move to other cities looking for greener pastures and settle down there. 4

A City Corporate Plan (CCP) of Madurai was prepared last year by Wilbur Smith Associates Private Limited which was facilitated by Tamilnadu Urban Development Fund. An appraisal of CCP, done by the National Institute of Urban Affairs reveals the following findings:

Present Situation, Goals & Vision and General Strategies: Selected Sectors

MADURAI CITY	Present situation	Goals and Vision 2011	Goals and Vision 2016	Sector Specific General Strategies
Water supply	Coverage = 36%	=100%	=100%	Asset management plan, leak detection plan, mapping and GIS, piloting 24x7 water supply, source augmentation and network coverage.
	Slum coverage = NA Supply =once in 3 days Supply (24x7) = nil	=70% (-) =10%	=85% (-) =50%	
	Quantity = 78 lpcd % NRW = NA	=110lpcd =20%	=110 lpcd =15%	
	Cost Recovery = NA	=75%	=100%	
Sewerage	Coverage = 59%	=90%	=100%	Asset management plan, rehabilitation of old network system, underground drainage for un-served area, mapping and GIS, network coverage for slums and recycle & reuse
	Slum coverage = NA Treat. &Disposal = 43%	=60% =90%	=100% =100%	
	Recycle & reuse = NA Cost Recovery = NA	=40% =50%	=60% =85%	
Storm water drainage and water bodies	Coverage= 28% (road length)	= 100%	= 130%	Primary drain rehabilitation, construction of tertiary drains, rejuvenation and rehabilitation of water bodies and operation & maintenance schedule
	Rehabilitation of existing water bodies	= 100%	= 100%	
	Usage of water bodies as water recharge structure	= 50%	= 70%	
Solid waste management	Door to door = NA	=80%	=100%	Door to door collection, introduction of twin bin system at storage, source segregation, mechanization of transportation, fleet management system, development of scientific landfill site and IEC activities
	Source segregation = NA Mechanised handling = NA Scientific disposal = NA	=80% =80% =80%	=100% =100% =100%	
	Waste to energy = NA Cost recovery = NA	=40% =50%	=70% =75%	
Basic services for Poor (Slums)	Network coverage = NA	=90%	=100%	Better access roads, storm water drainage, sewer network, sanitation facilities and provision of housing
	UGD coverage = NA	=90%	=100%	
	Adequately lit slums = NA	=100%	=100%	
	Pucca houses = NA	=80%	=100%	
	Education for all = NA	=100%	=100%	

Source: Appraisal of City Development Plan Madurai, National Institute of Urban Affairs, June 2006.

The NA in the table indicates that the facility is not available. It clearly shows that all the basic services for the poor, especially who live in slums is presently unavailable. It is then obvious that the homeless people are no more a consideration of the City Development Plan.

Madurai has an impressive infrastructure for a city its size and has plenty of room for expansion. Madurai has a small airport with connectivity to Chennai and Mumbai. An airport expansion and modernization plan is on the cards. The city has a robust public transportation system, and a well-developed intra- and inter-state bus and railway systems. Despite these facts, the city for long has had the looks of a town or overgrown village, while has not yet become totally modern like other similar sized cities. It is very clear at this juncture that Madurai is not so much on the path of urbanisation and it still has a face of an extended village. That makes the city more hospitable and it may not even get an urbanite character in the future.

2 Basic Profile of Homeless People in Madurai

It is estimated that there are some 1300 homeless in Madurai as per the records of the police department (from the interview with the City Commissioner of Police). The NGOs counter this figure and argue that the figures may be four times higher. The homeless in Madurai includes beggars, sex workers, persons with leprosy and what we came to understand as ‘floating’ homeless people. The floating homeless are people who live most part of their lives under open sky, but also return to their children’s or other relatives’ house in Madurai or their villages when they choose to.

Madurai being a temple city offers its own mode of hospitality to the homeless population, based on ancient traditions of religious charity. In our interview with public as well as with government officials, there was a visible but uneasy tolerance of the homeless population. Since many of the homeless also live on alms, they have been able to take on the saffron garb of ‘god men’. Yet this status is not extended to women homeless who either have to remain as an adjunct to the ‘god men’ or will have to live without the religious sanction to their dependence on begging.

Many of the homeless people of the city have come from the hinterlands of Madurai, hence it is easy for them to return to their native villages. In other words, Madurai homeless population does not comprise of many outsiders from other cities and is mainly of rural people. On the other hand for those villagers in the nearby areas of Madurai the anonymity that Madurai city offers is quite significant. They need this anonymity, since their existing life dependent on the ‘shame’ of begging, which is a step-down from their earlier or aspired dignified life of self-reliance through work, needs to be shrouded from their kith and kin.

Despite the feeling of resignation that seems to pervade the utterances of the homeless, the aspiration to return to ‘dignified’ life is very strong, but only if some opportunities are available. Returning to dignified living means different thing to different homeless. For some it means living in a home where their food and shelter needs are provided for by loved ones. For others it means owning a telephone booth or petty shop. Anyhow the craving for a life without homelessness is very intense.

The very aged among the homeless tend to think in terms of ending their lives as homeless people, as they are conscious about reaching the evening of their lives. Their dominant longing is to have a dignified death since a dignified life has eluded them. Many of those in the region of sixties and seventies, but that their bodies being heavily atrophied, have repeatedly talked about dying dignifiedly - meaning they do not die as an abandoned unknown person whose body would be lying unattended and unclaimed in the streets. It is exactly with this in mind that the homeless have formed a well-knit community with a promise to take care of each other’s death when it visits them finally. At best they want to have a place where they can eat and sleep before they die.

In the case of others whose spirits and flesh are still strong there is this desire to take up a dignified occupation -be it running a shop or owning a telephone booth. There are those very few among them who wish to return to their sons’ and daughters’ family. It also includes a group of disabled homeless who want to avail some of the facilities available with government departments.

3 Background of the Study

The most striking thing about homeless people is that their repeated attempt to make sense of their present demeaning situation. Their willingness to accept the lowliness of the state of their living at present is quite important. There is no attempt to rationalize their present livelihood option; no trying on their part to argue for the correctness of their present choice to eke out a living by begging or by being on the streets. In sum the self-righteousness associated with other sections of the population in poverty is glaringly absent in the case of homeless people. It only shows a veiled tragedy. In all other sections of people in marginalised conditions there is the possibility of occupying a moral territory where the mainstream societal opinion has failed to establish its hegemony, and therefore feel morally grounded in that inclusive community of say sex workers, eunuchs or disabled. In their case despite the overarching triumph of public opinion which tends to despise and degrade the life lived, one could still find meaning in the collectively-built alternative spaces. But in the case of homeless people, it is in the mainstream society's point of view that the evaluation of homeless' lives is attempted. That is why one sees the infectious sadness in the face of the homeless. The repeated lamentation that they are praying for a quick death only tells us about the despicability they themselves have for the way they have been forced to live their lives.

In other words, it follows from above that majority of the homeless people of Madurai do not enter into homeless life by choice. They are being homeless not because it is an attractive proposition. If they still treat it as a detestable existence it is because of the loss of personhood, loss of self-worth and a chronic reminder of their lowly existence which none of these so-called advantages replenish, nor annul. This becomes even more acutely evident when the homeless in question had in the past lived 'dignifiedly'. While those child homeless who have been initiated into begging at an earlier stage in their lives offer more defensiveness about having to become homeless, those old, destitute homeless who had lived the better part of their past endowed with love, dignity, sufficiency and social acceptance are often seen to be inviting a quick end to this demeaning life. However despite all the desperation that this life in begging drives them into, one could very well see the micro attempt to generate meaning in a largely meaningless universe their lives have been enveloped by. In a manner of speaking, in their lives, even when there is a clear awareness of the war lost there is still hope for winning few battles.

In spite of the general melancholy surrounding the lives of homeless, one could still come across those hopeful few who are dreaming of a life outside homelessness in future. For many of them, homeless life is also a temporary refuge before limping back to normal life. It offers best cover when in debt, when one's life is in danger or when one wants to escape from the wrath of faultfinding family members. We could also see those rare few who treat their homeless phase of their lives as a period lived in self-correction and self-ablution.

In the backdrop of these broad observations, the study tries to trace out the living difficulties in being homeless in Madurai city and the role of state in providing the administrative solutions to the well being of this invisibilised community. As Madurai continuously fails to obtain a cosmopolitan urban character of its own, even little efforts in the sphere of state policies can bring huge differences in the lives of homeless people and also will reduce their embodied sorrows.

4 Methodology

Areas surveyed

- Tallakulam Perumal Temple
- Periyar Bus Stand
- Meenaksi Amman Temple
- Rajaji Park
- Railway Station

The selection of the homeless respondents was not structured with any pre-determined sampling method. Initially the areas where the homeless people are living more in numbers were identified just by using the general observation method. Secondly the number of respondents to be interviewed in each of the identified areas had been derived out by keeping in mind the need of total respondents for the study.

In that way five important homeless pockets of the city were selected (given in the box) and the total number of respondents was fixed at 80 homeless people. While completing the field work, we had a slight increase in the total number of respondents, i.e., 2 more respondents added to the targeted 80.

Each of the selected homeless was met over a period of three days or three sessions (whichever was possible) for an in-depth interview and extended dialogue, followed by a general observation of their social life. A semi-structured interview schedule was also administered to collect quantifiable data (attached in the annexure).

Orientation for the researchers in collecting information was done by introducing both qualitative and quantitative tools of data collection. A perfect blend of both was expected to retrieve a great extent of information on homelessness of the respondents.

The research team included a coordinator and two field researchers in the initial stage and an additional data analyst in the ending phase.

5 Socio-demographic conditions and characteristics

This part of the report tries to exclusively analyse the socio-demographic as well as economic characters of the homeless people responded to our study. It is obvious that the understanding upon this analysis may not be generalised to the entire homeless population of the city.

Still, it would really pave the way to have a basic view on the homeless life as it is done sensitively more than systematically.

5.1 Age, sex and cultural profile

An analysis on the basis of age and sex wise classification of the respondents is mainly done to trace out the pushing factors that pressurize people to fall into the homeless life. The quantitative data is analysed by treating the homelessness as an ‘effect’ and not as a ‘cause’ as in Madurai people are homeless not because they were in that state of life.

5.1.1 Age of respondents of study (percentage in brackets)

Age in years	Male	Female	Total and %
20 and below	3	-	3 (3.66)
21-40	9	10	19 (23.17)
41-60	18	5	23 (28.05)
61 – 80	23	12	35 (42.68)
81 and above	2	-	2 (2.44)
Total	55 (67.1)	27 (32.9)	82 (100)

A majority (42.7%) of the respondents that we have included in our sample are the age group of 61-80 and 2 people are above 80 years. All the three who are below the age of 20 years are children living with their families or communities, which lead a kind of nomadic life by moving in groups. No girl has been interviewed for the research. The proportion of women respondents to the study constitutes one third of the total respondents, which is still representative of the women populace of the city’s total homeless people. The women respondents mainly fall under the categories of working class and old age people, i.e., 21-40 and 61-80 years of age. Almost all of the old women are the victims of non-caring families in the throes of economic difficulties. The working class women comprise domestic labourers, sex workers and dependent women.

All of the 82 respondents have reported of having a permanent address. It is not that they did not understand the researchers’ question in a proper way so as to respond that they do not have such permanency regarding their staying

place. But with their statement of having a permanent address, they refer to the place where they are staying now, such as, pavements, in front of the shops, etc., and probably it is the strategy that they adopt to derive meanings into the impermanency of their existence.

77 persons among the respondents are Hindus having a very small proportion 2 Muslims and 3 Christians. It may be noted that Madurai is a Hindu temple town. Even at this stage of facing continuous failures in their life, 75 of them have revealed that they still believe in religion for their salvation and 59 of them are engaged in different religious activities on a regular or irregular basis. These activities mainly include visiting the nearby and sometimes even the far away temples.

5.1.2 Caste identity of the homeless people

Community	Persons	Percentage
SC	9	11.0
OBC	35	42.7
General	1	1.2
No reply	37	45.1
Total	82	100.0

Much against the commonly held opinion that most of the homeless come from the lower rung of the society, it was found that among the 45 who had agreed to mention their caste identity, a majority (80%) are from the relatively high-placed castes and only the remaining are from SC community. It is suggestive of the fact that among the high-placed castes there has been a gradual decline of a caring social system whereas the same may not be the case with other depressed caste members.

5.2 Sleep: location and permanence

The realities about the location and permanence of the homeless people's resting places explain, to a great extent, the vulnerability of being homeless. Whether it is on the pavements or market corridors or under the ledge of shops, all are equal with regard to the homeless people as for them it is just an unsafe life under the vast sky.

Homeless people of Madurai select different places to have their night sleep. Among those, pavements or roadsides are the major choice as one fourth of the respondents fixes their night sleep on these rush-populated-day sites. Then comes the bus stands as one fifth of them are dependent on bus stand's rusty and dusty floors to rest their bodies. The place under the ledge of shops and railway platforms are also in their hit list to fix the night sleep.

5.2.1 Place of sleep

Place of sleep	Persons	Percent
Under ledge of shops or homes	15	18.29
Market corridors	4	4.88
Railway platforms	10	12.2
Bus stands	16	19.51
Courtyard of worship places	10	12.2
Pavements or roadsides	21	25.61
Under bridges	3	3.66
At your work place (Dhabas, godowns)	1	1.22
Others	2	2.44
Total	82	100

Permanency of their residing was measured with the duration of their stay in the present and previous locations as homeless.

5.2.2 Duration of stay in the present location

Duration in years	Persons	Percentage
Less than 1	16	19.51
1 to 5	38	46.34
6 to 10	19	23.17
11 and above	9	10.98
Total	82	100

A majority (46.3%) of them is reported to be in the present location for the last 1-5 years and a total of 34 percentage responded that they are in their present location for more than 5 years. Still, nearly one-fifth of them are occupying the present spots for less than a year. This statement of staying in the same location for more years does not mean that they are in the same pavements in all these years. As through their life stories we happen to realize that their mobility from one pavement to other happens frequently due to the physical discomforts. But, they still continue to live in the same geographical area without migrating to far away places and thus reported to reside in the present location for

more years. The pavement or bus stand or temple courtyard of any particular area makes not much difference in their sense of belonging to the place.

5.2.3 Duration of stay in the previous location

Duration in years	Persons	Percentage
Less than 1	3	3.66
1 to 5	15	18.29
6 to 10	13	15.85
11 and above	3	3.66
No Reply	48	58.54
Total	82	100

41.5% of the total respondents have reported of living as homeless in some other places of the same city. A vast majority (nearly 70%) of them have an experience of living as homeless for durations ranging from 1 to 10 years. Many of them have lived their previous homeless life in and around Madurai and only a few of them are from other states or districts (One each from Andhrapradesh, Kerala and Karnataka and other three from varied Districts of Tamilnadu). For the rest, homelessness is a very new agenda into their once lived ‘dignified’ lives. At the time of interviewing we could sense a kind of security in the minds of homeless people as they could still manage to live in their pavements that their lives could hardly decline further.

Anyhow their belief was destroyed when a court order was passed in the beginning of this year to replace them as a part of Government’s efforts to ‘clean up’ Madurai city (Annexure 11.1). This happened after the initial field works were completed for the study. When our researchers went back for follow ups, they could not find many of their respondents in the places where they met them before.

5.2.4 Problems in having an uninterrupted sleep

Reasons for uninterrupted sleep	Persons	Percent
Noise	5	6.1
Police chasing out	13	15.9
Police brutality	1	1.2
Street light	1	1.2
Health problem	12	14.6
Personal problems (unemployment, Family tensions)	1	1.2
Depression	7	8.5
Hunger	1	1.2
Fear	4	4.9
Inclement weather	7	8.5
Mosquitoes	18	22.0
No problem	12	14.6
Total	82	99.9

Having an uninterrupted sleep is a hard thing to be achieved in the homeless life. Most of the respondents (85%) have complained of not having an uninterrupted sleep during the last one week of our visit. They list out many reasons that interrupt their sleep. Mosquitoes come first in their list as more than one fifth of the total respondents have complained this as a major problem. Police chasing out and health problems together constitute as hindrances for nearly one third of the respondents' uninterrupted sleep. There are other disturbances as noise, inclement weather, depression, etc., which are least complained against, still significant of their disturbing nature.

5.3 Relationships: kin, biological or adopted, marriage and other liaisons, friends, sense of community, sharing, loneliness

It is relations which assures one the 'belongingness' to the worldly life. We usually construct our identity on the basis of our relations, which will again help us to lead the life of a 'social animal'. Many of the homeless respondents lack any kind of constructive relations in both the ways, biological or adopted. When they are left with a platform which is shared by no other actors, their whole life becomes a mono-acting, which is again monotonous and very lonely. The study has tried to trace out this struggle to have an identity, by means of various information gathered regarding their relations. The failures of the native societies and relations, otherwise called social networks, were very much visible in the life-stories collected.

5.3.1 Have relatives in the native place

Have Relatives in the native place	Persons	Percentage
Yes	61	74.4
No	21	25.6
Total	82	100

Nearly two-third of our respondents have reported that they have relatives in their native places. These relatives include sons, daughters, sisters, brothers and so many other close knitted relations. It clearly shows that the relatives have failed to accommodate the presently homeless populace due to varied socio-economic reasons as well as difficulties. Though the relatives can not accommodate them both physically and psychologically, the homeless people still do not want to lose their relations with them. It can be said so as more than half (35 out of 61) of the homeless people having relatives make a visit to their native places on a regular or irregular basis and 14 of them has made it in the previous month of our visit.

5.3.2 Living with Blood relations

Living with blood relatives	Persons	Percentage
Yes	9	11.0
No	73	89.0
Total	82	100.0

As the failures from the family's part are the main reasons for most of their homelessness, it is hard to see any of them living with their blood relatives. This is again different with the 'Street Performers', who lead a nomadic life, as they are all living in groups of blood relatives. Here in the above table which shows 9 of them living with blood relatives, all belong to the 'Street Performers' community, who usually live in a group of 10-20 members.

A major part (35.4%) of the respondents are widowed persons, both men and women, which reflects the fact that it is the death of their dear ones have pushed them into the homeless life. Nearly one fifth of them are unmarried among which most of them are men. Another significant portion (20.7%) of homeless interviewed is not staying with their spouses despite the fact that they are married, which again shows the dysfunctional nature of the family and thus the failures from its part. There are 4 homeless people reported to lead a co-habiting life meaning that they are living with partners with whom they are not married.

5.3.3 Marital Status

Marital status	Male	Female	Total	Percent
Unmarried	14	1	15	18.3
Married - Staying with spouse	6	4	10	12.2
Married - Not staying with spouse	15	2	17	20.7
Separated	2	-	2	2.4
Divorced	2	2	4	4.9
Widowed	15	14	29	35.4
Cohabiting - Not married but living as monogamous pair	1	3	4	4.9
Multiple partners in last one month	-	1	1	1.2
Total	55	27	82	100.0

A little more than one tenth of the respondents are married and continued to live with their spouses. These people are mostly from the community of ‘Street Performers’, who was reported to lead a life in groups. There are also few respondents in the categories of divorced and separated.

An insignificant portion (2.4%) of the married women have recorded of facing or faced domestic violence in their family.

5.3.4 Living with Adopted relatives

Living with adopted relatives	Persons	Percentage
Yes	6	7.3
No	76	92.7
Total	82	100.0

Only 7.3% of the respondents have reported of living with any kind of adopted relatives. Two-third of them (4 out of 6) are again the above noted co-habiting partners who live a kind of married life, though informally. It is only their homelessness that has united them in these instances. Other two are an old man and a youth who feel themselves as father and son and help each other in their difficult times.

5.3.5 Change of companion - In last one year

Change of companion in last one year	Persons	Percentage
Yes	14	17.1
No	68	82.9
Total	82	100

Among the homeless who are involved in alms-taking, there is a social arrangement that even if one person gets something, this should be shared among all. This way they ensure their economic security and cohesiveness. This explains why nearly 83 percent of the homeless in Madurai has reported that during the last years they have not changed their companions, meaning they have not changed their locations too.

However, curiously, this companionship has more often than not flourished into deep friendship among the homeless. This seems more an alliance of convenience and driven by instrumental and purposive motives. This is why, while they have such a commitment to their companions and they have lived nearer to each other for more than one year and they still have little trust. Nearly 82 percent said that they do not have trust in their friends. When asked to elaborate many recalled us to how their companions have refused to part with his/her share of money or food. They also shared other instances of betrayal for continuing the hate and the distrust on their companions.

5.3.6 Have Trust on Friends

Have trust on the friends	Persons	Percentage
Yes	15	18.3
No	67	81.7
Total	82	100.0

Their relationship with one another being driven by self-serving and instrumental intentions that are completely understandable since the homeless are fighting for a very limited resource there seems to exist a high degree of mutual suspicion and distrust.

5.3.7 Celebration of festivals

Celebration of festivals	Persons	Percentage
Yes	31	37.8
No	51	62.2

Total	82	100.0
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Even when many of the homeless people are ought to share a same platform, there is very less possibility for the development of intense relationship among them. Most of them are not ready to trust even their immediate neighbours/ friends. Thus celebration of festivals becomes a rare incident in their lives. Still, one-third of the respondents do celebrate different festivals. In these occasions they go to their family members/relatives, celebrate the festival by eating meat, etc., and then come back to their homeless life. The number of homeless people celebrate the festivals (31) can be well correlated with the number of the same visiting their relatives (35).

5.3.8 Belonging to any community living on the street (as non-homeless)

Belonging to any community living in the same street (as non-homeless)	Persons	Percentage
Yes	27	32.9
No	55	67.1
Total	82	100.0

In large number of cases the old people at the verge of their being utterly avoided, decide to stay off their respective areas of living since they care for their children's economic difficulties as much as they also care for the dignity of the family. It is well represented by the above table which shows that only one-third of the respondents are living in the same street where also members from their community (caste group mainly) are living. It was also obvious while talking to them that they are well aware of their caste identity and purposefully avoid staying in an area where members belong to his/her caste live. As Madurai is still having the character of an extended village, this kind avoidance they feel helps them to protect their family's dignity.

5.3.9 Positive relation with the non-homeless

Positive relationship with the non-homeless people	Persons	Percentage
Yes	51	62.2
No	31	37.8
Total	82	100.0

The distrust of their neighbouring homeless people is somehow mitigated by a positive and tolerant relationship evinced by the general public in relation to the homeless. Nearly 62% of the homeless explained that they have a positive relationship with the general public. This one-side explanation of positive relation is the occasional show of support and care coming in the form of some members taking the time to talk to them and give some foodstuff to

the homeless on festival days. These relationships create a kind of belongingness (to the worldly life) in the minds of the homeless.

5.4 Education

It is not sure whether the literacy level might have had any impact on their becoming homeless or in their efforts to get out of its clutches. Still an analysis of the same may lead us to certain realizations.

5.4.1 Literacy level

Literacy	Persons	Percentage
Illiterate	53	64.6
Primary	14	17.1
Secondary	14	17.1
Graduation	1	1.2
Total	82	100.0

A great majority of the respondents (65%) have not attended any kind of schooling and are mainly dependent upon their physical capital for earning a livelihood. The ones who have completed primary school education (17%) are also dependent in the same way. Only the rest of 18% have significant schooling with one graduate getting added to the list. Here it is important to note that loss of one's physical capital leads to the cease in their economic contribution to the family.

In these situations, the people who have no alternative of having any mental capital, becomes dependent on others for their livelihood. When others could not bear their dependency due to the socio-economic difficulties, these vulnerable people are left with no other decision except walking out from the house and become homeless. In that way the high illiteracy rate of the respondents can be interpreted as having relation with their becoming homeless.

Among the 3 children of the study only one has reported of going to school. Other two can not afford to go to school as their families frequently migrate from one place to other.

5.5 Occupation profile, earnings, expenditure profile, savings, remittances, loans

This part tries to draw out an economic map of the homeless life of the respondents of the study. The common joke among middle class people about beggars, which always depicts these people as Account holders of Foreign Banks reveals the insensitivity of the public and the present study really wanted to bring out the grave facts of the homelessness in the economic front.

It has taken into account the income and expenditure as well as the savings and debt details of the homeless people to have a comprehensive understanding of their economy. Any development strategy which concentrates on their economic well being would certainly bring greater changes in their lives as it may even help them to get out of their homelessness. But the possibilities of such initiatives are still debatable.

Living by alms is the main occupation for a great majority of the respondents (63.4%). It is considered to be the main occupation on the basis of both time spend with and the income earned out of. Still, some of them are engaged in different occupations, such as, commercial sex work, rickshaw pulling, cycle repairing, etc., and a significant portion (12.2%) of the respondents are Street Performers.

5.5.1 Main occupation: On the basis of time spent

Type of occupation	Persons	Percentage
No Work	2	2.44
Street vendor	1	1.22
Casual daily wage worker	1	1.22
Commercial Sex worker	3	3.66
Live by alms	52	63.41
Rag-picking	2	2.44
Shoe polisher	5	6.1
Domestic worker	1	1.22
Garage worker, cycle repair	2	2.44
Street Performers	10	12.2
Others	3	3.66
Total	82	100

Also there are very few who do not earn by any means, rather, depend upon their co-habiting partners to support for their livelihood.

5.5.2 Main Occupation: On the basis of income

Type of occupation	Persons	Percentage
No Work	2	2.44
Street vendor	1	1.22
Casual daily wage worker	1	1.22
Commercial Sex worker	3	3.66
Live by alms	53	64.63
Rag-picking	2	2.44
Shoe polisher	5	6.1
Domestic worker	1	1.22
Garage worker, cycle repair	2	2.44
Street Performers	10	12.2
Others	2	2.44
Total	82	100

A simple comparison of the two tables, on the occupation profile on the basis of time spent with and the income reveals that there is no major difference between both these categories. They do not have the luxury of having income earned through more than one means. Twenty one of them, that is, almost all others except the people living by alms, have reported of having health problem due to their present occupation, especially the Street Performers who usually lash their body with long whips to create public sympathy and thus receive alms. They also used to injure themselves with knives.

5.5.3 Days of available work in a month

Available work in a month	Persons	Percent
Full month	74	90.2
15 days	4	4.9
No work	4	4.9
Total	82	100.0

Their ultimate dependency on their present occupation is very clear as more than 90% of them have reported of having work for the whole of a month. It does not mean that they have job security after all many of them are living by alms. It rather explains the situation in which the homeless people are pressurised to earn their livelihood on an everyday basis. They can not afford to have a pause in their daily wage towards earning their daily food.

5.5.4 Daily income and Expenditure

Amount in Rs	Income		Expenditure	
	Persons	Percent	Persons	Percent
< 50	66	80.5	69	84.1
50-100	13	15.8	10	12.2
> 100	1	1.2	1	1.2
No Income	2	2.4	2	2.4
Total	82	99.9	82	99.9

When it comes to the daily income of the homeless people, more than 80% of our respondents earn only less than 50 rupees a day and also for most of them the daily expenditure does not exceed rupees 50.

Almost all of them do not have any debt except three, who have borrowed money ranging from 1000 to 1800 rupees. People having no trust in the repayment behaviour of homeless people is a major factor which hinders the homeless people from availing loans even for emergency purposes. It is the same case with their savings, as nearly 80% of them do not save money at all. Because, they do not believe other homeless people and also any other third person and find it hard to protect their savings. Thus they prefer to spend the whole money as quickly as possible, so as to enjoy the present moment. Even for the persons who do save, the savings amount is very less, ranging from 50 to 600 rupees. There are two have a savings of 1000 and 1500 each and only one person who has a savings of 30000 rupees, but still keeps that money unspent to face the future. Among these ‘saving’ people, most of them keep the money in their own custody as they do not trust others for this purpose and only very few keep it with nearby shopkeepers. Managing the emergency situations that may arise in the future is the main intension behind their savings, especially medical expenditures.

Though, many of them do not send money to their family (or they do not have one such), there is still a significant portion (13.4%) of homeless people who send money regularly or irregularly to their family. It happens because of their affectionate relation with someone of their non-caring family, grand children in many cases.

5.6 Recreation

Recreation is an important coping strategy for the homeless people, as the time spent with the recreational activity takes them out of the sphere which visualizes them as such. They find a way or other a little money to spend for their moving out of the time and space. At this point one really needs to have a critical understanding of the language of

the homeless people and what does it mean by recreation to them. It is also important to note that the common picture of recreation is always related with a cost factor and it may not be the same in the view of homeless people.

5.6.1 Most frequent recreational activities

Recreational activity	Persons	Percent
Television	1	1.2
Movie	26	31.7
Radio	5	6.1
Street plays	30	36.6
Others	7	8.5
None	13	15.9
Total	82	100.0

Nearly 37% of the respondents recorded street plays as the main recreational activity which is again a phenomenon does not include any expenditure in it. As an important cultural centre of Tamilnadu, Madurai has no dearth in having cultural programmes performed in the open streets. Street plays in the above table also includes these kinds of street cultural programmes, such as, dramas, dance performances, orchestras, etc., Next to that comes Movies as nearly 32% have opted for it. There is certainly a cost involved in this activity, but the amount will be very less as below Rs.5 in the local theatres. As they are from a community which is very much attached to the feature films (most of the Chief Ministers of Tamilnadu are from the film industry), the attraction that a homeless person has towards the films is quite natural and understandable. Five of them have a radio of their own and they are mainly from the group of Street Performers. Watching television is also in the list but it is not their own rather by standing outside the shops which display televisions shows to attract customers. Nearly one sixth of them do not have any kind of recreation. Other important recreational activity that they tell is to chat with their street friends and there are 8.5% respondents noted it down as their temporary way out.

5.7 Access to public services

Accessibility to the services is becoming an important factor in leading the life in this modern era. All of us are dependent on various service providers for leading a life with less discomfort. The infinite list of the service providers starts from the state. A person's accessibility to any service also includes his/her affordability in its economic front. In the case of free services it is the ability to claim or the deserving nature substitutes the affordability. Homeless people, being economically backward, have to depend upon the free service providers including the state. But when the question of their ability to claim arises, they are left with an answer of being voiceless and in case of their deserving nature, it is mostly a kind of total negligence shown from the part of both the state and other service providers. The homeless people are just left with the option of managing everything in their own and when it goes unmanageable they have to make a hard choice of living without those essential services. This part of the report tries to trace out

their managing tactics in availing the essential services for a day to day life. It also records the hurdles that they face in accessing them. A basic understanding of these will lead us to draw out the strategies to be adopted in provision of these services to them.

5.7.1 Source of drinking water

Source of water	Persons	Percent
Roadside taps	42	51.2
Shops	35	42.7
Tankers	5	6.1
Total	82	100.0

Roadside taps and shops are the major sources of water supply as nearly 94% of them have reported to be dependent on them to quench their thirst. Many of the shop owners of Madurai are generous enough to provide drinking water at free of cost. It is also a positive reflection of the Tamil culture, where providing water to the thirsty person is treated as a moral duty. Many of the respondents do not face any problem in getting their drinking water. It is again the distance to cross in getting water is the major problem that the rest (23% of the respondents) face.

5.7.2 Problems in accessing drinking water

Problems	Persons	Percent
Distance	7	20.7
Wait for long time	12	2.4
No problem	63	76.8
Total	82	100.0

Though there are instances of negligence of their dignity in getting water to drink, homeless people still feel that it is not a great task. It is also important to note down the accommodative nature of the Madurai public here, may not be with compassion but with patience.

5.7.3 Place of Defecation

Place	Persons	Percent
Open space	26	31.7
Pavement	1	1.2
Public toilet	21	25.6
Private toilet	33	40.2
Others	1	1.2
Total	82	99.9

Many of them (66%) use toilets for defecation, either private or public and the rest make the open space as their toilets. Except the people who uses the open space for defecating, others are ought to pay for availing the service. In the life of not having enough money to have food to live, this kind of payment really matters for a homeless person. All the state services regarding this is either unusable or poorly managed so as a homeless person can hardly have any access to it.

5.7.4 Place of Bath

Place	Persons	Percent
Public taps	23	28.0
Community bathing places	35	42.7
Others	19	23.2
NA	5	6.1
Total	82	100.0

Though there are very few homeless people, who never take bath, a major part of them take bath 2-3 times or at least once in a week. Community bathing places (river, etc.) and public taps are the high-listed places where they take bath.

5.7.5 Frequency of taking Bath

Frequency	Persons	Percent
Daily	16	19.5
2-3 times a week	38	46.3
Once in a week	23	28.1
Not at all	5	6.1
Total	82	100.0

But, defecation and bathing are the two important things for which a majority of them needs to pay money, so as to use the service of public/private toilets and bathrooms. This payment, which needs to be made for availing the service, is shown as one of the reasons due to which some of them are not taking bath. It ranges from one to five rupees according to the nature of the service provider.

5.7.6 Payment of Service Charges

Service	Persons	Percent
Drinking water	1	1.2
Defecation	49	59.8
Bathing	38	46.3
Sleeping	1	1.2

Among the homeless respondents only one has reported of paying service charges to get drinking water. It is mainly for defecation (60%) and taking bath (46%), many of the respondents pay service charges. There is also a single respondent who pay money to a lodge owner to sleep in its veranda during nights.

5.8 Access to ration cards and Voter ID

In an age where the human faces and fates are being translated in the form of papers and documents, it is becoming very important to have such things even to live a simple and a safe life in a state governing system. These documents have also gained momentum in providing the services of a welfare society to its most needy and vulnerable population. The present study has tried to get the facts from the homeless respondents regarding the possession of such documents. There were a number of such documents listed down in the interview schedule, but the respondents could identify only two among them and have only reported the possession or non-possession of these two, i.e., Ration card and Voter identity card.

5.8.1 Possession of Ration card

Possess Ration card	Persons	Percent
Yes, with city address	19	23.2
Yes, with village address	15	18.3
No	48	58.5
Total	82	100.0

A major portion of the respondents (58.5%) have recorded that they do not possess a ration card which is really an important document to be shown to avail the allocated food grains and other services from any fair price shop. In their transition from the native houses to the homeless life, many of them happened to lose their legal entitlements including their ration cards and voter identity cards. There is again a significant portion (41.5%) who said to have a ration card either with village address or city address.

Among the 15 who have their ration cards with the village address 10 belong to the Street Performer community, who usually have a house in their villages but do not live there as their livelihood is dependent upon their living and street performing in the city. These houses in the villages especially serve as retreat homes when they go back to the village for a month or so in a year. It is their old aged parents or dependent relatives stay in those houses all through the year. Hence possession of such a ration card with their village address does not help them to secure their livelihood in the city.

5.8.2 Possession of Voter ID

Possess Voter ID	Per-sons	Percent
Yes	25	30.5
No	57	69.5
Total	82	100.0

It is the same case with the voter identity cards as nearly 70% of them do not have one such and whomsoever having it were referring to their way back possession in a non-homeless life. Only very few of them were presently having the cards with them. As the homeless people are yet to secure the eligibility of being full-fledged citizens, their being allotted with a voter identity card seems to be nearly impossible.

5.9 Reasons and period of homelessness

There are certainly various pull factors and push factors got unfolded behind the homeless people's transition from homes to homelessness. A common understanding will tell us that the push factors must be more in numbers than the

pull factors. The study has tried to analyse both their life stories and the quantitative data provided by them in order to trace out the causes behind their becoming homeless. . We can also assure that most of those situations or causes would have been unavoidable by the people who are homeless now. It is certainly the unavoidable causes lead to undesirable effects.

Most of the life stories collected in Madurai state the ‘death’ of a dear one or dear ones as the important milestone from which their journey towards homelessness has started. The death of a husband or wife, by leaving the other alone in the midst of non-caring children, relatives and society, naturally leads the widowed to live in an unbearable loneliness. If they (the lonely ones) are not strong enough, both emotionally and economically, the non-caring and also exploitative people around drive them simply into the life of homeless. It is the same case when the parents of a child die at his/her earlier age where the relatives ill-treat him/her or deny taking care of his livelihood. Even if the ‘orphan’ child is left with the assets of his/her parents, it never assures him/her a better livelihood rather the exploitative relatives snatch it off by leaving the child to be homeless.

Next to the death, it is the ‘loss’ of something becomes unavoidable in many instances. In our exploration for the causes for homelessness, we are also able to trace out certain losses in the life stories of people who are pushed to be homeless. Loss of health, job, property, etc. When a person suffers from incurable illness, it marks the loss of his/her health and thereby the loss of physical capital. In the Indian context being employed is mostly dependent upon one’s own physical capital. An incurable illness or any sustained injury affects the person’s physical capital severely which automatically reflects in his/her loss of employment. A woman becoming unemployed would not be a serious issue in the Indian family life. But when the same is happening with a man it creates serious implications in the family. He is supposed to be the primary breadwinner and the principal contributor on its economic front. When it gets disturbed, the non-caring and also economically vulnerable family of him has no other way except ill-treating which would naturally persuade him to walk-out (!) of the house.

5.9.1 Causes for Homelessness

Reasons	Persons	Percent
Extreme poverty	20	24.39
Substance abuse	1	1.22
Abandonment by family	14	17.07
Absence of family	19	23.17
Family abuse	5	6.1
Stigmatising illness	2	2.44
Unemployment	4	4.88
Others	17	20.73
Total	82	100

Spending for the treatment of any incurable illness and selling out the properties for getting the children (especially girls) married are certain other factors seen in the life stories as the causes for the loss of house and other properties, which naturally leaves the people with a single option of being homeless.

The unemployment and extreme poverty which are listed separately in the table can also be interpreted in the backdrop of the failures of a family system. When the economic difficulty is unbearable the family is also left with the option of not taking care of the elder ones or the economically dependent ones. Poverty expressed in terms of lack of housing, extreme hunger and economic insecurity in combination with all lead to the breakdown of the social network system that have gone behind making these people to live out their lives in begging. Even though poverty has been existent along with them right from the beginning and these families have doggedly fought with poverty to maintain a dignified living, certain situations where the social strength to carry out their every day fight against poverty has resulted in the abandoned members becoming homeless. In many of those cases we found that the continuing poverty in their lives experienced a jolt when these supposed breadwinners lost his/her economic opportunity due to heavy indebtedness and run away from the family. This became the last straw as the families till that point believed that they could carry on if all the members stay around and share the burden, but when that particular support is gone, those members of the family who could not take to any gainful employment take to begging not so much as the first economic opportunity but only as a last resort.

It is the aged members of the family who become the primary victims of this particular process as the younger generation in the family tend to seek greener pastures in other parts of the country. They tend to treat the aged population as an additional burden therefore they leave them behind in their respective birthplaces. On the part of the aged population also there is this sentiment factor that encourages them to agree to the plan of staying back. When this happens in large number even in the middle class families by choice, in the case of the family of homeless we have interviewed it seems to happen as a matter of compulsion. Abandoned by their economically employable generation and unable to take up any other occupation of their own these elderly generations gradually slip into a begging and a life lived in streets. The older generation willingly bears the burden of poverty of the family when poverty seems to be visiting the family, as traditionally the elderly population is expected to be more magnanimous towards their younger ones. On the part of younger generation there is this rationalization that the elder generation needs to be freed from the family responsibilities so that they can go around visiting temples

For a certain group of homeless people in Madurai, being homeless and nomadic are their ways of life as they are all 'Street Performers'. Encroachment of their living places by Government and private parties could be seen as the sole administrative failure, which again turned out to be a cause for the homelessness of a very small portion of homeless population in Madurai.

The causes for Madurai's homelessness are mostly due to the failures of families and societies in and around the city as a practical response to their various socio-economic difficulties.

5.9.2 Years of homelessness

Years of homelessness	Persons	Percent
< 1 Year	12	14.6
1-5 Years	22	26.8
5-10 Years	12	14.6
> 10 Years	36	43.9
Total	82	99.9

Homelessness is a very long ‘living experience’ for many of the homeless people, whom we met for our study. History of homelessness for most of them records more than ten years of living experience under the open sky. Thus, many of them have come to a kind of co-opting with their homelessness and they have their own coping strategies to move along with the homeless life. Whereas a little but significant portion (14.6%) of them are being into this life for less than a year.

There are also 26.8% of respondents being homeless for 1-5 years and 14.6% being on the streets of Madurai for 5-10 years. This is a kind of experience which never adds any credit to their life nor improves their standard of living rather it is something which has a negative progression which leads them from being vulnerable to the worst parts of life.

5.10 Arrests and incarceration for living on streets and other crimes

Any state would prefer to take a step towards invisibilising the unmanageable sect of the entire population. Imprisonment is one of the important steps towards invisibilisation. Naturally the homeless people, who fall under the category of unmanageable sects, are more vulnerable for being imprisoned upon various reasons, ranging from living on the streets to fake cases woven against them.

5.10.1 Incidence of Arrest for living on the streets

Incidence of arrest	Persons	Percent
Yes	6	7.32
No	76	92.68
Total	82	100.0

Imprisonment for living on streets or alleged begging has happened only to a small portion of them (7.3%) and thus most of them have not experienced any kind of imprisonment. It does not mean that there is no police brutality over

the homeless people. From their life stories we understand that there are cases of police chasing them out of their sleeping places at a time or other. Still, the state never goes up to the extent of arresting them.

But after few months of the study the police have taken a great effort to wipe out the homeless population from the city in order to adhere a court rule.

5.10.2 Other arrests

Incidence of arrest	Persons	Percent
Yes	7	8.54
No	75	91.46
Total	82	100.0

There are also other incidents of arrest happened for a small part of our respondents (8.5%). Three of them were arrested for their engagement in commercial sex work. Other three were arrested in relation with family conflicts, which happened way back in their non-homeless life.

5.11 Disability

The disabled populations with congenial deformities or accidents or leprosy tend to be least cared for by the family networks particularly the siblings. Once the parents die, the disabled the population tends to be treated by their siblings to be a stain on the face of the otherwise robust community members. They become a threat to the family image, particularly in a time when the siblings are taking into wedlock. Therefore they underplay the presence of the disabled members, if not continually challenge their attempts to achieve dignity for themselves. At one point they leave the families to eke out a living for themselves.

The fact that the disabled and the diseased population is not accepted anywhere even for any gainful employment and their lack of awareness about possibilities for becoming a self employed have forced them into living by extracting sympathy from the public for the disability.

5.11.1 Disability among the homeless

Kind of disability	Frequency	Percent
Blindness	2	2.44
Deaf Mutism	2	2.44
Polio	1	1.22
Amputation	9	10.98
Malunited fractures	4	4.88
Others	2	2.44
No disability	62	75.61
Total	82	100

Most of the homeless people who live by alms have never tried for any other work to earn their livelihood. It is also the fact that one-fourth of them are having some kind of disability or other, such as, amputation, malunited fractures, blindness, deaf-mutism, etc.,

Though most of them suggested that they would remain in begging till the end, if counseled properly they would explore alternative possibilities. This is really important in the case of young homeless. In our own study and we have found that the homeless have taken to begging only as the temporary relief from the wretchedness into which they have been forced. Once they accumulate enough courage they are willing to return to their normal lives.

5.12 Assistance received

While many of the homeless people of Madurai are being vulnerable so as to depend upon the alms received during their selfless days, any other assistance from others in any form indirectly assist them to be away from securing alms. The study has also explored that part to know the nature of other forms of assistance.

5.12.1 Assistance received from others

Assistance from	Persons	Percent
NGO	3	3.66
Religious organisation	5	6.1
Government official	4	4.88
Single individual	19	23.17
None	51	62.2
Total	82	100

Majority of the respondents (62.2%) have not received any assistance from others. Whereas, among the rest many of them (23.1%) have received help from single individuals and another 10% has received help from any religious or non-governmental organization. All these persons have received mostly food items and it is important to note that few of the single individual helping hearts are running their own hotels in the city. Though some of them have reported of having been assisted by the government officials (4.9% of them), it is not clear whether this help happened at their capacity as Government officials or as sympathetic individuals. That part can not be well explained as homeless people does not have clear idea of differentiating these two.

5.13 Best and worst experiences while being homeless

As a way to trace out the life-graph of their homelessness, the study has tried to make them list out their best and worst experiences while being in this present situation. Many of them went beyond the specificity of the question and listed down the overall positives and negatives of being homeless. It also implies that for them homeless life is an endless narrative getting unfolded without being a series of specific incidents.

There are different advantages that homeless people envision in their life under the open sky. Here are the few:

- Free from family torture/tension
- Can have good friends
- Free to move to different places
- Free to sleep at any place
- Feels that no one is there to control
- Sometime get provided with free food
- Not to dependent upon any others for their livelihood
- Friends join together and go to film
- A comfortable place to earn money

There are certainly few who could come out with specific merits of being in this ‘pseudo’ independent life with special reference to their personal experience. There are respondents who:

- Does not involve in prostitution for last three years after becoming homeless
- Feels happy while seeing aeroplanes (important to note that the respondent was an old woman)
- Has good relationship with shopkeepers nearby
- Feels some people including police give respect to him
- Lives a happier life with his co-habiting partner

There is also a significant part of the respondents (nearly 25%) who had no best experience to share with us. It is also noteworthy here that all of them had, quite naturally, one or other worst experience or disadvantageous part of living on the streets.

The instability of life and the loss of identity are viewed as the worst parts of homelessness. Instability of life happens mainly due to the insecurity of their residing/sleeping places and the loss of identity is observed to be the consequence of the lack of constructive relationship with their peers. It is the uncertainty that always envelops their lives, hinders them from building constructive bonds with their fellow homeless people.

5.14 Greatest felt need, immediate and long-term

The greatest felt need of the homeless people is to have a stable life, if possible under a permanent shelter, so as to regain/restore their identity. Many of them do not look at any long term solutions for their miserable life on the street rather they are very much keen to get their lives temporarily secured. There are no systematized needs expressed by them, perhaps as they are not sure of their deserving nature, or the feasibility of their aspirations. They just have some longings to reveal in order to have a secured and sheltered life.

6 Food and Nutrition

Food, cloth and shelter are told to be the basic needs for human beings. Homeless people never care for their clothes. Still, some of them have alternative clothes and try to look neat and tidy, especially the ones who sit in front of temples. Shelter is not within their reach so it is not what they spend on.

Therefore it does not compete with food as their highest priority. It cannot be said that they are without choices in the food they eat, though there is a general myth that they eat whatever is being offered to them. Because it is found that they also have their own food patterns and have limited choices to select.

6.1 Food eaten in the last two days: content and sufficiency

Although they drink tea at any time it is available, more than 80% of the sample population mark tea as the first item in their morning menu. Almost all of them spend their own money in getting their first cup of tea. It can be noted here that Tea is the common man's drink in Tamilnadu and Coffee is treated as the Drink of upper middle class. Besides that the cost of tea is comparatively less than of coffee.

Next to the first cup of tea, nearly half of the sample population selects idly/dosa (South Indian dishes made out of rice flour) as their breakfast and nearly one fifth of them have rice (especially pongal) in their morning diets. Among the former ones, who eat idly/dosa, the majority of our respondents (70%) spend their own money to get their food from the shops. There are only very few sponsors who offer this kind of food in the mornings. But among those who take rice, more than half get their food from the sponsors. There are individual sponsors, institutional sponsors (NGO, temple, etc.,) and households who offer food to these people.

Also there are very few who cook rice or get it from the shops in the morning times. It is obvious that cooking becomes impossible once the sun rises and other people than the homeless spill on to the streets.

Besides these two major categories there are a few homeless people (nearly 10%) who use intoxicants as the substitute for food. These intoxicants range from betel leaves, beedi to gutka (sweetened tobacco), ganja etc., Again here they need to spend their own money to get these intoxicants.

Almost all of them go for rice in the afternoons and majority of them get it from individual, institutional or household sponsors. Still, a significant portion of the homeless people spends their own money to get their lunch from shops or to cook themselves. There are again the same 10% people who use intoxicants during the afternoons, not to substitute lunch but to supplement it.

Besides idly/dosa of the morning menu, a new item, parotta or North Indian fried wheat chapatis, gets added to the supper menu of the homeless people. Nearly two-third of the sample population make their selection from among these three choices and a greater majority of them spend their own money to get these food items from the shops.

Also there is nearly one fourth of the sample population who opt for rice in their supper. Unlike the other two occasions, this time the rice is not very much of a sponsored item. Because, more than half of them, especially who live as families cook their own rice in their dwelling places on the streets late into the night when pedestrian and

motor traffic becomes thin.

Nearly one fifth of the sample population include tea in their supper menu. Drug and alcohol usage is also found higher during night times.

What can be stated in sum is the monotonous nature of food intake. Even if one looks for pattern of food consumption, they seem to be eating same kind of food across many weeks. This is despite the irregularity of food intake itself. The recurring bouts of irregularity in food consumption deprives them of their nutrition, and poor health and repeated infections result in low food absorption, further worsened by their substance abusing behaviour, including caffeine in the form of excessive tea drinking.

6.2 Access to special food, cooked food or food cooked by a family member

Though many institutions claim to provide food to the homeless three times daily, the study found that it is frequently not true. Only during the lunchtime, most of the homeless people get the sponsored food and in other two occasions, that is morning and night most of them spend their own money to get the food from the shops or to cook themselves.

6.3 Eating patterns when lots of money is available

When they were asked about the differences in their food habits while having more money, one third of them responded that there would not be any change. Still, nearly 40% of them responded with different answers which we can group under two headings, one is eating good food from the hotels (good ones) and the second is eating meat or any other non-vegetarian food items.

There are a considerable percentage of homeless people (19%) who told that they would go for alcohol or some other intoxicants while having more money.

Usage of drugs is found to be an important substitute for food among the homeless people. As many of these drug-using people get at least a time's food sponsored by any individual / institution, they could afford to spend their earning to get drugs. In many places a kind of group formation and coming together is found at the times of drug usage, which is very rare among those who always wish to be alone.

Usage of drugs is also found with some homeless women, especially those who are commercial sex workers.

6.4 Coping if and when there is no money for food

When they were asked about their food pattern while having no money/very less money, beedi and tea filled up most of their lists. Only a few others had the alternatives of drinking water, begging, getting the food for credit, using drugs or using ration rice. There was also a homeless individual who eats some vegetables with more chilly and drink more water to kill appetite.

6.5 Longest periods without food

It is quite natural to see the vulnerability of the homeless people who are ought to live and fight with hunger on an enduring basis.

6.5.1 Days of not having food

Duration	Persons	Percentage
One Day	37	45.12
Two Days.	15	18.29
Three Days.	1	1.22
NA	29	35.37
Total	82	100

Nearly 45% of them have experienced living for at least a day without having food at least once in their homeless life. There is also a significant portion (18.3%) have gone to sleep for more than two days without having any food intake.

6.6 Food access during illness

Regarding their managing to get food during their illness, a major proportion answered that they would be helped by other homeless people or by their family members or relatives or co-habiting partners. Here again tea and the use of intoxicants were found to be the significant substitutes for food during the illness.

6.7 Daily expenditure on food as percentage of total expenditure also along with amount in rupees

Nearly 70% of them spend 50-75% of their earnings to cover their food expenditures. There are approximately 20% of the respondents spent 80-90% and 2 persons spend the whole of their earnings to meet their food expenses.

7 Health Status

7.1 Overview range of unique health issues of homeless people

It is quite tragic that many of homeless people, whose health is battered by poor nutrition, battling a brutalised environment, also cannot afford to access good health services. Both traditional institutions and the modern institutions like the state health providers, cost too heavily to be in reach of the homeless. It is even more tragic when one considers that many of the old homeless had come to Madurai also with the ambition of accessing the health services offered freely in general hospitals.

A combination of factors including the general apathy of the doctors and other service personnel has only worsened their ill health. While the impersonal health care systems like the state hospitals have excluded them, even their personal relatives have become neglectful when they go through poor health episodes. These factors apart unhygienic living conditions, and low food in take and absorption have all conspired to have taken a heavy toll on the health of homeless people in Madurai.

7.1.1 General Health

General Health	Frequency	Percent
Good	10	12.1
Fair	17	20.5
Poor	55	67.4
Total	82	100.0

Thus it is not surprising that only 10 members out of the 82 interviewed reported reasonable health. Only seventeen of the total eighty-two reported that they did not have any illness in the last one month period.

In reality there are two things that cloud their perception regarding their own health condition. One, they usually do not reckon their chronic illness as illness to be counted during the one month recall. Secondly, having grown accustomed to certain type of illness, since they recur at regular intervals such as coughing, skin rashes, diarrhoea and vomiting, they do not even count them as illness serious enough to be reported to. Thus we may have to assume that they are in even much worse in health than they reported.

7.2 Illness experience and Access to health services

Out of the 21 who have reported to have got illness in the last month, only 15 could get some kind of treatment. Here again it was mostly self medication with medicines bought across the counters of drug stores, rather than acquired through proper consultation with doctors at either private or at public hospitals.

7.2.1 Incidence of illness

Illness in last one month	Persons	Percentage
Yes	21	25.6
No	61	74.4
Total	82	100.0

As the table shows that most of them have resorted to medical shop or self- mediation, in the form of taking some indigenous folk medicinal treatment. Only four could ever access government hospital for medicines. In fact, even in the perceptions of homeless who have primarily come to Madurai city to avail easily available medial services, the government hospitals receive lowest rating.

7.2.2 Source of Medicines

Source of medicines	Persons	Percentage
Government Hospital	4	26.67
Private Clinic	3	20.0
Medical shop	5	33.33
Indigenous medicine	2	13.33
Health Centre	1	6.67
Total	15	100

Those who have answered affirmatively to the question on the quality of hospital facility it was private and Christian mission hospitals that passed their mind rather than the government hospitals. This is one reason why their treatment course gets disrupted quite often. Only four of the total sampled population of homeless had reported to have had chances to get regular medicines.

Even when afflicted with serious illness that warranted admission to hospitals, the homeless in Madurai make do with cheap medicines or some folk medicines from their companions. Many reported during the discussions that they often let nature take its own course, rather than work against it by admitting themselves to the hospitals. This is largely as a result of bad experiences with medical institutions. They often do not consult a doctor or go very late as a last resort. Though free treatment and medicines are given in government hospitals they avoid going there due to long queues, improper treatment, rudeness and carelessness of the staff members. Many are perceived to be undesirable as patients. There are a significant portion of the respondents (31%) reported of not being hospitalised even when they were advised to be.

7.3 Symptoms or illnesses those are severe enough to prevent the person from going to work, and those despite which they are still going to work

The poor physical condition of homeless people does not stem from a single cause, but results from a combination of different factors like lifestyle, personal or family life crisis, life events, coping behaviour and the individual risk behaviour for instance, alcohol and cigarette consumption, etc.

7.3.1 Ability to work during illness

Ability to work	Persons	Percentage
Able to work	14	66.67
Unable to work	7	33.33
Total	21	100

Among the 21 who have reported to be suffered by any kind of illness in that last one month, nearly 67% of them have said that they were still able to work during their illness. It does not mean that their illness is not so severe but it reveals a basic fact that the homeless people are not having the luxury of taking even a day off from their work of receiving alms in order to ensure their food.

Most of the symptoms reported by them are of the communicable diseases which affect them frequently as they live in a vulnerable situation.

There are also nearly 15% of the respondents have reported to have difficulty in seeing in the dark. It is mainly due to their old age and the low calorie food intake.

7.3.2 Difficulty seeing in the dark

Difficulty seeing in the dark	Persons	Percentage
Yes	12	14.63
No	70	85.37
Total	82	100

7.4 Injuries

In many homeless mind the foremost worry is not to die unmourned and uncared. This worry urges them to avoid injuries, since they know very well once injured, they have none to care and if the wounds occur it may prove very costly, since the wounds will be worsened by the flies and rats against which they cannot protect themselves that easily.

7.5 Experience of death of someone close

Many homeless have reported (17 of the total respondents) to have seen unwarranted death of their fellow homeless co-travellers. The very fact that they have to sleep under open sky near the ditches and toilets, invite all kinds of troubles and risks. The vulnerability to illness is further compounded by sleeplessness and lack of appetite, vastly reducing their food intake and absorption. Nearly 55% of the respondents have reported of having low/poor energy levels.

Homeless people feel very bad during rainy and winter season. It is due to the change of climatic conditions. They do not get alternatives to avoid themselves from standing in rain. Especially old age people suffer a lot in this season. They are old enough that they are unable to walk and move into a shelter; rather they stand in rain and get fever/cold very often. It is believed that the death rate among homeless people is high during this season.

8 Policy Implications, recommendations and suggestions

The well-being of all its citizens, especially those who are most vulnerable is, to a great extent, dependent on the state policies and the mechanisms to implement the same. There are even greater spaces to be filled up by the state, where the society and neighbourhood communities fail to be humane. Even if the general societal feeling happens to be more accommodative, there is still a strategic lack to prove that as a means for the well-being of the excluded groups, such as homeless.

The present study has tried to trace out the role played by the state in affecting the lives of Madurai's homeless in both positive and negative ways. There are indeed a few important initiatives to be elaborated here. The study has also tried to take stock of few more initiatives other than Governmental. These non-governmental initiatives are temporary solutions in nature and here we feel the importance of the state to play its insignificant role in a polished manner.

The discussions with the officials of the Madurai Corporation, revealed a fact that the homeless people are nowhere in their past or present agenda. Especially, the town planning division of the Corporation has just invisibilised the whole lot of homeless population in its developmental projects and they completely feel that homeless people are not at all their consideration. Citing all their financial hurdles, the Corporation officials believe that the responsibility to rehabilitate the city's homeless people lies upon the State government and their regime is limited to the provision of needed basic services to the 'legitimate' citizens of the city, i.e., who live in houses. It is that financial resources have not been decentralised to local bodies in the state on par with the decentralisation of responsibilities. The Corporation wants to play a safer game without leaping into the deeps of unknown risks, and caters to those who have power, and are least bothered about the coreless, mostly who do not even vote. On the other hand the state government has strategically pulled out its hand in the name of decentralising the responsibility. As the homeless have been thrust into no-man's land, their well being has gradually become no-one's responsibility.

Police, being the prime force of the state government, has an important role to play in allowing as well as not allowing the homeless population to live on the streets/pavements. Anyhow the police force of the city was more patient towards the homeless crowd and was not torturing them to leave their residing places or not even taking any measures to rehabilitate them. As the Justices F.M. Ibrahim Kalifulla and K. Veeraraghavan of Madurai Bench of Chennai High Court have mentioned in their recent court order to rehabilitate the Madurai homeless beggars, the Head of Police Administration in Madurai city itself was not aware of the functioning of the Special care homes and the Government care camps in the State. Even the persons who were arrested (which happened very rarely) for alleged begging, were detained under public nuisance case and not under the Tamilnadu Prevention of Begging Act, 1945. It is again important to note here that majority of the homeless populace of the city is being dependent on securing alms for their livelihood and the above said act of 1945 marks begging as a punishable offence. Still, the police force was not ready to effectively implement the prevention act only because of the rehabilitation elements contained in it following the initial detentions. The most disadvantageous part of the act is that it starts with the proposition that begging is a punishable offence and thus allows the use of brute force in detaining them in the initial stage before rehabilitating them. But that is the only way any state would know to shift its unmanageable sect of people into the manageable sphere.

Towards the end of 2006, a lawyer, who said to be affected by the homeless beggars of the city, filed a writ petition in the Madurai Bench of Chennai High Court requesting to direct the state or its police force to strictly implement the above said beggary prevention act. The court, on March 26 of 2007 issued an order favouring the writ petition and even awarded him with a cash reward of Rs.10,000. The order forces the police to detain the homeless beggars of the city and then to rehabilitate them in Special care home and work house which is situated only in one place for the entire state. The court has ruled out the inconveniences that the Police may need to face due to this single rehabilitation home for the entire state. This has led the police force to detain many of the homeless people of the city, including much of the respondents of the present study and consequently sent many of them to the rehabilitation home, which is situated in Melpakkam near Chennai. But this so called rehabilitation measure has made many of the homeless people to leave for nearby towns and another significant portion of the homeless people has temporarily escaped to their villages and again came back to their streets after all these rehabilitation drama is over. A brief account on the consequences of this important court order has been added in the Annexure 11.1 of this report.

The Government with its conservative mechanism many a times resort to the same kind of invisibilisation and custodialisation in order to deal with the unmanageable sect of its population. But, what is needed is to provide the rehabilitation measures a humane face and lifting up the responsibility of rehabilitating them from the police department so as to include the same in the agenda of social justice or other similar department.

There is also a general but illusory idea that the free food provision in temples at the lunch time serves the homeless people to a great extent. It is said to be illusory as the discussions with few temple authorities of Madurai Mennakshi Temple revealed that the preference in free food provision is given to the devotees of the temple who come from different parts of the country. They rarely consider the homeless people who resides adjacent to the temple premises and at few times they are served with the left over food items. The scheme of free provision of lunch in temples was introduced mostly as a means to attract more votes from the upper caste Hindu community and not very much to serve the poor people.

But, there are few non governmental agencies that are committed to provide free food to the homeless population of the City. Some of them are very much focused as they do not serve any able bodied homeless person with free food. They want to serve only the old aged, disabled and mentally disturbed homeless populace in Madurai. There are anyhow other voluntary efforts for providing free food to the homeless without such discriminations. What is lacking with these organisations is a long term vision for rehabilitating the homeless people and most of them feel that it is Government's duty to find a way out. Those who do not believe in state existence too have narrowed vision of rehabilitation homes which again needs a lot of external funding to be poured in.

The root cause of Madurai's homelessness is very much in the failures of families and native societies in having a humane face towards these vulnerable people. Thus, even if the Government wants to rehabilitate them, the efforts should be taken with a humane touch and not by using brute force.

The solutions lies also in financial decentralisation from state to the local Governments, which can again help the Corporation to have an independent plan for City development by accommodating the homeless people in its broader agenda. Secondly, preventing the police force from implementing the outdated 'prevention of beggary act of 1945' to detain the homeless beggars for the so called rehabilitation. There instead rehabilitative centres can be initiated in the city itself by having the involvement of the voluntary organisations. Government run night shelters will be another way to accommodate them as a measure to protect their otherwise unsafe nights. Provision of better alternatives for

their livelihoods would still be challenge until there are safer measures for their initial rehabilitation.

People indeed take the hard decision of coming out of their homes at the peaks of their being not respected and also their reasons and reasoning for being homeless are to be respected. Still, efforts can be very well taken to restore themselves in their families or native societies if it can turn out to create a pleasant outlook. The implementation comfort of this strategy is yet to be discussed upon.

9 General Observations

9.1 Coping Strategies of Homeless people in Madurai

Life's music has never been a monotonous one. It includes different tones and instruments making life a melodious orchestra. But when single string instrument plays the same tune again and again, and even this is frequently dispirited and off-key, the music of life is lost. We can hardly identify the efforts that the homeless people make to give different shades to their monotonous life. Still, they find different events to mark their life into a bunch of varied experiences.

A few homeless people who in part of their 'philosophisation' of life reveal that human enter into this world without anything in the hand and die without taking anything with them. This, they continue to tell, makes them not to own anything. Their owning nothing is not a curse, but they visualize it as their choice. "I am happy to be like this", tells each one of these philosophers. "I am happier even than the people who own many thing", there is no letting themselves down.

Especially, some of these 'philosophizing' homeless people touch the extremes by saying "Even if some relatives/family members/friends approach me with an offer to help, I deny them". They want to make it sure that they can manage the life by themselves. Thus 'philosophizing' seems to be the easy way to cope up with the abnormality of their life.

But this type of people is really very few and the other homeless people, who can not 'philosophize' the life, need to find out hard ways to move along with homelessness.

Next comes the usage of drugs. This is another major technique used by the homeless people to get out of the space and time that visualize them as homeless. There are different varieties of intoxicants ranging from beedi, tobacco to liquor, ganja, etc., When they are in the state of intoxicated, they feel themselves of entering into a different sphere, which temporarily destroy the fact that they are homeless. Interestingly, this usage of drugs creates a kind of group cohesiveness among the users, which is again a bonus to resist with the lonely nature of homeless life.

Recreational activities, to a small extent, try to pave the way for coping up with homelessness. There are some important recreational activities which create happiness for a short duration in the long days and nights of homeless, such as, street plays, going for movies, listening to radio and sometimes even watching television by standing in front of any shop. But, these recreational activities are not much effective as the usage of drugs.

A major proportion of the homeless people, when they can not 'philosophize' their lives, can not get themselves intoxicated by using any substance or when they can not console themselves with recreational activities, tries to stay under the shelter of 'pseudo spirituality'. By 'pseudo spirituality' we mean the attitude that makes the 'Fate' and 'God' as the responsible factors for whatever is happening in the life. ("Religion is the opium of man" – Marx). This kind of spirituality or belief helps them to 'go on' with the mantra of just two words, "It happens".

'Relationships' are another factor that plays a significant role in the 'coping strategies' of homeless people. The

relationships, which they develop with other homeless people or with any other non-homeless, create a kind of belongingness (to the worldly life) in the minds of the homeless. There are several noted cases of co-habiting partners who live a kind of married life, though informally. It is only their homelessness that unites them in many instances.

Also there are a few homeless people who come out with new meanings for their homelessness, such as, homelessness as a 'Tapasya' (penance) homelessness as the need for punishing ones own self, homelessness as free and uncontrolled life, etc.,

All the discussed strategies help the 'social animals', though they are homeless, to have a 'storied' face/life. Still, most of the homeless people are miserable most of the time as they continuously fail to make these stories as their own. They have the masks that never fit on their faces, but they still cover their faces with that or at least trying to.

9.2 Personal Experiences of Field Researchers

No researcher can be unshaken by the research process. The point of neutrality in the research needs to be revised when the researchers record the changes in their attitude by involving themselves in the research process.

Our researchers also have experienced such attitudinal changes, especially those who have directly involved at the field level. Those changes may not be explained but their experiences can be recorded here. In all their meetings with the homeless people the researchers have experienced the fact, that, two different spheres coming together into the same space and time, the sphere of the researcher / non-homeless and the sphere of the homeless.

The researchers have developed their own strategies in developing relationship / building rapport with the homeless. The following are a few in common:

- The physical appearance can not be the consideration to approach the homeless people. Because, the researchers have experienced in many instances that the persons who seemed to be considerably clean and were supposed to share un-hesitantly did utter only a few words. On the other hand, the persons who were unclean / dirt or seemed to be an introvert did just pour out their story as they had been waiting for somebody to listen to their story. This made our researchers not to consider the physical appearance while selecting the homeless persons to get shared with their stories.
- The researchers used to evolve some strategies for coming out of the problematic situations if such things happen. Some initial incidents in which they got into problems with pimps and drunkards have made them to envision such situations and be ready with the strategies to come out. Finally they decided to avoid visiting the places where these kind of problematic people are in sight.
- Initially our researchers were accompanied by their friends while visiting the homeless people. This is believed to make them feel a kind of extended strength in facing an entirely new circumstance / sphere of life.
- One of our researchers used to observe the homeless people for a whole day before visiting them. This, she feels, made her to differentiate the favourable or unfavourable response from the part of homeless.

- Our researchers preferred to meet the homeless people who are in group as at least one of them will favourably respond while approaching. Also, it is possible to approach the entire group through this initial respondent. These kind of favourable respondents are usually the informal leaders of that particular group and they help the researchers to move easily into their spheres.
- One of our researchers speaks very less in the initial meeting with the homeless people, as she feels; speaking much may reduce the sharing interest of the homeless. Both our researchers prefer to listen in the initial meetings.
- While they meet with the homeless, our researchers try to enter into the time and space of the former. They are very much careful not to consider 'others'. This exclusion of 'others' gives them the strength to overcome the abnormality of the situation that they are in. Also, one of our researchers feels that the prayers give her the strength to move on.

When they come back from the fields, our researchers were mindful in recording some of their experiences with and observations about the homeless.

The homeless people expect some kind of financial benefits from the researchers in the initial stages. But, once if the relationship has been built, they never accept even something is given to them; rather, they offer something (tea, etc.,) to the researchers to show their hospitality. In one incident, a homeless person, who is also a respondent to our research, happened to lose all his belongings (some clothes and very few vessels) as somebody has stolen them. He shared this incident with one of our researchers. By being empathetic with his sorrow, our researcher offered him some money to buy vessels. But the homeless denied the offer and told the researcher that he can somehow manage the situation and he does not want the difficulty to be shared by the researcher. The researcher also remembered that his statement was made not out of any self-esteem/ pride but of love.

There are still one or two homeless people who would speak only if they are given some money.

Apart from listening to the words of the homeless, our researchers were also being very careful in taking notes of the emotions, expressions and gestures of the respondents. These observations reflect in the case studies that they write.

Though the researchers are very much careful in avoiding drunkards, they never hesitate to meet the homeless, with whom a good rapport is built, even if they are drunk or being intoxicated. Whenever there were incidents in which the researchers happened to be with the group of homeless people, who smoke 'cannabis' the latter took care of not to blow the smoke in the direction of the researchers. They also cared not to hurt the researchers by their strange behaviours. Their having such manners was a surprise to the researchers.

Many of the homeless people highly value the meetings with our researchers. They are happy that there is somebody to listen to their story in the first instance. When one such respondent was not well, one of our researchers happened to visit him again. She got some biscuits to offer to the ill. She then remembered the brightness that the small biscuit pack made in the face of that old man. More than a means of data collection, the meetings were the instances where the homeless people have felt a kind of being taken care.

For one of our researchers, Madurai is the home town. Conscious of being noticed by some known persons was always there, she feels, in the backdrop which again distracted her concentration. She added that, even this small distraction can be avoided if she happened to work in other cities.

When she was new to the field, one of our researchers was introduced to some of the homeless people by the other. In one such incident she happened to meet with an old man and an old woman. She then only talked with the old man and left the place. But, the very next day when she went to meet the old woman, the latter complained about not taking notice of her during the last day's visit. Our researcher got shocked and realized the importance that the homeless people attach to the mere/so called 'data collection' meetings.

Still there are many homeless people expect the researchers to visit them regularly and express their wish to the researchers.

In another such 'field introduction' visit, both our researchers happened to visit some homeless people who were already known to one of them. But they were hesitant in talking to the researchers and somehow managed to avoid the conversation from happening. Next time when he visited them again they happened to complain about him getting a girl with him during the last visit. They told him that the others may think badly about them if they are being visited by girls. Our researcher was surprised at their giving importance to others' opinion.

The homeless people develop a kind of personal relationship with the researchers which they can not build with the other homeless and thus they also start sharing their grievances about other homeless people with whom they live.

One of our researchers noted down an interesting change that she found out in her relatives and friends as they have started noticing the homeless people, which they never did before, so as to help her out in the research process. At the least they informed her about the places where she can find out homeless people.

The researchers have some interesting observations to make about the homeless:

- they never hesitate to drink tea whenever and wherever it is available.
- they have their own way of healing themselves.
- they have their own justifications for not taking bath.
- many of them are very much hospitable that they offer separate sheets to sit with them.
- there is less sharing happens within their group.
- some people does not even know the name of the persons sitting next to them.
- many of their quarrels are due to 'money' factor.
- some people are always being frustrated upon life and thus angry towards others.

Both the researchers have the feel that there are many things to be learnt from the homeless, especially the proverbs that they use while conversing. The proverbs are very short to explain the realities of life, remembers one.

Finally, both the researchers accepted that they are not what they were a few months ago and they accredit their involvement in this research as the main reason behind the change (despite all the problems that they faced in these few months).

10 Storied Moments of Homeless Life

10.1 Subramani

As it received thousands of people each day, Madurai junction also received Subramani, but not as a guest.

In the midst of the poor who worry for not having footwear, Subramani was standing without a leg. A nearby cobbler advised him to sit there and to spread a towel in front of him, as it may help him to earn his livelihood.

Though his mind refused to do that, his unfilled stomach compelled him to do so. He started begging without uttering a word. Gradually he became inventive with more words for begging and thus responded to his empty stomach.

The passing time provided him with different relationships, of which some are true and many are fake and spiritless. Street sex-workers were also in that lists. It is then one such girl who asked him for a smoke and he gave a beedi, which was kept, shoved above his ear. She took that beedi and also nonchalantly the two rupees which was there in his towel. She moved towards a public toilet.

On seeing this happening for another day, his cobbler now expressed his anxiety for not stopping the girl from taking away the money that Subramani earned by begging. But Subramani did not care about that and said that the girl might be having some financial difficulties. That is him...

He just stared at his empty towel and then the street. He saw Karuppai, another old woman begging on the street. He also saw her getting insulted by a person by shouting at her as a nuisance.

Karuppai with a painful heart and also with the disturbing thoughts of being ignored by her family moved from that place and came to Subramani. Her defective eyesight tried hard to locate Subramani. He then helped her to find him by raising his voice.

She asked Subramani to get her some food as she did not earn anything that day. The exchange of food between these two is quite usual at times when any one of them fails to earn it from their day long begging.

The mercury light was competing with the moonlight and the two hearts started having their food under the empty sky.

“Why don’t you go to your place for sometime and eat good food there?”, asked Subramani.

“I wish to go but my sister’s daughter-in-law will treat me indifferently and thus I am hesitant to go there”, she replied disgustedly.

The conversation continued even after they finished their supper.

“For a long time I have been thinking to ask you. Which is your place? How did you come here?”, Karuppai started enquiring about Subramani.

“Oh! God! I have been here for the last six months. Finally today you had the mind to know about me”

“I could not sleep as this street light is bright. So I thought of listening to your story”, Karuppaiyi responded to him by adding humour to the situation.

Subramani started his journey to the past by narrating his story.

“I studied up to ninth standard. Then I worked in a hotel for six years. My native is Bodinayackanoor and I was also engaged in some trade there. My elder brother was a teacher. We two worked hard for getting our sister married to a good family”, the story went on.

But the enthusiastic Karuppaiyi was cross questioning him, “How did you lose your leg?”.

The story got diverted and he started narrating about his losing leg, “I got a small wound in my leg which was not getting cured for a long time. I took some indigenous medicines which brought some negative effects. It was a wrong medicine. Then I went to the Government hospital in Madurai and got treated for nearly four years. There was a nurse in that hospital, who was very caring about me. Suddenly one day she asked me whether I could marry her. I took her to my home and got married. I was temporarily cured off my illness. But the wound was still expanding. In the mean time my mother-in-law came to our place with lot of people to threaten me and took her daughter back to their home. I was not much worried as both my marriage and parting happened without my initiation. I consoled myself. I went to the Doctor again. He advised that only removal of one of my legs was the solution since it was serious. A sister of the church helped me financially to get it operated. I continued my trade with an artificial leg. It was then we brothers started having some conflicts. When there was a big conflict I decided to come out of the house and thus reached this destination”.

“What was that conflict about?”, Karuppaiyi still preserve her enthusiasm.

“He wanted to donate our house to the temple. I argued for giving it to our sister and thus it went on and ended up in a big conflict”, Subramani finished narrating his story and asked Karuppaiyi about her past.

“I am tired today. I will tell you on another occasion”, Karuppaiyi got ready for her sleep.

Subramani noticed some policemen patrolling and got alerted. He asked Karuppaiyi to sit for some more time. She did the same by murmuring something. The police crossed and then and did never forget to shout at them to sleep without blocking the way.

“I am getting a sort of itching over the body nowadays. Even if I go to the Government hospital, they are very keen to get rid of me and thus give some tablets without examining the illness. I don’t know what to do for this itching?”, Karuppaiyi found some words to describe her illness and continued to scratch her body.

“You should take bath at least once in a day. Bathing once in a week will not help this”, Subramani started advising her.

“Oh, you always persuade to take bath. Fine, I no more have any itching. You please stop advising. Eating food itself

is a difficult task in this life and who will give the two rupees to take bath. Will you? I should have not talked with you”, she turned her face. As if reminded, she enquired about the time with a person who passed by.

“It’s twelve midnight”, responded the man.

She once again got ready to sleep as she needed to wake up before five o’clock in the morning so as not to be disturbed by the police.

Subramani moved to his place, as he saw her sleeping. He felt a deep happiness as there was somebody to listen to his story. He might have lost his address but this undercurrent of compassion which rules their relation may help him restore himself.

10.2 Subbiah

It was an evening with most of the people in their hurries. Subbiah was responding with his silence for all the thousands questions raised by Ravi who was in an intoxicated state.

A typical parental response...

Subbiah has to bear with all these problems whenever he happens to meet Ravi in this state. It was the same happening on that day. Ravi started playing with Subbiah’s patience.

“Hey Dad! I heard that you are not allowing anybody to walk peacefully in this way. All of them are complaining to me. Why do you still in this world?”, asked Ravi.

“Mmh... why won’t you tell that?! I have brought you up, trained you in the work and then by thinking that I ought not to disturb and be a burden to you, I came out of the house and started staying here. You should scold me more for doing this...”, Subbiah responded painfully.

“Stop... stop there. You did not get me the Collector’s job. Oh! Leave that now, how much money do you have now?” the son started the strategy to snatch the money from the poor father.

“I myself am begging for my livelihood. Don’t you feel ashamed to take it from me? I don’t even have a penny today. Look...” he showed his shirt pocket to his son.

“I don’t believe you. Unfold the sleeves of your shirt...” asked the son as a CBI officer.

“Why are you so greedy? You earn 200 rupees a day and still want to snatch the little money from me. Go... go home... your children will be waiting for you without eating”, Subbiah continued to be the father.

“Stop advising me, I am not going to move from this place. I also want to know what you can do if I am standing here”, and the son continued to stand there.

The people standing in the platform were noticing the conversation. By feeling ashamed of this and by getting angry due to Ravi’s action, Subbiah started shouting at him. “Go away from this place”.

“Oh! It’s ok... See you tomorrow”, the son moved from that place at last.

Subbiah sighed with a great relief and started spreading his sack over the floor to sleep. He had forgotten about his supper.

He covered himself with another sack to protect him from mosquitoes and the rain. Though it started drizzling, he was not much bothered about that and continued his sleep.

All the street lights went off due to the rain and the courage that Subbiah had to face the challenges was still bright in that darkness.

He woke up earlier in the morning. After finishing the daily routines he started waiting for the sunlight to get his clothes dried.

His appetite was going up as he ate nothing in the night. He then moved towards ‘Annai Illam’ to get his food.

Not located far away from where Subbaiah sleeps, Annai Illam is a home for the orphaned children run by Christian Missionaries. However, even Subbiah is welcome there to eat there once in a while.

The sister besides providing food, asked him about his absence last night and also the reason for being late in that morning.

“Yeah, I managed to sleep with hunger last night and this morning I had to wait for the sunlight to dry my clothes”
“Why don’t you sleep under some roof in front of any shops when it rains? Who will look after you if you get affected by fever?”, asked the sister with lot of care.

“I don’t care about walking under the hot sun or sleeping under the raining sky. Nothing will happen to me even if you drop a rock on my head. We in our childhood ate more nutritious food without going after the taste as you do now. Even if I get such diseases, I can manage to get cured of them”, he was replying haughtily, though half-mockingly.

“I can’t win you by arguing”, the sister became silent and provided him the food.

After finishing the breakfast he searched in his baggage and found not even a penny in that. He then started begging for that day. When his earnings reached ten rupees by the afternoon, he sat down in a place and started observing the happenings around him.

He also has a habit of talking to himself. He wanted to laugh at the boys who were running after girls in the streets.

He felt hurt when many persons who know him passed by without noticing him. Suddenly he has to raise his head to look at the person who addressed him. “Hello brother! How are you?” the man enquired Subbiah. But he could not recognize the man and thus stared at him.

“Hey brother, three years ago we were together for some days in Thallakulam”, said the stranger.

“Oh! Kandhasamy!” recognized Subbiah. He continued, “I am fine due to God’s grace. How are you?”, Subbiah tried

to recollect his memories of being with him.

“I am also fine. I have to move now. See you sometime later” and the man moved from that place.

Subbiah felt a great pleasure, as there is somebody to enquire for his well being and became proud of having such friends. He then started again his usual human watching.

He saw people bowing down while crossing a particular place in that street. There was a Lord Ganesh temple. He explained himself why the Lord Ganesh got that local name (Pillaiyar). As he was alone he could relate only with himself. And he finds peace in talking to himself. He also had a fear that others will call him crazy once if he happened to share his own perceptions with them. That made him to talk less to others. When he felt a kind of discomfort by sitting under the hot sun, he thought of taking bath and started walking towards the river.

On his way to river he happened to see a police man blocking a man with a two-wheeler and getting bribed for not having a driving license. This made him to think that people are more concerned with others' fault and never care about their own.

He neared the river and saw the riverbed with full of grass. He then looked at the multistoried buildings on the river banks. His eyes journeyed between the two. He told unto himself, “The banks got filled with the buildings and thus the riverbed got filled with grass”.

There was a thin muddled stream in the middle of the river. He took bath in that and returned to his place. He went to the shop where he used to buy cigarettes. This is the only bad habit that he can not give up, but can reduce.

He gave two rupees to the shop keeper and asked for two ‘Scissors’. A known person there teased him, “Hey Old man, do you use drugs?”

“No I have stopped it”

“Why do you buy ‘Scissors’ always?”, the questioning continued.

“Filter cigarettes cost much and I am also getting old. So I may not be able to live my life in the way I like”. He then moved from that place to go to ‘Annai Illam’ for taking his lunch.

While returning to his place he saw Kanakavel – a well-wishing passer-by, who always pays attention to Subbiah – and enquired, “Hello sir, How are you”.

“Fine, how are you? Asked Kanakavel.

“I am fine”, nodded Subbiah.

“Tomorrow is independence day. Do you have any plan to go somewhere?”

“What kind of independence is this? We were slaves to the British then and are slaves to the politicians now. Nobody cares for the other and run only after money...”, Subbiah started lecturing about the degradation of the society as he sees it.

“Why are you so pessimistic? Don’t you have anybody in this area to care for you?”, Kanakavel tried to cool him down.

Subbiah pointed a shop in front of them, “That shop owner stopped his watchman from the work, as I am here and never allow any theft to take place in this street. His shop is safe in the nights as I am here. But he has never thought of getting me even a single tea. Let us leave him as he is a third person. Take the case of my son. He was so obedient to me when he was getting trained under me as a mason. But today he does not hesitate even a fraction of second to beat me black and blue. He never even does offer any help to me. Money is the sole factor which brings respect and relations in this world. I am afraid that even the mirror may not reflect your image if you happened to stand before it without any money. Somehow I managed to live in this material world. I live only because I believe that committing suicide is against God. I would be very happy to die if he calls me back... even now”.

It was an act of pouring the emotions into the words.

Kanakavel gave him five rupees and readied to move. Subbiah wished him again a Good day with more respect.

Subbiah got back to his worries of living in the streets as an old man. His lips started translating the emotions of his heart and his nodding listened to those words. That is the only weapon that Subbiah could use against the people who ignore his emotions, talking to himself. The talking continued... more deeply...

10.3 Manikandan

There was the day’s rush on the street. Still, one could clearly listen to the voice of Manikandan, who was again in the same place to sell his plastic products. The day was in its early morning hours. A policeman neared him and shouted, “Don’t you have sense? How many times I have told you that you should not sell your products here?”. Manikandan was a little aback, still managed to have a dry smile on his face. He searched his empty pocket and managed to get some thirty rupees. He gave it to the policeman. There was a bearable silence then; the policeman went away by ensuring that he would come the next day.

This is how he has managed to live on the streets for the last eight years. He then called his wife to say, “It is already late for the school, go and drop Vidya in the school”. Divya is their daughter, who is in second class. The sales continued. It stopped only when he felt unbearable hunger. He went to a nearby shop to get two packets of curd rice which he shared with his wife and another small kid who is just two years old.

By the time they finished their food, there appeared a person in white tidy look. “Salaam saab! To day’s sale is very poor. I haven’t earned much. I will definitely give the money tomorrow. Please...”, he pleaded to the new man. “You are telling the same thing everyday. If you continue to do this, I will also come to the streets like you. Anyhow I will come tomorrow, make it sure that you pay the interest at least”, said and went the man.

It was late evening when he finished that day’s affair and set back to their ‘one wall’ house to relax. He started smoking. His memorable and pleasant past was flying inside his dreaming eyes. His daughter put an end to his dreams. “Pappa I am hungry”. He came back to the present and took his daughter to a nearby teashop. A man who was in decent looks moved a bit when he saw these father and daughter standing near to him. The teashop owner noticed this and thus shouted at Manikandan, “Hey, come this side. I will give you the tea. Stand in that corner”. He

could just bury his anger which arose of the strange look of the people around. He then also got some idlis for the whole family's supper. He ate some four idlis in and went to the temple in a hurry. "Why are you so late?", the temple authority was in anger, "Quickly clean the premises". Manikandan acted immediately, started sweeping the premises. It was almost 11 o'clock in the night when he finished his cleaning work. "Come earlier tomorrow", told the temple authority before leaving.

Manikandan came back to his residing place. The single blanket was used by his wife and children. He lied down on the floor without having anything to spread over. He slept. He was not very much bothered about the mosquito bites and noisy vehicles as he was tired of the day's hard work.

He woke up in the early morning. He went to the public toilet with the whole family. "Hi Mani, why are you so early today?", asked the man in public toilet. "Yeah, as it is Sunday today, we thought we will go to our house in keeranur". (It is a far off village from Madurai city). They went to their village after taking bath.

It was a small thatched hut, which they had to say as their house. They were again aloof in their village. No relatives visit them. Uma, his wife started talking, "It is only because of me you are suffering. You should have not married me. Your relatives would have been there for you then". Theirs was an inter-caste marriage. "Don't talk idiotically. The relatives would automatically come if we have a little money", he consoled his wife.

He asked his wife to feed the children. He had gutka to kill the appetite. He fell asleep again. There were again those dreams of memorable past with few more on the desirable future. This time it was an ant which reminded him of the present. He woke up suddenly and started worrying about bringing up his two children, repaying the old debts, etc.,

He could not sleep after that. He came out of their hut. Walked with his barefoot without knowing where he goes. 'God must be having some ways for us', was the only hope that he had at that time.

10.4 Hanifa

"Don't sit here. Go away from this place", it was a policeman chasing out the people on that platform. He also neared Hanifa. "Hey oldman, I have told you many times that you should not sit on this platform. It is for people to walk. Go away or I may need to use my stick to speak". Hanifa is a leprosy patient. He could not move so fast to respond to the policeman. Still, he obliged and moved away from that place. He has lost most of his fingers and it was really hard for him to move. He tried to sit in front of a hotel. But the shop owner started shouting at him. "Hey don't sit here. There is no business since the morning. If you sit here no people would come into the hotel". Hanifa had to move again and finally retired in a place near to drainage. Flies and mosquitoes were just haunting over his wounded limbs. He was almost used to this pain and thought only about the place for that night's sleep.

It was 11 o'clock in the night and he noticed the book shop getting closed on the other side of the road. He waited till the owner moved far away from the sight. He then occupied the place under the shop ledge. He could not sleep. His heart was full of burden of the past. He started thinking about his past life.

He lived as a family-man for more than 30 years. When the leprosy started showing its first signs, his children started hesitating to near him. His wife went beyond by saying him to leave the home as their children would not get married if he stays back. His mother could not help him at that moment. He then had to take the hard decision to leave the

home. He boarded a train from his home town, which again dropped him in a remote station of Kerala. Actually he got down there by choice as he felt the situation there a bit calm and consoling. He gradually resorted into alms taking for securing his food.

Language was not a barrier for him to earn his livelihood. He stayed there for nearly four years. When he had saved a quite good money, he came to Madurai and went for his treatment in Government hospital. The doctors there advised to operate his fingers off as otherwise he might lose his life. He accepted only to retain his living moments. His fingers were removed. He now had to come back to alms taking and this time it was in the Central railway station of Madurai. The income was very less when compared to Kerala, still he managed. He then came to know about a hospital in a nearby town, which provides special treatment to leprosy patients. He saved little money again and went there to get treated. He could recover his health somehow.

Now it is the longing to visit his family disturbed his days. Finally he boarded into a bus to go to his home. He had some 1500 rupees that he earned in all those days.

He could not go into his house due to his hesitation and thus sat in a hut in their farm premises. One of his relatives came to him by that time, “Good that you came. Your daughter is going to get married in three days. It is your wife who sent me here by knowing that you have reached. Have you brought any money with you?”. It was completely an economic deal. Hanifa gave the money that he took with himself. The man after getting the little money, with an unsatisfied face, instructed Hanifa, “Anyhow it won’t be good if you stay back here. It may create some problem in the course of marriage. Your wife also feels that it would be better if you leave immediately from here”.

Hanifa was angry but did not know on whom/what it should be shown. All his dreams of visiting his house withered away. He went back to that old railway station of Kerala. He earned a little more and then reached the specialised hospital near Madurai. The treatment gradually drained his savings, and then he had no other way except coming back to Madurai railway station.

He feels that the earning in Madurai railway station is far lesser and he can not manage to get his food. He few days back had a plan to go to that railway station in Kerala. He tried entering the Madurai railway station for few times, but the police never allowed him to go inside.

His plan was a failure and now he has the only resort, which is to stay back in Madurai. Some days he gets food provided for free and some days not. It is the exclusion from the society which makes him to feel lonelier. The physical illness is now slipping into a kind of mental illness.

10.5 Selvi

The artificial make-up and those gesturing eyes could easily differentiate Selvi from the crowd. The mechanical smile hailed that she is a commercial sex worker. People crossed in front of her with a mean look. She never bothered all these but was waiting for a probable customer. She finally got the fish bitten the pray. She gestured with her hands two and half, but the man agreed upon two, i.e., two hundred. Selvi now called her autowala friend and asked him to drop them in a nearby lodge. She was but careful to get into the auto after it crossed the police station. “Otherwise I had to pay him a hundred”, she said.

While getting down from the auto she asked the new companion to pay for the auto and another 100 for the room in

the lodge. "It will not be a part of that 200", she reminded her customer.

The person left the place after an hour by paying her 200 rupees. She from there directly went to a wine shop. She gave the shop keeper a 100 rupees note and asked for 'old monk', a cheaper rum. She had to then use abuse words towards them who were teasing her act. She spared no minutes when she got the bottle. She opened it in a hurry and drank it raw, without mixing anything. The shop keeper advised her not to drink it as raw, it may affect the health. "The whole life is in its darker side, who cares about the health then?", she was not ready to take that advise. "This is the only enjoyment I have in my life, don't advise on this", she told the shopkeeper and left the place.

This time she was on the way to her platform near railway station. She stays there. The liquor was functioning at high spirits. She could not walk steadily. She felt the vehicles are running away from her with a great fear. She still managed to reach her residing place at railway platform.

She met her friend Mariamma there, who is also a sex worker. "It seems you have got a good customer, your walk is so steady", teased Mariamma. "Of course, what happened to you? You are still with full make-up, seems that you had no customer yet?", responded Selvi.

Mariamma was in a great despair of her getting old and unable to attract customers. She nodded with a great despair. Selvi then gave her twenty rupees and asked her to eat some food. "By the time you come back, I will get two 'Packets' from Pitchai". Pitchai is a homeless beggar who supplies, Ganja, the so called 'Packets' to these two friends.

She went to Pitchai from there, "Hey old man, what happened? Your eyes are so reddish, it seems you have smoked off all the money that you have begged today?". Pitchai could not bear this comment. He refuted, "Your condition is not so better than me. You are drunk with the money that you earned by selling your body". There was silence for some time before they two came to terms.

"Why you didn't go to the film today?", asked the old man. "I thought I would listen to your radio", she answered and asked for the packets. Before giving her the packets, the old man shares the rumour with her, "You know! Our Mallika is in love with that 'auto' Muthu". Selvi got irritated by listening to this. "Don't talk to me about love. It is only because that bloody love I happened to be here on the streets".

"Did you love someone?", the old man was curious to know. "I told you don't ask. I was eighteen at that time. I ran away from my house with that rascal and married him. He was with me to enjoy the sweet moments but left after I had two children".

"Where are your children now?", there was the next question. "I was then in Trichy, already into prostitution. There was an auto driver who was caring me and I lived with him for few years. He got my children joined in a hostel. They are still there in his guardianship".

"Why did you leave Trichy then?", asked him again. "He was then in a financial crisis. I had to engage myself again in sex work. In between I was arrested for alleged prostitution and spent four months in jail. Even after getting released from the jail, the police disturbed me a lot for bribes. I could not survive there and finally decided to come to Madurai", Selvi ended her story.

"That is the entire story, now give me the packets". She was again into the same tone. She was in a hurry when got

the packets. She put the stuff into a beedi and started smoking. It was enough to make her asleep. She slept on the very platform. When she woke up in the next morning, she had a slight headache. She then thought of taking a tea. While going to the teashop, she suddenly realized that another 100 rupees, which she kept in the jacket was missing. She had no one to complain against and no one to help her out. "What is lost is lost", she consoled herself. She asked the teashop owner to put that in her account, a deal of credit. While taking her tea she saw that same man of previous night crossing without noticing her. She after a while realized that she was not in her make-up at that time. She had smile spreading on her lips. It was a kind of pretext for that night and another strange man to come...

11 Annexure

11.1 Madurai High Court Order and its Consequences

S. Annamalai from Madurai

ON March 26, the Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court directed the Commissioner of Police, Madurai, to “strictly implement the provisions of the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Begging Act of 1945” without waiting for further notifications from the State government.

The order was passed while disposing of a writ petition filed under Article 226 of the Constitution by a city advocate, D. Muruganantham, seeking this direction. What followed was a series of activities aimed not only at eliminating begging but also at identifying and rehabilitating people who have been forced to live on the sidelines - without food, shelter and care.

As police and other officials tried to identify and classify those seeking alms, civil society attempted to find an answer to questions such as “Can begging be treated as a crime?”, “Can it be eradicated by enforcement of the law alone?”, “Is it a necessary evil?”, and “Are we not forcing more and more people to the fringes of existence by adopting increasingly exclusive policies?”

But the most important concern was about the relevance of a law passed during British rule, at a time when courts are asserting the individual’s right to live with dignity and right to basic necessities of life.

The answers to some of these questions could be found among those uprooted from their habitations by a system that wants only the able-bodied to enjoy the fruits of civilization - a system that adds new groups to marginalised populations. A predominantly rural southern Tamil Nadu is dependent on agriculture for sustenance. Failures of successive monsoons, the delay in restoring the original level of the Mullaperiyar dam, depleting groundwater table, and urbanisation have made agriculture unviable.

Migration to industrial centres such as Tirupur and Erode is common in Sivaganga and Ramanathapuram districts. Those who cannot move out come to Madurai in search of employment. The absence of big industries - Madurai’s industries are clusters of small units that fight for survival - is another reason for the lack of employment opportunities.

In the absence of any means to earn a livelihood, people from agrarian families in rural areas take to begging.

It should be said to the credit of the city police that the drive against beggars was carried out with a humane touch. Police Commissioner A. Subramanian deputed women police personnel to undertake a ‘socio-economic survey’ before enforcing the provisions of the 1945 Act. The survey categorised the people on the streets as able-bodied, mentally unstable and those causing nuisance.

After identifying about 320 people, the next phase, of segregation, took place. Those not creating nuisance were let out on bail. Some were fined Rs.50 each. Those who were sound mentally and physically were arrested and sent to the Government Rehabilitation Home at Melappakkam in Chennai. The mentally unstable ones were left untouched.

A few destitutes were handed over to the Mother Teresa Home.

Before the court order, these people could be seen near places of worship and at bus stands, at the railway station and on busy roads. Their absence is conspicuous now. Many of them have migrated to nearby places such as Palani, Tiruchendur and Kodaikanal.

The exercise put the district administration and the police on a proactive mode. Says Subramanian: “Our objective is to make this ancient city free of begging. All our energies will be channelled towards rehabilitating these unfortunate people. If our plan works, Madurai can emerge as a model in containing begging.”

The plan formulated by the police, along with District Collector S.S. Jawahar, is to house the alms-seekers in unused Corporation buildings. Arrangements have already been made to provide them medical care, clothes and basic amenities. But there is no arrangement for the supply of food. The district administration plans to form self-help groups of destitute people and orphans in order to link them to existing rehabilitation schemes.

Although there was no physical resistance to the drive, it brought both relief and concern. Relief because Madurai can now claim to be a ‘tourist-friendly’ destination in the absence of pestering beggars and it will mean an end to the cruel exploitation of women and children. The concern is over whether it will be possible to eradicate begging by enforcing a piece of legislation.

Henri Diben, executive director, People’s Watch-Tamil Nadu, a Madurai-based human rights organisation, questions the implementation of the “archaic law”. “How will it match with today’s concept of right to life?” he asked. In the 1987 case Prabhakaran Nair vs State of Tamil Nadu, the Supreme Court held that the right to shelter is a Fundamental Right guaranteed under Article 21. In Olga Tellis vs Union of India (1986), Chief Justice Y.V. Chandrachud observed that “the right to life includes the right to livelihood.... If the right to livelihood is not treated as a part of the constitutional right to life, the easiest way of depriving a person of his right to life would be to deprive him of his means of livelihood to the point of abrogation.”

“Begging is a social issue, and we should not criminalise poverty,” Henri says. He is against the concept of detention homes as they do not allow people to live as dignified citizens. Any rehabilitation effort should restore the dignity of the individual. People take to begging as an extreme step to keep themselves alive. The policies now pursued vigorously are bound to marginalise more and more people from mainstream society and they will have no other option other than to settle down in urban centres and seek alms, according to Henri. He says that all poverty alleviation programmes should make these people, who have been displaced from their moorings, the main beneficiaries.

Madurai, owing to its geographical location, has become a dumping yard of people not wanted in their homes. Mentally deranged persons and the old and the infirm are left to fend for themselves on the city’s streets. Of course, a group of exploiters exists along with genuine seekers of alms. This group goes to the extent of “hiring” children from pavement dwellers for begging.

Runaway children from villages are easy prey. These children get so attached to the exploiter that it is difficult to restore them to their biological parents, says S. James, founder of Nanban, a centre for street and working children. This non-governmental organisation has rescued over 500 child-beggars in the past 17 years in Madurai city alone. As they grow up, these children often come into contact with criminal gangs.

“From begging, they are forced to indulge in bag lifting,” James says. The centre has placed the rescued children in vocations and got the girls married off. It can be said that the drive against begging has brought into focus the relevance of the Tamil Nadu Prevention of Begging Act, 1945, which exists because nobody has challenged it in a court of law.

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Source: http://www.worldproutassembly.org/archives/2007/04/caring_caterer.html

11.2 A Brief account of Few Interviews conducted

11.2.1 Akshaya Trust – Mr. N. Krishnan

Akshaya Trust is working for the urban homeless people in Madurai from the last 5 years. Akshaya trust knows almost all the aspect of the life of these people and how they live.

Reasons for Homelessness

There are mainly three reasons for homelessness. They are,

- 1) Poverty: Because of poverty many are leaving their home for various reasons like in search of a job, for a better life, etc.
- 2) Drugs: When the people are addicted by drugs, they may not be able to live a normal life. In this situation they may not be able to cope up with their family and leave their home, reach in some cities and earn their livelihood by begging and use that money for bringing drugs? In this case for them, this life style is comfortable.
- 3) Circumstances: Because of different circumstances like, problems in the family, economic and other social problem they are leaving home or they are driven out by other family members.

Homeless Population in Madurai City

Total population of homeless in Madurai is about 300, but it varies. In this 100 are able bodied people. The rest have some kind of physical on mental problem or they are very old. Akshaya trust provides three time food for these people.

What you think of homeless people

It is not right to say generally about homeless people. There are abled bodied homeless and disabled bodied homeless. In the case of abled bodied homeless they are lazy and are cheating the society, we should never consider them. In the case of disabled bodied homeless, they include, mentally retarded, physically handicapped, those who are suffering from chronicle illness, and old people. It is not the guilty of these people, but various circumstances led them to this condition. They are also “Human beings”, they also should treat equally as any other human being.

Strategies to Deal with Homeless People

There are a lot of strategies to deal with the homeless people. Strategies differ from person to person, according to their problems. But generally the strategies are, to treat them with love and affection, non discriminating approach, be very close to them, knowing them very well and on the basis of their mental condition treating them.

Do homeless people exploit public sympathy?

It is not true to say that the physically unfit and mentally ill people exploit public sympathy. But the able bodied homeless people exploit public sympathy.

Is it because of any sin that they are like this and do you think they are sinners?

They are not at all sinners they are more good hearted than others people. There are various reasons that they became like this, it cannot be connected with sin and they cannot be called as sinners.

Life Style

The life style differs from person to person. The life style of those who are living in group will differ from that of those who live individually age wise also there is difference in life style. In the case of mentally retarded people their life style will be entirely different, they are not living the life of a human being, and they are living like animals and the people also treating them like that. As Akshaya trust is working from the last 5 years what are the changes came in these people.

There is not much changes in the life or life style in the large portion of homeless people. But in the case of mentally retarded people there are lot of improvement and changes. Earlier the mentally retarded people were aggressive, it was very difficult to approach them. But now almost all of them have become calm. Earlier they never used to wash their hand before eating food, but now by regular practice they are washing their hands before taking food. It is very important to say that Akshaya trust is able to bring three mentally retarded people in to normality and now they are living a normal life.

Have you attempted to safeguard them?

No, it is not so easy to safeguard them. There are lots of issue and problems for the homeless people. It is not possible to solve it issue by issue or problem by problem. What is needed is a complete solution for all the problems and issues. If we go issue or problem basis it will leads to lot of other complications.

How you are helping them?

Akshaya trust provide, three time food to the homeless people other than able bodied people. It is like breakfast for 200, lunch for 200 and dinner for 200. Per day it costs about 8000 rupees and the fund will be collected from anybody who comes out to help these people.

Do you envision any kind of rehabilitation to reduce homelessness?

Yes, Akshaya trust is going to construct a shelter for all the homeless people other than abled bodied person living in Madurai city by next year. In this way Akshaya trust is going to extent it's services. By rehabilitating them Akshaya will be able to focus on all other aspect of the homeless than providing them only food. By rehabilitating them Akshaya will be able to focus on their food, health, physical and mental development, protection from all their problems and more over a very loveable an peaceful environment to live.

11.2.2 St. Joseph Development Trust

St. Joseph Development trust is an NGO mainly focusing on children and child issues in Madurai St. Joseph Development Trust is working from last one year. Here they focus of street and uncare children. They provides food and shelter to them and also support in education.

Reasons for Homelessness

The important reasons for homelessness are:

- 1) Rural people coming out from their villages to the cities in search of job. But they may not get a job as easily as they think, they may not be in a position to go back to their home, so they stay back here.
- 2) Family problems: Because of the problems of family they may not stay with their family member, and they leave the home.
- 3) Poverty: Because of poverty and related problems, it will become impossible for them to stay in home so they will come out of home or because of poverty and debt they may lose their home.
- 4) Torture: Because of torture from other family member, and other communities people leave their places and become homeless.

Government Laws and Policies for Homeless

There are lot of laws and policies existing. Human rights give equal rights to all human beings. Child right consider all children are equal and should get equal opportunity. But in reality, “the government officials closed all the laws in shelf”. Laws are their in the shelf no one is practicing it or no body is caring about it. If NGOs come out with good suggestions and solutions also they are not ready to help they are turning their faces from the NGOs.

Homeless people are problematic or not?

Yes, Homeless people are problematic. Some or the other way they are disturbing the public and the society. In the same way the public also are creating problems to them. Normally public used to behave them brutally and mercilessly.

Strategies to deal with homeless people

St. Joseph Development trust is dealing only with a portion of homeless, that is street children. It is not that easy to deal with them it includes some strategies like:

- Visiting them frequently.
- Taking other street children in the camp and meeting them.
- Giving counseling to them.

When they come to the shelter of St. Joseph development trust, they can stay there and will get three time food. They will also be supported for their education.

Lifestyle of the Homeless

Lifestyle of all the homeless is not the same. It will differ on the basis of their physical and mental fitness, age group, whether they live as group or individual etc. Generally it cannot be said that the life style of these people are good. It is also true to say that they do not have a particular life style, they are facing the life as it comes.

Have you helped them any way?

No, we are helping only street children. We do not have programmes for helping the entire homeless people.

Have you ever attempted to safeguard them?

The homeless may have many problems. But solving all those problems are not that easy and there are lot of limitations

in helping them government can help them or the NGOs working exclusively for homeless can help them. As St. Joseph Development trust focus on children, it is very necessary to concentrate in that area. So it will not be possible to deal the issues of homeless in general.

The solution for homeless

It is difficult to say any solution for homeless people. There are lot of laws and policies but it is not so effective. There are rehabilitation centers also, but these people likes to be in streets only. There are only few NGOs working exclusively for homeless. So NGOs should make programmes for protecting and rehabilitating them. The main problem is there is no coordination between NGOs and government. Government is not supporting NGOs as they need. There should be a joint venture from both NGOs and government, then only we can achieve some progress.

11.2.3 Police Official - Mr. K. Mohan, S.I of Police, Madurai

Mr. Mohan is working in police department from the last 32 years. In this 32 years of service, he came across lot of serious issues and problems. He say the situation before 20 years is entirely different from the present situation. These are lot of changes happened in the social, political and economic circumstances. So working conditions prior 20 year is differ from present.

Homeless People

Those are about 500 homeless people living in Madurai. The number varies from season to season.

Reason of Homelessness

Lot of reason can be cited for homelessness. But the important reasons are:

- 1) Migration: In search of job or thinking that there are lot of job opportunities incited most of the people are leaving their home and ends up in streets.
- 2) A huge portion of homeless were the people thrown out from their home, when the parents becomes old, then children may not be taking care of them and they will be thrown out from their houses by their own children. In the case of chronic diseases like mental problem, the other family members will be throwing them out from home.
- 3) Torture: Because of physical and mental torture by the parents and relatives most of the children are leaving their home. In the case of elderly people also the same thing happens.

Laws and Policies

There are many laws existing for the protection of human rights and dignity, child rights and for marginalized sections and community. Existing laws and policies are not bad, it is good enough to serve the purpose. But these laws are not at all active. If the laws come into action there should be full participation and support from all stakeholders, government, politicians, government departments and public.

Government cannot do anything with out the help and support of other stakeholders. It is true that police department is responsible department for enforcing these laws. But police is afraid of enforcing it. Because there are lot of political hands working to overcome these laws. In this respect if police wants to do something it will turn against police. So police people also do not want to take risk, “we are also human beings like you, with family, relations and all, with out this uniform we are nothing”. Public also have a very vital role to play in the practice of laws and

policies. But there is no public support in the cities to the practice of law. If something happens before their eyes, they never care. They all are busy or pretending to be busy. Begging is a crime, they know it very well then also they beg. By begging they are disturbing and irritating the public. It should be stopped. Another thing there is no coordination between government department in carrying and activities. all departments and public blames police department but never helps.

Life Style of Homeless People

Life style of homeless people is very pathetic. It is very difficult to live with out a roof over the head. It cannot be called even as life, they are living for the sake of life.

Have you helped them anyway?

Not much. It is not easy to help them, what help are unless provide them some money or food. It is not possible also to help ach and every individual. In the situation of hospital case also, if we are taking some one to hospital, the hospital people will ask somebody to stay with him / her. So nobody do not wants to take the risk.

Have you attempted to safeguard them in any occasion?

Yes, we will be safeguarding them from the problems created by the public to them. We are treating them as the members of our society, not as some unwanted creatures.

What is the solution for homeless?

There is only one solution that is rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is not the only duty of government. Government is only a partner in it. Lots of NGOs are working for the betterment of society, why they should not rehabilitate these people? They are collecting corers and corers of rupees from foreign and other sources. If they utilize those money in a proper way it will not be difficult to rehabilitate them. One NGO called 'Akshaya' is providing food to them, that is a good charity. But it is not the end or solution to the problem. For this the government and non government organizations should join together and work.

11.2.4 Sanitary Supervisor - Mr. Ganeshan - Madurai Cooperation

Mr. Ganeshan is working in this field for the last 20 years. According to him the homeless population is increasing not decreasing.

Reasons for Homelessness

These may be many reason to become a homeless. But the main reason is family problems.

Family problems: Family problems are the prime reason for the homelessness various problems like ill-treatment toward old parents, ill-treatment towards young children, physical torture, etc may lead to a person or child living his / her home. Thus they become homeless.

Migration: Many rural people are migrating to cities in search of job, but they may not get jobs / work frequently and it may not be affordable for them to stay in a lodge or hotel so they stays in the street.

Sin: Another reason is the sin done by their parents that they are suffering.

Poverty and debt traps: Poverty and diseases throws people into debt trap and in this process they will lose everything and comes to the street.

Government laws and policies

There are lot of laws, but the laws are not so effective to protect them. Some other laws should bring out to protect them.

What you think about homeless people?

Homeless people are very poor, they are living in poverty. Nobody is taking care of them. They are disturbance to the public.

Lifestyle of Homeless People

Homeless people do not have a particular life style. They will be floating from one place to another. But they live in very unclean and unhealthy circumstances. They are getting good thrice a day from NGOs.

What corporation is doing for homeless people?

What corporation can do? Or what corporation is supposed to do? There are many rehabilitation centers run by government, but they are not ready to go and stay there. Two month before all the homeless people were shifted to Chennai, rehabilitation center but they are not ready to stay there. They are coming back to the sheets again.

The help sanitation department is doing for homeless when they die in the street, we will be removing that body from their to cemetery. Other duties and responsibilities are of other departments.

Solution for Homelessness

The full responsibility of protecting them is the duty of government. Government should take effective steps in rehabilitating them. Those who are not well should hospitalized and should give treatment. The other institutions like NGO, also can do this.

11.2.5 Sanitary Worker and Political Leader - V. Muniyandi - Madurai Corporation

Mr. V. Muniyandi is working in this field from last 20 years and is actively in politics from last 35 years. He is the leader of all sanitary workers in Madurai.

Reasons for Homelessness

Poverty: The reason for homelessness is nothing but poverty. In Uttar poverty the rural people will not have any option other than to migrate from their villages to the cities to earn their livelihood. In this process the family becomes dispersed and they will be scattered to different places. Here also with their meager income they may not be able to get a roof over them. So ultimately they will be in streets.

Laws and Policies for Homelessness

There is no law and policy in Tamilnadu. In Tamilnadu it is not possible to bring any law and policy in to action. Because, everything here is functioning on the basis of caste system and political power. If you have power you will be the king... that is the situation.

Lifestyle of Homeless People

Life style of homeless people is so bad. They are not bathing, taking food properly; they are not even getting peaceful sleep. Their health is very poor and they used to eat hotel wastes.

Problems faced by homeless people

The main problem of homeless people is sexual abuse. Others will be exploiting the young girls and mentally retarded women sexually.

Have you helped them in anyway?

It is not possible to help them beyond a limit, from the sanitation department there may be some help. "I am helping them personally by providing them food, money etc".

Who should help and safeguard them?

It is the duty of government to safeguard them. There are many NGOs in Madurai. They are receiving lot of money in the name of poverty, but they are doing nothing for this poor people.

Solution for homeless people

There is no solution for homeless people as far this type of a system continues. There are lot of government programmes, there are lot of NGO programmes. But no programme is giving the result. Because no body is considering them as human being. All are searching for the different ways to make money, nothing more than that. In this process all including government ignores them and no body is there to understand there feelings and what they need.

11.2.6 Advocate Alagumani, Highcourt, Madurai

Reason for Homelessness

- 1) Globalization and industrialization: Because of globalization and industrialization, many people lose their jobs. Globalization is abolishing and will abolish completely the village and cottage industries. All over India and Tamilnadu there were lot of small soft drink units, all of those were closed or in a dying stage with the arrival of MNCs like Pepsi and Coca-Cola. This is a case of all cottage and small industries. In this way thousand and thousand of people are losing their jobs and coming to the streets in search of a new job.
- 2) Poverty: Because of poverty people come out to the street to earn their livelihood.
- 3) Illiteracy: Others used to exploit illiterate people physically and economically. So they may end up in debt trap, with out any other way they come out to the stress.
- 4) Abounded parents: In old age, their children may not take care of them and will treat them very badly. So they leave their home.
- 5) Sick persons: Sick persons like HIV positive, leprosy people, etc come to the street because nobody will be their to care them.

Laws and Policies

There are many laws and policies to protect the vulnerable groups in society and government is giving them supports like, old age pension, widow pension, children below 18 should be protected, etc. But in another way law is against street people, that not to use public places and even court is considering them as nuisance. Even if there is some provision for homeless nobody is paying attention to it

Life Style

They do not have any particular life style. They do not have any other alternative that is why they are in streets. Because of various factors they come to the street, no one will come and live in street purposefully.

Problems due to homeless people

All are thinking negatively about the homeless people. As they are in street there will be problem for the public and vice versa. But they are not at all criminals. There are big criminals in the society and leads a very decent life, but sometimes these people may involve in some petty thefts and thus they will be label as criminals. They are striving nothing but to fill their stomach. But if there is one or two incident like some petty case means the whole people living in street will be labeled as criminals.

Help to the homeless people

Yes, conducted a case for a visually challenged homeless man, who was running a telephone booth in front of a big house. The house owner found him as a nuisance and tried to evict him. At that time a petition filed for him in the high court and high court stayed the eviction.

Solution for homelessness

Brining a solution for the homeless people is not a very big thing if all join together and work. In India's total population a very few people only are their in street. If we consider entire Madurai it will not cross more than 1000.

It is not only the duty of government to do the entire thing; each and every citizen has a duty. It is a collective duty of all.

When we are speaking about the solution it should cover all the aspect like, shelter, education, all facilities and employment opportunities. There should be a shelter with all facilities and full freedom, that they can go anywhere. They should be made independent.

“Prevention is better than cure”. So no new person should come to the street again. It needs some long term plan and policy decisions.

11.2.7 Advocate Muruganandam , Madurai High Court

Advocate Muruganandam filed a case in the Madurai High court to rehabilitate the homeless beggars from the Madurai city. Here he expresses his views about homeless people and what is the reason behind in filing such a case against the homeless, which led to the eviction of homeless people.

Reason for homelessness

There are many reasons.

- 1) Poverty: Because of poverty, may be in search of job people comes to the cities and live on the streets.
- 2) Abandoned people: Huge portions of people in street are old people or sick people, their relatives deserted them and they have on other way than staying in street.
- 3) Cheating: Many people are coming to the street purposefully to cheat people and get money.

Laws and Policies

There are lot of schemes and laws. But state itself is not interested in practicing it. In early 70's when DMK government was in power they brought a scheme for the homeless and beggars, like "maruvalu thittam", which means new life scheme. But after that nobody knows what happened to it. Politicians are only aiming at vote banks nothing more than that.

Begging Act

Begging is a punishable offence according to law and constitution. The people those who are begging will be arrested, produced in the court and will be punished. They will be classifying as able-bodied persons and disabled bodied persons. Able-bodied persons will send to the workhouse. There they will be provided vocational training and three-time food. After this they will be mastering some skill and able to do some work. In the case of disabled bodied persons, there are many rehabilitation centers; they will rehabilitate in those centers.

Reason for the case

In Mattuthavani, there are many people camped near to bus stand. They are from Andhra Pradesh. During daytime ladies will come out with young babies for begging. In nights they are engaged in prostitution. They become a big nuisance to the people who are coming to the Mattuthavani bus stand and going in that way. If we did not give the money, they will catch our hand and will come behind till they get the money. This was the first problem that leads to think about a case like this.

Actually this case does not aim to torture the homeless people. But it was filed to help them. The focus of case like, when the court orders to evict them, they will be arrested and rehabilitate and thus their will be a solution for the homeless people.

This case was actually a "wake up call" to the government and officials. They are doing many unnecessary activities like providing, television to people. Television is not a basic need but 'shelter, food and clothes are the basic needs of human being', this was one of the argument made in the court. By carefully looking at all this court ordered to evict them and rehabilitate them.

But the government and police interpreted the order in other way that, the homeless people are nuisance to public and they should be evicted. Government told begging exists because the police people are not efficient. The aggressive police tortured the poor people and were driven away from the city.

The case was indented to rehabilitate the homeless. But the officials interpreted it in other way and got a negative effect out of it.

Solution for homeless

Solution is nothing but to arrest the homeless, not to torture them, but send the able bodied people to the workhouse and rehabilitate the disabled bodied people in rehabilitation centers. It is not a very big thing to do; it is possible if government and officials firm to do so.

Patna City Report

by Arpan Tulsyan

Chapters

1. Introduction
2. Profile of the Urban Poor in Patna
3. Food and Nutrition
4. Health
5. Perspectives of Policy Makers and Implementers
6. Conclusion
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1 Introduction

Patna, is the capital city of Bihar, a state infamous for its lack of development and high crime rates.

Bihar is a rural state, with 10.5% of level of urbanisation, much below the national average of 27.78% and way behind urbanised states like Maharashtra (42.4%).

Nevertheless, urban poverty in Bihar is 32.91%, much above the national average of 23.62%. In absolute numbers the below poverty line population in urban areas of Bihar is 2.86 million, Patna being the only city in the state with a population of a million plus.⁵

With the population of over 1,885,470, the city of Patna is about 25 Km long and 10 km wide. The population density is 1132 persons per square kilometre. There are 839 females to every 1,000 males.

The population of the city of Patna has grown from 6.02 lakh to 16.97 lakh during the decade of 1971- 2001. The population in 1991 was 11.47 lakhs. The decadal growth rates have been high for last three decades (more than 50%). The population estimate for 2021 is 28.0 lakh people. This is higher than national decadal growth rates, which has been around 20 – 25% over last three decades; 24.8% in 1971 – 81, 23.8% in 1981 – 91 and 21.5% in 1991- 2001.

Rural poverty in Bihar is 41.1%, much higher than the urban poverty i.e. 32.91%. Given that the state retains its semi feudalistic traits and has a large area of economically depressed rural hinterland, the push factor is expected to be strong and urban growth rates are going to be higher than estimated. Currently, the city receives a floating population of about 2 lakhs everyday.⁶

According to Patna CDP report (ibid.), a report of urban development ministry in Bihar, plan for development of Patna under JNNURM, an estimated 65% of the population reside in slums, squatters and other poor quality settlements. This is inclusive of urban villages. The plan is to improve the quality of housing and services in these areas so that by 2021 the population living in such condition comes down to 40%. Although the plan talks about slum population and efforts that need to go in their improvement, there is a complete invisibilisation of homeless population, in statistics and in policy.

Patna has a significant proportion of informal sector along located along the major commercial areas and also along the road network of the city. The contribution of informal sector, with more than 30% of the industrial workforce, to the city's overall economy is considerable. However, the income per employed person in the organized sector may vary from 6.5 to 3 times the income per employed in the informal sector.

Although the city of Patna offers more livelihood opportunities to migrants from rural areas, they also create conditions of their continued impoverishment. People migrate from rural to urban areas in search of livelihood opportunity, do manage to earn, often more than they do in rural areas, however, their financial situation does not become better, as the expenses of the city are high and they continue to be impoverished. It does not reduce their poverty, just transfers

5 <http://dm.nuhru.in/>, urban health information gateway for collectors and district magistrates initiated by Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) and Urban Health Resource Centre (UHRC)

6 Patna City Development Plan (2006-2012) Appraisal report,

them to a different category of statistics; to that of workers from farmers and from rural to urban poor. And as urban poor, they are worsened as they are likely to lose all informal community and caste support systems that exist in rural areas. Also, in urban centres they are made to pay for several essential everyday services like bathing, defecation and water which are available free of cost in rural areas.

The present study studies the problems of urban poor, particularly homeless poor with special regard to food, health, sanitation, livelihood and shelter. We have finished the data collection in Patna.

We interviewed a total of 85 respondents were through comprehensive questionnaire with sections on health, food, nutrition, shelter and livelihood. Qualitative data were collected through case studies and a few government officials were interviewed to capture their perspective on problems of urban poor.

2 Profile of the Urban Poor in Patna

It is difficult to categorize urban poor, as they include wide range of workers like casual wage labourers, construction workers, domestic workers, street vendors, rickshaw pullers, beggars and many social categories like single women, migrant youth, persons with disabilities etc. A good proportion of them are children below 15 and old persons without caregivers. Among them are the victims of natural disasters, migrants from rural areas, destitute, displaced traditional craftsmen now in low demand, and people who have reduced to homeless due to abject poverty.

Patna's urban poverty is mainly a spill over from rural hinterland. The backbone of rural Bihar is agriculture. However, in a continuation of its feudal history, 75% of the rural poor were landless or almost so in 1999-2000 and about 28% of the land was leased out with poor tenancy protection laws. Also, tenants had to pay about 50% of the gross produce as rent (World Bank report, 2003). Thus, with increasing population pressure on land and inflation, most rural poor migrate to Patna to earn a living.

2.1 Age and Sex

The research team found majority of urban homeless as men/ grown up boys of all age groups. From amongst our respondents, 77.64% were male and only a 22.35% were female.

The table below gives an age wise and gender wise distribution of our respondents.

Table 1.1

Age Vs. Sex Cross tab				
		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
	5-15 years	9	0	9
	15- 25 Years	5	5	10
	25- 35 Years	20	2	22
	35- 45 Years	14	7	21
	45- 55 Years	7	1	8
	55 and above	11	4	15

The number of females is significantly low, as most men migrate alone, leaving their families back in villages. This may show that the city offers more livelihood opportunity for men than for women. Men could be rickshaw pullers, street vendors and work in informal sector, whereas only limited opportunity is available to women, most of who

work as domestic help. Also, the security needs of women are greater than those of men.

Also, the men who migrate mostly do so without families, as they have no proper arrangements in an expensive city to be able to afford a family. It was put in explicit words by middle aged homeless man as, “Hum marad ke baccha hoi. Auratiya ke kanne tangke chalbhai, bachvan ke kanne thelke chalbhai. Jaeya parbai vahin sut jayi. Kiraya lebai ta 800 rupaiyah letai ek mahina ke”. (We are the children of men. Where all will we carry women, and where will we drag our children. Wherever we lie, we sleep. If we take a room on rent, it will cost at least 800 rs a month). This is further supported by our data on family savings (Page no. 16 .)

More importantly, it is through their women folk and children that they maintain their contact to village, going back in times of need or festivals.

Though, there seems to be a new trend coming up where the whole family migrates permanently from village, not hoping to go back after collecting some money.

Most of the women we interviewed were living with their spouses (16), rest (3) were widows. There was not a single unmarried women found on streets, not even living with their families by birth.

2.2 Livelihood

People often migrate from villages to cities in hope of better life. However, most of them in Patna earn their living by pulling rickshaw, doing casual wage labour, or working as street vendors. A significant number of them live on charity or by soliciting alms.

The capacity, ability and opportunity of urban poor for a gainful employment is severely restricted. Livelihood depends on their ability to sell their labour in the market, which in turn depends on age and gender. Most of these people are unskilled and are unable to benefit from the opportunity provided by the city economy as it relies heavily on certified knowledge. City life is costly and many services and facilities that are free in rural areas need to be purchased in a city. However, the income of urban poor is unstable, irregular and low.

Besides sale of labour, some homeless women, in desperation, resort to renting of body as in case of casual street based sex work (but this tends to be shrouded by silence and denial) or also sale of body itself (blood donation or sale of body organs).

The table 1.2 shows that maximum numbers of the respondents spend their maximum time and earn most of their money by living on charity or soliciting alms. This remains true for both men and women, however approximately equal numbers of women also survive by donating blood. It is important to note that many of the occupations in the city that are available to migrants and poor like passenger rickshaw puller and rickshaw load puller are labour and intensive and lie within male domain. Women on the other hand have the alternative of serving as domestic help and some earn through offering casual daily wage labour. Thus, due to lack of livelihood opportunities, women resort to blood donation as a way of earning money.

Table**1.2**

Primary Occupation	Male	Female
Street Vendor	9	
Casual Daily Wage Worker	4	1
Construction Worker	1	
Passenger Rickshaw-puller	16	
Rickshaw Load Puller	4	
Handcart Pusher	1	
alms/ charity	18	6
rag picking		1
Blood donation	4	7
domestic worker		3
Any other	9	
Total	66	18

The table below shows occupation of special groups that form a part of the study. It is striking to note that where young children have diversified livelihood opportunity available, 82.35% of old persons, 92.30% of leprosy patients and 100% of widows live on charity.

Table 1.3

Occupation	0-15	55 and above	Widows	Leprosy patients
Street vendor	3	-	-	-
Casual labour	-	1	-	-
Construction worker	-	1	-	-
Rickshaw – load puller	1	-	-	-
Handcart pusher	-	1	-	1
Live by alms	-	14	3	12
Others	5	-	-	-

Total	9	17	3	13
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For most leprosy patients we met were the ones who had lived in shelter homes of an NGO. All of them lived on alms as no work opportunity was available to them. They mostly begged in pairs and used a small wooden cart. One of them would sit in the cart while other pulls. After half the day, they change their positions. They carry an aluminium mug to collect all the food that is given to them. All of them have lost their fingers and have only stumps and there is complete loss of sensation at some parts. They have different plastic bags hanging from their cart to put what they get from their alms. When one gets tired pulling the cart the other takes to pulling.

At the end of the day when you meet them you can see on their countenance tiredness, tried by how scorching sun, cold winter wind and lashing rain, yet there is no choice for them. When they return you find them going through what they have gathered and putting them away to carry back home. If they have not been able to get cooked food, we find them trying to get bricks together and make a fire, the pot keeps boiling and it is an art to see how they can manage to get the hot vessels down and prepare their beds for the night.

The research team found many men working as casual wage earners sleeping in Gandhi maidan. They shared their livelihood related problems in a focussed group discussion. The minimum wages for unskilled worker Patna is 109.79. However, in the labour market the usual rates are 70 – 90 Rs. On one hand workers have no bargaining power in the market due to adverse demand- supply graph. On the other, due to less availability of work, there is a competition even among labourers. The poorer and needy ones may agree to work on a lower rate and this impact on the prospects of all others. Chaurasiya laments, “Bhukhe pet kya karein sahib, jo milta hai usi par majuri karne chale jate hain.” (What can we do with an empty stomach; we go to work on whatever price is offered). There are some more aggressive labourers who threaten and express crude anger on those who agree to work on a lower daily wage.

Along with this, there are some anti social elements that makes mandatory a payment of 5-10 Rs from any labourer who enters the physical space of Patna labour market. Those who refuse to pay are beaten up and their future entry in the market is denied. Chaurasiya is unhappy with the lack of unity among labourers.

When one is getting beaten up, no one comes to rescue and all want to play safe for themselves. Shivering with anger and frustration, Chaurasiya concludes, “Ek jagah kam karne nahi dega ta dusar jagah jaenge, kahan kahan humko rokega”. (If they don’t let me work at one place, I will go to another, where all can they stop me from going).

2.3 Sleep, location, permanence

An observant and sensitive late night walk on the Frazer road, Gandhi Maidan, Gayatri Mandir or Patna Junction will candidly expose the problems that a homeless urban poor faces.

There are sights of men narrowing themselves and sleeping on congested lanes, women cooking next to an overflowing drainage pipe, with darkened and de-shaped, overused aluminum utensils, and half clad children with running nose, untidy hair, crying, fighting or playing amidst thick smoke generated by burning wood in brick chullha. They sleep on newspaper or rags or on nothing at all. Houses comprise of pieces of clothes, lots of plastic and some bamboo.

Place of sleep

Most of the urban homeless sleep on pavements and road sides, under the staircase or ledges of shops and residences of Bankipore club, or in Gandhi maidan area. Railway platform in Patna is preferred choice of many as it protects them from rains and saves them from a lot of police and mafia harassment on streets.

58.8% of homeless sleep on pavements or road sides, 17.64% in NGO night shelter, 15.2% on railway platforms and a negligible percentage of them sleep on places of worship, road dividers or bus stand.

Table 1.4

Night Shelter	Male	Female
In market corridors	2	
Railway platform	13	
Bus Stand	2	
Courtyard of places of worship	1	
Non-government night shelter	10	5
Pavements/road-sides	36	14
Road dividers (centre of the road)	1	
any other	1	

The table below shows the difference between preferences of places of sleep by single men and men living with families. Those with families prefer to sleep on pavements, which is quieter and more secluded in the nights. These pavements are of the residential area and not market corridors. They prefer to keep away from over crowded spaces like railway station and bus stop.

Table 1.5

Sleeping place	Male living alone	Male living with spouse	Total
Market corridors	2	-	2
Railway platforms	11	2	13
Bus stand	2	-	2
Courtyard of places of worship	1	-	1
NGO night shelter	3	7	10
Pavements	10	26	36
Road dividers	1	-	1
Others	1	-	1
Total	31	35	66

Old age persons were found sleeping mostly in NGO night shelter. This could also be as NGOs give preference to aged persons due to their extreme vulnerability.

Table 1.6

Old age persons: 55 & above

Sleeping place	Persons	Percentage
Market corridors	1	5.88
Railway platforms	1	5.88
NGO night shelter	12	70.59
Pavements	3	17.65
Total	17	100

Patna has a night shelter scheme or 'rein basera' (a component of Sahari Jan Sahabhagi yojana). for the homeless urban poor and we do find few benefiting from them, however in past 3 years no new night shelters have been constructed and the funds under the scheme lie unutilized. Among the existing ones, some are locked up due to feuds among homeless over the sharing of space, and some have been usurped by a few who belong to higher strata and are patronized by the local leaders. They have turned it into kirana store or a small tea shop for themselves.

Conditions of sleep

Most of the urban poor have been sleeping in the same location for many years.

However, they cannot have an uninterrupted sleep of 7 hours. The table below shows the reasons for disturbed sleep. The topmost reason for both men and women are mosquitoes and police brutality. However, health and noise too form an important reason for men. The reason specified as ‘others’ was always anxiety. Men seem to acknowledge more openly about the existence of personal and anxiety related problems a cause for disturbed sleep. Women talk more about mosquitoes and police brutality.

Table 1.7

Reasons for disturbed sleep	Male	Female
Noise	11	1
Police Chasing out	2	1
Police Brutality	9	3
Health problems	9	1
Depression	1	0
Personal problems	4	0
Hunger	1	0
Fear	1	0
Bad Weather	1	0
Mosquitoes	9	11
Tension	5	1
Other	5	0

There are significant differences between reasons for uninterrupted sleep between different age groups and social categories. Health problem is the largest single reason for disrupting sleep of old age homeless; however, for children on streets, its mosquitoes.

Table 1.8

Reason for uninterrupted sleep	0-15	55 and above
Noise	2	3
Police chasing out	-	1
Police brutality	1	1
Health problem	-	7
Personal problems	1	1
Mosquitoes	4	2
Others	1	2
Total	9	17

Although in interview schedules ‘bad weather’ does not seem to be an important reason, in case studies and vulnerability mapping, it comes strongly, particularly the problems during rains, when many spend their nights wide awake with only a polythene bag to cover their heads. Many a times they have to keep shifting their place of sleep according to weather conditions. Some go and sleep in the parking places or railway station during monsoon months.

Some snippets from the case studies will make evident the problems encountered by homeless with regard to police brutality.

“Jab Gandhi maidan mein koi karyakram hota hai to police raat main sone nahi deti.”. (When there is a program in Gandhi maidan then police does not let us sleep here).

“Humlog lathi ki mar bhi kha jate hain yahan son eke liye”. (We can even get beaten up by stick to sleep here).

“Yahan par to chor – police mile hue hain, aur vo saath mil kar humare paise lutvati hain”. (There thief and police are in unison and they get together to steal our money).

“Police kabhi pakardkar apna pair dabvati hai”. (police sometimes gets hold of us and makes us press their feet).

“yahan par prashashan jua khilvata hai, pair dabvata hai. Yahan par majdoor ke saath ganda kam karta hai, kisi ke saath gupt vaivahar rakhata hai, vaishyavriti ko badhava deta hai”. (Here administration arranges for gambling and asks us to press their feet. Here they do bad things with labourers, keeps illicit ties with some of them and encourages prostitution).

On similar lines, an anxious women, living on pavement with her 5 children and husband who works as construction labourer shares her fears, “Bahut khatra hae, raat biraat ke bahut chor chalta hai, kabhi kabhi koi saman hi le kar bhag jata hai. Gunda lallera dhamka ke chal jai. Ekgo aadmai dal ka raat bhar jage hai. Jab subah panch baje hai to kaleja main thandak parde hai nahi to raat bhar tap karte hain, takte rahte hain. Kal raat jagte rah galai”. (There are lots of dangers, lots of thieves are around who just pick up our stuff and run away. Or goons come to threaten us. One

person from the group stays up at night. When its five in the morning, we relax in our hearts, for the night we have to do penance. Yesterday night I was awake throughout).

The instances of eviction from makeshift houses on the roadside were also reported from Patna. The cruelty of the whole process of eviction and how it uproots people was described by a woman in following words, “Halla gardi haemin ujjarti hai. Ghar ujarta hai prashashan to khana bhi ulat deta hai. Saman torta hai. Chulhe par laot mar kart or deta hai. Bans- tans tir deta hai. Atachi phenk deat hai. Gali bhi deta hai. Hum log kya karange. Phir majburi mein yahin aa kar rehna hai isliye muh nahi lagte. Ghar to hai nahi” (Halla Gardi {bulldozer} displaces us. When administration breaks down houses, it also throws away our food. Breaks our worldly belongings. They kick at our chulla and brings it down. Bamboo is torn. Suitcase is thrown away. Also, abuses us. What can we do. We have to stay here due to our helplessness so we keep mum. We don’t have a house).

Most of the respondents acknowledge their permanent address in their village. However, within Patna, two-thirds of them have no relatives living with a permanent address. Out of 85 respondents, 31 said they have no relatives in Patna, and 38 of them did not respond to the question. Only 16 of them acknowledge having their relatives living in the city under a roof, however, they either don’t visit them at all or when called during festivals. Many of them have their blood relatives, either spouse or father or brother staying in city with them.

2.4 Relationships

“Jahan maan nahi hai vahan ja kar kya karnege? Jarurat padne par bhi kisi se madad nahi mangege, namak roti kha lenge par kisi ke darvase par nahi jayege”. (What will I get by going to where I am not treated with respect? Even if I am in need I will not go to ask for help, I will eat roti with salt and survive).

34.11% of the homeless poor have relatives and/or friends in the city with a permanent address. However, most them do not feel welcomed or prefer not to go to them even in times of need.

Table 1.9

Home of a relative/friend with a permanent address to go to in times of need	
Yes	No
29	56

Table 1.10

Do you feel that you belong to any community	Male	Female
Yes	16	8
No	50	11

Large parts of homeless population, more particularly men, do not feel that they belong to any community on street.

Only a few, 24.4 % of men feel a sense of community, where as, 42.1% of women feel a sense of belonging. One major reason for it could also be that women mostly migrate with families and while men migrates alone; making them lonelier.

77.6% of the homeless have no relationship of any kind, (even friendly) with any homeless, although a good number of them have been in Patna for a long time. The interaction between homeless and non-homeless is minimal and restricted to being functional.

Table 1.11

Relationship with the non-homeless	Male	Female
Yes	12	7
No	54	12

72.94%, i.e. 62 out of 85 homeless say they have never been helped by anyone ever in their lives.

2.5 Education

Majority of the respondents have never been a part of formal schooling system. Only a few men, but no female have moved beyond primary education, as it can be seen in the table below. However, while collecting qualitative data we came across a person who was a graduate, yet due to lack of employment opportunity and rising debt in the family had to move out to Patna and work as casual labour.

Table 1.12

Formal Education	Male	Female
Illiterate	51	18
1 - 5 years	3	1
5-10 years	7	0
Above 10	1	

Even among children (0-15) there was very low literacy. Out of 9 children as our respondents, only one said that he is going to school.

2.6 Work, income and savings

For most of the urban poor, daily availability of work is not impossible. Almost all of them manage to secure at least 15 days of work in a month. Availability of work also depends on the season. In summers the availability of work is more than in winters. Monsoons are by far the worst months. However, festive months of October and November are good for the poor.

Table 1.13

Days of work available	Male	Female
full month	28	7
15 days	20	6
10 days	5	1
5 days	1	
no work	2	2
none of the above	4	1

The caste wise, gender wise daily income and expenditure (in rupees) for homeless urban poor in Patna is shown in table below. There seems to be very little gender difference in income and expenditure.

Table 1.14

Current daily income and expenditure												
Caste groups	Male						Female					
	Income (in Rupees)			Expenditure (in Rupees)			Income (in Rupees)			Expenditure (in Rupees)		
	<50	50- 100	>100	< 50	50- 100	> 100	< 50	50- 100	> 100	< 50	50- 100	> 100
SC	29	6	4	32	6	1	8	2	1	10	2	1
ST	1	1		2	1							
OBC	10	3	2	13	1	1	3	1	1	4		1
Others	5	1	1	6	1			1		1		
Total	45	11	7	53	9	2	11	4	2	15	2	2

Although the income level lie much below minimum wages for both male and female, it can be seen that cut down on their needs tremendously, manage within their bounds, and 20.37% of men and 12.5% of women re actually able to save a little each day. It is important to mention that among persons above 55 only two have savings of Rs.10 and 20 and other 15 do not have any savings at all. Among adult men, all the 35 who stays with family do not have savings, among 11 who are not with their family 9 have no savings and one has Rs.10 and the other has Rs. 7000 as savings. This brings us back to high cost of maintaining a family in the city and therefore men prefer to migrate alone.

However, these savings are minimal and in most cases do not exceed 2000- 3000 Rs. All who save prefer to keep the savings to themselves. They are illiterate, lack documentation and find banking process cumbersome. On the streets, there is tremendous risk. Thieves act as homeless, sleep next to them and disappear with their money in the morning,

so they have to be very careful. Yet, they prefer to keep their money with themselves. Clearly, modern institutions have failed to establish accountability among poor.

Nand Kumar's story is a living example of his harassment due to his decision of keeping his money in the bank. He had saved about 2000Rs from his daily toil. He deposited the money with a post office in Patna. One night when he was sleeping in Gandhi maidan, using the clothes that he wore through the day as pillow in the night, someone stole his passbook and 300 rs of cash. Since then, for about two and half months, he has visited posts office several times. He hasn't been issued a new passbook yet. Nand Kumar says; "Post office mein darkhast diye hain, daily bolta hai e slip jama karo, u slip jama karo, kabhi simply bhaga deta hai. Paise mangta hai. Jab jate hai to kahta hai 2 baje, 3 baje, 4 baje aao; jate hain to office ke bahar chala jata hai." (I have given an application in the post office. They ask me fill a new slip every time, or sometime they simply ask me to leave. They ask for bribe. Whenever I go, they ask me to come at p.m., 3 p.m. or 4 p.m. and when I got there, officials leave from the office).

Nand Kumar has already filled in 4 forms worth 20-30 Rs in pursuit of getting his passbook. Even for the form that is to be given free, he is charged 20Rs. As he is illetrate, he depends on someone else to help him with the form. That may also cost 5 -10 Rs.

Although Nand kumar is really anxious about his passbook and his savings that lie in the bank, he has now decided to go to the bank only on the days when he fails to find labour work. He had kept this money saved for his old age.

As their assets are fragile, income insecure, they are denied any credit facilities from the bank. Credit is available through local mahajans. Most debts are incurred for health related expenditure or marriage. The rate of interest is as high as 10%.

Shelter and livelihood are the prime concerns of the urban poor. An improvement in livelihood opportunities, increasing work security and assured wages is the only thing that will improve their lot in true sense. With better shelter, not only will they enjoy better health and a raise in living condition, but also the productivity of the city as a whole will be enhanced.

2.7 Recreation

Table

1.15

Recreation	Male	Female
Movies	2	
road-side entertainment	2	
radio/ FM	2	1
Any other	23	15
None	37	3

Mental health of the urban poor is also affected by his daily struggle for survival and security. Table 4.6 shows that

47.05% of the respondents admitted having no recreation in their leisure time. 44.7% find recreation in the group chat and celebration of festivals (any other). Only a marginal number of them go for movies, listen to radio or participate in road side entertainment.

2.8 Public Services

Sanitation is one of the biggest problems that urban houseless poor face. They are not covered by Municipal Corporation.

In a state where only 12.6% of urban poor have the access to piped water supply and 18.9% have access to toilets, homeless population is most likely to be living at the edge.

44.7% of the urban homeless get their drinking water supply from roadside taps. 36.4% use tankers and the rest of them fill up their water from various other places like shops or parking lots of apartments etc.

There are a lot of problems that they face in accessing drinking water. Long distance, fear of being chased away, waiting for long hours in the queue are a few commonest ones. This comes out strongly even in qualitative data where people lament about having no tap in a space as huge as Gandhi maidan. Another man told us; “Radio station jakar nahate hain. Dikkat padne par apne thekedar ka naam lete hain. Agar na bolen to jahe na detai. Hilhe na detai. Du char danda laga dega ki kyon aadmi hai. Bhaga dega.” (We go to radio station to bathe. If we have trouble, we name our contractor. If we don’t take his name then we will not be let in. we will not be allowed to move. We will get 2-3 blows of stick and will be chased away).

60% of the urban poor use public toilet to defecate. It costs 1 – 2 Rs every morning. For a poor person’s budget, comprising of about 50 Rs a day, it forms 2-4% of the daily budget. Thus, we find that a significant number of them, 29.4% defecate in open space. Qualitative data shows that more often than not, these toilets are unclean and there is no water in their taps. Those who use them need to arrange water from a road side tap or many sleeping in the market area have arrangements with the shops/hotels from where they eat their regular meals. This open space is usually a nalla or a canal or some bushes near to their dwellings and leads to severe health impact.

Table 1.16

Latrine facilities	Male	Female
Open space	21	4
pavement	4	2
public toilet	39	12
private toilet		1
any other	2	

Due to lack of facilities, only 35.29% of urban poor bathe daily. It is significant that from amongst those who bathe

daily, only 6.66% are females. Majority of them are male. 50.58% of urban houseless poor take bath 2-3 times a week. Almost all the females fall to this category. They are dependent on community bathrooms for their bathing. This costs them an additional 2 Rs. It is more so with women who hesitate to bathe on streets using public taps as is possible for men. The table below shows disaggregated response by all the respondents.

Table 1.17

Bathing	Male	Female
Daily	28	2
2-3 times a week	26	17
once a week	4	
5-6 times a month	5	
Never	2	

Table 1.18

Voter's card

Voter's card	Male	Female
Yes	18	8
No	48	11

42.15 of women and 27.7% of men we met had voter's id card.

2.9 Reasons for Homelessness

The most important reason that can be singled out for homelessness is extreme poverty. The other reasons too, flow into or out of poverty. Abandonment, stigmatized disease and absence of family all lead to destitution and thereby poverty. Of the abandoned category belong children and women. Foremost among stigmatized diseases is leprosy. Natural calamity, flood in Patna's case, and unemployment contribute to poverty and renders them homelessness.

Table 1.19

Reasons for homelessness	Male	Female
extreme poverty	31	12
need to send money home	1	
Abandoned	12	
absence of family	6	2
Family abuse	1	
cant afford to rent a place		1
stigmatizing illness	6	3
natural calamity	3	
Unemployment	3	
any other	3	1

The table below shows reasons for poverty among the most vulnerable social groups that we covered during the study.

Table 1.20

Reason for homelessness	0-15	55 and above	Widows	Leprosy patients
Extreme poverty	6	2	2	-
Abandonment of family	2	1	-	-
Absence of family	-	2	-	3
Stigmatising illness	-	9	1	9
Natural calamity	-	2	-	1
Unemployment	-	1	-	-
Others	1	-	-	-
Total	9	17	3	13

Almost all the leprosy patients left home because of their stigmatized disease. Their homelessness was preceded by tremendous family and societal pressure. Most of the maintain contact with their families even now, and do save

money and eatables that can be stored to take it to where their family lives. Whenever they go, they do not however stay there for more than a day or two.

For those who have responded to ‘absence of family’ it is likely be a result of their expulsion from the family because of leprosy. For old age persons, the most common reason is disease again, where else for the younger population its either extreme poverty or absence of family.

Just a cursory view at both the tables above would show that though poverty seems to be greatest cause for rendering younger population homeless, or perpetuating it, however, for leprosy patients, widows or old age persons without caregiver, the reason is health or abandonment from the family. That goes on to reinforce that health shocks are a major reason for chronic poverty and homelessness. And conversely, health care interventions are important to limit homelessness.

On the other hand, improving wages, securing livelihood, developing agriculture, revitalizing dying crafts and occupations can go a long way to reduce homelessness among young and adult population.

Homelessness can also be the result of specific circumstances in urban centres. Qualitative data highlights the case of Musahar community, the lowest rung of the caste based society who were evicted by Rajput landlords from west Lohanipur. It is a Rajput dominated area where Musahars were given some land and made to settle in surrounding areas to enable them to provide efficient services to Rajput ancestors, about 150 years ago. Over four generations now, as the area lies in the heart of the city and land prices have doubled many times over, Rajputs want their land back. Musahars have 150 year old ownership document, however, they were evicted forcefully by the Rajputs, lead by Pappu singh and with full police support. The case was taken to the court, there has been tremendous amount of political pressure build up by CPI ML and human rights groups and musahars have won the case in district court. However, the case is now being heard in high court and the whole musahar community of about 25-30 families have continued to live in pitiable conditions on pavement for about three years now. Although small, they form an important proportion of the total homeless population.

The number of years a person has continued to be homeless shows the lack of upward mobility in the city. The table above shows that most of our respondents have continued to live on the streets of Patna for more than a decade. It makes evident the vicious cycle of poverty and the inhospitable city conditions that does not allow poor to climb up the social and economic ladder despite their daily toil.

Table 1.21

Years of homelessness	Male	Female
<1 year	8	
1-5 years	4	2
5-10 years	5	
> 10 years	47	17

Through interview schedule, we also tried to capture some lived in experiences of homeless population. We had some open ended questions about the subjective feelings and needs of the poor. It is to be noted that most of them choose to leave a blank space to where two best experiences had to be recorded. Some of them were courteous to refer to us and ‘people like us’ who are sometimes willing to listen to homeless visiting them as best experiences. A lesser number of them spoke about simple things like when they are able to buy new clothes for themselves or family members, or when they can save some money to send home.

2.10 Arrests for begging and living on streets

Table 1.22

Have you been Arrested for living on the street?	Male	Female
Yes	5	3
No	56	16

5 males and 3 females, i.e. 6.8% of the respondents have been arrested for living on streets. While 2 males from amongst those we met have been arrested for begging.

Table 1.23

Have you been arrested for begging?	Male	Female
yes	2	
no	60	19

2.11 Disability

About two thirds of the respondents have no disability conditions. Only 11 male and 6 female complain of disability. Most of them have leprosy induced deformities, one respondent is hearing impaired and another suffered paraplegia. We had more respondents as leprosy patients, as we did choose to study this group in a detailed manner.

Persons with disabilities did not seem to form a major proportion of Patna urban poor. Although almost all of the homeless seemed to be suffering form an ailment which could potentially lead to disability. This will find elaborate mention in the chapter on health.

Table 1.24

Disability among urban poor	Male	Female
Yes	11	6
No	48	12

2.12 Aid and assistance

72.94%, i.e. 62 out of 85 homeless say they have never been helped by anyone ever in their lives.

Some, 18.82% have been helped by NGO working in Patna, and only 3 of the respondents have been offered aid by individuals. It was noticed that women have been helped more often by NGOs (working for women empowerment) than men.

Table 1.25

Have you ever been helped?	Male	Female
by an NGO	10	6
by an individual	3	
None	50	12

On the whole, one can say that although state and society depend largely on urban poor, for its huge informal sector, contributing to a significant part of economy and providing vital services, yet there exists an unequal relationship, where poor are often not just marginalised but also criminalised and illegalised.

2.13 Good and bad experiences and felt needs

All of them had more than one bad experience to cite. More than 80% of bad experiences was related to shelter and livelihood deprivation and police brutality.

Their felt immediate need is again for shelter or opening a small tea shop or regular work at a dhaba. Some want to own a rickshaw while others want blankets to be distributed by government. A minor percentage of them express their desire for Anntodaya ration card and pension entitlement. Here, one must be reminded of the multi crore blanket scam in Patna which surfaced in 2003, where blankets meant for the distribution to poor and homeless worth 30 crore were bought through dubious means and dubious suppliers. In this scam, not only the company whose tender was passed was found to be non-existent, also most blankets never reached to those they were meant for. The case has recently been reopened by NDA government as political vendetta against Janta dal leaders, and is unlikely to bring much benefit to homeless.

Most of the homeless do not dare to dream big. They are taught to limit their expectations and not to think too farther in life. All the responses to this question can be put in three broad categories, which we define here in their words:

“Bahut kuch socha tha lekin ho nahi pata, isliye sochna chor raha hun”

“bas dana pani milta rahe”

“Kam se kam bhikh mang kar to khana milta rahe”

3 Food and Nutrition

“Allah ki do nazar hai. Ek se amir ke liye dori dhili rakhte hain, dusre se garib ki dori kas dete hain. Tab itna taklif dete hain ki kisi ke paasbahut khana hai aur koi khane ko taras raha hai. Hum phal phul, meat machli ko taras rahe hain.” (Allah has two ways to look. With one he loosens the thread on rich, with another he tightens the one of poor. Then he gives a lot of pain. So much so that someone has more than enough to eat, while the other starves for food. We are starving to eat fruits and meat or fish).

Daily food is the most primary desire that an urban homeless poor. And it is essentially the food that enables them to survive, it is not meant much for taste, or nutrition.

Our questionnaire got detailed information of food consumed by our respondents over last two days of the survey. No one reported going empty stomach. Almost everyone had had some quantity of rice/dal or roti/sabzi. There were a few cases that had just managed a glass of sattu. Most of them had had self cooked food. Self cooked food is prepared on street with unhygienic conditions and lack of clean water. Many of them had purchased food that is sold at small dhabas or thelas that offer puri and aloo sabzi in 8-12 Rs. All the leprosy patients had to purchase or beg food since they could not cook, as they have lost grip of their fingers and most of them have stumps of their palms. It is important to note that all the leprosy patients responded with deficiency in sight and night blindness. Begging is more common in temples and at railway junction. A few had eaten left over from the night before, and some other sources, for e.g. rag picker child finding something from the garbage dump and eating it. Almost all of them have two meals a day. For breakfast, they have tea or biscuits or sattu. Dinner is the heaviest and most complete meal after a hard days work.

However, this must be taken as the best case scenario. Their income is irregular and unsure. What they eat on the day depends largely on the previous days work. Our questionnaires were conducted in summer months when the work availability is high.

The contrast was seen in case studies, conducted in monsoon months where we found lack of work opportunity for casual labour, construction worker, low demand of rickshaw pullers and hand rickshaw load pullers. Also, it is in rains that they could not cook on streets with pouring rain, and water wetting their fuel and grains.

Having ice creams and fruits were rarest of rare experience, may be once in several months. However, non vegetarian items and sweets were more common, eaten during festivals or when the day had been good. Quantity of non vegetarian food could be less, or sweets would only mean suji halwa or jalebi, the cheapest ones available, but none the less, they seemed to be looking forward to occasions of relishing it.

None of the homeless store any food due to its perishable nature and their lack of space to store. Most of them cannot afford milk and sugar on a daily basis. Besides, fuel is something that is beyond their means. Often we have witnessed fire burning with bits of branches that they may have collected or with cakes of cow dung. Many a times it is cheaper to buy low quality food from the dhabas than to cook it.

Thus, the food consumed by an urban poor is depended on many factor, the work availability, the health status of family members, number of family members, inflation and weather being the prominent ones.

It is most difficult for the women on streets as it is they who have to manage and run the household. A woman shares it with us in the following words;“ 15 rupaiyah kilo hai chawal. Ab jiske ghar mein 5-6 go khane walle hai usmein kya challega 1 kilo mein, kam se kam 3 kilo to chahiye. Ab hum bara aadmi ta hai nahi je nashta karenge, koi bread hai, chai hai. Ta kahan se layenge? Roj ka 70 rupaihya kamai hai, usmein kahan se layenge khana, us par se panch go laikan ke bhi to dekhana hai.”

(Rice costs 15 rs per kg. now, there are 5-6 people in the family to eat., how will 1 kg suffice in this, at least 3 kgs are needed. We are not big people who will have breakfast, eat some bread, or have tea. So, where will we get food from? Daily income is 70 rs, how can we get food in that, on top of it we have 5 children to look after).When asked what they do when they have no money, 35.29% of the respondents stay hungry, 14.11% solicit food from others, 11.76% eat on credit, and only a marginal number of them have their own savings to depend on or feel comfortable to seek help from friends and relatives.

Table 2.1

Coping when there is no money	Male	Female	Total
Solicit food	12	3	15
Eat from temple	3	0	3
Depend friends and family	3	0	3
Eat from savings	5	0	5
stay hungry	24	6	30
Live on credit	10	7	17
Others	7	1	8

Table 2.2 shows the longest period a respondent has been without food. Only three of them have never had a whole day without food in their lives. Most of them have lived for two whole days without eating anything. However, there have been people who have gone without food for as many as five whole days.

Table 2.2

Longest period a respondent lived without food			
No of Days	Male	Female	Total
1	16	5	21
2	30	13	43
3	12	0	12
4	2	0	2
5	3	0	3

Where most of the respondents earn less than rupees 50 per day, most of them spend anywhere between 20 to 40 rupees on their daily food. A good number of them also eat food up to 60 Rs a day, however, for some who live with family; it is the expenditure of the entire family on food and not just on self. Through an approximate comparison we can say that on an average 80-85% of income is spent on food. 11 (12.94%) of respondents suggest 100% income spent on food.

Table 2.3

Daily expenditure on food	Male	Female	Total
Rupees 10-20	8	5	13
Rupees 20-40	36	5	41
Rupees 40-60	18	8	26
Rupees 60 and above	2	1	3
Total	64	19	83

Many of the urban poor admit to consumption of alcohol and drugs like gutka and ganja. However, it is mainly related to coping with hunger and/or stressors of life. A boy in rag picking says “agar kura par biscuit ya bread mila to nashta yahin kar lete hain nahin to do rupaiyah ka chai pi kar kam chala lete hain. Roz 3-4 gutka kha lete hain.” (If I find something like biscuit or bread packet on the garbage I eat it for breakfast, else I take a cup of tea worth two rupees and manage with that. I eat about 3-4 packets of gutka each day).

There are instances of domestic violence that women face from their husbands particularly under the influence of alcohol. They rationalise it quickly, “dekhiye, daru nahi piyega to kaise labour ka kam karega. 70 rs kamata hai din ka, kabhi eita dho kar, kabhi pathar dho kar. Badan dukhta nahi hai kya? Piyega tabhi to thakavat dur hogi” (see, if he doesn’t drink, how will he work as a labourer. He earns 70 rs a day, by transporting brick or stone. Will his body not ache? Only by drinking will the tiredness go away). She rationalises domestic violence that often follows alcoholism

in these words, “hum log ke saath nhi to kiske saath karega. Tension hota hai, problem hota hai to thora bahut karta hai. Aadmai thore karta hai. Paisa nahi rehne ki majburi mein jhagra vagarah ho jata hai.” (if they {husbands} don’t beat us {wives}, who else will they beat. If there is tension or problem then there is little violence. Husband doesn’t do it. As there is no money, due to tension, little feuds do happen).

Government Schemes

India boasts of a nation with the largest number government of food schemes even in normal times. The study tried to assess the performance of most popular government schemes and their impact on the life of urban poor.

PDS is the biggest government food subsidy to provide poor buffer from hunger. It claims to provide poor with essential commodities and reduce inequality. However, poor targeting and leakage renders it useless for the homeless, i.e. poorest of the poor. Many of the respondents did have ration cards, mostly in villages, however, almost all of them were APL cards, ones were cereals cost was almost same as the market rate, or more.

Table 2.4

PDS BPL* Sex Cross tabulation

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
PDS BPL	Yes	6	2	8
	No	59	17	76
Total		65	19	84

Out of 85, 59 respondents did not have any BPL ration card. Only six of them had BPL ration cards. No homeless was found with an Antodaya card.

Our study shows that most homeless continue to stay at the same place for a longer duration of time and may not be as mobile as they seem to be. Many of them have continued to live in the same place for over a decade. Thus, they may actually be given ration card and not having a permanent address can be overridden in most cases.

Pension * Sex Cross tabulation

Of the 14 60+ respondents, 12 were persons with disabilities and two widows, and therefore entitled to government pension under more than one category, however only one (7.14%) out of 14 that we met, receives pension. Many of the leprosy patients were not given pension on the pretext of their being less than 60 years of age.

Table 2.7

Annapurna * Sex Cross tabulation

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
Annapurna	No	64	19	83
Total		64	19	83

No Old age homeless urban poor that the team met are entitled to Annapurna rice.

Similar is the result for all other three schemes (ICDS, Mid Day Meal and Wage Employment Program) that we investigated. None of the respondents have benefited from any of these schemes. The findings of qualitative data only reiterate the above. One person chose not to respond to any of the questions in the government schemes section.

This data clearly shows the limitation of state schemes to reach poorest of the poor. Rural poor or even the urban slum dweller has more access to government schemes than a homeless urban poor.

4 Health

There are a wide range of health and sanitation facilities that are available in urban areas as compared to rural areas. However, most of them seem inaccessible to urban poor. In private sector urban poor are barred due to their inability to pay, while in public sector, they are discriminated against and the facilities available fall short of all standards. At the same time, urban poor are placed in much more vulnerable conditions, living on overcrowded roadside, with mosquito infected drains, heavy air pollution from traffic, exposed to extremes of weather conditions, lack of sanitation facilities and a sense of loneliness, anxiety and powerlessness that affects mental health. Food insecurity leads to malnutrition and the chances of communicable diseases like tuberculosis, malaria, HIV/AIDS is high.

The concept of health that exists among urban poor is the absence of disease that prevents them from working and earning. Health problems are ignored as long as it doesn't get impossible to ignore them any further. Due to poverty and inaccessibility, health lies low in their priority, unless there is a serious disease.

4.1 Self reported health

To the question of self reported health, 69.4% of the respondents felt that they enjoyed good health on the day of the interview. 11.76% felt a bit unwell and 18.82% felt quite unwell. However, if we look at the division as per gender, 52.6% of the women said that they were a bit, or quite unwell. This reflects on the intra family distribution of work and food. Women are always the last and least to eat.

Table 3.1

		Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
Self reported health	Good	50	9	59
	A Bit Unwell	8	2	10
	Quite Unwell	8	8	16
Total		66	19	85

31.76% of the urban poor faced health problems in the month prior to the interview that prevented them from going to work. A table with the health problems they encountered is given below.

Table 3.2

Health problems that prevented urban poor from working in last one month	Male	Female	Total
Arthritis	0	1	1
Back Pain	1	0	1
Coughing	0	1	1
due to tension not able to work	0	1	1
due to wounds	1	0	1
Fever	4	0	4
Gastic	1	0	1
Jaundice	1	0	1
legs not working	1	0	1
Leperosy	1	1	2
pain and diziness due to Malaria	1	2	3
pain in abdomen	2	0	2
Pain in back and legs	2	1	3
TB	2	0	2
Weakness	2	0	2
wounds in legs and hands	1	0	1
Total	20	7	27

The number of days urban poor missed working due to illness are shown in table below. 7% of them had no illness in the month. All the leprosy patients suffer wounds in their hands and feet. Disease has been arrested in some due to NGO intervention, but most of them continue to be on medication. These wounds were reported to be very painful and sometimes interfered with their sleep.

43.5% continued to work despite illness. 10.5% of them have missed work for a month or more. Their continuing to work despite illness manifests their poverty and how the loss of even a day's work would mean no food for the poor and his family.

Table 3.3

No. of days urban poor missed work due to illness			
No of days	Male	Female	Total
1	1	1	1
3	1	1	2
5	0	1	1
7	1	0	1
10	8	1	9
12	1	1	2
15	6	3	9
17	1	0	1
20	3	2	5
30	5	0	5
60	2	0	2
180	1	0	1
360	1	0	1
Did not miss work	31	6	37
Total	62	16	78

It shows the critical relationship between poverty, livelihood and health. Due to lack of secure livelihood, they continue to live in poverty, poverty results in food insecurity and malnutrition and leads to health hazards. Further, disease not only results in loss of income, but also extra expenses on medicines. Like a vicious circle, it is caused and further leads to poverty.

4.2 Hospitalisation experince

All of the urban poor reported that they go to hospital for their ailment. On a counted few go to private doctors, often someone with whom they have an established rapport. Most of them go to government hospitals. They do take medicine at least for sometime; however, chances of lapse are high. Despite severe health problems, 12.94% of the urban poor could not get hospitalised in recent past. The reason, as mentioned by them were 54.5% of them was that the doctor (of government hospital) refused to admit them.

For the rest 55.5%, the reason is monetary. They had no money for medicines or injections (many of which are not available in government hospital) and could not afford loss of income.

A detailed experience of a widow whose husband passed away due to callous behaviour of the government hospital and the problems she faces due to her single status is described in the paragraph below.

In her small plastic jhuggi, which probably has the size of the bathroom of the neighbouring bungalows, we meet Shanti Devi, a 60 year old widow.

Her husband passed away two years ago. She says, “na Ghar hai, na dhan tuar hai, bimar para tha tab PMCH me in le gaye the,. PMCH mein doctor bhi bolta hai, kahta hai, ye koi dharamshala hai jo dawai free main milega. Ghuma deta hai. Nurse ne dhakka diya. Admi mar jata hai. Mera aadmi mar gaya elaj ke bina” (There is no house, no rice and dal. When he (her husband) was ill then I took him to PMCH. Doctor in PMCH is rude with patients and says that it is not a charitable institution that medicines will be provided for free. He procrastinates giving treatment. Nurse pushed me aside. People die there. My husband died due to lack of proper treatment).

She goes on to say, “ u richshaw chalata tha. Aankh se dikhta nahi tha. Sar dukhta tha. Ek bar jarda lag gaya. Bhik mang kar, chanda kar kar dah sanskar kiye.” (He was a richshaw puller. His eye sight was weak. That gave him headache. Once he caught cold. I had to beg and collect money on charity for his last rites).

She now works as a domestic help to earn her living.

Her biggest limitation as a widow is that there is no credit available to her in times of need. She says, “Karja mangne jate hain to deta nahi hai, kahata hai mosmat ho gaya to tumko kahan se karja dein, dar dehat mein bhi sampati nahi hai. Saas sasur sab bech ke kha gaye. Mardana marne se bahut dikkat ho gayi.” (When I ask for credit, people decline. They say I am a widow, so how can they give me credit; I have no property even in village. My mother and father in law sold it and used up all the money. I face a lot of problems as my husband has passed away).

Although Infant mortality did not form a part of the quantitative questionnaire; it came out as an outcome of poor maternal health, malnutrition and poverty through qualitative data collection. To quote from a case study, “Paanch go baccha khatam ho gaail. Kaise ho gayi ka pata; mare doraye ke koi baat ho gayil. Aadmi bachave par bhgwan na bacheaie. Saal bhar ke chokra marayil, du mahina, panch mahina, aath mahina, char mahina, asihi karke mar gayil. Ilaj kar kar ke har gayil te mar gayil. Pet ki bimari ke jaan gayil. Hum na jane. Bhagwan janat hain. Humre pet mein ki bimari ho gayi te jane parbhu”. (Five children passed away. I don't know how it happened, they died due to something. Humans try to save but god doesn't. One boy was an year old, then 2 months, 5 months, 8 months, 4 months and so five children died. We got tired of getting them treated and then they died. I think there was problem with stomach. I am not sure. God knows. What disease did they get from my stomach is known only to almighty).

Some of the urban poor earn their living through rag picking; however, this may pose a serious health hazard.

Many of them rely on street food, hat is prepared in unhygienic conditions, and may lead to nutritional deficiencies like iron/calcium/multivitamins deficiencies, cardiovascular problems, fragile bones and dental problems.

4.3 Health of pregnant and nursing mother and child

For a few questions where we could not collect answers from the field, a look at the state statistics for urban poor would suffice for the reason. The percentage of children receiving all immunization is only 16.6% in urban areas of Bihar. One can then guess how much less it would be urban poor and further less for urban homeless. Needless to say that none of our respondents have got their children immunised.

Percentage of pregnant women receiving the recommended 3 ANC visits is a meagre 20.2% in urban Bihar and percentage of deliveries attended by health personnel is 20.9%. Percentage of underweight children is estimated to be 60.7%.

In a situation so grim as this, the questions on health care of pregnant and nursing mothers and children below 5 went unanswered.

5 Perspectives of policy makers and implementers

DANAPUR: Patna Junction, which has been given status of a model station of the Indian Railways, has of late turned into a shelter for the homeless people.

Beggars and nomads in particular have converted the platforms into their temporary night shelter. They freely cook their food, lie on platforms and use the facilities meant for the passengers.

Most of them take bath and wash their clothes in the railway yard with none to check them.

According to sources, the railways are supplying about 12 lakh gallon water per day to Patna Junction to cater to the needs of passengers. As many as 207 taps, one chiller plant and two water coolers are installed on the platforms of Patna Junction.

About 700 benches are also provided to Patna Junction platforms as part of passenger amenities. Unfortunately, facilities meant for bonafide passengers are being used by these homeless people

A senior railway official at Patna Junction said that the Patna GRP is a mute spectator to all this. DRM KBL Mittal, too, admitted that the Patna railway station had become a shelter for the homeless people.

“They use the station everyday to sleep during night and defecate in the morning. It is not possible for the railways to keep the station clean all the time. However, the railways have deployed more sanitary staff at the Patna Junction to keep it clean round-the-clock,” he said.

Times of India, 3 July, 2005

Poverty is not only experienced in how much money does one have to spend but it is also a lived in experience, experienced in the context of a state and a society and in all its socio-political interactions. It is experienced differently by people depending on their age, sex, caste and occupation.

State seems to be largely apathetic to urban poor. Our research team spoke to some government official to assess their perspective on the problems encountered by urban homeless population.

Most of the government officials showed no interest in talking to the research team. We often had to run around for their time and appointment and when we did get to talk, despite assured confidentiality,

they always restricted themselves to what is on paper. They were cautious not to comment on implementation aspect or to voice their personal opinions. Many a times seemed to be a blame game going on between various government departments and officials. For instance, block development officer tried hard to put all on the municipal corporation and avoided talking to our team.

Field workers reported the instances of impolite and arrogant behaviour of more than one government official. If this could be this with ‘middle class’ researchers, who wish to talk of urban poor, their interaction with urban poor themselves can be anticipated with some dismay. More often than not, homeless urban poor was blamed for their problems and their issues were trivialised.

An official from HUDCO talked about lack of initiative taking politician and executives in the state. He said that there is no scheme that government has for urban poor. As example, he quoted two of the central government schemes. A Community toilet scheme that has funds waiting to be utilised but so far it hasn't even reached to take off stage; and Night Shelter scheme where the last shelter that was constructed is three years old now. If there is a scheme they work on, then arranging funds is not a constraint. He stressed further that 'Housing and Urban development' is a state subject.

Food and civil supplies department official agreed that there is complete invisibilisation and no scheme that serves homeless urban poor. There lack of permanent address, high mobility and more often migrant status makes government abdicate any responsibility towards them. The only facility that we were told of was making available two litres of kerosene oil at the rate of Rs 10.50 to a migrant labour if s/he stays at one particular place for a longer time. However, the research team did not encounter any homeless poor that is aware or has benefited from this facility.

A Department of land acquisition and rehabilitation official boasted of a perfect rehabilitation policy followed by the state where every displaced person is given 4 decimal of land and 10,000rs cash for temporary shelter and 5,000 for transport of their worldly possessions. For farmers specifically, he stressed there is a system in place where they are given Employment guarantee card with assured minimum wages. So there is no real need for them to migrate to urban centres and bear all the hardships. However, when we questioned the implementation aspect, he had a train to catch and referred us to a book written by him on 'slums in Patna' for greater information.

Worst was seen with the attitude of police. Police official were most aggressive and blamed urban poor themselves for their miseries. Some words of a few police officials in Patna are quoted below:

“Sahar ke beghar garibon se hame koi matlb nahi hai. Lagav nahi hai. Vaise bhi in lagn ke bare main sochne ka kabhi maka nahi mila”. (We have nothing to do with homeless urban poor. They do no concern us. We haven't had enough time to think about them).

When we stressed that many of the urban poor live in constant fear of police harassment, the response was, “man mein dar unhi ka rehta hai jo apradhi prvriti ka hota hai”. (The ones who fear are the ones who have a criminal nature).

On the issue of problems related to shelter there was a complete denial of existence of homeless people; “Sabka kahin na kahin ghar hota hai, sab jhuth bolta hai”. (Everybody has a house somewhere or the other. They are all lying).

On poverty, the response is further callous; “Garibika ka karan ve log swayam hain. Kam ki koi dikkat nahi hai. Kamane wallon ki kami hai. Ve log kamchor hain”. (They are responsible for their poverty. There is no scarcity of work opportunity. There is scarcity of people who are willing to work. These people are lazy). This goes on further; “Aaj kal koi bhi aadmi kama kar badhiyan se parivar ko chala sakta hai, lekin jin logon ki aap baat kar rahein hain sab ganja, daru pine walle hain. Ghari chin lete hain aur pite khata hain”. (In today's world anyone can ear enough to run the family smoothly. But the people you are talking about are the ones who consume ganja and liquor. They steal our watches to drink and eat).

A few urban poor do not get their families despite the affordability factor is due to their disillusionment from the city life. Ramlal, a cook, spends about 6 months of his time in Patna every year. This routine has lasted for over two decades. He dismisses the idea of building a little house in the city and says, “Yahan ghar bana kar kya karenge? Gaon aur sahar ke maze main bahut pharak hota hai. Dehat ka janana yahan nahi reh sakta. Sahar ka jaan pehchan

bhi kharab rehta hai. Waise bhi yahan barka ke vaas hai, garib ka nahi". (What will I do by building a house here? There is a lot of difference in living in village and a city. Women living in village cannot adjust in city. City offers bad socialisation. Anyways, city is meant for rich people to reside in, it is not meant for poor). However, Ramlal continues to stay in Patna for long periods of times out of the compulsions of livelihood.

In the nutshell, urban poor, particularly homeless, face invisibilisation in public policy. Official response swings from denial on one hand to blame on the other. They are even more marginalised as compared to the slum population, who do have some access to some basic amenities and some policy space.

6 Conclusion

Bihar being a semi feudal state, has always had great income gaps between haves and have nots. Rural poverty has always been high. As the state is the least urbanised one in India, and Patna being the capital city, most rural folk flock to Patna in search of work and livelihood.

One can say that due to tremendous pressure on land, farmers have turned workers, and rural poverty has become urbanised.

However, urban poverty is an isolated experience where the caste and community support structures are often missing. It poses greater risks and makes them more vulnerable, as in urban areas poor has to pay for many facilities that are found free in villages and there are no common property grounds or forests to depend on. Their failures to utilise urban opportunities are seen as personal failures and never in term of structural hindrances.

Modern state has failed to provide any social security or accountability among urban poor. It has in fact joined hands with their exploitators and proved to be worst among them. Police and government officials are but a part of the larger society and they share similar perceptions about homeless.

Due to structural inadequacies, poverty is a circle. The only way to break through it is to provide livelihood opportunities. The extent and magnitude of the task makes it state responsibility.

7 Annexure: Life Stories

7.1 Surviving in a hostile city

“Yahan Beauti Parlour Khojo, Call girl Khojo, Mil jayega par Naukari nahi Milega, ye ajuba gagah hai, Main jina nahi chahta. aas paas ka Mahol dekh tanik Bhi iksha nahi hoti Duniya mein rehne ki”.

(If your look for Beauty Parlour or Call Girl here, you will find it, but you will never find a job. This is a weird place, I don't want to live. When I look at the surrounding environment, I don't feel like living in this world); says Ranjeet Ram in an aggressive voice as he spreads his bed sheet on the footpath at the end of exhibition road,

He is a man of 60 years, but looks a lot more older than his age. His head has little hair, his teeth are artificial and he looks painfully thin. He belongs to a place called Hajpur near Patna. He was born in Meghalaya where his father worked as Gardener in a Food presentation Factory. There, he was educated up till 7th Standard, as we talk; Ranjeet Ram uses broken English words with great speed and enthusiasm. At the same time he also looks careful, cautious and guarded in his speech.

Ranjeet lives in Gandhi Maidan under the open sky in summers. When it rains, he shifts himself to 'Adharshiela Complex.' If some day there is no place at Adharshiels complex, then the night has to be spent sitting in rain. During winters he depends on some friend on street to share the quilt.

Ranjeet works as Daily wage laborer helping to load or unload brick, sand, cement or soil. Sometimes he also works as a Plumber. Currently, he is working in a building construction as a Plumber. He charges Rs.100 for a day, however if it is for a Friend he agrees to work with a little less money. He does not like to work with employers to dehumanize workers. He quotes his experience and says; “Re, Be, aare! Sambodhan se Bulaya jata hai. Ma Bahen ki gali aam baat hai. Malik se pani maango to kahega ke kal niche hai Jahar Pile” (The call us 'Re', 'Be', 'Aare'; we are also given abuses related to mother and sister. If we ask our master for water, he says go downstairs, and drink from the tap).

Ranjeet Ram gets up at 5 am, and goes to Patak ji's Public toilet with 1 Rupee coin to defecate. He buys a Babool stick to clean his teeth worth 50 paise everyday. Thereafter he spends four rupees on a cup of tea and Biscuit, he has developed contact with a few sahibs who come for morning walk. Sometimes they pay for his tea and also lecture him on how a life should be lived. Sharp at 7 am Ranjeet is at Balacharya Mor where labourers from whole of Patna gather in search of daily work. If he doesn't get a job there then it's a wait till 11 a.m. If he has money in his pocket, then from his money else he borrows to get 200 gm of Sattu and 3 litti's (local eatable) worth Rs.6 and eats. If he finds work, he has this for lunch at 1 pm. Then he has proper a dinner for night. He says that today he has had ½ plate Khir and 2 rotis from a Dhaba in Rs.9. However, he wanted to have mango, Salad and papad along with, it but his budget doesn't allow it, in total he manages his daily food in Rs.30, Whatever money he saves, he saves it for his children.

Ranjeet has married off his daughter recently and gave 21,000 cash as dowry. Ranjeet Ram's eye shine with joy as he talks about his son in law who has recently got a job with CRPF. He talks about his biggest rule set in life, he finds work or not, he saves Rs.20 everyday for his family. However, he doesn't like keeping money in bank or any where else. He keeps it with himself.

In a month Ranjeet gets work only for 10-15 days. Through the year, monsoon months are the worst. However, on the days of Government holiday, like Gandhi Jayanti he gets good pay for his work. On holidays Sahibs get their work done directly and there is more work opportunity. Market is shut go they use the day to load their godowns.

Ranjeet Ram further says “yadi him Din lagatar kar karte hain to aang aang tutue lagta hai. Agle din kam par nahi ia pate. Malik kehta na natak kar raha hai. Phit rest lena parta hai tab kahin pakar kam layak ho pate hain”. (If we work continuously for 8 days, every muscle of our body aches, then we cannot work for another day, employer says that we are pretending. Then we need to take some rest, only then are we able to work again.

Ranjeet cites an experience from a ward council and says that they wanted to make labourers work from 7 a.m. to 7 pm. For contain our 12 hours. If they refused, they were beaten up and made to leave.

Ranjeet lives in Patna only for 7-8 months in a year. For rest of the months, he goes to village to serve his masters in village. He had to go to his landlords place and work on his lands. Zamindars are mostly Bhumidar and Rajputs, he adds. Ranjeet normally enjoys good health. However, when sick, he goes to some doctors he has developed friendly relations with in last 40 years. It this doesn't help then he goes back to his village. He knows a doctor who serves in PMCH. He can even go to his private clinic and treated free of cost.

Ranjeet goes to village for every festival, particularly holi and Chaat, then he gets to eat puri, pua, halwa, Bari, Bajra and non-vegetarian food items.

Ranjeet also knows four languages; he is fluent with Asammes, Bengali and Nepali. He feels most troubled by police when there is some program in Gandhi Maidan, particularly on 15th August and 26th January. On those days, police doesn't want any of them to even come near Gandhi Maidan. Sometimes he has been caught by police on his way to toilet at night. Sometimes they abuse, and at other times they also accuse him of being a pick pocket and beat him up. When he sleeps at night, someone stealing away his slippers is a routine thing.

About 8 years back Ranjeet was able to get his labour identity card which he renews every month after paying Rs.5 and holds it close to his heart. He finds this card very beneficial, He says, “aagar kahin maine kam kiya aur majuri na mili, ya dadagiri dikhaya to main card dikhata dhamkata him ki labour commission mein ja kar Rs.100 ki jagah Rs.400 harjana le lunga”, (If I work somewhere and they don't pay me or threaten me, then I can show them my card and threaten them with going to labour commission and getting a compensation of Rs.400 instead of Rs.100 labour charge).

7.2 Fighting the constant battle for life

About four years ago, in 2003 the whole Muhallah of Musahar community was evicted from west lohanipur. The land belonged to Rajput ancestors, who had for their convenience, established a muhallah of Musahars to provide them with essential services. 150 years ago, land was transferred to Musahars and the documentary evidence of transfer of ownership rests guarded with them. However, with soaring land prices, and the areas belonging to the heart of Patna city, Rajputs wanted their land back. Pappu Singh, a local feudal lord, with full and active support of police, broke down Musahar muhallah and chased them out of the area, using brutal force and instilling fear. The pretext was that their traditional occupation of piggery dirtied the local area. It is a clear case of caste, exclusion, poverty and power overlap. This entire locality is now living under a Buddha Statue near by.

Sudamia devi and her family is one of the evicted Musahar family.

Sudamia Devi tries to look 'normal' and hospitable; playing down the impact of eviction in her life. However, when one talks to her for long, one can see the anguish in her eyes, her tense muscle movement and frustration in her voice, she lives under this statue with her children, their spouse and several grand children; a total of 18 members in the family.

Sudamia devi has tea and Bun for Break-fast. The tea shop owner does not serve her tea in his glass. She has to collect it in a glass of her own. As she says it, Sudamia devi is conscious, ashamed and careful; she insists on having a family member setting next to her as she talks to us.

The whole scene looks chaotic. She has a makeshift chulha made of bricks on the road and some rice is being cooked. Lying scattered on the floor are some de shaped darkened and overused utensils and some dirty worn out clothes. A couple from sudamia's devi family is lying on the floor, her daughter is busy cooking and two of her grand children are playing and fighting, both together. The family is oblivious to the presence of whole city around them. They do not care for traffic or pedestrians walking by. Three four chickens are hopping through their space. The whole area is overwhelmed by sink; there is filth, an open drainage and so much of scattered dust that it will upset any bystander in a few seconds.

The whole family cooks and eats together the food consists of Roti, Rice, Dal and Vegetable. It is cooked on same brick lived chulha filled with wood. All the children are semi clad, with uncombed hair and unwashed face, playing and fighting amongst each other. They look thin with pot bellies; living specimens of malnutrition, for festivals there is some non-veg. but no sweets.

Her family was into Piggery before displacement. However, with forced eviction all their pigs have either been lost or killed. Some have been stolen. This was their main source of livelihood. She says, "Suar te hamni gaye Bhainsh halai, Suar ka Baccha hai 200-250 Rupaiah." (Pigs were cow-Buffalo for us. For one piglet- we got 200-250 Rs. if a little grown up, we got as much as 1000 Rs.)

All adult men of the family are casual labourers now. Work is not available everyday. They earn enough to fill up their stomach with some food and Survive. If there is any illness, then money has to be borrowed.

Everyone in the family is suffers from some ailment. The range varies from cold, cough to T.B. She herself says she has Bone TB. Her husband too suffers from TB. They are under treatment by a doctor who doesn't charge them consultancy fees. However, everyday she has to spend Rs.20 on medicine. Her treatment has been going on for about a year now. Her husband keeps coughing all through the interview, he confesses 'Daru pine se aisa hua hai' (it is because of alcohol consumption), still, every male in the family drinks before going off to sleep.

Her whole family gets treated in Private charitable clinics nearby. They never go to government hospitals. She says we've no one to advocate for us in Government hospital. There is no one to take care, for 15 days we'll just be lying on the floor helplessly and standing in the queue and then when treatment begins we will die in 2-3 days. Due to expensive medicines (although the consultancy is free); sudamia devi's family has incurred over 25,000 of debt. The rate of interest is as high as 10%. The entire family is dependent on Mahajans.

One of her grandchild passed away last year. Sudamia devi says it had rained heavily for 3 days then. The child was

drenched and his ears were filled with rain water. They could not arrange for money and he died of infection. Since last four years, of eviction, every year, 7-8 people of the group die due to extreme cold in winters. They have to stay up whole night when it rains. Only the polythene bags that they have collected from roads offer some help.

Police is like a constant terror in the eyes of Sudamia Devi, her family and her entire community. Just 3-4 months ago, informs Sudamia Devi, Pappu Singh had bribed police into harassing them. There was lot of violence. Police had broken their Chulha, and thrown away their food. After long harassment and violence police left them in chaos and went away. They even beat up their little kids who were trying to sleep amongst all noise and heat. Wiping off the corner of her eye with Sari Pallu, She says she could not bear to see it all.

Sudamia devi is known as a tough women in her locality. She also stood for MCD elections held recently. She has been active in protests and gearing up support for her community from the world. The issue of this eviction created ripples in Patna for a long time and was taken up strongly by Human rights Group and CPI ML. Sudamia devi has herself meet with C.M Nitish Kumar thrice.

However the entire high caste neighbourhood is apathetic to them. The court case has been on for years. They have even meet chief minister Nitish Kumar in this regard. CM sent them to District Officials. The district court gave their verdict in favour of Musahars. The case is now going on in high court. However, Musahars are a poor community and it is getting increasingly difficult for them to sustain the expenditure of lawyer. Everybody is keeping their fingers crossed and waiting for courts judgement. Sudamia Devi is very hopeful. She says as all the legal papers are with them, court cannot decide otherwise. She says, “Likhant kea age Bakant ke Komi Value hai. Baki judge ke Poison Khila Ke Mukadma Dage Badhwale Jaet hai” (written has greater value then spoke. Rest all he can do is to bribe the judge and prolong the case).

Despite hope, yet Sudamia Devi could not hide her anxiety. She is insecure and uncertain. She has no faith in government who says something today and goes back on it tomorrow. Her sick husband has problems in working. She now stays under open sky and drinks water when hungry. She gets nostalgic and remembers her golden days when the entire community lived as one neighbourhood. However, adds in a dejected tone that most community people now have stopped supporting them due to the fear of Pappu Singh.

Terror of Police, everyday struggles for survival, disease, debt and court case; all this was toughened her face and heart. She sounds angrier gradually. May be this is the anger that sustains her battle against the unjust.

7.3 Nand Kumar Chaurasiya

Nand Kishor belongs to Panderi (Buxar). However, he ahs been living in Patna for past 3-4- years. Out of the four brothers, he is the only one to do labour work, the rest have their shops and are living a family life. He has 2.5 acres of land in the village, which he has left for his brothers to cultivate. In return, he stays with his brothers whenever he goes to the village. Nand Kishor’s wife died 15 years ago, in 1992, when he was working in Kolkatta. His wife was pregnant and was at her mother’s place, when she died while giving birth to their child. The infant child followed her mother, after a month. Nand Kishor never married again. He talks about his wife with a detachment, and confesses that he doesn’t know much about the incident, which he got to know only after he traveled back to village from the city.

He finds work for about 6-7 months in a year. Maximum opportunity is available in summer months, then October-November, and the other festive seasons. Availability of work is less in winter and rainy season. Mostly, he works as assistant of a electrician or plumber, or does construction work, un/loading sand, cement and bricks. He once worked at a sweet shop and knows how to make some Indian sweets and snacks. Casual work get him 80 rs a day, however, he laments, “ek din kam milta hai tad u din baithna parta hai” (If I find work on one day, then there is no work available for the next two days).

Nand kumar sleeps on a towel, that he spreads as mattress and sheet, and uses his folded shirt and vest as pillow. During rains and cold, he shifts to ‘Ashiana tower’, an apartments building near Gandhi Maidan. He uses Ganga river for his daily defecation and bathing. Only on rare occasions, does he feel the need to go to public toilets.

His breakfast consists of 2-3 rotis and aloo sabzi that he buys in 8 rs from a roadside dhaba,. In the afternoon he spends 15 rs and eats rice-dal-sabzi from another hotel and the same goes for the night. For festivals, he eats on or two pieces of mithai. Nand kishor has a relative living in Patna, but lately, he has not been in touch. So, Nand Kishor celebrates his festivals with his friends from Gandhi Maidan. Nand Kishor can never afford fruits. He specifies that it has been at least five years since he has eaten a mango. Even when he has money, Nand Kishor tries to save as much as possible, rather than spending. He says, “ Apna paisa jama karte hain. Mein naya nahi purana admi hun. Paisa jama karunga to budhapa main kam aayega” (I save my money. I am an not new, but an old man. If i save money now, it will help me in old age).

Nand Kumar’s story is a living example of his harassment due to his decision of keeping his money in the bank. He had saved about 2000Rs from his daily toil. He deposited the money with a post office in Patna. One night when he was sleeping in Gandhi maidan, using the clothes that he wore through the day as pillow in the night, someone stole his passbook and 300 rs of cash. Since then, for about two and half months, he has visited posts office several times. He hasn’t been issued a new passbook yet. Nand Kumar says; “Post office mein darkhast diye hain, daily bolta hai e slip jama karo, u slip jama karo, kabhi simply bhaga deta hai. Paise mangta hai. Jab jate hai to kahta hai 2 baje, 3 baje, 4 baje aao; jate hain to office ke bahar chala jata hai.” (I have given an application in the post office. They ask me fill a new slip every time, or sometime they simply ask me to leave. They ask for bribe. Whenever I go, they ask me to come at p.m., 3 p.m. or 4 p.m. and when I got there, officials leave from the office).

Nand Kumar has already filled in 4 forms worth 20-30 Rs in pursuit of getting his passbook. Even for the form that is to be given free, he is charged 20Rs. As he is illetrate, he depends on someone else to help him with the form. That may also cost 5 -10 Rs.

Although Nand kumar is really anxious about his passbook and his savings that lie in the bank, he has now decided to go to the bank only on the days when he fails to find labour work. He had kept this money saved for his old age.

Nand Kishor has a nasty cough. He now starts coughing loudly. He says he has got cold and cough as he got drenched in rains. He has had this for many a days and it doesn’t seem to be going yet. He took some medicine from the chemist shop below a nursing home. He has tried two chemist shops but his cough has only gone worse. He understands that it is wiser to go to the doctor now. Although his teeth seem healthy white with shine, he says he uses neem to brush them and two of his teeth are decayed.

Every morning, Nand kishor goes to two big labour markets in Patna, one at Nala walla mord and another at

Bhattacharya road. He says, although it has been decided that labourers will be paid Rs 100 per day, he gets only 80 Rs. This leads to a lot of dispute and displeasure amongst the workers too. This who agree to work on a lower wage are disliked. Nand Kishor says, “Bhukhe peit kya kare, jo miltya hai usio par majduri chale jate hain” (What can I do with empty stomach, so I go to work on whatever rates are given).

On agreeing to work on lower wages, there are some labourers with anti social traits who threaten and beat them up. To top it all, he has to pay 5- 20 Rs to local goons who man the gates of labour market. Nand Kishor is now agitated and says, “Ek jagah kam nahi karne dega ta dusari jagah jayenge, kahan kahan humko rokega” (If he doesn't let me work in one place, I will go to another, where all can they stop me). Nand Kishor further stresses that labourers are not united. If one is getting beaten, no one will come forward to help, and that is why he has to be very cautious in the labour market.

Nand Kishor has firm believe in his God. He always prays for 2 meals a day and a healthy body. There is nothing more that he wants. If he has a fine health he will continue working and earning his living. He is not clear as to what he wants/expects from government or society. He just wants a daily opportunity to work.

7.4 Deepak Kumar

It was about 10.30 p.m. in the night. The traffic on Frazer road was on towards decline. The shops and offices were closing down and homeless people were beginning to spread their sheets on the pavements to sleep. From amongst them, there was a little boy who was studying under the street light. When I approached the child, he first expressed his displeasure on not being able to solve a Mathematics problem and asked for help. He was a little scared of his teacher who was fond of beating children, when they can without complete homework.

Deepak, 10 years old, lives on Frazer road, outside the Bata showroom, near Radiostation. He lives with his father who has been a rickshaw puller in Patna for over 25 years. Since last 25 years, his father has slept at this place, along with his rickshaw. Ganesh Madal, the father, earns 100 rs each day and tries to save 30-40 rs out of it. His purpose to save this money is to make Deepak a ‘big officer’. And that is why he is made to live with his father in Patna, not in village with his mother and siblings.

Deepak has three brothers and a sister. Sister, being the eldest is married, and Deepak is the second son. Deepak misses his brothers and all the games they played together, very much. Deepak looks dejected and says that his mother is no more. He says that his mother loved him a lot and he always slept next to her. Deepaks father has told him that her mother had gone to see a movie, on the way back she caught loo (hot wind that blows during summers), and therefore she passed away. Its been 10 years since then. However, Deepak's father really takes care of him and he misses his mother slightly less because of it. He has an uncle living in patna. He lives in a rented room in a temple complex. His aunt loves him a lot.

Deepak gets up at 8 every morning and gets fresh in sulabh toilets. He has to pay 2rs everyday to them. A ParleG biscuit (small packet, for 3 rs) is his daily breakfast. His father buys it every night and keeps it for him to eat in the morning. After this, Deepak plays on road with his friends from street and his father goes to work with his rickshaw. At 9, Deepak bathes from a tap near ‘Bhartiya Nritya kala Mandir’ school. He bathes here at he doesn't have to pay. Thereafter, he eats roti- sabzi and a small cup of milk, and goes to his government school. Deepak's father says, ‘Even if I don't eat, I get a cup of milk for Deepak eevryday’.

Deepak is presently studying in standard two, and can count till 100 comfortably. He also knows ABCD, reading and writing both. However, he hasn't learnt the tables yet. In his lunch break, at about 11.30 a.m., he gets to eat khichri from midday meal. After school, at 2 p.m., Deepak goes to his uncle's place in the temple and plays with his cousins there. At 4.30 p.m. he goes to temple for his tuitions. These tuition classes are run by an NGO, at no cost, for the poor children.

After tuitions, he comes back to his home, outside Bata showroom and plays with his friends monu, sonu, guddi, piyush etc. These children too stay on the street but none of them are school going. After all the kids go to their respective sleeping spaces on the street, Deepak goes to eat dinner with his father. It usually consists of roti and aloo sabzi. Again, Ganesh gets an egg for Deepak once in few days. If the day has been good, he gets chicken for Deepak, or dahi roti. He tries to get chicken and fish for Deepak at least one every month.

Deepak sits down to study after dinner and continues till late at night. In summer months they do not have much problem, however, in winters or rainy season, when it rains or its too cold, they have nowhere else to go but to spread a plastic over the rickshaw and spend the night while sitting on it. When he feels very cold, Deepak hugs his father tight and tries sleeping. He cannot concentrate on studies in winters due to cold. Once asleep, the traffic noise does not trouble Deepak. Deepak likes his footpath house; however, he wishes that there was more space so that they could play comfortably.

Deepak wants to become a 'sahib' when he grows up. However, he adds that he will not trouble any rickshaw puller even when he becomes a 'sahib'.

7.5 Phelana Devi

We found Phelana devi sitting with a sack full of waste paper, polythene, and empty bottles; outside the building of Pata Junction. She refused to talk to us and asked "tohara hums eke matlab hau?" (what have you got to do with me?)

After much persuasion was she ready to talk to us. Phelena devi belonged to a family that wandered from village to village and lived a nomadic kind of life. They put up their tents, and lived for only a few villages at a place.

Phelena devi is now 40 yrs old. She was abandoned by her husband a decade ago. Musahar by caste, Phelena devi lived a similar wandering life with her husband. Mostly, they lived near nalas (drainage pipes), she recalls.

She does not give reason for her abandonment. Just tells us that he was an alcoholic. He would drink even in the day time and would keep lying drunk on roads. They had a daughter who passed away soon after her father abandoned her mother. Phelena devi does not what disease took her daughter's life. She says, "Uppar walla na chahi to kaise ji" (how would she have lived if almighty didn't want her to).

Phelena devi does not seem to be too intelligent. She does not remember much about her childhood.

She has no memory of her husband too. She says she is healthy except for occasional gastic problem, and her left hands and legs are swollen up. She has never been to a doctor, and when needed, she buys some medicine from the chemist shop and eats it.

Phelena devi is a ragpicker. She walks through the city, particularly the area near station and collects all waste bottle, bits of paper, metal, cloth and plastic. Her income lies from 20-30 rs per day. Every morning, after relieving herself, she has tea worth Rs2 and goes out with her sack to collect rags. She allows herself a few minutes of rest if tired, and then continues to work. By 2 p.m., after she has finished with collection, she goes to sell it. Only after she has earned for the day does she have her first meal of the day. If she is ill, or could not earn enough, then she begs on the railway station and earns her living.

She has been living at Patna Junction for a about 15 years. It is convenient for her to collect rags an beg on the station. She also eats bits of biscuits and samosa from the bin. Moreover, in the station, she is protected from thieves, and the furies of weather, like extreme cold or heavy rain.

The day she has enough money, she eats from hotel on the station. In 8 Rupees she eats rice, dal and sabzi, and at night, she gets herself 3 rotis worth 6 Rs. Sometimes, she also eats in Mahavir mandir langar, where they serve khicri. She can never eat fruits and juice because of lack of money.

Sometimes, when she sees someone eating fruits on the station, she tries to beg it. Mostly, she is refuted, however, sometimes, she is given some fruits to eat. Just yesterday, she was given 2 bananas by a kind hearted person. Overall, there is no regular routine or pattern for her food consumption.

Phelena devi lives on the junction in every season. In winters, she covers herself with old clothes to battle with hunger and in summers, she sleeps on a newspaper sheet. She has no relatives in Patna, only two friends of about her own age, living on junction, who beg outside Mahavir mandir to live. For her, Holi, Diwali and all the festivals are like any other days, for there is nothing to celebrate. Only on Durga puja, she walks through the streets and visits some temples.

On station, she has no problems with police or pickpocket. There is nothing that she can offer to them, so they do not trouble her. For much ado, she blames no one and expects nothing. She sighs, “Jab hamar pati humra na bujalu, ta baker ka” (If my husband did not understand me, then what to can say about other people).

7.6 Sudhir Thakur

Frazer road, the pavement outside Durdarshan, is a home to about 15 homeless. They engage in unorganized labour, or are street vendors. From amongst them, we met Sudir Thakur. Sudhir is 45 years old, and is a barber by caste and profession. He came to Patna in search of employment, 17 years ago. He migrated because his work was underpaid in village and also, he did not enjoy enough patronage there. They followed a kind of ‘jajmani system’ which ensured work to people who had patrons, and Sudhir, did not have enough of such clients.

Thus, Sudhir came to Patna with hopes of better livelihood, both in terms of more clients and more remuneration by each of the clients. First, he started working in a saloon, at RS 100 per month. After a month, when Sudhir asked for his pay, the salon owner refused him salary and also relieved him of his services. Fortunately, Sudhir saw a police man right outside the saloon and mustered enough courage to complain to him. This got him a good sum of 300Rs. Sudhir then bought all his equipments from this money and started his private work. Sudhir says, initially people who stopped by to get hair/beard trimmed on road where large in number, and prices were low, so he could manage 10-12Rs everyday and life went on smooth. However,, there has been a gradual decline of clientage and inflation has

increased prices. Today, he gets 35 Rs everyday. In this amount of money, he runs a family of seven. He lives with his wife and five children, 3 male and two females. Five of his children died as infants, five survive. He cites poverty as the reason for his children's death. Has he had enough money, he would have taken them to private hospitals. He is not sure about the reason for their death, just that they had some stomach or mouth related problems.

Sudhir says that his wife has some mental health related problems. She behaves inexplicable ways at times. She had got family planning operation one three years back. Since then, she has neither cooked, nor taken care of children. Many a times, she starts beating them up without any reason. He doesn't have enough money for her treatment too. If she was well, and if she could go to work as domestic help, the family condition would be better. All his kids are thin and look undernourished and half clad. With tearful eyes, Sudhir says, he cannot even afford treatment for his family. When pains is unbearable, he gets medicine from chemist and gets them, but never takes them to the doctor. If he had money, he would have sent his children to study in government schools.

Sudhir has his own ailments too. About five years ago, he had a paralysis attack, where the left side of his body was badly affected. He had got himself treated in private hospital for two months. On his request, the doctor did not charge any fees from him and also gave him medicines for six months for free. He is all right now, but has becomes weaker. Lines of anxiety appear on Sudhir's face. He says, his eldest daughter has reached marriageable age, but he has no money to get her married. She now works ad domestic help and earns 200Rs per month.

Sudhir's family has two meals a day. In the morning they eat rice and dal, sometimes vegetable and at night, they eat roti and sabzi. He cooks dal primarily because the kids need some nutrition. They eat rice with green chillies and onions. Aloo sabzi is the only vegetable they can afford. He doesn't even remember when was the last that family got to eat non vegetarian food. Its been long since they have had any fruits. Two months ago he had bought bananas worth 10rs, on the insistence of his children. They cook food on a little chullah made of bricks. When it rains and they can't cook, the entire family lives on sattu.

Sudhir cannot sleep before midnight as he has yet not got himself accustomed to traffic din. He gets up at five, goes to Sulabh toilets, or to the nala on the roadside and then eats food. Thereafter, he arranges a chair and hangs a small mirror on to Durdarshan's wall and starts his work. He works right next to his home as he can take care of his children simultaneously. Sudhir gets five rupees for hair cutting and 2 rs for trimming beard.

Sudhir has been eating the same kind of food for all his life. He says 'if I can eat sweets for one day, instead I can eat food for two days, in the same amount'.

In a makeshift house build of old polythene, seven people live. When it rains, all of them sit and pass the night, and for cold they burn some wood. Now, its been seven days since husband – wife has had a bath. They do not have money to pay sulabh. They just manage to get a bucket of water from a nearby house for cooking food.

Sudhir is no cynic. He thinks there are good people in the world and that is why he can still think of living. He says, if police would cause trouble, then he wouldn't have been able to live on same pavement for 17 long years. He has benefited from no government schemes, and has no ration card. He just wants a house to live, where he faces no insecurity of eviction and it has a roof that doesn't drip.

Survey Schedule

Part 1

Socio-Demographic Characteristics

1. Name.....

2. Age:.....

3. Sex:.....

1. Male.....

2. Female

3. Eunuch

4. Does the interviewee acknowledge a permanent address:

1. Yes

2. No

If yes, details of permanent address:

5. Do you have a relative or a friend who has a

Where you can go back in times of need or to celebrate a festival

1. Yes

2. No

If yes, details of permanent address

.....
.....
.....

6. If yes, when did you last visit him? How many months ago?

“99” if not applicable

.....
.....

7. Where do you sleep at night?

1. Under staircase
 2. Under ledge of shops or homes
 3. In market corridors
 4. Railway platform
 5. Bus stand
 6. Courtyard of places of worship
 7. Drainage pipes
 8. Govt. night shelter
 9. Deserted/ abandoned Buildings
 10. Non-government night shelter
 11. Pavements/road-sides
 12. Road dividers (centre of the road)
 13. Parks
 14. On bridges
 15. On flyovers
 16. Under bridges
 17. Under flyovers
 18. At your work place (eating joints—Dhabas, goods godowns,)
- Any other (please describe)

.....
.....

8. How long have you slept at the present location?

Years

Months

9. Where was the previous location that you slept? For how long?

Specify the previous location :

10. Over the past one year, have you slept for 7 hours or more of uninterrupted sleep?

1. Yes
2. No

11. In the past week, did you have 7 hours of uninterrupted sleep?

1. Yes
2. No

12.

Do you get uninterrupted full night sleep? If

- 1. Noise
- 2. Street Light
- 3. Police chasing out
- 4. Police brutality
- 5. Physical abuse
- 6. Sexual abuse
- 7. Health problem
- 8 Depression
- 9. Personal problems (unemployment, family tensions)
- 10. Craving for addiction
- 11. Hunger
- 12. Fear (describe the kind of fear: fear of theft, fear of violence, fear of death)
- 13. Air pollution
- 14. Working in the night
- 15. Inclement weather
- 16. Mosquitoes
- 17. Health problems
- 18. Any other

.....

13.

Do any blood relatives live with you on the streets?

- 1. Yes
 - 2. No
- If yes, specify:

.....
.....

Mention the number of members:

.....
.....

14.

Do any adopted (not in the fo

- 1. Yes
 - 2. No
- If yes, specify:

.....
.....

15.

Apart from these, can you trust

- 1. Yes
 - 2. No
- If yes, specify:

.....
.....

16. Do you celebrate Diwali/Id/Christmas/Gurparab?

Yes

No

If yes, elaborate, How /with whom etc:

17. Do you feel that there is any community to

1. Yes

2. No

18. Have you had any positive relationship with the non-hom

1. Yes

2. No

19. Education (years of schooling)

“00” for illiterates

.....
.....

20. For Children :

Are you going to school?

1. Yes

2. No

If Yes, then which class

.....
.....

21. Special category:

1. SC

2. OBC

3. ST

4. Others

22. Religion:

1. Hindu

2. Muslim

3. Christian

4. Sikh

if others specify:

23. Occupation / time spent

- Street vendor
- Casual daily wage worker
- Construction worker
- Passenger Rickshawpuller
- Rickshaw Load Puller
- Handcart puller
- Handcart pusher
- Secondary Occupation:
- Hammal (loader, porter, paledar)
- Commercial sex worker
- Live by alms received / charity
- Ragpicking
- Shoe polisher
- Scavenging and street cleaning
- Deals in drugs
- Professional blood donor
- Domestic Worker
- Garage worker or cycle repair mechanic
- Home-maker
- Student
- Gambling
- Any other (specify)

24. Marital Status

1. Never married
2. Married-and staying with spouse
3. Married- not staying with spouse
4. Divorced
5. Separated
6. Widowed
7. Cohabiting (not formally married but living as monogamous pair)
8. Multiple partners in last one month

25. Where does your spouse live

1. With the respondent, homeless
2. In the village/town to which they belong
3. Separated

26. If a woman, do you suffer from domestic violence from

1. Yes
2. No

27. Recreation – Most frequent and second most frequent
1. Most:
 2. Watch television
 3. Watch a movie in cinema theatre
 4. Street play/road side entertainment
 5. Listen to radio
 6. None
 7. Any other
28. Where do you get drinking water?
1. Road-side taps
 2. Shops
 3. Tankers
 4. Any other (specify)
29. Do you face problems in getting drinking water?
1. Distance
 2. Have to wait for long
 3. Have to fight for it
 4. People tell us to leave
 5. Any other (specify)
30. Where do you go for defecation?
1. Open space
 2. Pavement
 3. Public toilet
 4. Night shelter
 5. Private toilet
 6. Any other (specify)
31. How often do you bathe?
1. Daily
 2. 2-3 times a week
 3. Once a week
 4. 5-6 times a month
 5. Never
32. Where do you bathe?
1. Public taps
 2. Community bathing places
 3. Night shelter
 4. Any other (specify)

33. Do you pay for any of the following services?

1. Drinking water
2. Defecation
3. Bathing
4. Sleeping space
5. Bedding

If so, how much (per day) and to whom?

.....
.....

34. Do you possess a ration card?

1. Yes, with city address
2. Yes, with village address
3. Yes, but it is pawned
4. No
5. Not aware of it

35. Do you possess a voters' card

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not aware of it

36. Reasons for homelessness(in order or priority)

1. Extreme poverty
2. Main reason:
3. Need to send money home
4. Mental illness
5. Other contributory reasons:
6. Substance abuse
7. Abandonment by family
8. Absence of family
9. Family abuse
10. Social persecution (untouchability, riots etc) {pl. check the details of it}
11. Mentally challenged
12. Attraction to glamour of the city
11. Cannot afford to rent house
12. Stigmatising illnesses
13. Natural calamity (earthquake, cyclone, drought)
14. Unemployment
15. No demand for traditional skills (crafts, artisanry) in the village
16. Any other (specify)

37. Years of homelessness

1. < 1 year
2. 1-5 years
3. 5-6 years
4. > 10 years

42. Days of work available in a month

1. Full month
2. 15 days
3. 10 days
4. 5 days
5. No work
6. None of the above (specify)

38. Current Daily income

1. < 50 Rs.
2. 50-100 Rs.
3. > 100 Rs.

39. Current Daily expenditure

1. < 50 Rs.
2. 50-100 Rs.
3. > 100 Rs.

40. Have you borrowed in cash or kind and

Amount borrowed

Interest amount

41. Do you save money?

1. Yes
2. No

42. If savings are present:

How much currently?.....

Where do you keep your savings?.....

What do you intend to do with your savings?

43. Do you send money home?

1. Yes- Regularly
2. Yes - Irregularly
3. No

44. Have you been arrested for living on the street?

1. Yes

2. No

If yes, number of times:

45. Have you been arrested for alleged begging (receiving alms

1. Yes

2. No

3. If yes, number of times

46. If you earn by begging, did

1. Yes

2. No

If yes, what all kind of work did you do:

.....
.....

47. Did you go to jail/beggars' home?

1. Yes

2. No

If so, how long- in years?

.....
.....

48. Have you been arrested for any other reason?

1. Yes

2. No

If yes, number of times,; If yes, reasons:

.....

49. Is there any disability that you have?

1. Yes

2. No

50. If yes please code for the following disabilities?

1. Blindness
2. Hearing impaired
3. Deaf Mutism
4. Mental handicap
5. Mental illness
6. Polio
7. Paraplegia
8. Amputation
9. Malunited Fractures
10. Leprosy induced deformities
11. Others (specify) _____

51. Have you been helped by any of the following?

1. NGO
2. Religious organization
3. Government official
4. Government official but in their individual capacity
5. Single individual
6. None

If yes, specify the help received

52. Describe two best, and two worst, experiences while

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

53. What is your greatest felt need, immediate and long-term.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Urban Homeless People

Survey of Physical and Mental Health and Nutrition Status

Note for Researchers

Survey Schedule Part – II For Food and Nutrition

Describe the food eaten in the last two days:

(Ask interviewee to describe each meal and probe with questions for tea and snacks etc in between as part of conversation. Ask for time and quantity details too. And then the interviewer can fill appropriate box. Though you fill the table time wise- do Not ask for details time-wise. Alternatively this first column need not have times mentioned and this can be filled in based on response)

A> Today	Food Item(s)	Quantity*	How obtained	How old		
				Upto 1 day	1-2 days	>2
6am -1 pm						
1 pm- 7pm						
7pm- 5am						

B> Yesterday	Food Item(s)	Quantity*	How obtained	How old		
				Upto 1 day	1-2 days	>2
6am -1 pm						
1 pm- 7pm						
7pm- 5am						

Quantity* Use a easily understood quantity like a ‘katora’ or its equivalent but not in gms

(this table is very valuable and must be carefully filled up to include all meals and snacks in a two day period so that we can have the pattern over a full 48 hours. The time of eating will give us clues to life style and dependence of eating on lifestyle. The food quality and quantity will describe how adequate and nutritious the diet is. The last column is to identify whether food is self cooked, bought, begged, foraged or obtained from some other source like langar etc)

A. Description of cooking if applicable: where is stove, fuel, provisions kept. What problems in cooking and serving and washing etc.

Do you ever get to eat – the following- when ? When did you eat it last?

Special Item*	Frequency (wkly, mnthly, festivals etc)	Quantity (katora or similar measure)	How obtained	How old		
				Up to 1 day	1-2 days	>2 days
milk						
egg						
chicken						
meat						
fruit						
vegetables						
sweets						
Ice cream (specify kind of ice cream)						

this refers to those items not as part of any other meal; eg, meat not as part of biryani etc.

Is it normally like this? (Are these two days representative of your eating in general)

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

How is your eating different when you have lots of money?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

What do you do for food when you have no money?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

What stores of food do you currently have and where?

.....

What is the longest period you have gone without food?

.....

How did you manage to get food during illness

.....

Do you have any difficulty seeing in the dark?

.....

What is your daily expenditure on food? (facilitator should write this as percentage of total expenditure also along with amount in rupees.)

.....

For mothers with nursing children or with children below 5 years:

.....

What is the date of birth of the child?

.....

(this requires very careful determination of age by history. Try to identify birth day by season, association with some festival, elections, natural disaster etc where parents are present. In older children without parents – perhaps they left school in a particular class or remember when they ran away plus how many years on the streets etc)

If nursing or caring for a baby for how long did you breast feed exclusively?

.....

How many times did you feed your baby (breast milk plus other food) in the last two days? (same table as given for q.1)

Past Two Days	Food	Quantity	How Obtained	How old		
				Up to 1 day	1-2 days	>2 days

Make sure you ask specifically about

- milk (formula {powder} or cow's or buffalo's)
- egg
- chicken
- fish
- beef
- meat
- fruit
- vegetables
- sweets

Examination

General appearance

.....
.....

Demeanour and fatigue/weakness (impressionistic):

.....

Signs of anaemia: Pale

.....

Signs of vitamin A deficiency –Bitots spots in eyes

.....

External Signs of malnutrition:

Skin -rough

Hair - brownish

Lips- cracks at angles of lips

Derivations: from above data:

Daily Caloric Intake

(with the help of a nutritionist)

Food Schemes: Do you (or your child) have access to the following food and social security schemes:

PDS:BPL

PDS: Antodaya

Old age pension

Annapoorna

ICDS

School MDM

Wage Employment programs

NMBS

The Health Questionnaire

The objective of using the questionnaire is to try to get a feel of the whole range of health related issues that affect the homeless people and that are many a time unique to them due to their circumstances.

While the questionnaire is a guide to the various issues it is to be remembered that it is by no means complete. The persons using the questionnaire should feel free to add points / information / views to enhance the information gained. Please feel free to write down anecdotes as one comes across them – do not try to fit anecdotes into questions. Write the full thing using as many of the persons own words in any blank space. Anecdotes help very much in the overall interpretation of the results.

The information gained is meant for developing a manual for health workers who will be working among the homeless. While information about the various illness experiences is important, it is important to also ask about access issues. This a significant contextual issue in the lives of the homeless.

The structure of the questionnaire:

We are trying to capture the experience of the homeless people in different time frames. For the illness experience it is a one-month period. For hospitalization it is a one-year period.

Part I of the questionnaire is to be administered to everyone.

Part II of the questionnaire needs to be administered only for the symptoms that have been mentioned in part I.

Part III is to be administered for each symptom that has been asked for in part II.

At the end you can just mention all the symptoms in part II – as a checklist for symptoms that have not been mentioned by the person.

Each question will have to use local slang and dialects – this is important to get accurate information. The best way would be that each team (city wise) needs to sit together to translate the English questionnaire into the appropriate language.

The order of the questionnaire is also not crucial. However it is necessary to finish part I before the other two parts.

As mentioned there may be areas that the questionnaire is not covering – or other dimensions that it does not ask about – please feel free to write these down. As far as possible use the words of the homeless themselves.

Notes on individual questions:

Question 1 – 8: in these questions we are trying to get an idea of the symptoms or illnesses that are severe enough to prevent the person from going to work. Please record the exact words used by the person. If you are not clear about the word please add a small description of the symptom / illness (again in the persons own words). If they mention a particular disease – for example ‘typhoid’ – ask them who told them so. If they have diagnosed it themselves ask them why they think it is so – what are the symptoms because of which they think they have typhoid.

While listing the symptoms in the priority list – priority means what they are most distressed about. It may not necessarily mean the most ‘serious’ symptom according to you.

Question 9 – 13: this set of questions tries to capture the symptoms that they are suffering from but despite which they are still going to work. Again they may use slang or particular words from their dialects – please record the exact

words they have used. The set also attempts to capture any chronic diseases that the persons suffer from – these include hypertension, diabetes, asthma etc. the hypothesis is that even if they know or were told about these diseases they are not getting adequate treatment.

Question 14 – 20: these questions try and capture the experience of hospitalization. The hypothesis is that most homeless do not get hospitalized due to various costs, the fact that they are not treated well or that they have no one to stay with them in the hospital. The main idea is to try and capture their experience of the government system and the problems they face in what is supposed to be the ‘safety net’ for them. Another attempt is to capture the ‘cost of free treatment’ (question 20). Again please feel free to use the words of the persons and also any anecdotes.

Questions 21 and 22: these two questions cover special groups like women with children and children under 5. the main aim is to see whether they are accessing the services the government is supposed to be providing for these special groups.. these services are the antenatal and delivery services and the immunization and the ICDS scheme.

While the delivery history is meant for the most recent delivery. A brief description of the earlier deliveries may be given, especially if they are different from the last delivery or were under different circumstances (for example if they were not homeless at that time).

The question on the polio vaccination of Jan / Feb 2004 is an attempt to see if the pulse polio program is reaching the children. Different states have different dates and the dates given are for tamil nadu. Please make changes according to the dates in your states.

Question 23: is about injuries. The hypothesis is that this is one of the important group of ‘disorders’ the homeless suffer from. While there is a specific group of questions in part II , this set is more general in nature. Again anecdotes will be useful.

Question 24: is about the experience of death in someone close. This ‘verbal autopsy’ is an attempt to capture the end of life experiences of the homeless.

The part II

This is a series of questions under each symptom. This is a more medical part and follows a certain logic, which will help come to a diagnosis during analysis. Please feel free to add anything you or the person feels is relevant.

There may be other symptoms that are not covered, please feel free to add these and describe in detail.

Part III

This is an attempt to measure the impact of the illness on the life of the individual To be done only on subset maybe the 10 case studies?

While the above questionnaire is meant to capture the experience of illness and access to health care services, it is also meant to capture the brutalized life of the homeless. This can only be captured by anecdotes and actual words, these needs to be added as much as possible.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR UNDERSTANDING THE DISEASE EXPERIENCE OF THE URBAN HOMELESS

Instructions: This questionnaire has three parts. The first part is the open questions on disease experience. This part is meant to be open-ended questions and it brings out one quality of information- that which the patient volunteers. We may repeat these questions in part 2 and part 3. Go to part 2 only after part one is fully completed. Part 2 is structured to ask about all possible common symptoms – many of which the patient may have but may not have volunteered. Part 2 is also useful to find out more details of the symptoms that the patient has volunteered so that a diagnosis can be indicated. Whenever you encounter a positive response to any symptom in part 2, then go onto part 3 fill in the symptom number and ask the entire ten questions of part 3. On completing that return to part 2 and continue from where one left off. On encountering another symptom again go to part 3 and complete part 3 again for that symptom. Thus part 3 is an appendage to each and every question of part 2 and you would need to have many pages of the part 3 questionnaire with you. Sometimes since different symptoms relate to the same illness episode you may not need a separate part 3. One has to use discretion on this.

Part 1 **Open Questions on Disease Experience** **General Health Questions**

How is your general health?

.....

Today are you feeling;

Good

A bit unwell

Quite Unwell

Please describe how you are feeling today

.....

.....

Did you have any symptom / illness but you still continued to work/earn in the last one month?

Y / N

Please describe the illness;

.....

.....

Did you have any symptom / illness that prevented you from working/earning in the last one month?

Y / N

Please describe the illness

Did you have any major illness (Bedridden for ≥ 3 days) in the last one year?

Y / N

Please describe the illness

.....
.....
.....

Regarding the symptoms in the last month that caused distress: despite which you continued to earn/work
If yes what were the symptoms in order of severity?

.....
.....
.....

Regarding the symptoms in the last month: that prevented you to earn/work
If yes what were the symptoms in order of severity?

.....
.....
.....

How many days did you miss work because of these symptoms / illness?
1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5 / 6 / 7 / >7

What did you do for this illness

.....
.....

Do you have any symptoms at present that are troubling you (despite which you are going to work)?

.....

What are these symptoms / illness in order of priority?

.....
.....
.....

What do you do for this problem?

.....
.....
.....

Are you taking any medicine on a regular basis?

Y / N

Have you ever been asked to take any medications on a regular basis?

Y / N

For what conditions have you been asked to take medicines?

.....
.....

Have you ever been admitted to hospital/ nursing home in the last ONE year?

Y / N

Were you ever advised admission but did not get hospitalized?

Y / N

What was the reason for not getting hospitalized?

No money / can't afford govt. hospital

Rudeness of the staff.

No proper treatment given

No attendant

Loss of wages.

If yes, What was your problem for which you got admitted*? In order of severity?

.....
.....

* Pregnancy or problematic delivery can be accepted but not normal delivery

Where did you get admitted?

How many days were you admitted in hospital?

How much did you spend (total) on the hospital admission?.....

Medical (drugs, tests, bed) =

Travel (patient and attender) =

Food =

Bribes =

Others =

Approximate wages lost (patient + caregiver) =

Specific questions for women with children:

Where was your last child born? Home in village / govt. hospital / on the street / other's

(describe).....

Who helped you during your delivery?

Did you receive antenatal care* during your pregnancy?

Y / N

Where ? Govt. center / NGO / Pvt. Clinic. / NIL

How many check ups did you have?

1 /2/3/4/5/ >5.

Did you receive Iron tablets ?

Y / N

If yes, how many?

Did you receive TT injections?

Y / N

If yes, how many?

* defined as 4 or more visits to the doctor and/or 2TT injections see what their definition is not the medical definition

Specific question for children under 5:

Where was the child born? Home in village / govt. hospital / on the street / other's
(describe).....

Regarding immunization

Does child have an immunization card?

Y / N

Did child receive BCG?

Y / N

Is there a BCG scar?

Y / N

Did child receive DPT/

Y / N

Did child receive measles vaccination?

Y / N

Did child receive polio vaccinations with each DPT?

Y / N

Did child receive polio vaccinations Jan/ Feb 2004?

Y / N

Has the child ever been weighed by govt. worker?

Y / N

Has the child ever told to be undernourished?

Y / N

Did the child receive any supplemental feeding?

Y / N

Injuries

Have you ever sustained an injury during your routine work?

Y / N

describe

Have you ever been involved in a vehicular accident?

Y / N

Have you ever been abused / injured by your partner?

Y / N

Have you ever been bitten by a dog / rat / ?

Y / N

Experience of death

Has anyone in your family/group died in the last one year?

Y / N

What were the symptoms immediately preceding death:

Sudden death: within 1- 3 hours.

Chest pain.

Cough / vomiting blood

Injury

Stroke – inability to move one arm and leg

Diarrhea

Starvation

Others.....

What was the care given to the dying person?

Cremated/ buried/ other

What was the cost

General Health Indicators:

Sleep – good / fair / bad

Appetite – good / fair / bad

energy levels – good / fair / bad

Sexual activity – Good / fair / bad

If bad, are there any conditions due to which you have not been engage in sexual activity (Pl.specify)

Does this lead to stress and complications

1. Yes

2. No

if yes, then what complications

Sexual desire – good / fair / bad

Is it possible to get this history considering there may often be history of sexual abuse???

.....
.....

Part 2 Specific Symptoms (For a small subset of 10 or so possibly the ones on which we do the case studies)

Pain

Y / N

How many days in the last month?.....

Headache

Y / N

Acute non recurrent (less than 6 months

Y / N

Chronic (more than 6 months) recurrent

Y / N

Low back pain

Y / N

Aggravated on coughing?

Y / N

Aggravated in certain positions?

Y / N

Stomach pain?

Y / N

Related to eating?.....

Y / N

Episodic / intermittent?

Y / N

Chest pain?

Y / N

Increases with cough / deep breathing?

Y / N

Related to exertion?

Y / N

Joint pains?

Y / N

One joint?

Y / N

Multiple joints?

Y / N

Acute? (less than three months)

Y / N

Chronic? (more than three months)

Y / N

For women

pain related to menstruation:

Y / N

Pain During the periods?

Y / N

Pain Before the periods?

Y / N

Generalised aches and pains with no localizing?

Y / N

OVER LAST MONTH HAS THERE BEEN;

Fever

Y / N

If yes, how many days?

Was there running nose and cough?

Y / N

Was there shivering and chills?

Y / N

Was there cough with sputum?

Y / N

Was there burning during urination?

Y / N

Was there boil / s or abscess / s?

Y / N

Was there diarrhea or dysentery?

Y / N

Was there headache and body ache?

Y / N

Vomitting

Y / N

If yes, how many days?

Associated with jaundice?

Y / N

Associated with diarrhea?

Y / N

Immediately after food?

Y / N

Diarrhea

Y / N

If yes, how many days?.....

If yes, how many episodes?.....

Watery?

Y / N

Blood and mucus?

Y / N

Large volume?.....

Y / N

Associated with fever?

Y / N

Constipation / Hemorrhoids

Y / N

If yes, how many days?.....

Is frequency less than one per day?

Y / N

Is passing stools very painful?

Y / N

Are there occasional/regular bleeding when you pass stools?

Y / N

Is there a mass descending from the anus that you can feel?

Y/N

Cough

Y / N

If yes, how many days?.....

Sputum?

Y / N

Blood in the sputum?

Y / N

Fever?

Y / N

Chest pain?.....

Y / N

Breathlessness

Y / N

If yes, how many days?.....

Episodic / seasonal?

Y / N

Exertional?

Y / N

Associated with chest pain?

Y / N

Increases with lying down?

Y / N

Injury

Y / N

If yes, how many days?.....

Which part of the body is injured?

Was there a fracture?

Y / N

How did injury happen?

Are there any persistent symptoms?

Y / N

Skin

Y / N

If yes, how many days?.....

Patch?

Y / N

Hypopigmented?

Y / N

Deformity?

Y / N

Itching?

Y / N

If yes, where?

Weeping lesion?

Y / N

Pus discharge?

Y / N

Bloody discharge?

Y / N

Watery discharge?

Y / N

Neurological Symptoms

Y / N

If yes, how many days?

Fits?

Y / N

Loss of consciousness?

Y / N

Weakness of limbs?

Y / N

UL and LL of one side?

Y / N

Both limbs either upper or lower?

Y / N

Progressing?

Y / N

Improving?

Y / N

Stable?

Y / N

Metabolic Symptoms

Y / N

If yes, how many days?

Is there excessive thirst?

Y / N

Is there increased frequency of urination?

Y / N

Eyes

Y / N

If yes, how many days?

Is there redness of the eyes?

Y / N

Is there general difficulty in seeing?

Y / N

Is there difficulty in seeing at night?

Y / N

ENT SYMPTOMS ENT Symptoms

Y / N

If yes, how many days?

Is there pus discharge?

Y / N

Both ears?

Y / N

Is there difficulty in hearing?

Y / N

Both ears?

Y / N

DENTAL SYMPTOMS

Y / N

If yes, how many days?.....

Tooth ache?

Y / N

Swelling and bleeding in the gums?

Y / N

Do the symptoms affect eating?

Y / N

FOR MALES ONLY

Is there any genital problem:

Y/N

If yes, how many days?.....

Is there genital ulcer?

Y / N

Painful?

Y / N

Are there Inguinal Buboos?.....

Y / N

White discharge per urethra?

Y / N

Burning urination?

with fever

Y/N

Difficulty in passing urine

Y/N

Pain during intercourse

Y / N

Inability for sexual intercourse

lack of desire
due to difficulty in getting/ sustaining erection
any others – specify _____
Is there any ulcer or pain in anal area

FOR FEMALES ONLY: (16 to 25)

Is there any menstrual problem other than pain (for women in appropriate age group)

excessive bleeding during periods

scanty or absent bleeding

Are there any genital discharge-

is it foul smelling\

does it have blood

is it associated with burning urination

is it associated with abdominal pain

Is there any genital ulcer

is it associated with discharge

Is there any burning urination

with fever

Is there any mass you feel is descending from the vagina

is it associated with ulcers]

is it associated with pain.

is it associated with bleeding

Is there dribbling of urine soiling your dress

at all times?

only when you cough or strain?

Is there a problem with sexual intercourse?

is the problem pain?

what other problem is it?

Obstetric history: Have you ever been pregnant?Y/N(if answer is N or question is inappropriate the interview ends here)

How many children are alive? Now?-----

How many were born?-----

..... (the question is the key and requires patience in relating time gaps to children who are alive.eg was there any child before shelu, your first child? Or was there any child between shelu and banu? Etc.)

At what age did those that died – die- _____

Did you have some pregnancies that resulted in dead born children? Y/N

Is so how many----

Did you have some pregnancies that ended prematurely as an abortion?Y/N

If so how many----

Was the abortion spontaneous – Y/N

or something you sought(induced)- Y/N

in which case who did you seek abortion with

what method was used

Are there health problems – especially related to genital areas and lower abdomen that date to a particular pregnancy?

to an abortion.

Thank you very much for cooperating.

Part 3

The Detailing Of Disease Experience Corresponding To Each Symptom

SYMPTOM NUMBER - _____ :

For each of the symptoms / groups of symptoms that the patient is suffering from please ask the following questions.

Did you have to stop going to work because of this problem?

Y / N

How many days?

Did you continue work despite the symptoms?

Y / N

Did it affect your capacity to work?

Y / N

Did it need treatment?

Y / N

Did it heal on its own?

Y / N

Who provided treatment?

What was the cost of treatment?.....

What was the cause of the problem according to the person who treated you?.....

.....

.....

Was the treatment effective?

Y / N

Have the symptoms generally improved?

Y / N

What do you think the cause was?
.....

Instructions:

For who provided treatment- take care to find out whether he is qualified doctor or unqualified or a relative, whether an allopath, Ayurvedic, homeopath or herbal practitioner or whether a home remedy was used and whether help was sought in public hospital. Most persons may have chosen multiple options – and chosen different priorities for different symptoms- so take care to query carefully

Cost of treatment includes cost of drugs, fees and travel to meet the health care provider. Does NOT include loss of work.

Answers to questions i and j are impressionistic- but useful. Answer to the last question must be noted down in as close to the patients own words as possible.