

## PRESS NOTE

### **“Young Children’s physical environment in slums seriously needs to be prioritised”**

Better environment for physical and psychological growth are essential for human development specifically for the development of young children at an early stage. This helps in creating and developing early and young minds for future growth and development. Children need a safe and healthy environment for their proper development. Special planning and design of the outdoor and indoor spaces enables a child to **play, learn and explore**. It is through the physical environment and neighbourhood that children acquire **social, cognitive, and physical skills**. Restricting these may slow-down the holistic developmental process of young children. There are components which has major role in a child’s development and therefore every child should have access to them those are clean and safe water, healthy air to breath, public space to play (parks and playground) all weather housing, proper sanitation, electricity with safety measures, better transportation, soil free from contamination etc.

Brahmapur being a medium city in Odisha with a population of 3, 85, 356 among them slum population of 1, 17, 541 in 137 pockets scattered all over the city. The town has numerous problems and challenges which start from poor service delivery to the weak governance and institutional framework, resulting in slow development. Provision of drinking water supply and sanitation is decade old problem, no organized drainage system for discharging of

#### **What is Child-Friendly Physical Environment in urban poverty?**

- Young children’s access to affordable, quality basic health services, clean water, adequate sanitation and solid waste removal within their house and neighbourhoods.
- Municipality and other urban local authorities to ensure that urban development policies (like RAY & JnNURM), resource allocations and governance actions are made in a manner that is in the best interests of the young children and their living areas.
- Safe environments and conditions that enable the development of young children, with opportunities for recreation, learning, social interaction, psychological development and cultural expression in and outside the slums.
- A sustainable and protected environment from the effects of any environmental hazards and natural disasters.
- Ensure that special attention is given to the needs of disadvantaged children, such as children with disabilities, children of seasonal migrant families of the city and children living without adequate parental & family support.

filth and excess wastewater, waste disposal and management systems have serious problems, roads of the town are rough and muddy, poor quality of basic services to slums are very acute, unavailability livelihood options, rising social exclusion, poor participation of slum dwellers (including women, youth, children and the weaker section) in civic activities, inefficient bureaucracy, low level of civic engagement, lack of political will and corruption has slowed down the development process. The problems of slums in Berhampur in general and specifically for children are

- There are no specific plans, policies and programme for children by the Berhampur Municipal Corporation and implementation of existing programme are poor and the budgetary provisions and allocation are almost nil.
- The City Development Plan of Berhampur nowhere mentioned specific policies, programmes for children. There is clear reflection of non-recognition and even violation of vital children’s rights and poor implementation of existing programmes like right to water, right to food

(PDS, ICDS, MDM) , right to housing (IHSDP, RAY), rights to survival, health and education and right to information.

- The present need of drinking water is 50 mega litres (MLD) per day but PHED only manages to supply 33 MLD and the situation becomes very acute during summer.
- The standard norms of CPHEEO and UDPI guidelines the per capita supply of water should be 135 litres per capita per day, but PHED has been able to meet only 73 lpcd in Berhampur.
- Absence of sewerage system results 26.4 million litres wastewater way into open drainage, non-existence of full-fledged sewerage collection, treatment and disposal system and households defecate in open fields due to lack of public toilets posing threat to public health of children.
- No systematic drainage system for discharging of filth and excess wastewater and absence of effective mechanism for complete coverage and collecting of solid waste is causing unhygienic conditions which pose great health hazards of the children in the city.
- Land and housing security of the slum dwellers are still in constant threat. They always fear of getting evicted by government and landowners. Albeit, IHSDP is yet to be useful to other slum communities especially those which are unauthorized and occupying government lands.
- Vulnerability of slums dwellers to urban development which is serious due to the master plan developed by BMC that will determine public land utility in the future. The fact that many slum communities occupy public lands, the possibility of displacement or relocation is feared by the residents and also hurdles development of early minds. Slum communities specifically children are hardly consulted in this planning process, hence, they are not equipped with knowledge on how to respond given the government will push its plan.
- Despite existing government programmes on slum development such as the IHSDP, SJSRY, NSDP, VAMBAY, AAY, Annapurna, UIDSSMT of JnNURM, RAY and BSUP are promoted by the central and state government and being implemented by BMC, the slum residents who are intended beneficiaries of these programmes are not well-informed. The slow implementation of these programmes presumably due to lack of funds also places the slum residents at the waiting end, unable to proactively engage the local authorities.
- Poor capacity and diversity are witnessed in slums; they do not have groups or associations that facilitate collective action for the residents' well-being. Although political activities are not uncommon in slums, they are usually initiated by politicians and political groups which consider the slums as vote banks.
- The existing governance structure makes it difficult for the urban poor to have a voice in the city's development process targeted at them. Poor information dissemination and low level of voice and participation of the vulnerable section like women, children and slum dwellers are often makes them unreached to the public programmes.
- BMC on its part are not taking action to form ward committees, hardly take public opinion and then in to consideration and it is very poor in disclosing publicly held information even if there is right to information law and public disclosure act in place.
- Lack of participation means that the urban poor often do not have a choice in determining their own development needs and priorities. Lack of transparency at the local level affects the poor and marginalized stakeholders in many ways, often perpetuating exclusion and limiting their access to urban resources and opportunities.

Keeping this in mind the **Youth for Social Development (YSD)** - an independent social research and development organization working to improve governance in development areas that have direct impact on poor and vulnerable groups especially women, children and weaker sections in Odisha are currently commencing a pilot project titled **“Making Berhampur a Child Friendly City”** with the support from BvLF in 15 selected slums in Berhampur city. The basic objective of this project is to improve the physical environment of children living in urban poverty in slums in Berhampur city of Odisha through increased community sensitisation and participation, inform, empower and engage with young children and also engage with the municipal local government and other service providers to improve the physical environment and promote children’s growth and development.

YSD has joined hands with Humara Bachpan Campaign to spread the message among mass and involve and engage the stakeholders to promote improvement of young children’s physical environment by way of research, documentation, dissemination, community empowerment and engagement with local government and service providers to make Brahmapur a child friendly city.

### ***About Youth for Social Development***

The Youth for Social Development (YSD) is a not-for-profit independent social research and development organisation established in 2005 by a group of professionals aspiring to improve the lives of the tribal, rural and urban poor in Odisha. YSD works with local communities, women, youth, children and vulnerable groups to promote good governance, transparency, social accountability and citizen participation through research, public education, capacity building, documentation, people centred advocacy and participatory development action.

### ***About Humara Bachpan Campaign***

Humara Bachpan is a national campaign on safe and healthy environment for young children living in urban poverty. The campaign focuses on ensuring child friendly components in the urban renewal and related urban programs and policies such as Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JuNURM) and Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY). These policies and schemes should have a separate chapter on children’s participation and there should be exclusive allocation of resources and process to meet the physical environmental needs of young children. Advocacy through **Networking, Media & Communication, Research and Documentation** and creating models through **Demonstration projects**, are the four key strategies of this national campaign.

### ***For further details contact***

Bibhu Prasad Sahu, E-mail: [bibhu@ysdindia.org](mailto:bibhu@ysdindia.org) Mobile: 99371 90060

Ananta Prasad, E-mail: [ananta@humarabachpan.org](mailto:ananta@humarabachpan.org) Mobile: 9040132131