



ISSN: 0975-833X

RESEARCH ARTICLE

EFFECTS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION ON CHILD EDUCATION – A CASE STUDY ON SLUM AREA OF DANKUNI MUNICIPALITY, HOOGHLY, WEST BENGAL

***Avishek Banerjee**

Department of Geography Rabindra Mahavidyalaya, Champadanga, Hooghly

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 18th September, 2012
Received in revised form
25th October, 2012
Accepted 19th November, 2012
Published online 18th December, 2012

Key words:

Large size of family,
Low income,
Girls Engagement in household work,
First generation learner.

ABSTRACT

Child education in slum areas affected a lot due to poor socio-economic condition. Low literacy rate, many drop outs indicate that children have to face a lot of problems in their education. Due to large sizes of the family and low monthly income parents can't afford education to their all children. In the study area most of the families (53.33%) earn between Rs. 2500 – 5000 per month. Thus it becomes difficult to afford education for all children if there are more than two school going children's in a family. Educational qualification of parents has an impact on the educational progress of child, and level of education among parents is also not satisfactory in the study area. There are also gender gaps, here only 25% parents wish their girls to study above secondary level. Many children have to work also at the time of their study to earn money. Girls are specially engaged in these types of works and also in household works. Moreover, economic problems, sharing only one small room with more than four family members, regular problems in many children's family due to their drunken father creates disinterest among children about their study. Problems of safety due to crossings of rail line or busy road affect the education of primary school goers. First generation learners also faced psychological problems to adjust themselves in the environment of their school.

Copy Right, IJCR, 2012, Academic Journals. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Slums are a universal phenomenon and exist in practically all the cities across the world. Slum area normally tends to be backward in every socio-economic aspect. Child education is not also an exception. In developing countries like India, where education system in general almost suffered by different socio - economic problems, it is then assume what type of condition exists among the poorer sections of our society. There are a lot of disparities between slum area and any other normal area not only in socio-economic conditions but also in case of child education. In India, a large number of projects and programs were launched to reduce the gender and regional disparities but the problems faced by urban slum dwellers were ignored. Various measures were suggested in different policies and five year plans for the development of rural and backward areas but no concrete strategies were evolved to look into the educational problems of urban deprived. The average socio-economic indicators, like per capita income, infant mortality rate, literacy level, enrolment of the school going children, are much better in urban areas as compared to the national average, but the same is not true of the slum areas. The situation in some slum areas is even worse than many rural areas. It is only recently that the administrators have started thinking about the educational needs of this segment of population, which remained neglected for decades. The Ninth Five-Year Plan recognizes that the relative inequalities are more pronounced in urban

areas and reduction in urban poverty is proceeding at a lower rate. The poverty ratios in the urban areas are projected to exceed those of the rural areas (Govt of India, 1999). As the World Bank (1994, P. 9) rightly recognized, "Poverty is not only a problem of low incomes; rather, it is multi-dimensional problem that includes low access to opportunities for developing human capital and to education". Slum children too face educational deprivation in terms of accessibility and quality as well.

Many children from slum areas do not have access to schools with adequate facilities and teachers who are tuned for teaching the under-privileged. If the remote and backward areas have natural geographical barriers like hills, mountains and adverse weather conditions, children of the slum areas have hindrances like busy road, railway track and temporary obstructions. The school may be available within a reasonable distance but the child may need to cross a busy road or railway crossing which becomes an impediment for attending the school. (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2003). Thus it becomes necessary to highlight how socio-economic as well as environmental condition affects the child education in slum areas. "Here is an attempt to reveals the socio-economic barriers that hindered the growth of child education in slum areas of Dankuni Municipality".

Objectives

The main objectives of the present paper are:

-) To analyze the effect of poor socio economic condition on child education
-) To reflect how slum environment affect child education
-) To highlight the gender gap that exists in case of child education
-) To examine the various problems, that have to faced by slum dwelling children from their early childhood

Study Area

Dankuni is a fast growing industrial township near Kolkata. The town is part of the C.D. block Chanditala-II, of Hooghly district, in the state of West Bengal (Fig.1). The latitudinal and longitudinal extension of the town are 22°40' N - 22°42' N and 88°16' E - 88°18' E. Dankuni municipality has 19 wards. There are 87 slum pockets and 6212 dwelling unit in this area (Banerjee, 2012). The total population of this municipality is 104326, among which 31063 are lived in slum (Survey report of Dankuni Municipality - 2010). The present survey was conducted over the following slums (Table-1)-

METHODOLOGY

Here the study is based mainly on primary data. Purposive random sampling was adopted in the selection of data. The sample survey was carried out among randomly selected samples for primary data. 60 slum dwelling children's of 5-15 years age group were taken into investigation through questionnaires. Among 60 children 30 were girls and 30 were boys.

For the purpose of the study their parents are also interrogated to collect relevant information. As the study area Dankuni Municipality was formed in 2008, there are no census record of ward wise total population and actual slum population, which is almost a handicap for the preparation of this paper. Thus the data related to population was collected from the survey report of Dankuni Municipality, conducted in the year 2010.

“LOCATION MAP”

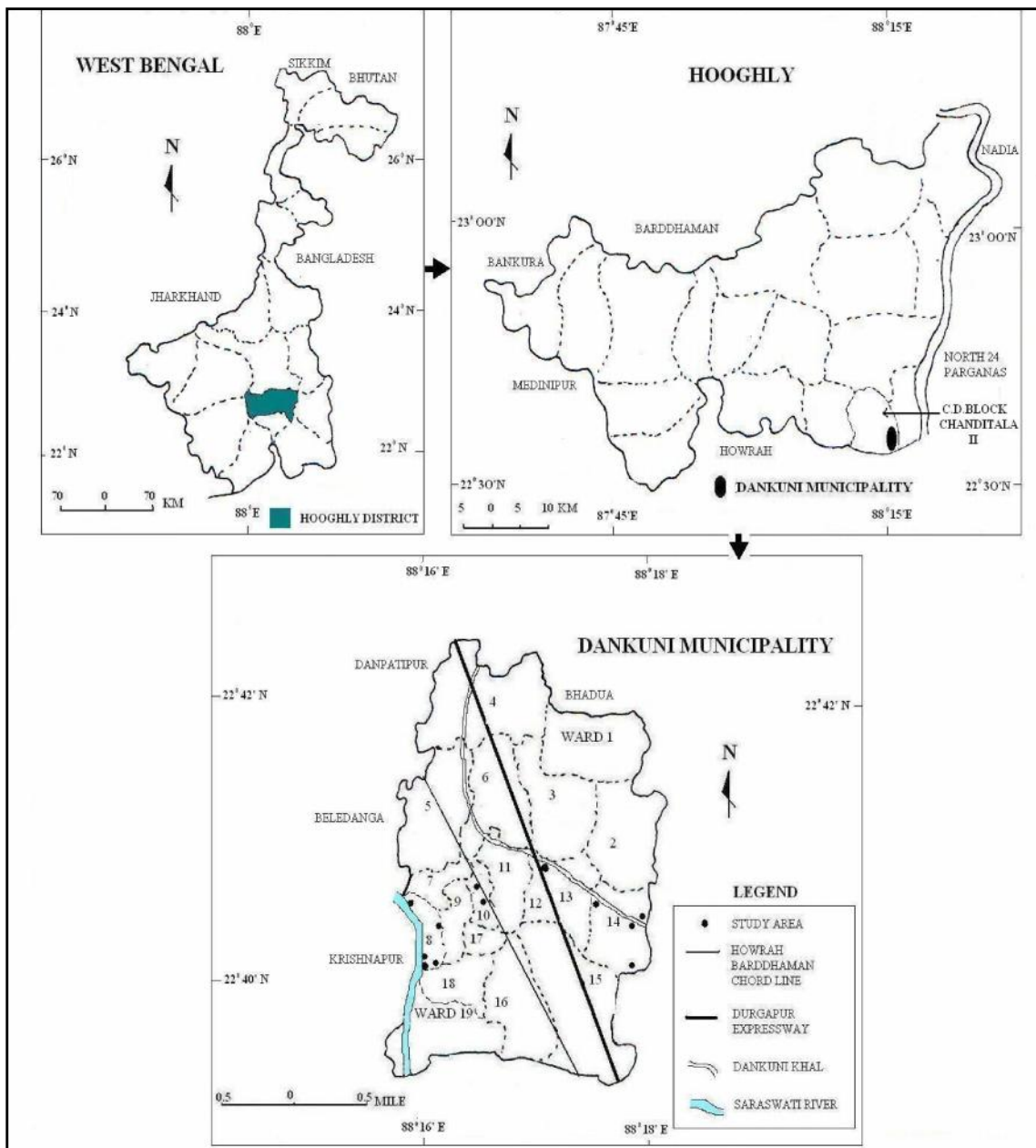


Fig.1. Location map of the study area

After the completion of field work, the collected data and related information's are computed and presented with suitable diagrams with the help of Microsoft Office Excel package.

Assessment of the Effects Of Socio-Economic Condition On Child Education

Socio-economic status of the society controlled educational status a lot. It is observed that in slum areas of Dankuni Municipality over all socio-economic status is very low. So, child education is affected by this condition. In the study area child literacy rate is 73.34 %, but the rate of drop outs is also high 26.66%.The data indicates that child have to face a lot of problems to continue their study, which causes drop outs. Here some parameters are selected to analyze the effects of socio-economic status on child education. These are -

-) Family size
-) Household income
-) Education Attainment of the Parents
-) Environmental Conditions in Slums And Their Impact on Children
-) Aspirations About the Education of Children
-) Gender gap
-) Problems of safety
-) Reasons for Disinterest of Children in Studies
-) Engagement in work
-) Effects of family problems
-) Psychological problems of first generation learner

Family Size

A larger family size implies higher dependency ratio, making it difficult to afford the education of all the children and pay due attention to them (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2003). In the study area it is observed that here only 23.33% family has less than four members. Most of the family (55 %) has four to six members, and 21.66% family has more than six members (Fig-2). So, as the economic condition is quite bad in these slums, it's then really tough to afford money for children's education in case of a large family.

Analysis of the income is very important, especially for the economically backward people, as large amount of their income is spent on meeting the basic requirements. Education of children becomes the second priority, as it is difficult for parents with low income to incur expenditure on stationery and uniform. It becomes all the more difficult if they have 2 or more school going children. The income level of the household is calculated by clubbing the total income of all members of the family (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2003). In the study area around 52 per cent households had one family member working; around 37 per cent had 2 working members and around 11 per cent had more than 2 family members working. If the amount of monthly income is analyzed it is observed that 20% family has income less than 2500 Rs. Per month. Most of the families (53.33%) are between the range of monthly income Rs. 2500 – 5000 per month. Only few families (26.66) earns above 5000 Rs. Per month (Fig – 3).

Now if we relate the increasing prices of essential commodities with a family size of 6 to 7 members, it becomes difficult to provide money for education in these households. Majority of the slum dwellers depends on the government schools for the education of their children. But they also have to bear the fees for tuition or for books and other accessories. But it may be said as per observation that as the socio-economic status and educational level is below in this area; most of the families have low consciousness about their expenditure. Even then, around 30 per cent households are spending more than Rs 300 per month on liquor and alcohol. As far as occupation of father is concerned, around 52% are engaged as skilled or unskilled labourers, have irregular jobs and low income. When the income of the government school going children and private school going children was compared, it was found that most of the households of later category had slightly higher monthly income and the fathers were employed in more organized and regular sectors. In some poor families children's also have to do work to earn money as parallel with their studies. They works at home and help their mother to make paper packets or in stitching clothes. Mainly girls are engaged in this type of works.

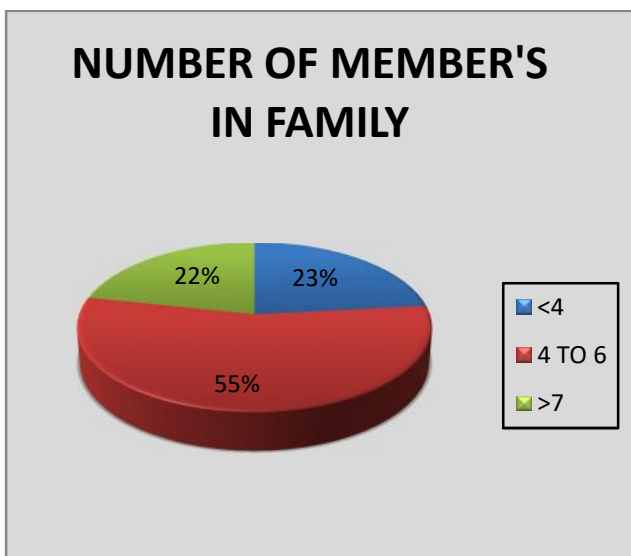


Fig.2

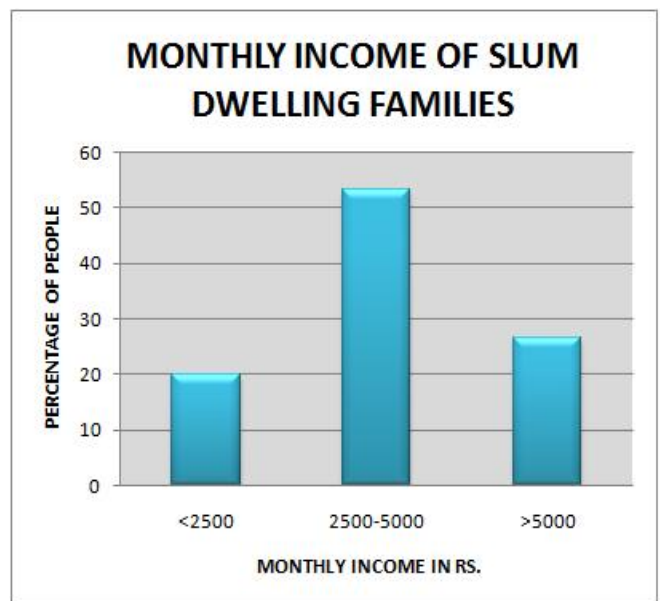


Fig.3

Household Income

Educational attainment of the parents

The education of the parents has an impact on the educational progress of the child (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2003). The data on educational attainment of the father is given. In around 85 % of the fathers of sampled children are literate and 53.32 % father also passed madhyamik (Secondary) exam and thus they can help their children in their study. But despite this, the achievement level of the children was low. Most of the families reported that fathers come back home tired after long working hours. Therefore, they hardly help the children. Mothers take major responsibility in the upbringing of their children. Therefore, the education level of mothers is more important for the education of the children (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2003). Here in the study area 81.66% mothers are literate. But their level of education is not high. The educational status of the parents as revealed in the sample survey is given in Figure-4. The figure indicates sufficiently about the educational backwardness of women. Around 18.33% mothers are illiterate in the study area. And 13.33% mothers studied only primary education. Thus they cannot help the children in their studies; as such it reflects on the achievement levels of children. The schools of these areas need to take additional responsibilities and work more efficiently to help these children. But in reality, they are mal functioning.

facility at home, only around 15 % people have individual tap water supply, rest of them are dependent on the community tap and tanker water. Those who don't have private water supply, compelled to depends community tap and have to spend a lot of times to collect water. When asked further, it was found that 30 % students were given the major responsibility of collecting water. Girls are supposed to help in the domestic work daily. Unless the developmental Programs are initiated in slums; it would be very difficult for these children to come up to the expected level of learning.

Aspirations about the education of children

The aspiration level of children's own begins from the aspiration level of their parents. The parents of all children's were asked whether they would like their children to study up to primary, middle, secondary or other higher levels of education. It was encouraging to note that most of the parents want their children to complete their study at least up to secondary level. 91.66% parents of boys and 89.99% parents of girl children's wants their children to study up to madhyamik (Secondary) level. The data clearly reveal that there is general awareness about the importance of education among these deprived groups. The parents want their children to break the vicious circle of educational backwardness and obtain higher education. But the household and school environment where these children go, put constraints on them

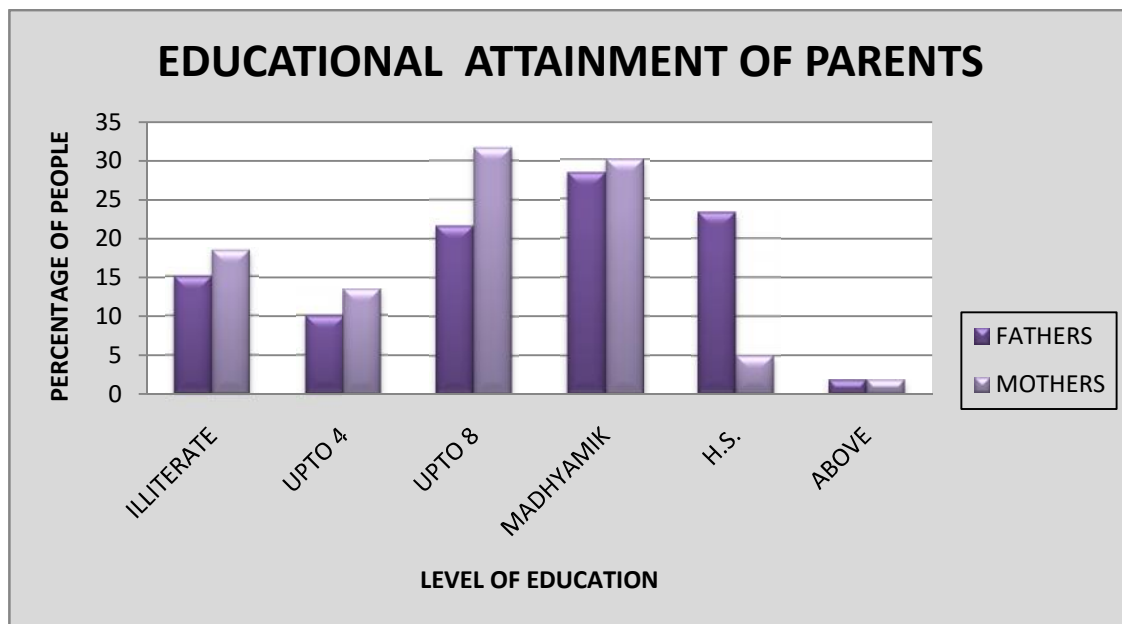


Fig.4

Environmental conditions in slums and its impact on children

Children's grow up at their homes. They spend most of the time at that environment. It is in their home where they have opportunity to grow physically, mentally, intellectually and spiritually. Right to shelter, therefore, includes right to adequate living space, safe and decent structure, clean and decent surroundings, sufficient light, pure air and water, electricity, sanitation and drainage facilities. Slum people are devoid of all these essential physical facilities and they are always living under the fear of 'unsettlement' Aggarwal *et al.* 2003). In the study area around 53.33% people has only one room and 38.33 % two rooms only. Rooms are dingy, small and without proper ventilation. Only a few have the toilet

and as a result a number of children dropout before completing the Primary or upper primary levels occurs (Aggarwal *et al.*, 2003). Another striking feature observed about this matter. That is gender gap. Gender gap was exists also among their level of aspiration. The aspiration level for girls' higher education is comparatively lower than boys. Only 25% parents wish their girls to study above secondary level.

Gender Gap

In the study area as the level of education is poor among the parents, there are also a poor mentality exists among them about the education of their girls. As it observed earlier that parents are not interested about the higher studies of their

girls, they also believe that girls can live a better life if they get married with an efficient boy. And so the parents are more concerned about their girl's marriage from early age than their study. Besides this, here most of the teen age girl agreed that they have to do work at home. They have to cook if their mothers are working women, and they also become busy to collect water from public tap, and also to make paper packets, making soft toys to earn money. Thus it's really tough for them to manage time for their study. The situation is comparatively far better in case of boys. They don't have to engage at household works and parents also concerned a lot about their study.

Problems of safety

There are also feelings of insecurity among slum dwelling parents with their children in some specific areas. For example the slum area of Monoharpur Raypara is located beside the rail line, in such a position that the slum dwellers have to pass over the rail line in a long distance to reach the main road as there are no proper way. Here the Howrah-Bardhaman chord line section is a very busy rail line, on the other hand most of the parents are engaged outside in their own work and they don't have time to drop their children at school. So, most of the parents of this area don't send their children to school for a

of them help their parents in their works. Girls are mainly engaged in this type of works. Some of the girls agreed that they have to cook at home when their mothers are engaged outside in works. They also have to help their mother in making of paper packets, stitching clothes etc. Some of the secondary level students work as private tutors and they teach primary school students as they can earn money. They have to spend a lot of time per day in this type of engagement in works and thus they can't get proper time for their studies at home.

Effects of family problems

Another problem of the study area is the lower standard of social environment which affects child education. Children did not get proper environment for studying at their home also. Besides the small one room, insufficient books and materials, other socio economic problems, they have to face many family problems many days. One of the common problems is consumption of alcohol by their father. In slums of this area a large number of males are alcoholic, which creates different problems in their family life. Males' intake alcohol regularly due to physical strength of work, illiteracy etc. 45% women agreed that their husband consume alcohol at regular interval.

Table 1. Ward wise slums

Ward No	No of the Slum	Name of the Slum	No of household	Slum population	WardwiseTotal population	% of slum population to total population
8	45	Kalipur Mal Para	100	250	5852	23.06
	46	Mrigala mal para	100	200		
	47	Buno para	30	150		
	48	Purbasa	100	300		
	49	Part of Mrigala Mallick Para	150	450		
10	53	Monoharpur, Raypara Rail line	315	2800	4836	69.23
	54	Monoharpur Baishali Pally	75	548		
13	60	Aurobindo Nagar	50	200	4427	4.51
14	61	Sukanta Pally	42	220	5182	42.93
	62	Khudiram Pally	43	175		
	63	Bonder Bill	355	1750		
	64	Delhi Road Chaitanya para	20	80		

Source: Survey conducted by Dankuni Municipality, 2010

long time due to feelings of insecurity. Thus it becomes the habit among the children and they don't want to join schools in future. The slum areas located besides the Durgapur express way also suffered by similar problems of insecurity.

Disinterest among children in studies

Although most of the parents expressed the desire that their children should study up to higher levels, however the children did not want to study due to various reasons. Some of them were interested to take up job while few of them could not understand what was taught in the school. Many of them found it difficult to meet the educational expenditure and some of them opined that it's really tough to study without private tuition, and it's also not possible for them as the charges of the coaching centers or private tutors are relatively high. It clearly implies that the incentive schemes like the provision of free uniform, free supply of textbooks are yet to be implemented effectively and benefit the poor. (Aggarwal *et al.*2003). In such areas mid day meal and other programs are very effective and able to prevent the drop outs.

Engagement in work

As the socio economic condition is poor in this area, most of the family members try to earn little amounts of money as they can live a better life. Children's are not also exemptions. Most

Some males are also gave pressure to their wives to supply them money as they can consume alcohol. Thus, as some of the males are alcoholic, domestic violence mostly torture on women is a regular event in these slums. When males become drunk, most of them torture on their wife due to different reason or creates domestic violence. Though it becomes really tough to quantify the actual number, because most of the women do not agree this due to fear or shyness but here approximately 51% women are tortured sometime (Banerjee, 2012). This type of environment creates disinterest in their mind which affects their study.

Psychological problems of first generation learner

There are also some families in the study area whose children's attend school as a first generation learner. But there are almost huge differences between the environment of their slum area and the environment of their school. Entering the school means for them that they are entering into an alien physical and social environment which they, their family and their peers have never experienced. They are faced with leaving a certain world in which they fit for an uncertain world where they know they don't fit (Sengupta, *et al.* 2012). In Fact, slum dwelling children find themselves 'on the margin of two cultures' and have to offer renegotiate relationship at

school and at home to manage the tension between the two. As a result, they become the highest risk students for dropping out.

Conclusion

The case study reveals that the child education is very much affected by socio-economic condition in the slum area. Poor economic condition, large size of family, Low aspiration level hindered the growth of child education. So, to improve the condition, more stress on literacy, steps to prevent drop outs are necessary at first. Local schools have to play their role more actively to create interest among students. "Co-operation and good behavior of school teachers to those poor slum children's not only create interest about study, but also helps the students to study without private tutor". To develop the economic condition of the area, formation of more self help group, easy loans to self-help groups is necessary. It is also necessary to control incidence like early age marriage or torture on women with strict hands. Moreover, awareness of people about gender gap and about education for all children is required. Mass media may take major roles to increase awareness among people about these matters.

Acknowledgement

I wish to thanks Begam Hasina Sabnam (Chairman, Dankuni Municipality), Ms. Sangita Bose (Urban planner, Dankuni Municipality) for their help. I also wish to thank Mr.Soumyadip Chakraborty and Mr. Supriyo Majumder (students of geography honours, 1st year, Dum Dum Motijheel Rabindra Mahavidyalaya) for their help at the time of primary survey, and also to all slum dwelling people for their co-operation.

REFERENCES

-) Aggarwal .Y. P. and Chugh Sunita : Learning Achievement of Slum Children in Delhi, *Operations Research and Systems Management unit*, National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, November, 2003, pp- 14-20
-) Banerjee Avishek: Status of Health among Slum Dwelling Women - A Case study on Dankuni Municipality, Hooghly, International Journal of Current Research, vol. 4, Issue 11, pp 180-184 November, 2012
-) Banerjee Ahana and Chakma Namita: Socio-Economic Profile Of Slum Women Workers in the Burdwan Municipality Area, West Bengal:An Assesment-Practising Geographer-Journal of the Indian Geographical Foundation, Vol-13, pp. 220 – 233
-) Khullar,D.R. (2006): *INDIA, a comprehensive geography*; Kalyani publishers,New Delhi.
-) Mohanty. Dr. Kundalini and Chakraborty Swarupa: A Study on problems of Tribal Childrens studying in Secondary schools of Jalpaiguri District, West Bengal, *Geo-Analyst*, Vol.2, No.1, 2012
-) Sengupta Susmita and Ghosh Shovan : Problems of Education among the Scheduled tribes in India: Finding a balance, *Geo-Analyst*, Vol.2, No.1, 2012
