

Slums and associated problems: a case study of Almora town in Uttarakhand

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Abstract: *Rapid urbanization and socio-economic development has transformed the urban structure completely. This change is affecting urban settlements on the social and environmental levels. Slums are those areas of the city whose settlement is often used for minimum development of low-grade and blind structures. The rate of urbanization in developing countries is higher than in developed countries. This is the reason that 96% of the slums of the world are seen in developing and least developed countries and only 4% of them are seen in developed countries. Out of the total 121 crore population of India, 65,494604 peoples are living in slums. On the other hand, Uttarakhand which is a hilly state, out of its one crore population, 4, 87,741 people is residing in these slums (Census of India, 2011). Slums are considered to have an important role in keeping Almora town clean, in the absence of basic facilities and regardless of their health. In a way, it would be more appropriate to call them Swachak Mitra (those who contribute to keep the environment clean) but their problems are becoming a hindrance in their own development. Living condition in slum has a direct impact on people health. However, the prolific spreads of slums have been a rampant problem in urban areas worldwide. But these people are not less than a warrior. So, to improve the lives of people who live in slum require community empowerment, good local coherence, dialogue among all stakeholders and political commitment from the state. For which it is very important to strive for real-time policies and facilities. This paper deals with issues like, problems and particularly requirements of basic infrastructure and service such as houses, hospital, water, sanitation, solid waste management, land registration, education, vocational training and financial support to the slums of Almora town.*

Key Words: *Urbanization, slum dwelling, central business districts (C.B.D), Almora, environment, suburban.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Today, more than half of the world's population live in urban areas (United Nations, Department of Economics and Social Affairs, 2014) out of which 31.2% live in slums with 43% in developing countries (Un-Habitat, 2003). Slums generally develop in the outer parts of the urban settlement areas. The industrial revolution of the 19th century, which led to emergence of modern industrial cities, was the factor as a new central element in urban organization. Slums also began to develop on a large scale with the industrialization of the 19th century. "Any predominantly residential area where the dwellings by reason of dilapidation, overcrowding, faulty arrangement of design, lack of ventilation, light and sanitary facilities or any combination of factors are detrimental to safety, health and morals" (U.S. Housing Act, 1949). The appearance of slums may be seen as a byproduct in the process of urbanization in a developing country like India (Goswami, and Manns, 2013). Rapid urbanization is increasing in the mountainous regions of the Himalayan states of Uttarakhand, due to which the urban sprawl, suburban and slum area is also increasing, the main reason for this can be attributed to unemployment, poverty and migration. These cities house almost 69.1% of the total means 0.77 million populations residing in 578 slums spread across the state (Pant, 2017). The condition of the people is worse as slum is usually a highly populated urban residential area consisting mostly of closely packed, decrepit housing units in located in a deteriorated or incomplete infrastructure, inhabited primarily by impoverished persons (UN-Habitat, Kenya, 2007). Although slums, especially in America, are usually located in suburban areas, in other countries they can be located in suburban areas where housing quality is low and living conditions are poor (Caves, 2004). The two major issues in dealing with slums are most vulnerable slums with respect to climate change and how are they being addressed through government policies (Habeeb and Javaid, 2019). Now, environmental health issues are some of the most visible symptoms of the challenges facing informal and slum settlements (Mossavi, 2011). Slums in the study area are facing a variety of physical, socio-cultural, economic and environmental problems. The area with low level of housing which is characterized by large population is called slum. Therefore, slum is defined as illegal occupation with overpopulation, in which lack of basic facilities such as poor domicile, poor drinking water, and poor health facilities are found. At present, slums are the biggest problems of urban centres due to rapid urbanization and lack of resources. This growth of the slums has provoked increasing

international interest, and the United Nation Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) specify a target to address the ‘Plight of Slums’ (UN, SDGs, 2015). There are low level schools and inadequate sanitation due to which a variety of problems have to be faced. In these settlements inferior goods are found in local shops apart from this there are alcoholic people, criminals, also see side here.

1.1. OBJECTIVES:

The present study mainly focuses on the slum dwelling and associated problems in Almora town (Uttarakhand). The Main thrust of this study is to examine various slum areas and their associated problems. The following objectives have been framed for the present study is as:

- To study the present condition of slums of Almora town.
- To examine the demographic characteristics of slum dwellers.
- To study the living conditions and infrastructural facilities available in the slum areas.
- To study the problems and constraints of slum development.

2. METHOD:

The present study was completed with the help of both Primary and secondary data collection. The study used data set collected from Almora municipality, and Census of India, 2011, which comprised slum dwelling location, population, area, number of households and other demographic characteristics. Primary data obtained by field survey and interview method with extensive field traversing. Mapping of slum areas was possible by Geographical Information System (GIS) software and distribution of slums shown through administrative wards. The location of each slum is marked on the map and shown by appropriate tables and diagrams.

3. STUDY AREA:

Almora is a municipal board and a cantonment town in the state of Uttarakhand, India. It is the administrative headquarters of Almora district. Almora is situated on a ridge at the southern edge of the Kumaun Hills of the Lesser Himalayan Range. Over the past few decades, the town has grown as commercial and educational centre, leading to rapid urbanization. Along with this, slum settlements also developed in the outer parts of Almora town. Geographically, the study area is located between 29°57’ to 29°61’ N latitude and 79°63’ to 79°67’ E longitudes covering about 7.35 km² areas and divided in 11 administrative wards (census of India, 2011). The height of the town is 1644 meters above sea level. Almora is a major hill station in the country located in the Lesser Himalayas. Almora is primarily famous for its natural beauty. There are two clearly defined seasons, summer and winter. The average daily temperature is marked as about 12°-23°C in summer and in winter 2°-15°. The average annual rainfall in Almora city is marked at about 100-200 cm. Two non-perennial streams *Kosi* and *Suyal* also run through the town and considered important in completing the water supply of the town. Four slum dwellings are situated in different wards of town. Total population of Almora town is 34122 while the population of slum dwelling is 841 (Census of India, 2011). The population density of the Almora town is 4525 person per sq. km. while the average density of the main four slums is high in the context of area which is 54,188.144 people per sq. km.

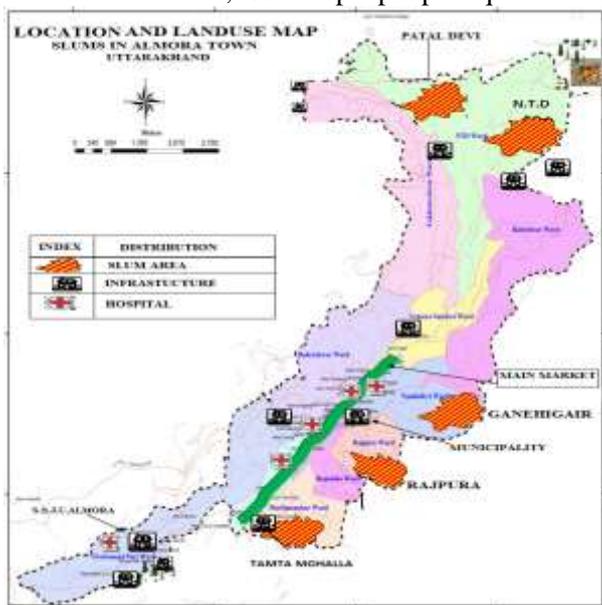


Figure 1: Location Map of Slums in Almora Town

4. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS:

Table 1: Location and population of Slums of Almora Town, 2011

S.N.	Slums Name	Geographical Location	Possible Date of Settling	Number of Families	Population	Area (sq.km.)	Population Density	Residential Land Type
1.	Pataldevi	29°36'51.9" N 79°39'47.2" E N.T.D ward	About 100 year ago	46	276	0.01036	26,640.926	Revenue, Municipal body
2.	N.T. D	29°36'55" N 79°40'15.9" E N.T.D ward	About 100 year ago	23	115	0.00257	44,747.081	Revenue
3.	Ganeshigair	29°35'90.9" N 79°39'97.2" E Nanda Devi ward	About 100 year ago	27	162	0.00196	82,653.061	Revenue
4.	Rajpura	29°35'63.9" N 79°39'60.2" E Rajpura ward	About 100 year ago	48	288	0.00063	4,57142.850	Municipal body
	Total			144	841	0.01552	54,188.144	

Source: Census of India, 2011, and Almora Municipal Board

A. Basic Characteristics of Slums:

i. Slums in the Town:

The slum in Almora town has developed mostly in the outer zone of the C.B.D area. Slums have been legally or illegally developed on government land, government houses and are being expanded continuously by encroachment. At present, there are four slums with 841 inhabitants covering an area of 0.1552 km² out of total 7.35 km² in town area (Census of India, 2011). Thus, four places have been notified by the municipality in the study area as slums, which are located in different wards of the city- N.T.D slum dwelling, *Pataldevi* slum dwelling, *Ganeshigair* slum dwelling and *Rajpura* slum dwelling. Apart from these, the municipality has also identified *Tamta Mohalla Basti* as a slum (For basic facility). The population density of the Almora town is 4525 person per sq. km. while the average density of the main four slums is very high in the context of area which is 54,188.144 person per sq. km. making the housing more problematic.

In the past, the main purpose of settling slums was for the cleanliness in the town. For this they were also provided government accommodation by the municipality, and they were mostly migratory people. But due to poverty, illiteracy, housing shortage etc, this area spread as a slum. In addition to the house provided by the municipality, they started encroaching on the land, with increased the population density and their problems also took a form.

ii. Families, Gender and Caste:

According to the information received through different sources – total population of slums is 814 persons having 144 families. The possible date of their settlement is believed to be about 100 years before. Most of the land type of their residence comes under the revenue municipal body. They have been provided 83 government houses by the municipality and in addition they have also established their own private houses.

The caste as a social stratification plays predominant role in our social life especially in India and Uttarakhand too, due to which a sense of inequality develops in the society. It helps us to understand the social fabric of the Nation. In present study all slum people belong to SC category of *Valmiki* society.

B. Slum Associated Problems in Almora Town:

Rapidly growing population in the slum areas has more impact on the environment resource due to which various types of problems arise. The increasing pressure on resources by urbanization and urban sprawl, different types of challenges are being faced. Today we think that our society has moved forward, but has it really happened when we talk about slums, then it is still the same as it was before, even the conditions of slums is becoming worse day by day.

i. Housing Problem:

Residential problems of slums in Almora town are abundant. Four slums reside on an area of only 0.1552 km² of the total town area of Almora. In all these settlements, 83 government houses have been provided by the municipality. But the irony is that 841 people with 144 families live on such a small area. Currently, due to increasing family size and

housing problems, they have built raw houses of mud and stone; these are very dense and small. As a result, various types of infectious diseases are born here every year.



Photo Plate 1: Poor Condition of Houses

Table: 2. Government Houses in Slum

Name of Slum	Government Houses
Pataldevi	18
N.T. D	09
Ganeshigair	09
Rajpura	47
Total	83

Source: Almora Municipal Board, 2018

ii. Drinking Water Problem:

Water is very important for human life. In fact, water is life and human beings cannot live without it. According to a UN report, around 1.2 billion people, or almost 1/5 of the world’s population, live in areas where water is physically scarce and another 1.6 billion people or nearly one quarter of the world’s population, face economic water shortage. They lack basic access to water. The Asian Development Bank has forecasted that by 2030, India will have a water deficit of 50%. The water crisis remains a serious problem due to urban sprawl and increasing population density. Almora town was established on its water dependence on natural water resources. But due to the increasing population in the urban areas and low level of water in summer season, the problem in whole town increases even more. Slums especially have to face this because water resources are available very low quantity. Then, there is obviously more crisis in summer season. Study finds out that 27 families in *Ganeshigair* slum area depend on only one water tank which is also located about 500 meters for from the slum area.

iii. Unemployment:

Unemployment has become a serious problem at the present time. Slums of Almora town are badly affected by unemployment due to lack of skill and education. Slum dwellers here face high rates of unemployment. Present study also shows that about 50% people are working as town cleanness and 50% do not have regular work. They are involved in other fields of works as of drivers, shop runners, seller and commerce etc. Illiteracy and conservative ideology can be considered the main reason for unemployment in the slums of Almora town.

iv. Health Concerns:

Overcrowding leads to faster and wider spread of disease due to the limited space in slum housing. Poor water quality, a manifest example is a cause of many major illnesses including malaria, diarrhea and trachoma (WHO, 2004). One of the problems among the people living in slums is health related, main reason behind this clean drinking water, garbage, public toilet, open sewer lines etc. are the major issues responsible for various infectious diseases. This is the major reason of high death rate in the age group of 30-60 people of slum in Almora town. The main reason for spreading of infection diseases which later on cause serious illness among these people caused due to no protection during cleaning sewer lines, and ignore basic safety measures etc, other factors that have been attributed to a higher rate of diseases transmission in slums include high population densities, poor living conditions, low vaccination rates, insufficient health related data and inadequate health services etc.



Photo Plate 2: Public Toilet

v. Lack of Infrastructure:

One of the problems of slums is the lack of basic facilities. There is a shortage in basic facilities like drinking water, proper lighting, school, toilet, dustbin, hospital, market etc. Due to living in the outer zones of the town they are deprived of these facilities and also of roads, sewer, piped water etc.

vi. Social Problems:

Increasing crime, moral degradation, domestic violence is lack of employment etc. All these factors collectively lead to various social and economic problems. In addition, heavy liquor intake and gambling cause violence in the house, due to which there is tension in the families.

vii. Environmental Problems:

Urban living is the keystones of modern human ecology. In the last few decades, due to the rapid urbanization the environmental problems are getting more and more complicated slums are one of the major causes of environmental pollution. Lack of infrastructure in slums generates various types of environmental pollutions. Inadequate management and planning of surface drainage, sewage, waste disposal (including solid and liquid waste) are the common problems, which lead to infectious diseases and severe health hazards in slums.



Photo Plate 3: Lack of Waste Management

5. RECOMMENDATION:

The following may be suggestion to solve the problem of slums of Almora town are as:

- Adequate residential facilities should be provided to each slum family. Accommodation should be environment friendly and convenient.
- There should be proper provision of clear drinking water in slums, so that diseases caused by polluted water can be controlled.
- The children of slum should be encouraged to study so that they seek jobs and can upgrade to the main stream of the society.
- Skill development training should be provided to generate income.
- Residents of slums should be given special facilities in the government hospitals of the town for health treatment. They should be encouraged to come to the hospitals.

- Proper arrangements should be made for basic amenities and services in the slums like piped water, sewer, electricity, road etc.
- Pollution and the environment issues should be solved on priority bases.

6. CONCLUSION:

In this research paper, the geographical location of the slum dwellers of Almora town and their problems has been studied. Urbanization is going to be a big challenge in the coming time, constant population growth; mass density and rural-urban migration are the main reasons due to which various environmental problems in slums are getting formidable. Slums are generally located near the C.B.D (Central business district) areas all over the world, but the slums of town Almora are far from C.B.D. Due to which various types of facilities and services are not available to them. Therefore, it is very important that the policies and programs of the municipality and government should be like that the gap between the slum and the town can be removed. At present, Almora town has four slums, but if this area of the society not managed well then in future it may expand further and may cause various socio-economic problems. Problems related to slums are becoming multidimensional. Implementation of various programs and planning at the local level is very important to the administration, so they can also rise higher. They can also get accommodation, clean water, education, medical, transport facilities and other essential services. Slum plays an important role in the development at the regional and state level. The slum people of the Almora provide their services as “Eco-friendly people” in the town, which keeps our town clean and tidy but ironically, they themselves live in slums, are deprived of amenities. Therefore, it is very important for the government to be sensitive to them.

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