

Research Article

Social Exclusion and Urban Poor: Intervention of NGOs in Reducing Urban Poverty

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ABSTRACT

The paper seeks to explore how different Bilaspur-based non-governmental organisations (NGOs) work towards alleviating urban poverty. The models or processes they incorporate might differ according to the context and the target population. It also seeks to recognise how the different processes work suitably for an organisation. This topic is considered crucial because of the looming problems that urban poverty brings with it. It also requires attention and the fact remains that not enough research has been done to its worth. Although a lot of poverty eradication and poverty alleviation programmes and projects are running, it has not been tackled satisfactorily even after all these years. The experiences, insights and information from the various organisations working on urban poverty can be assimilated together to bring about a more wholesome way of advocating this serious concern. The knowledge sharing could enhance and strengthen the ways in tackling the problem. The relevance of the paper is to understand the NGOs role as they have grass root intervention in a scenario where urban poverty with its magnitude of problems cannot be tackled by the government alone. And in their intervention they have their own unique processes, strategies and approach and ways of addressing the issue which needs to be explored. This sharing of information and experiences of the NGOs working on urban poverty would encourage learning and also contribute to strengthen strategies on social inclusion of urban poor.

Keywords: Social exclusion, Social inclusion, Urban poor, Poverty, Ngos, Intervention and reduction

INTRODUCTION

‘Social exclusion and social inclusion have become important concepts within the last decades of European philosophical thought. Especially, social exclusion has been widely discussed in the social politics of Europe’ (Byrne, 1999). ‘Social exclusion is a process that deprives individuals of the resources required for participation in the social, economic and political activity of society as a whole’ (Pierson, 2002).

Poverty is a state in various sections of society, namely individual’s/group’s/ community’s life which hampers to fulfil basic necessities. There are two concepts of poverty, that is absolute or abject poverty and relative poverty. First one defines the income/expenditure of an individual not at subsistence level which show state of deprivation. Second one denotes inequalities of income. Here, comparison has been drawn between low-income groups with high-income groups.

‘There is no consensus on a definition of urban poverty but two broad complementary approaches are prevalent: economic and anthropological interpretations. Conventional economic definitions use income or consumption complemented by a range of other social indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality, nutrition, the proportion of the household budget spent on food, literacy, school enrolment rates, access to health clinics or drinking water, to classify poor groups against a common index of material welfare. Alternative interpretations developed largely by rural anthropologists and social planners working with rural communities in the third world allow for local variation in the meaning of poverty and expand the definition to encompass perceptions of non-material deprivation and social differentiation. Anthropological studies of poverty have shown that people’s own conceptions of disadvantage often differ from those of professional experts’ (Masika, 1997).

‘Urban poverty in India is associated with unsanitary living conditions, limited or no access to services, a high dependence on labour markets, complex social relationships, and high levels of vulnerability. It is also associated with specific categories of people and with particular individuals’ (Loughhead, 2001).

‘Urban poor are identified on the basis of social, economic and occupational vulnerabilities as the housing and poverty alleviation ministry has decided to junk the Planning Commission’s income benchmark. As of now, families earning below Rs 4,824 a month are put in the bracket of urban poor’.¹

‘Thirty-five per cent of urban Indian households qualify as poor, according to a report in this newspaper quoting unreleased data from the Socio-Economic and

¹<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Urban-poor-to-be-identified-onvulnerabilities/article-show/18013557.cms/> retrieved on 11/08/16; 16:00 h.

Caste Census, 2011 (SECC). This is way above earlier estimates of the urban below poverty line (BPL) population for 2011–12, which ranged from 13.7 per cent as per the Tendulkar Committee’s methodology to 26.4 per cent going by the Rangarajan expert panel’s formula. It is also consistent with findings on rural India already released by the SECC, showing roughly 60 per cent of households to be facing “deprivation”. That again is much more than BPL estimates for rural India in 2011–12, at between 25.7 (Tendulkar) and 30.9 per cent’.²

In India Urban poverty is complex and poses a multiplicity of issues and troubles. ‘Urban poverty, unlike rural poverty, imposes considerable negative externalities on the society and economy’. As the UNDP’s India: ‘Urban Poverty Report 2009 points out, the urban poverty poses the problems of housing and shelter, water, sanitation, health, education, social security, and livelihoods along with special needs of vulnerable groups like women, children and aged people. Over-crowded slums, without access to these basic civic amenities and social welfare nets, and with constant uncertainty associated with evictions and loss of livelihoods imposes considerable drags on the productivity and opportunities available to its residents besides constraining economic growth’ (UNDP, 2009).

The high rate of migration, that is rural to urban has led to substandard living conditions in the urban areas. Migrations are generally the combined effect of both push and pull factors and, it is indeed, quite difficult to discern the role of the two (Lee, 1966). The pull factors are functional at the urban destination in the form of perceived job opportunities, higher wages and a dreamy city life. According to Census 2001, 30% of Indian population comprises of internal migrants, but there is limited understanding of the perspectives and aspirations of the migrants and their relatives at the destination.

In the 1990s, Indian government board a progression of decentralisation to endorse the urban sector under 74th Amendment of the Indian Constitution. Under this devolution of power, resources and accountability, which are essential tools to enable urban local bodies to improve their responsiveness to locally identified needs, have not however been fully realised. Hence, numerous discrepancies impeded by weak local capacities and conflicting political interests in the process of decentralisation in India have not actually empowered urban poor people to influence policy and practice.

‘As opposed to exclusion, social inclusion refers to struggling with the social exclusion in order to change the system in favor of those who are excluded, alienated and oppressed. It also stands for the abolition of all factors leading to deprivation. It is “an attempt to re-integrate or increase the participation of marginalized groups within mainstream goals” (Pease, 2009).

²<http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/editorials/urban-poor/retrieved> on 11/08/16; 16:00 h.

‘Social inclusion is used to describe the complementary approach which seeks to bring about system-level institutional reform and policy change to remove inequities in access to assets, capabilities and opportunity. While the social inclusion dimension of the social change process may be responding to pressure from below created through empowerment, it is often instigated from positions of relative power within the existing institutional framework’.³

In this context, wherever the state and market have failed to reach, the NGOs have made their presence felt and tried to bridge the gap between the state and society. NGOs have become important instruments for social development through social management. As it can be seen that the state and market have failed to reach out to the urban poor in India, the role played by the NGOs becomes pivotal in inclusion of social poor by reducing urban poverty. Social management of NGOs is part of promising policy argument which is associated with a social welfare type paradigm, which tends to see urban poor people as the objects of development done by third actors of governance. ‘The emergence and growth of the NGOs in the recent times is largely attributed to the serious disjunctions and distortions in the development paradigm itself where the urban poor and the marginalized received the least attention’ (Pawar, 2004).

SOME OPERATIONAL AND CONCEPTUAL DEFINITIONS (RELATED TO SOCIAL EXCLUSION, URBAN POOR, URBAN POVERTY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION)

Social Exclusion: ‘The concept of social exclusion figured prominently in the policy discourse in France in the mid-1970s. The concept was later adopted by the European Union in the late 1980s as a key concept in social policy and in many instances replaced the concept of poverty. This concept is a response to the crisis of the welfare State. Social exclusion is a complex and multidimensional process. It involves the lack of denial of resources, rights, goods and services, and the inability to participate in the normal relationships and activities, available to the majority of people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural or political arenas. It affects both the quality of life of individuals and the equity and cohesion of society as a whole’.

‘Social exclusion itself is universally regarded in the academic and policy literature as involving multi-dimensional disadvantage’ (Levitas, 2007).

Urban Poverty: ‘Urban-based poverty in the developing world is closely related to economic globalization factors and to weak governance systems which do not encourage wider distribution of wealth. Nevertheless, the recent

³<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEMPowerment/Resources/486312-1095970750368/529763-1095971096030/bennet.pdf> retrieved on 10/08/16; 19:00 h.

neo-Keynesian trend in development policy promoted by the major donors continues to stress urban poverty alleviation through close public-private sector joint management, broadly continuing the urban management concept, with this being adapted as desired. There is thus an increasing need to examine the concept as applied in practice and not predominantly through its publication output. This will entail assessing the impact on urban areas of concurrent structural adjustment, while at the same time not treating social problems as inherent “natural consequences of growth” (Stren, 1993).

Social Inclusion: ‘Social inclusion as the opposite of “social exclusion” may reflect a desire to sound positive, to focus on social objectives rather than dwell on the past. Pairing the fight against social exclusion with modernizing social protection in the EU made a more affirmative term desirable. However, social exclusion and inclusion are distinct, one dealing with social problems, the other with social membership’ (Silver, 2010).

Non-governmental Organisations: Non-governmental organisation (NGO) is a term that has become widely accepted as referring to a legally constituted, NGO created by natural or legal persons with no participation or representation of any government. In the cases in which NGOs are funded totally or partially by governments, the NGO maintains its non-governmental status and excludes government representatives from membership in the organisation. Unlike the term intergovernmental organisation, ‘non-governmental organisation’ is a term in general use but is not a legal definition. In many jurisdictions these types of organisation are defined as ‘civil society organisations’ or referred to by other names.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

‘Poverty is multidimensional, thus measuring it presents a number of challenges. Beyond low income, there is low human, social and financial capital. The most common approach to measuring poverty is quantitative, money-metric measures which use income or consumption to assess whether a household can afford to purchase a basic basket of goods at a given point in time. ‘In an era of globalization, seeking to rapidly reduce poverty can produce two problems. First, such a focus will not meet the needs of all the different types of poor people. Second, such an approach those who need different forms of support, policy changes, or broader changes within society that take time’ (Chamhuri, 2012).

The basket ideally reflects local tastes, and adjusts for spatial price differentials across regions and urban areas in a given country. Money-metric methods are widely used because they are objective, can be used as the basis for a range of socioeconomic variables, and it is possible to adjust for differences between households, and intra-household inequalities and disadvantaged situation.

“Disadvantage results in social exclusion when the various institutional mechanisms through which resources are allocated and value assigned operate in such a way as to systematically deny particular groups of people the resources and recognition which would allow them to participate fully in the life of that society” (Kabeer, 2000) (Figure 1).

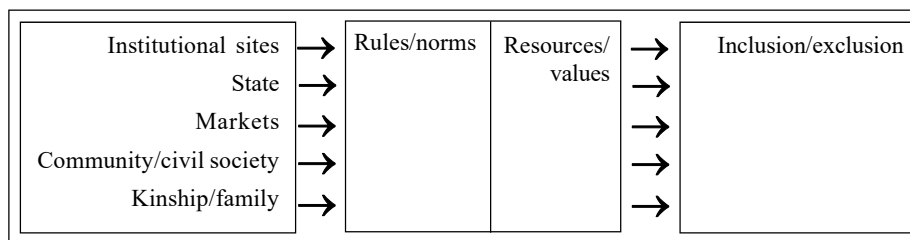


Figure 1: ‘Institution, access and exclusion’ (Kabeer, 2000)

‘Increased resource consumption can cause resource scarcities, and scarcities impose costs on societies. But experts debate the severity of future scarcities and human capacity to adapt to them. There are three main positions in this debate’ (Matthaei, 1984).

‘Poverty is “pronounced deprivation in well-being”. The conventional view links well-being primarily to command over commodities, so the poor are those who do not have enough income to meet their needs’ (Sharma, 2012). Poverty ridden individual moves through a phase of a state of insecurity, low self-confidence, powerlessness and vulnerability throughout the life span unless they are not facilitated. These multidimensional effects of poverty are coupled with the wide spread of inequalities in social, economic, political and environmental spheres (Drèze and Sen, 2002).

As a result well-being of an individual is hampered and they have limited access to other assets, income, health, shelter, education, nutrition and entitlement over constitutional rights (World Bank, 2000–2001). When these risk profiles hinder them to realise their capability which directly as well as indirectly affect poor well-being.

The discourse on quality life and well-being of an individual in society depends on various aspects. Indian well-being index in a broader way cover all aspects of wellness. That includes home amenities, kitchen facilities, education, health, entertainment, communication, transportation and hygiene (Figure 2).

With the state’s withdrawal, the market fails and other governance institution became inefficient, the poor are usually left to cope with their poverty.



Figure 2: 'Well-being index (NSSO 59th round; January–December 2003)

Here, NGOs have taken own initiatives through participatory and integrationist help to overcome the barriers that hinder towards achieving the well-being of urban poor. It is also associated with what Sen's term's 'agency' and 'well-being' freedoms has described. Well-being freedom is linked with person achievement and the opportunity is conceptualised by collective action and activities of the people engaged (Sen, 1987).

'Properly functioning economic institutions, especially markets, provide incentives to encourage conservation, resource substitution, the development of new sources of scarce resources and technological innovation. "Distributionists" acknowledge that there may be resource limits to human population growth, but for them the real problem is the maldistribution of resources and wealth. Poverty and inequality, in their view, are the cause not the consequence of high population growth rates and practices that deplete resources' (Homer-Dixon, 1995).

'Edwards and Fowler (2003) observed and highlighted that NGOs have become a force for transformation in global politics and economics. With globalization the

shifting pattern of poverty and insecurity within and between countries that called for more sophisticated strategies and interventions, increasingly connected across the borders of geography and sector, causes and effects. Hence the NGOs have to play important role in disbursing the aid and in helping to ensure that the new global rules for trade, human movement, financial and environmental governance were both fair and effective in combating injustice. The authors further observed that NGOs were not only the prime providers of relief, humanitarian assistance and specialized services but also mediators between civilians, government and even the military in complex political emergencies. Most of the NGOs were intermediaries in the sense that they worked between the grass roots or community level and other levels and sectors of the society providing a range of support services' (Fowler, 2003).

'NGOs are important linkages between the people at the grassroots level, civil society and the state. They have been instrumental in creating awareness and implementing development programmes in agriculture, watershed development, women's empowerment, education, health and family welfare. They are the representatives of the alternative modes of development' (Punalekar, 2004).

On the basis of various theoretical frameworks, it is explored that various dimensions of the urban poverty are the managerial shortcomings. While keeping the context as pertaining to the Indian situation, the literature also kept in sight the macro factors like globalisation and how a country's poverty is related to the larger globalisation. It also focuses on income and non-income dimensions of intra-city differences in well-being: namely, monthly per capita expenditure, per capita area of household dwelling and access to water and sanitation. As simple averages such as the head count ratio or the proportion with access to water and sanitation fail to take into account the heterogeneity in urban areas, they compared the univariate and joint distributions of these dimensions across households living in slums and non-slum urban areas. They sought to determine whether households living in non-slum urban areas are unequivocally better off than those living in slums. Their important finding implied that non-slum residents are not unequivocally better off than slum residents. It also suggested that the poorest non-slum residents are worse off than the poorest slum dwellers.

'India is urbanising. This transition, which will see India's urban population reach a figure close to 600 million by 2031, is not simply a shift of demographics. It places cities and towns at the centre of India's development trajectory. In the coming decades, the urban sector will play a critical role in the structural transformation of the Indian economy and in sustaining the high rates of economic growth. Ensuring high quality public services for all in the cities and towns of India is an end in itself, but it will also facilitate the full realisation of India's economic potential. With only one-tenth of population classified as urban population,

India entered the twentieth century as under urbanized. It was only after independence that urbanization started acquiring momentum. In absolute terms there has been a phenomenal growth in urban population since independence. During the period 1947–91, urban population of India has increased from 50 million to 217 millions in 1991' (Sharma, 2012).

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research Design: The research design which was employed for this paper is case-study research design. The information on this topic need descriptive look; hence, detailed description has taken through this design.

Sampling and Universe: Though NGOs working towards the issue of urban poverty has to be selected as per area of article. Therefore, purposive sampling technique has been used. The universes for this study are five NGOs working in Bilaspur on urban poverty or various indicators, which will be helpful to minimise urban poverty.

Data Collection: The data has been collected with the help of my passed-out students who has been currently working in these organisations. A self-administered interview schedule is employ to extract data from the office bearers and executive employees.

PROFILE OF THE ORGANISATION AND RESPONDENTS

The organisations taken in the study worked on urban poverty were:

1. Participatory Research in Asia

Participatory Research in Asia's (PRIA's) work is focused on empowerment of the excluded through capacity building, knowledge building and policy advocacy. PRIA is working with other grassroots NGOs to help organise slum dwellers in two cities of Chhattisgarh – Bilaspur and Raipur. PRIA has taken initiative in Raipur and Bilaspur to RAY cities of Chhattisgarh to mobilise the slum dwellers to get collectivise and raise their voices for getting benefits of all the services and schemes for which they are entitled and intervened into 10 slums. PRIA and the field staff made regular visit to this slums, conducted preliminary meetings in all these slums and discussed about the existing issues of the slums, motivated them to get organised to express their voices and demands based on their needs.

2. Shikhar Yuva Manch

Shikhar Yuva Manch is located in Bilaspur Chhattisgarh. Shikhar Yuva Manch Ngo is working on key issues of agriculture, art and culture, children, Dalit upliftment, drinking water, education and literacy, environment and forests, human rights,

legal awareness and aid, land resources, panchayati raj, rural development and poverty alleviation, tribal affairs, urban development and poverty alleviation, vocational training and water resources.

3. Matrabhoomi

It focuses on self help groups and working with unorganised labour. It also provides vocational training and providing employment. It also has co-operatives. Moreover, it runs non-found education centres and youth empowerment centres and provides linkage with found education. It also provides with political education.

4. Mahila Shiksha Kalyan evam Parikshan Parishad

Mahila Shiksha Kalyan evam Parikshan Parishad (MSKPP) is non-governmental, non-profitable, non-political and non-religious organisation. It is established on 25 September 1986 and started working on self-employment, vocational training and entrepreneurship development of both rural and urban women. MSKPP is committed to well-being of women through their economic and social empowerment. It is targeted through engagement of women with income generating activities. MSKPP moves with capacity building, skill and entrepreneurship development among women and urban poor that bring them into their sustainable existence. MSKPP includes poor, deprived and oppressed under its action.

5. Mitwa Mahila Kalyan evam Seva Samiti

Mitwa Mahila Kalyan evam Seva Samiti (MMKSS) is a leading NGO which works with grass root people, for grass root people aiming at their all around development, emphasising on children issues. Its intervention is on child rights, sustainable livelihood, slums development, environment and gender equality. MMKSS believes in People's power, so it works as a facilitator of people's power through empowerment and promoter of the alternative mechanism at grass root through people's organisations.

Profile of the Respondents: The respondents consist of executive director, development, programme manager, founder and project coordinators.

Analysis and Interpretation: Five organisations are included for the study, out of five organisations three are located in Bilaspur and one is located in Raipur. The functioning area of these organisations is Bilaspur. Data has been analysed qualitatively.

Table 1 depicts about the various issues highlighted by NGOs to reduce urban poverty; hence, it is clear that MSKPP, MMKSS and SYM are highlighting more issues compared with other two NGOs. Out of five, four NGOs are functioning in the area of advocacy and capacity building which are based on agitation model

Table 1: Functioning areas of NGOs in reducing poverty

Issues of Urban Poverty	NGOs Working on Urban Poverty in Bilaspur					Total No. of Same Issue NGOs Working on
	PRIA	SYM	Matra-bhoomi	MSKPP	MMKSS	
Advocacy	√	√		√	√	4
Capacity building	√		√	√	√	4
Education & literacy		√	√	√	√	4
Drinking water		√				2
Vocational training		√	√	√	√	4
Water resources	√	√				2
Housing and homeless	√	√				2
Participatory governance	√					1
Women empowerment			√	√		2
Legal awareness & aid		√		√		2
Urban development & poverty alleviation	√	√		√	√	4
Community mobilisation, awareness			√	√	√	3
SHG formation		√		√	√	3
Livelihood support & promotion			√	√		2
Total No. of issues NGOs working	6	8	4	10	9	

of development, where they are bringing peoples together, giving them awareness and pushing them to fight against government machinery who oppresses them for claiming their rights.

Table 2 explains the kind of approach adopted by the NGOs. None of the NGOs adopt a single approach. Two adopt a mixed approach and one adopt three approaches. And two NGOs adopted all four approaches.

Table 3 explains the mechanisms adopted by NGOs to evaluate their work. Four NGOs use feedback, five take up documentation to evaluate their work, only one NGO use research, four NGOs use record keeping, four meet with their target group, one use survey and one NGO evaluate through the media reports. And two conduct with the help of public consultation.

OBSTRUCTIONS IN INTERVENTION AND STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING THEM

(1) SYM: The hindrances faced by the organisation are the non-cooperative attitude of duty bearers and lack of institutional mechanisms like independent enquiry

Table 2: Approaches adopted by NGOs

Approaches of the NGO	NGOs Working on Urban Poverty					No. of NGOs Adopting Same Approach
	PRIA	SYM	Matra-bhoomi	MSKPP	MMKSS	
Rights based	√	√		√	√	4
Service delivery		√	√		√	4
Community development		√	√	√	√	4
Networking	√	√		√	√	4
Total No. of approach of an NGO	2	4	2	3	4	

Table 3: Monitoring and evaluating mechanisms adopted by NGOs

Evaluating Mechanisms	NGOs Working on Urban Poverty					No. of NGOs Adopting Same Evaluating Mechanisms
	PRIA	SYM	Matra-bhoomi	MSKPP	MMKSS	
Feedback		√	√	√	√	4
Documentation	√	√	√	√	√	5
Research	√					1
Record keeping	√	√	√	√		4
Meeting with target group	√	√		√	√	4
Survey					√	1
Media reports				√		1
Public consultation	√				√	2
Total No. of evaluating mechanisms followed by NGOs individually	4	4	3	5	6	

systems for redressals. Fundraising and funding are other challenges. To overcome these challenges, the organisation undertakes lobbying, advocacy and people's mobilisation.

(2) PRIA: The major hindrance is the policy maker's attitude of non-cooperation. To overcome this, the organisation keeps on working and trying to persuade them. The second hindrance for the organisation is to bring and mobilise the stakeholders to get together.

(3) Matrabhoomi: Hindrances are created by government agencies, beneficiaries and competition from NGOs. The way out adopted by the organisation is through non-violence and amicably settling matters.

(4) MSKPP: The hindrances occur when the beneficiaries or target population relocates to different places. There is also lack of acceptance on the part of the population. Funds are meant only for projects and the requirements for administrative purposes like staff and others are ignored. The animators in the communities help in the process of acceptance and even if the organisation phase out from the community, the work of the animators and their influence would continue. For funds, the only way is to keep on applying.

(5) MMKSS: The poor participation of the government stakeholders is a hindrance. Also the information collected during the visits is many a time not authentic. To overcome this, the organisation tries to involve the government at an initial stage and validate the information from other NGO sources.

Table 4 explains the models used by the NGOs for carrying out their work. advocacy is taken up by three NGOs, lobbying by four, awareness by four,

Table 4: Operational models adopted by NGOs

Operational Models of NGOs	NGOs Working on Urban Poverty					No. of NGOs Adopting Same Models
	PRIA	SYM	Matra-bhoomi	MSKPP	MMKSS	
Advocacy	√			√	√	3
Lobbying	√	√		√	√	4
Awareness	√	√		√	√	4
Networking	√	√	√	√	√	5
Campaigns and movements	√	√		√	√	4
Capacity building	√		√	√	√	4
Research	√			√		2
Public meetings	√	√	√	√	√	5
Total No. of Models adopted	8	5	3	7	7	

Table 5: Methods of promotion of awareness adopted by NGOs

Methods of Spreading Awareness	NGOs Working on Urban Poverty				
	PRIA	SYM	Matrabhoomi	MSKPP	MMKSS
Organising exposure visits		√		√	√
Seminars, and consultations	√	√			
Publications and ICT	√			√	
Demonstrations		√	√		√
Petitioning		√		√	√
Total No. of methods adopted	2	3	1	3	3

networking by five, campaigns and movements by four, capacity building by four, research by one and public meetings by five NGOs.

Table 5 explains the ways in which awareness about urban poverty is promoted by the NGOs. Three NGOs organise exposure visits, two NGOs organise seminars, programmes and consultations, two NGOs use information communication tools and publications, three NGOs take up demonstrations and petitioning.

CONCLUSION

A major trend that can be seen is that majority of the NGO's focus on the poverty of money and access. This can be seen that high focus of areas like livelihood, income-generating activities and employment is really helpful in curtailing poverty. It was found that all NGOs strongly believe in the rights of the people towards their well-being. And the approach they have adopted is primarily rights-based approach and there are elements of service delivery and community development. Their rights-based approach can be reflected in the high level of participation of people in different levels of their work; target population participates at all levels from the phase of designing of the programme till the evaluation. It was found that NGOs adopt an approach towards development and also for service delivery. Moreover, NGOs worked at all micro, mezzo and macro levels – that is individual, family, community, national, influencing and policy making. Furthermore, it was also found that NGOs, both with major and common focus on health, education worked on micro and mezzo level. And one organisation worked in all levels except the individuals from family, community, city, state, national to influence policy making. Models of advocacy, lobbying, campaigns and movements, capacity buildings were adopted by all organisations to include urban poor in the mainstream.

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