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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Urban Governance and Slum Issues in Kollam Corporation (Kerala State): A Case Study from an Indian state

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#### Abstract

Developing countries like India presently suffer from the enormous growth of urbanization. The urbanized areas are usually associated with the issue of slum. Rapid rate of urbanization resulting from rural-urban migration is a major contributing factor to slum development in developing countries. Due to the unsustainable planning and management, immigrants tend to congregate and seek accommodation from less desirable areas of the city. This paper assesses the socio-economic and environmental characteristics of slums in selected suburbs in Kollam District, Kerala. The paper also assesses the environmental impacts of the approaches in dealing with slums. Slums are manifested by poor physical and environmental features such as poor housing conditions, poor road conditions and networks, poor drainage facilities, and environmental pollution.

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## INTRODUCTION

A slum is a compact area of overcrowded populations, poorly built, congested dwelling condition, unhygienic environment usually with inadequate infrastructure and lacking in proper sanitary and drinking water facilities. Living conditions in slums have a direct impact on people's health. One of the major challenges that face urban planners globally is the proliferation of slums in urban areas and the host of health hazards that they bring along with their wake. However, the prolific spread of slums has been a rampant problem in urban areas worldwide.

Hutchinson (1997) has defined a slum as an area of poor quality housing, typically found in the inner city in rich countries and in other parts of cities in poor countries. He observed that, slum housing is usually densely populated, in a bad state of repairs and has inadequate services including poor sanitation, poor supply of electricity, irregular water supply among others, and its inhabitants are often poor with low rates of literacy.

The characteristics of urban villagers and their ways of life were described by Gans in his study of the residents of West End Boston in 1962 which was cited in Clark (1982). He argued that the slum area is populated by immigrants from diverse ethnic backgrounds both national and international. Their common features include; low incomes, absence of occupational skills and qualifications, poor housing which is manifested by dilapidated state of the buildings, garbage on the streets, among others. It is a very complex social relationship, as there is a friendly, intimate and close-knit community, reminiscent of that which exists in small towns and rural areas. The family remains a major component in their social organization, and religion retains its hold on the people.

The living conditions in slums are usually unhygienic and contrary to all norms of planned urban growth. Human development and improvement in the quality of life is the ultimate objective of all planning programmes leading to higher economic and social development. There exists a very strong linkage between attaining economic prosperity and enriching the quality of life, which is reflected in the social indicators of health, longevity, literacy and environmental sustainability. These indicators serve as valuable inputs for developing suitable policy initiatives. In true sense, environment development with progressive transformation of economy and society with its major objectives lie in the satisfaction of human needs and aspirations. India is vast culturally and geographically

comprising of 28 states and 7 union territories. Present study is a humble attempt to explore the environmental scenario of slum dwellers in Kollam city (Kerala State) India. Among the urban population, slum dwellers are usually the poorest. Literacy and education are the hall mark of Kerala Social Development. On this count also, slum population lags behind. They have remained poor, deprived of the basic nutrition, rudimentary shelter, minimally competent medical attention and basic education posing a great challenge to Kerala model of development.

## **1. Objectives of the study**

- To find out socio-economic condition of the slum dwellers
- To identify the problems and constraints of slum development.
- To examine the demographic characteristics of slum dwellers.
- To review the environmental aspects of the city.

## **2. Research Methodology**

Case study method is used in this research study. The study targets the population and households in the selected slum communities of Kollam area. The data collection tools that were employed in the research include the use of structured questionnaire, interview guide, direct observation, a (photographic) camera, telephone interviews and a pocket notebook.

The structured questionnaires used for the collection of household data includes a set of close and open ended questions. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the houses from which the household heads in the four slum communities were selected for interview.

The questionnaire was set and administered through a random sampling technique targeting a household head in every thirtieth house in each of the four purposively sampled slum communities.

The data analysis was carried out during the research using qualitative methods. A qualitative method of analysis was also used to describe and interpret data mainly from the interview guide and data from secondary sources.

In this research, the key data variables were:

Household characteristics of slum communities

- Housing condition
- Household access to utilities in slum communities
- Slum control efforts and urban growth management
- Challenges associated with slum control efforts

## **3. Overview of Slum**

### **4.1. Average Slum Size**

The total area covered by the slums is around 0.79 km<sup>2</sup>. The average area of a slum varies between 3000 and 5000 sq. meters. The slums located in the fringe area are higher in size with low density as compared to the slums located in the core area with higher density and relatively smaller areas.

The average number of families in the slums is about 101 families /slum. The largest slum in terms of population is the Kollam port cluster with 430 families and 3,619 persons. Kadapuram cheri, Panchayt vila chery, resettlement cherry and vedikunnu cherry are occupied by more than 2000 persons per slum. On an average, a house in the slum has about 30 sq.mts and land availability per households is about 1.8 cents.

As indicated in the table below, the slums occupy an area of 0.79 sq. km which is equivalent to 1.35% of the total area of the city. It is interesting to note that 15% of the population is living in 1.35% of the area in the region where homestead development is prevalent. It is understood that the contradiction is mainly because the settlements of fishermen along the coastal areas have been categorized as slums which resulted in the increase in average density among the slums.

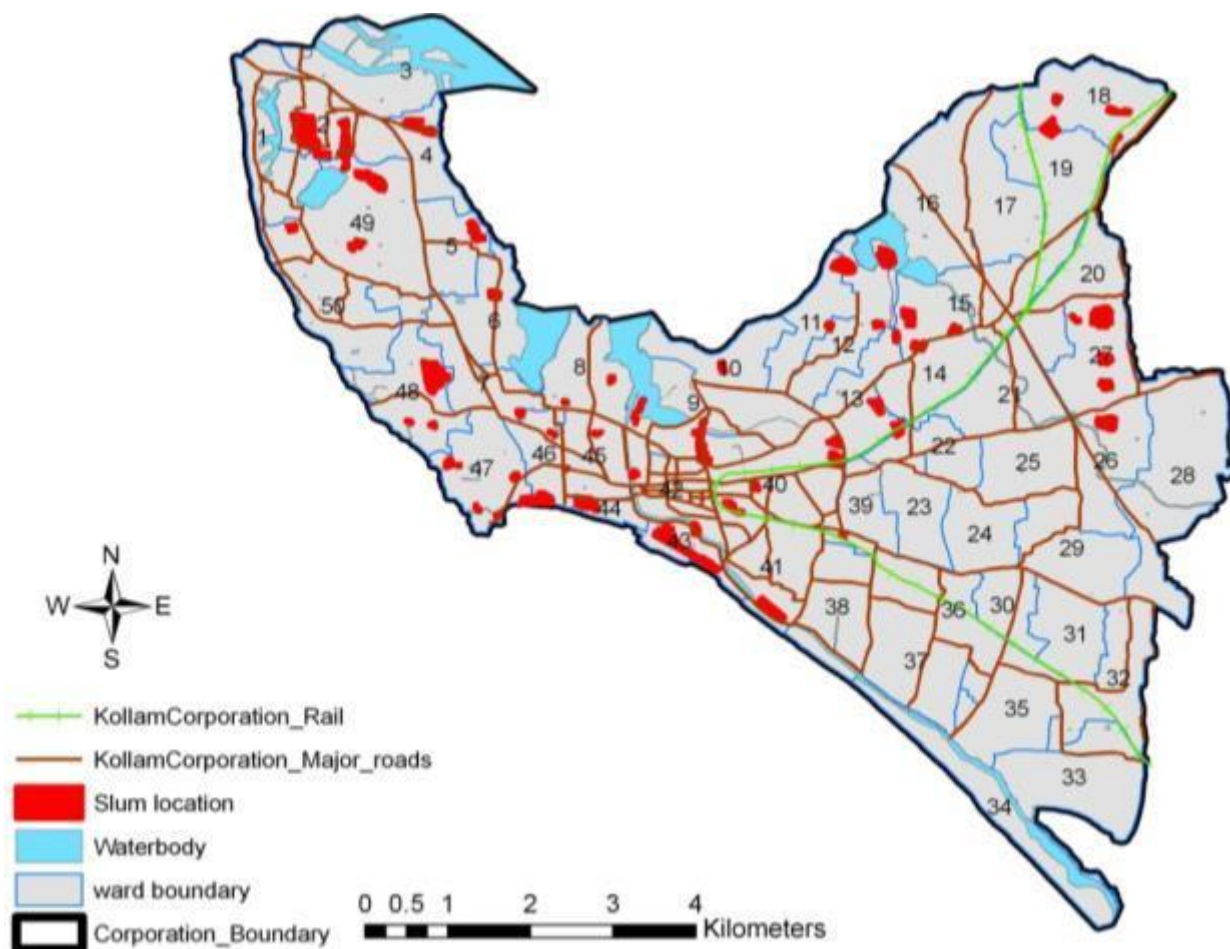
As per the survey, rural to urban migration accounts for about 7% of the households in the slums of Kollam city, contradicting the usual perception about the dominance of rural to urban migration in rising level of urbanization and slum formation in India. Also, the survey says that the average age of a slum is about 35 years; this implies that the traditional village settlements and SC colonies have been categorised as slums.

### 3.2. Slum profile

Sr.No		City	SLUMS	City % share
1	Area	57.31	0.79	1.35%
2	Population	349,033	54860	15.71%
3	Households	85,000	11248	13.23%
4	Total number of Slums	102	102	100%
5	Density	95 person/ha	882 person/ha	

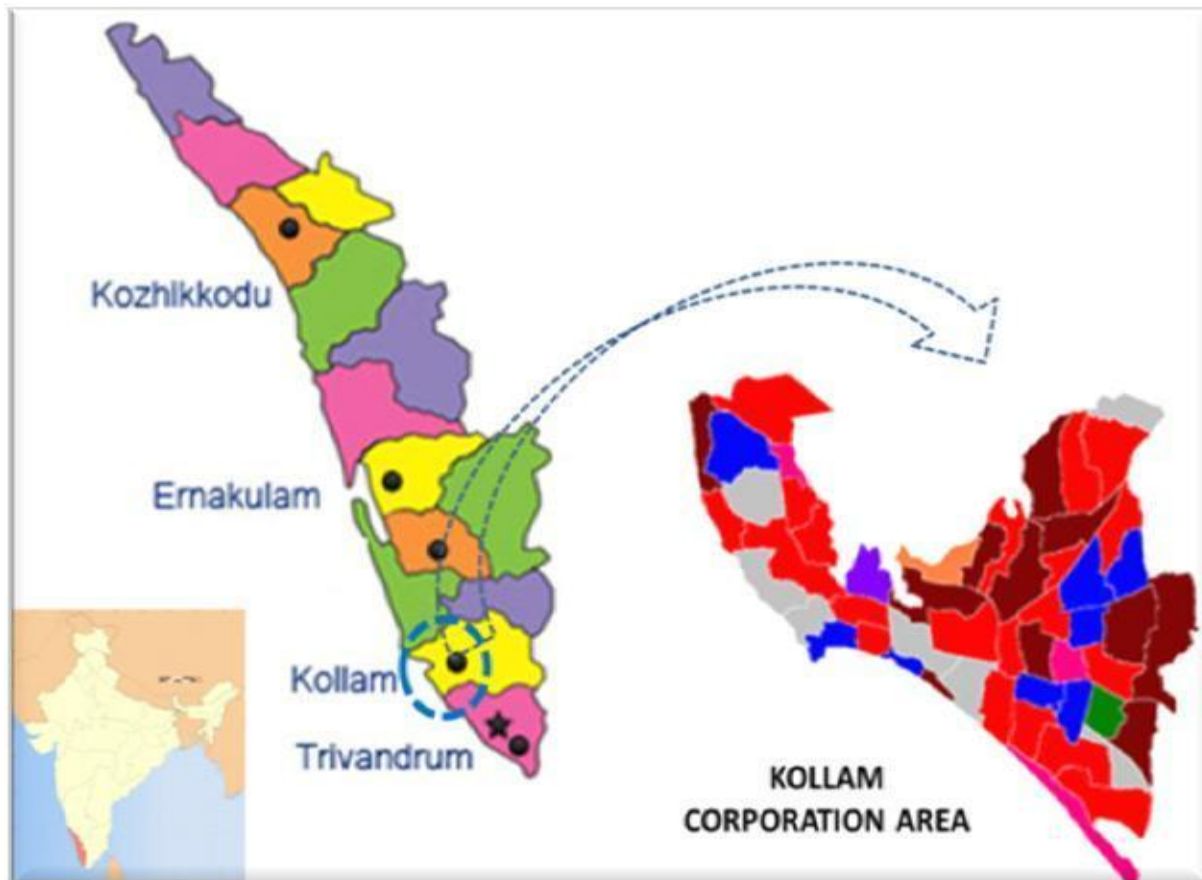
Sources: GKDP 2031, SFCPoA 2013-14

### 4.3 Ward-wise Slum locations (Source: Draft SFCPoA Kollam 2013)



#### **4.5. Location map of Kollam** (Source: Draft SFCPoA Kollam 2013)

Kollam is the fourth-largest city in the state and is the headquarters of Kollam district. The town was a prominent commercial and industrial centre in the southern part of the state. The city is situated 72 km north of Thiruvananthapuram, the state capital, and 150 km south of Kochi. The city has strong physical connectivity with important towns in Kerala as well as the neighboring state of Tamil Nadu both by road and railways



#### **Findings from the study: Some Facts**

The main objective of the study was to identify the major problems of the slum dwellers in Kollam slum. This particular place consist of 56 houses. Slums exist in almost every nation and the dwellers face several challenges ranging from poor living conditions to poor housing and environmental conditions. Slums in Kollam specifically face challenges with access to water and sanitation services, environmental problems and poor housing conditions resulting from poor maintenance culture. These challenges are faced by the dwellers partly because their income levels are low. This makes them unable to carry out maintenance and other activities to improve their housing and environmental conditions.

##### **Current status**

#### **5.1 Access to Water**

One of the major complaints was the lack of water availability. Water and sanitation is a major component of the development of every community. The Kollam Corporation- made pipes had only water supply for some hours and other hours tap remained dry. There is also issues in water availability wherein they use pipe water for drinking and have to wait from morning 6 clock till 8 clock for getting water. There were only 4 pipes and no public well in this area.

Most of the houses in this areas do not have individual water supply. In this area, public taps do exist but the number of persons using each such tap is generally very high. Many slums, especially in the outskirts of the Kollam cities, have open wells as their only source of water for drinking, bathing and cleaning. These wells are generally insanitary. No attention is paid to the maintenance of wells, or even of public taps. A considerable number of slum dwellers have to fetch water from outside the slum areas.

Most of the respondents do not have water facilities in their houses. This creates inconveniences as they have to move for a distance of about 800 meters before they get potable water. The situation worsens when there is water shortage. First, the pipes in most cases develop faults which take some time for the plumbers to come and fix them. In some cases, the pipelines in the ground develop faults and needed to be removed and new ones fixed, but building may be extended to leave a small space for the pipeline which becomes difficult for the operation to be carried out. In such cases, plumbers intentionally refuse to come and do the work.

### **5.2 Housing Conditions**

Though Government had given them assurance to build houses for free and surveys were done regarding that, no other steps were taken further. The people here don't have ownership right for their property still. Almost all the houses in slum are in improper, and sometimes dilapidated, conditions. The houses are usually inadequately ventilated. The designs are such as to afford bare shelter, leading to acute congestion. In squatter settlements, houses are constructed using materials like mud, un-burnt bricks, tin-sheets, asbestos sheets, bamboo, gunny bags, plastic sheets etc. and are usually single-room units with inadequate space standards. These houses had their walls cracked, foundations exposed, roofs leaking and even parts of the buildings collapsing. Due to the low income status of the respondents, they were unable to carry out maintenance.

The cracks in the walls were due to the fact that in the process of building the house, the foundations of the houses were not concreted and aligned well, so the moment the foundations are exposed, it expands and leads to the cracks in the walls. The foundations were exposed because of erosion during rainfall. There were inadequate drains to channel the runoff and as such the runoff passed the backs of the houses leading to the exposure of the foundations. Majority of the houses had their foundations not concreted and as a result they were easily eroded by runoff from rain. Most of the respondents admitted that the roofs of their buildings leak. These houses had their roofs leaking profusely whenever it rains. This causes inconvenience to the inhabitants of houses and as such have caused the inhabitants to place plastics and plywood on their roofing sheets. This was to ensure that the rains did not enter their rooms through the roofs to destroy their properties whenever there was heavy downpour. Some of the residents sometimes had to position buckets at vantage points within their rooms to prevent their rooms from getting flooded. Some of the roofing conditions were in such a state that it required the placement of heavy objects such as concrete blocks and car tyres to prevent them from ripping off during heavy storms.

### **5.3 Economic Characteristics of the Slum Dwellers**

Unfortunately, the economic circumstances of the slum dwellers are such as they do not allow them to improve their living conditions. A majority of the sum dwellers are employed in the unorganized or informal sector. A large proportion of them work on a daily wage basis and, therefore, have little or no job security. A significant proportion is employed in construction sector. Due to low income, their standard of living is also low and they are left with little surplus income for housing after meeting their families basic needs of food and clothing. The main job of the people here are collection of wastes and working as domestic servants. Both men and women are paid equally in this area. For waste collection, they get 100 rupees per day. The slum area is faced a crucial economic back drop.

Working as house maids in urban elite houses is the major occupation and livelihood of women. Men worked as daily laborers, doing odd jobs. One of the major drawbacks that was observed was the lack of proper working of the already existing government- made Self Help Groups schemes and the other such small scale incentives that are of great use. In order to get a loan or other such financial aids, these are the only option available for them.

Majority of the slum dwellers who live here, belong to lower socio-economic class and have migrated to the city with the hope of better means of livelihood. Having basically low economy, skill and work experience, they have no choice in the competitive job market and pick up low paid jobs such as construction labourer, domestic servants, casual factory workers and petty trading business. With their meagre income, they are forced to live in slum areas in the most unsanitary and unhygienic conditions, and are carrying out their existence with the barest necessities of life

### **5.4 Access to Sanitation Services**

The major problem that all of them have been facing was the lack of proper sanitation and drainage facilities. The conditions prevailing there was that, drainage waste and waste materials from the nearby slaughter house were floating around the houses. In terms of liquid waste disposal, most of the respondents dispose of their liquid waste in drains outside the house. Only few percent of the households dispose of their liquid waste in the open space. Though the liquid wastes were disposed of using the outside drains, these drains were in poor conditions. They are choked with rubbish, sand, polythene bags and others. As a result, all the households' liquid waste were stagnated in the drains creating breeding grounds for mosquitoes and other disease causing agents. During heavy downpours the drains overflow and the liquid waste sometimes enter the rooms of some of the residents. The high prevalence of malaria, diarrhea and some isolated cases of typhoid were as a result of the drains serving as a thriving place for such pathogens. Some people also dump their solid waste along the roads and behind other people's houses. This was a major cause of poor environmental sanitation in Kollam and also a cause of environmental related diseases such as diarrhea. It was realized that all the diseases recorded are as a result of poor environmental conditions and poor solid waste disposal and management.

In the name of cleaning up the drainage, all the existing sewage system got dismantled. This has become a breeding ground for disease spreading mosquitoes. Due to this, even new born kids are suffering from various harmful diseases such as asthma, continues fever, vomiting and other related diseases. During monsoon season, the level of water in the pond increases causes sanitation issues. The people are getting awareness classes about cleanliness from the authorities.

Due to the foul smell from the nearby slaughter house they can't even have food from their own homes properly. During the monsoon they had their homes flooded with water, which they themselves had to remove from their homes. Since they don't have proper assistance from the existing government they are trespassers by law and were not even given a land ownership status. A certain group of them want to leave the particular place and breathe in fresh air for at least a day.

The drainage system in the slum is very poor. The sewage water cannot flow away. The situation becomes particularly worse during the rainy season and get mixed-up with the slaughtering areas water, making extremely unhygienic environment. The major problems highlighted by the respondents include lack of drinking water facilities, the foul smell from slaughter house, poor drainage and sewerage and road. The solutions suggested by the slum dwellers are that either the slaughtering houses should be properly maintained or it should be closed down.

#### **5.5 Prevalent Diseases**

The sewerage system of the slum area is not sufficient in everywhere. Most of the slum area has open drainage system. The drainages are very much dirty and unhygienic which need renovations. Epidemics is another major problem facing by the peoples of this slum area. It was realized that all the diseases recorded are as a result of poor environmental conditions and poor solid waste disposal and management. Due to the slum nature of Kollam especially the building extensions, there is no proper ventilation in their rooms and this is causing the rashes. This area is suffering from filth due to poor environmental sanitation. Most of the drains were choked with polythene bags, sand and empty tins. Most of the drains were also not engineered and due to that liquid waste is unable to flow through smoothly thereby creating stagnant waters. There were pockets of weedy surroundings which served as breeding places for mosquitoes and other diseases

## **4. Waste Dumping and Health Hazards in in Kollam Corporation**

Figure 6.1



Figure 6.2



Figure 6.3



## **7. Analyses and Discussions**

The main purpose of this study was to find out socio-economic condition and health status of slum areas. First objective of this study was to find out socio-economic condition of urban slums. For this purpose different indicators were used. Results show that most of the responses related to these indicators were not positive. Household size was observed larger; more than one fourth of total respondents denoted that their household size was 6-7 members. More than half of the respondents were living in joint family system. Nearly about one third of total respondents had 3 rooms in their house. The household size, limited number of rooms and its dirty condition shows that accommodation would be a problem for them. Detail was sought about type of house that respondents had, more than half percent households had semi-pacca house type. Income level is an important characteristic of any population; information was collected about the monthly income of households. Population less than one third of total respondents had income level from 10001 to 15000. Most of the households had only one member who earns. Some information was sought out about basic necessities of life which affect living status of any household. Results illustrate that almost all the respondents had connection of electricity. Most of the respondents got water from pumps. There were very few respondents who treat water before using for drinking purpose. Only few percent treated water before using it and their method of treatment was filtration. This shows that these people do not treat water to make it pure. The water which they use for drinking is not healthy. This water can cause diseases for them.

Family planning programmes are not conducted properly in this area. Though there are two Self Help Group units functioning in this area, they are not getting any kind of support from the government.

Roads and lanes are narrow and often unpaved. Puddles and slush are common-place after every rain shower. The facility of roads and street lights is generally inadequate. This adversely affects the safety and security of residents and is generally believed to be largely responsible for high rates of night-time crimes.

Most of the respondents were using woods as source of fuel in kitchen. One out of four households had been using this source. Information was collected that where they dispose kitchen waste, most percent had practice to dispose it in the nearby pond. They dispose their kitchen and house waste nearby drainage which can create problems for local dwellers.

One out of five did not have drainage attached to house for sanitation. This shows that sanitation system is not proper in these areas. Results illustrate that majority percent households had toilet facility and out of these half percent had flush type toilet. This shows that toilet facility is available in these areas.

Majority of the respondents replied that their household members practice proper washing of hands. It shows that they are good at practicing this healthy deed. But unfortunately more than half of those do not wash their hands with soap. Dwellers of slums do not have adequate system of latrine cleanliness. Sanitation is very poor in slum areas. This clarifies that these people have unhygienic latrines.

Quality of food is major concern for the slum dwellers. Taking nutritious foods and frequency of consumption of foods is important determinate of good health. Poor water and sanitary conditions lead to adverse health outcomes in the households living in the slums. Especially women and children in the slums are most vulnerable section. Protein-energy nutrient intake is widely low in the particular slum area.

Another important objective of study was to find out health status of urban slums. Firstly, to find out health issues question related to health status was used. More than half percent respondents replied that many of their household members had to face any illness in two months prior to study. This is a quite high ratio of illness in any area. This response reflects the degradation of overall health status of this area. Most frequent illness that they faced was diarrhea and at second was the fever. The occurrence of diarrhea coincides with the absence of pure water.

Most victims of illness were children under five. Half percent affected members were these young ones. They are more vulnerable to pathogens of these diseases. Though most of the affected members got treatment, a percentage of them were deprived of the same. Another percentage of them who got treatment from quack sources while another set of them do not go for any treatment.

The main source of getting treatment for disease was government dispensary or hospital. They do not have enough resources to get treatment from private clinics so they prefer to visit public medical centers. Chronic diseases were common in elders.

They are no active SHG Programmes in this area for women. Cultivation is not possible in this area as there is limitation of space. The colony people are finding it difficult to get their girl children married just because they belong to this colony.

Rapid urbanization has brought alarming, unmanageable and persistent problems of slums in almost every city of the world. Slum development in the case study areas is characterised by non-availability of property right, poor sanitation, sub-standard buildings and poor utility services etc., which limit possibility of sustainable planning and management of these communities. The environmental conditions are degraded and abysmal with increasing problems of encroachment on unauthorised land especially on river banks and flood plains, and inadequate sanitation facilities leading to dumping of household waste into nearby water bodies.

When it comes to housing, most of the slum dwellers live in leaking roofs and in houses with weak and leaky roofs made of old corrugated iron sheets. This situation causes discomfort to the slum dwellers especially during rainy season. As a mitigation approach, the slum dwellers used materials such as car tyres and polythene bags to prevent the roof from ripping off and leaking during heavy thunderstorms.

Poor sanitation, large household sizes, poor provision of utility services, sub-standard buildings, congestion and unapproved extension of buildings, poor urban planning system, blockage of main access roads (poor access roads) are the common characteristic observed here just as seen commonly in slum areas. The common problem that every single household faced was the lack of water supply, infrastructure, road, and foul smell from slaughter houses etc.

Sustainable urban planning and management thus requires the creation of cities which are functional in terms of promoting harmony among the various land uses, enhancing the aesthetics of the urban environment, achieving economy in the use of resources (land, water, human, finance), improving the safety of the urban dwellers, ensuring convenience in the urban setting as well as maintaining continual and sustainable growth. These requirements of sustainable urban planning are at variance with slum formation and development and are important in meeting the needs of both the current and future generation.



### Causes of Slum Growth in Kollam Corporation

- Inadequate supply of utilities
- Housing shortage
- Unauthorized development
- Disregard for planning regulation
- Rural urban migration

### **8. Suggestions:**

The following are the major suggestions for the study,

- Facilitating access to income generating activities through capacity building and strengthened urban Small Scale / micro enterprises.
- Ensure full time water supply in consultation with Water authority
- Promote stronger self-help groups programmes
- Increased budgetary allocation for housing.
- Amendments of inappropriate legislations
- Improving the livelihoods in urban areas through increased access to basic quality services and socio-economic infrastructure.
- Improving the socio-economic growth of poor urban settlements through better participatory management, job creation, public/private partnership and governance at local level.
- To improve urban environmental health sanitation, drainage, community infrastructure upgrading, vehicular access and solid waste management in a sustainable fashion with special emphasis on the poor.
- Majority of the people were not ready to shift from the place. So it is better to bring forth changes in their area itself rather than shifting them to another place.
- Ensure cleanliness through proper waste disposal and drainage and sanitation systems. Efforts in improving waste management in the slum communities have been faced with many challenges due to lack of involvement and awareness creation among the slum dwellers.
- Strengthen Self Help Group activities so that it will improve their livelihood
- Ensure basic facilities like road, water, drainage, etc.
- Utilize media to highlight the issues and develop awareness in the community.
- Most of the slums identified for the study area were low lying areas and inundated during rainy seasons. Measures should be taken to raise their level in order to avoid problems of flooding and slogging in such slums.
- The open drains alongside the road should either be provided with removable covers or appropriate arrangements should be made for their regular cleaning so as to avoid accumulation of sewage.
- Local government should provide more facility of public latrines for prevention of water and land pollution.
- Local government should undertake measures to improve the physical environment of the dwelling places, proper drainage, sewerage system and adequate water supply.
- Slum clinic or mobile clinic van should be arranged for treatment of common diseases and health promotional activities.
- Local government should develop strategies to prevent the formation of new slums. These should include access to affordable land, reasonably priced materials, employment opportunities and basic infrastructures.
- Adequate water should be supplied to the slum communities to improve the livelihood of the people. This is to help address the problem of inadequate supply of water to the slum communities. The authorities should update data on the number of households in the slum communities so that adequate water can be supplied to the people.
- Intensify house-to-house waste collection in the slum communities to help address the worsening sanitation problem in these communities. Under this strategy, the authorities should contract private waste management firms, build their capacity to enable them enter into negotiations with slum community members on the modalities for efficient collection of waste and the best way by which payment for services rendered could be effected.
- The Department of Urban Roads should be empowered by the Ministry of Roads and Highways to take full control over all lands earmarked for road construction and protect them from encroachers. Offenders of such regulations should be prosecuted. All structures which are in the right of way should be demolished to

give way for the expansion of the narrow roads. Failed local roads in the slum communities should be repaired and the unpaved ones constructed.

- Access to potable water should be improved. Improving access to potable water has so many dimensions such as repair of broken pipes, replacement of copper pipes with PVC pipes and others. These can be effectively done if the buildings are not extended to cover the water lines. The inhabitants must therefore be made aware about this issue so as not to harm themselves with water shortages.
- The slum dwellers should be sensitized on the need for housing maintenance so that the dangers associated with poor maintenance of housing such as collapse of buildings will be avoided. They should be made aware that a house should undergo maintenance at least every five years to ensure that the houses are in good condition.
- Family planning should be promoted in the slum communities to help control the large household sizes and the overcrowding in the communities. The Government Health Service should be put in charge of the education and campaign on the importance of family planning in order to ease the congestion in the slum communities.
- There is the need for policy reforms on slums. The first step is to raise the awareness of political leadership through factual information on slums. Most often, political leaders turn a “deaf ear” to the concerns of slum dwellers until social stability appears threatened or a health problem begins to spread throughout the general populace. In this regard, political leaders must be well informed of the challenges facing slum dwellers so that they can buy into any reasonable development initiative.

## **9. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the study has established that slum growth in Kollam cities is basically a result of rural- urban migration which has fuelled urbanization in the country. Unfortunately the urbanization in Kerala has led to the growth of primate cities. The ever-increasing urban population has resulted in housing shortage. This coupled with the authorities’ inability to provide affordable housing for the low income urban dwellers has resulted in the creation of slums in the cities as part of the urbanization process.

The developmental activities in urban centers provide employment to the rural migrants as well as the local urban population. These low income groups, in the absence of proper shelter were settled in pockets of the slum areas characterized by overcrowding, dilapidated dwellings, lack of sanitation and civic amenities. Realizing the gravity of the situation governments have implemented a number of schemes and programmes to improve the living conditions of people living in slums. There is the need, therefore to deal with slum growth since it may not be possible to halt urbanization. The foregoing suggests therefore that slum control in Kollam cities require a holistic and an integrated planning approach that can reduce rural poverty and improve urban livelihoods since these appear to be the main causes of slum growth in cities. In short multipronged strategy is required not only to address the needs of slum dwellers for shelter but also the problems urban poverty, unemployment, low incomes and lack of access to basic urban services.

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