

## **Educational and environmental awareness of the slum dwellers: a study in Guwahati, Assam**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Education is a process of developing knowledge, skills and habits in the individuals for their larger social adjustment. Educational awareness means developing awareness towards education. Everything which surrounds us may collectively be termed as the environment. Environmental Awareness is an awareness and subsequent desire to preserve natural resources and the environment. The largest proportion living in slums in the world is in the Asian region. This fast growing slum population has been witnessed in Assam and in Guwahati as well. Guwahati has 90 slum pockets. The slum areas of Guwahati suffer from different educational and environmental problems. Hence, the study will be a small attempt to study the educational and environmental awareness among the slum dwellers of Guwahati, Assam. The educational and environmental problems of the slum areas can be solved by making slum dwellers aware towards education and environment.

**Key Words:** Education, Educational Awareness, Environment, Environmental Awareness, Slum, Guwahati, Assam.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Education is a process of developing knowledge, skills and habits in the individuals for their larger social

adjustment. It makes an individual civilized, refined, cultured and educated. It is the key to solve the various problems of life. Educational awareness means developing awareness towards education.

Everything which surrounds us may collectively be termed as the environment. Education can develop the sense of awareness towards environment. Environmental Awareness is an awareness and subsequent desire to preserve natural resources and the environment. Environmental Education refers an education through the environment, about the environment and for the environment. It can develop the sense of awareness, knowledge, understanding and promote new skills in facing the problems of environment.

The slums though an important part of the urban life are yet often neglected by all. Thus, slums suffer from problems of poverty, unemployment, urban decay and illiteracy thereby resulting in social problems of crime, drug addiction, alcoholism, high rates of mental illnesses, child labour and suicide. They exhibit high rate of disease due to unsanitary conditions, malnutrition and lack of basic health care. Low socio-economic status of its residents characterizes the slum population. A solution for meeting the challenges of slums is education. Education is an index of development of a nation and has positive effects on the functioning of a society. Though the government has taken up various schemes for universalisation of education and programmes of creating awareness towards environment in the country, still, the scenario of slums in the

country is quite disheartening.

The people living in slums in Guwahati mostly come from outside the State and start living in slums and near the railway track on the land belonging to the railways. In these slum areas all sorts of services are inadequate and general environmental scenario is hazardous. The dwellers of slum areas suffer from poverty, misery, exploitation, humiliation, insecurity, inequalities, lack of education and environmental degradation. Slum areas lack of adequate and clean water, unsafe waste disposal systems, lack of adequate and nutritious food. Hence, the study will be a small attempt to study the educational and environmental awareness among the slum dwellers of Guwahati, Assam.

#### **NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Guwahati is the largest commercial, industrial and educational center of the North-East region. In Guwahati slums are increasing. It has 90 slum pockets. These slums do not receive the necessary attention in regards to development. An important factor of development is education but the slums in the study area are educationally backward and lack the necessary educational facilities. The slum areas of Guwahati suffer from different educational and environmental problems. *The problems of slum areas can be tackled through the*

*means of education. Therefore the present study is aimed at studying the educational and environmental awareness among the dwellers of slum in Guwahati, Assam.*

### **AREA OF THE STUDY**

The population of the world is gradually increasing in an unprecedented manner. With this, gradual increase in the population of the slum has also been noticed. And it has been projected that by 2020, the world's slum population would be about 1.4 billion (UN-HABITAT, 2006). The largest proportion living in slums in the world is in the Asian region, which is also urbanizing at the fastest rate. This fast growing slum population has been witnessed in Assam and in Guwahati as well. The slums that have mushroomed in different parts of the city have not only become eyesores but also a serious cause of concern for urban planners.

Guwahati is a fast growing metropolis and the most important city of the region. Slum areas are growing fast in the metros. Guwahati city comprises many big and small slum areas and pockets, where people are living below poverty line, in unhygienic and insecure conditions. Most of them do not have easy access to schools, hospitals or public places for the community together. There are 90 slum pockets and the approximate population is 1,67,796 as per information provided by Guwahati Development Department,

Dispur, Guwahati. Out of 90 slum pockets of Guwahati city, Assam, 2 slum pockets i.e. Santipur, Bhutnath and Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar were selected for the present study.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To compare the level of awareness among the slum dwellers of Santipur, Bhutnath and Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar towards education.
  2. To study and compare the literacy rate of the slum dwellers of both the slums.
  3. To compare the level of awareness among the slum dwellers of Santipur Bhutnath and Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar towards environment.
  4. To study and compare the general environmental condition of both the slums.
- A study was conducted by Saikia in June (2012) (Journal of Education and Development, Multi-disciplinary, Peer Reviewed Journal) with the topic “*A study on Educational and Environmental Awareness of the Slum Dwellers of Guwahati City, Assam*”. The main objectives of the study were - to study and compare the literacy rate among slum dwellers, to assess the level of awareness towards health and hygiene among slum dwellers and environmental sanitation among women and to find out the rate of child

labours of Paltan Bazar and Madrasi Patti Slum. The major findings of the study were - the child literacy rate, sanitary practices, awareness of women regarding environmental sanitation of Madrasi Patti slum is higher than Paltan Bazar. Also there is no child labour in Madrasi Patti slum as against the opposite picture in Paltan Bazar Slum.

- Borah and Gogoi (2012) (Multidisciplinary International Journal) studied growth of slum areas and changing land use pattern in Guwahati city, India. This paper was an attempt to study the growth of slums in Guwahati, the nodal centre of North East India and its impact on the changing land use pattern of the city.
- A study entitled “A field study report on Educational Awareness of the Slum Dwellers of Guwahati City with special reference to Paltan Bazar Slum Area” was conducted by Baruah (2010) as per requirement of M.A. degree under Gauhati University. The objectives of study were – to find out the literacy rate of slum dwellers, work pattern of slum dwellers and rate of child labourers of slum area. The findings of the study were – the literacy rate of parents and children were very poor, the work pattern of slum dwellers belongs to lower level (like sweeper, coolie etc) and the rate of child labour is increasing day by day in Paltan Bazar Slum Area.
- Gogoi (2007) studied about the *social problems of urban poor in Guwahati city*. The main objective of the study was to identify different groups of urban poor in Guwahati city, to find out the cause of their problems and to assess the impact of these problems on cities environment. The study reveals the fact that the number of the slum in the city as recorded by different Government agencies does not tally with each other. Moreover, these authorities enlist only those slums where different slum related schemes can be implemented.
- A study “*Dynamics of Slum formation in selected towns of western Assam*” was conducted by Das (2006) under Gauhati University. The investigator studied about existing slums, the origin of the people, reasons for migration, per capita income along with nature of service, etc.
- Lahkar (1991) is one of the pioneers to study the slums in Guwahati. In his work, *The Slums of Guwahati City: A Geographical Analysis*, he had discussed the status of slum in Guwahati city and attempted to analyze the spatio-temporal aspect of slums with the socio-economic operations of the slum dwellers. He covered all the aspects of slums in Guwahati city like population, income expenditure, housing condition etc.

## DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study is limited in terms of sample, educational and environmental condition and content. Due to the limited period of time it is not possible to make an extension survey of all the slum pockets available in greater Guwahati. Therefore, the present study has the following limitations -

- The study was delimited to Guwahati, Assam.
- Out of 90 slum pockets of Guwahati, only 2 slums were taken for the present study.

## OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS OF THE TERMS

- **Education:** Education is a process of developing knowledge, skills and habits in the individuals for their larger social adjustment.
- **Educational Awareness:** Educational awareness means developing awareness towards education.
- **Environment:** Everything which surrounds us may collectively be termed as the environment.
- **Environmental Awareness:** Environmental Awareness is an awareness and subsequent desire to preserve natural resources and the environment.
- **Slum:** A slum is a run-down area of a city characterized by squalor and lacking in tenure security.

- **Guwahati:** Guwahati is a fast growing metropolis situated on the banks of river Brahmaputra.
- **Assam:** Assam is a northeastern state of India. Its capital is Dispur, located within the municipal area of Guwahati city.

## METHODOLOGY

The present study was based on descriptive survey method.

## SAMPLE

For the present study, 50 slum dwellers (25 male and 25 female) from Santipur Bhutnath and 50 slum dwellers (25 male and 25 female) from Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar has been selected by using purposive sampling technique. The total number of sample taken for the present study was 100.

## TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION

In this study, following tools were used for collection of data –

- Self-structured Questionnaire.
- Interview Schedule.
- Observation Tool.

## STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES

In the present study simple percentage and bar graphs were used.

## ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

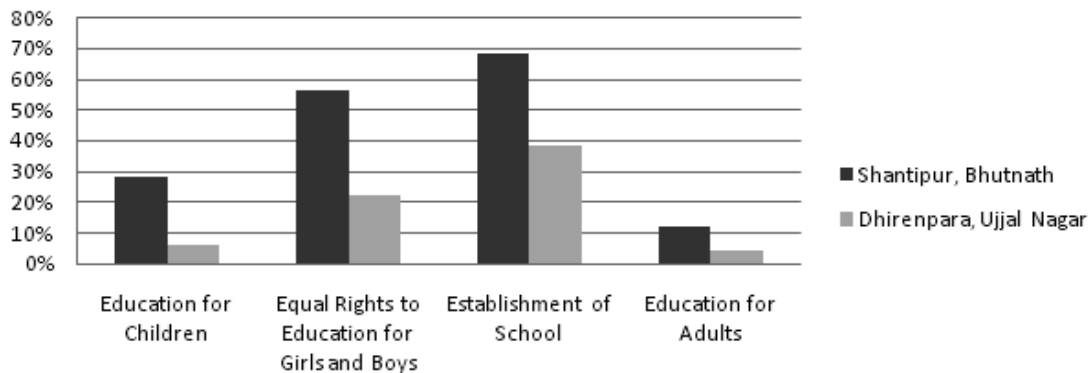
Analysis and interpretation of data has been done on the basis of the objectives of the study.

**Objective 1:** To compare the level of awareness among the slum dwellers of Santipur, Bhutnath and Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar towards education.

**Table 1.** Level of Awareness among the Slum Dwellers towards Education

Sl. No.	Statements	Santipur, Bhutnath				Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar			
		Aware		Not Aware		Aware		Not Aware	
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1	Children should be given Education and Child	14	28	36	72	3	6	47	94
2	Girls and Boys should be given Equal Rights to	28	56	22	44	11	22	39	78
3	School should be established	34	68	16	32	19	38	31	62
4	Education should be	6	12	44	88	2	4	48	96

From the study it has been found that regarding the level of awareness towards education the dwellers of Santipur, Bhutnath were more aware in relation to education for children (28%), equal rights to education for girls and boys (56%), establishment of school (68%) and education for adults (12%) in comparison to the dwellers of Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar.



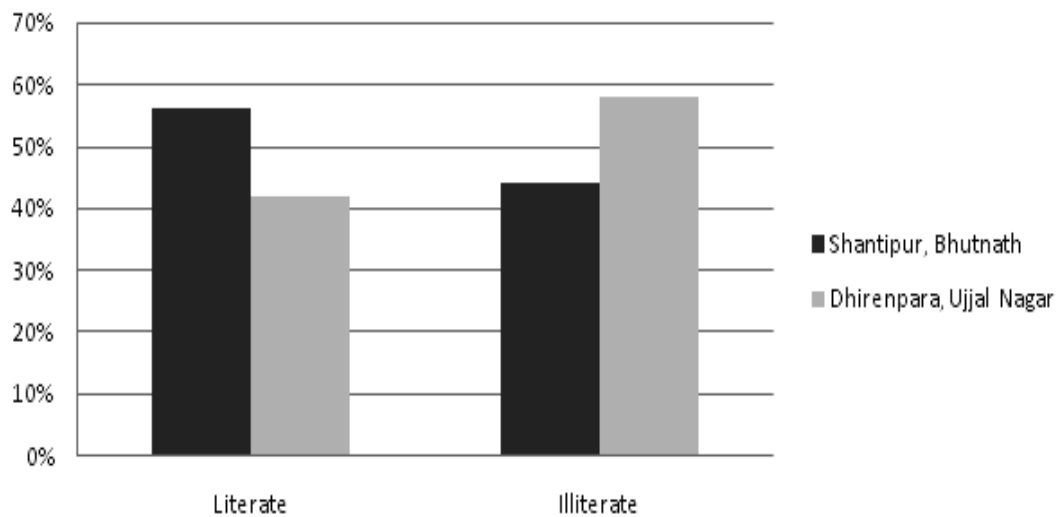
**Figure 1.** Level of Awareness among the Slum Dwellers towards Education

**Objective 2:** To study and compare the literacy rate of the slum dwellers of both the slums.

**Table 2. Literacy Rate of the Slum Dwellers**

Slum Dwellers	Santipur, Bhutnath						Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar					
	Total	%	Literate		Illiterate		Total	%	Literate		Illiterate	
			Total	%	Total	%			Total	%	Total	%
Male	25	50	17	34	8	16	25	50	12	24	13	26
Female	25	50	11	22	14	28	25	50	9	18	16	32
Total	50	100	28	56	22	44	50	100	21	42	29	58

From the study it has been found that in Santipur, Bhutnath, 56% dwellers were found to be literate and 44% were illiterate. On the other hand, in Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar 42% dwellers were found to be literate and 58% were illiterate.



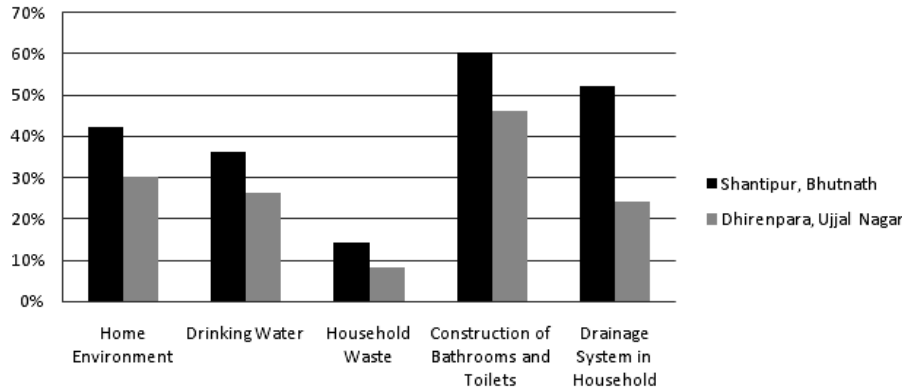
**Figure 2.** Literacy Rate of the Slum Dwellers

**Objective 3.** To compare the level of awareness among the slum dwellers of Santipur Bhutnath and Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar towards environment.

**Table 3. Level of Awareness among the Slum Dwellers towards Environment**

Sl No.	Statements	Santipur, Bhutnath				Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar			
		Aware		Not Aware		Aware		Not Aware	
		Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
1	Home Environment should be cleaned.	21	42	29	58	15	30	35	70
2	Drinking Water should be boiled.	18	36	32	64	13	26	37	74
3	Household Waste should be gathered at one particular place.	7	14	43	86	4	8	46	92
4	Bathrooms and Toilets should be constructed.	30	60	20	40	23	46	27	54
5	Drainage System should be there in every Household.	26	52	24	48	12	24	38	76

From the study it has been found that regarding the level of awareness towards environment the dwellers of Santipur, Bhutnath were more aware in relation to home environment (42%), drinking water (36%), household waste (14%), bathrooms and toilets (60%) and drainage system 52% in comparison to the dwellers of Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar.



**Figure 3.** Level of Awareness among the Slum Dwellers towards Environment

**Objective 4.** To study and compare the general environmental condition of both the slums.

**Table 4. Sources of Water**

Sources of Water	Santipur, Bhutnath		Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar	
	Total	%	Total	%
Well	5	10	-	-
Tube Well	18	36	2	4
Municipal Water Supply	24	48	17	34
Other	3	6	31	62



From the study it has been found that in Santipur, Bhutnath, 10% well, 36% tube well, 48% municipal water supply and 6% dwellers were using water from other sources. But in Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar, 4% tube well, 34% municipal water supply and 62% dwellers were using water from other sources.

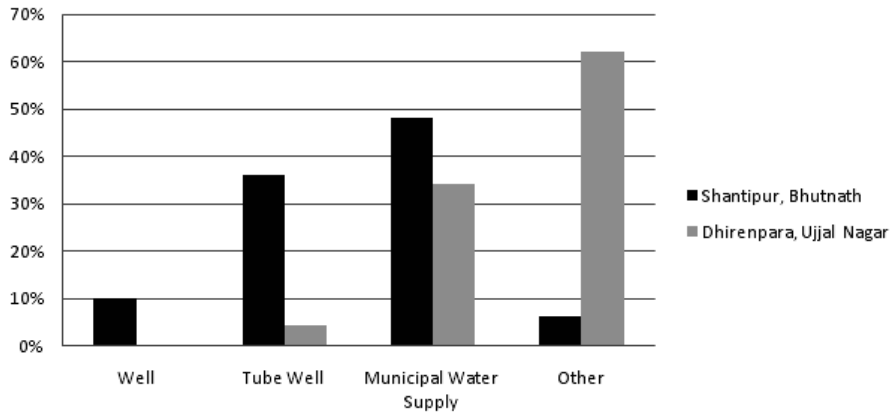


Figure 4. Sources of Water

Table 5. Disposition of Household Waste

Disposition of Household Waste	Santipur, Bhutnath		Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar	
	Total	%	Total	%
Dumping Away from Habitation	13	26	-	-
Throwing Here and There	37	74	49	98
Burning	-	-	1	2

From the study it has been found that regarding the disposition of household waste, in Santipur, Bhutnath, 26% dwellers dump away from habitation and 74% throw here and there. On the other hand, in Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar, 98% dwellers throw here and there and 2% burn their household waste.

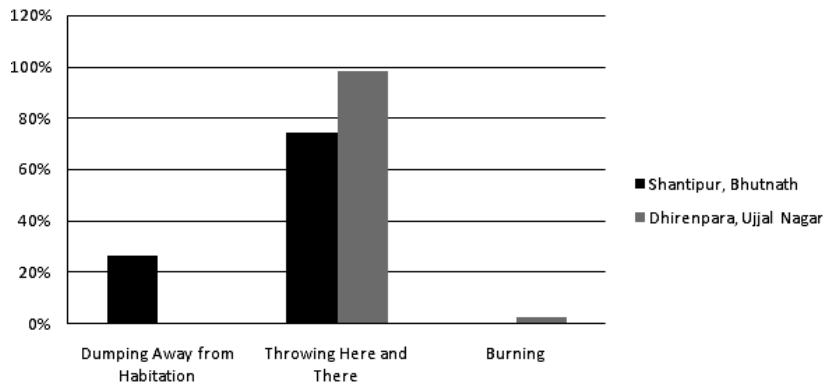
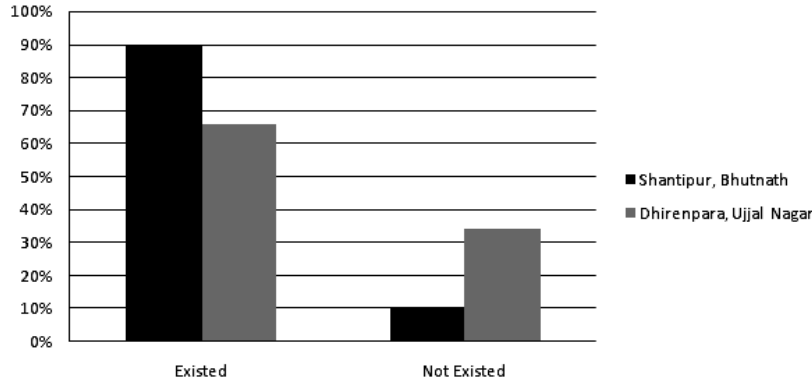


Figure 5. Disposition of Household Waste

**Table 6.** Drainage System

Drainage System	Santipur, Bhutnath		Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar	
	Total	%	Total	%
Existed	45	90	33	66
Not Existed	5	10	17	34

From the study it has been found that in Santipur, Bhutnath, according to 90% dwellers drainage system was existed and according to 10% dwellers drainage system was not existed. But in Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar, according to 66% dwellers drainage system was existed and according to 34% dwellers, drainage system was not existed.

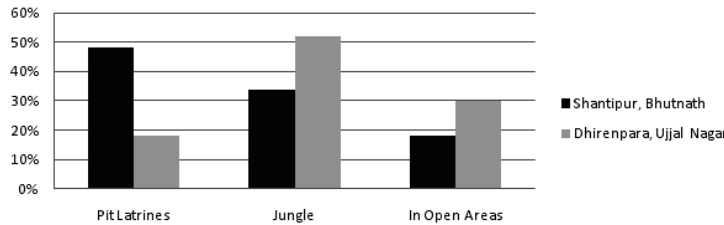


**Figure 6.** Drainage System

**Table 7.** Places of Defecation

Places of Defecation	Santipur Bhutnath		Dhirenpara Ujjal Nagar	
	Total	%	Total	%
Pit latrines	24	48	9	18
Jungle	17	34	26	52
In Open Areas	9	18	15	30

From the study it has been found that regarding the places of defecation, the slum dwellers of Santipur Bhutnath, 48% were using pit latrines, 34% were going to jungle and 18% were using open areas. But on the other hand, the slum dwellers of Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar, 18% were using pit latrines, 52% were going to jungle and 30% were using open areas for defecation.



**Figure 7.** Places of Defecation

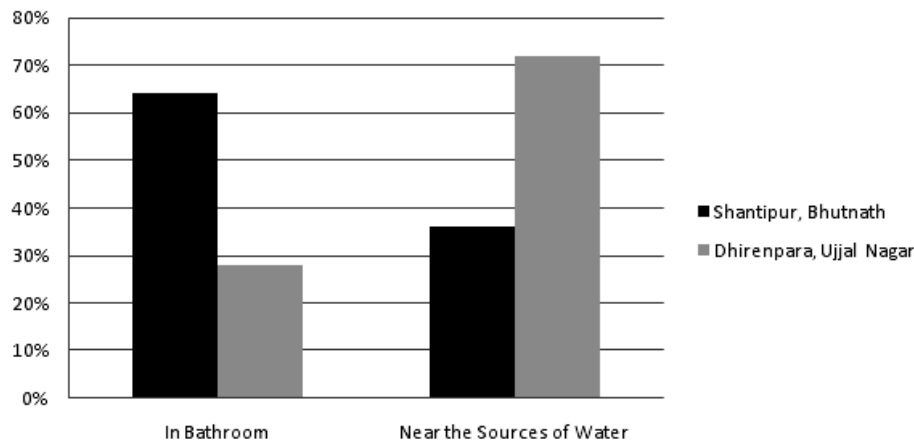
**Table 8.** Places for Bathing, Washing Clothes and Utensils

Places	Shantipur, Bhutnath		Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar	
	Total	%	Total	%
For Bathing				
• In Bathroom	32	64	14	28
• Near the Sources of Water	18	36	36	72
For Washing Clothes				
• Inside the Bathroom	11	22	5	10
• Near the Sources of Water	39	78	45	90
For Washing Utensils				
• Inside the Kitchen	6	12	-	-
• Outside the Kitchen	10	20	14	28
• Near the Sources of Water	34	68	36	72

From the study regarding the places for bathing, it has been found that the slum dwellers of Shantipur, Bhutnath, 64% were taking their bath in bathroom and 36% near the sources of water. On the other hand, the dwellers of Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar, 28% were taking their bath in bathroom and 72% near the sources of water.

Regarding the places for washing clothes, the dwellers of Shantipur, Bhutnath, 22% were washing their clothes inside the bathroom and 78% near the sources of water. But the dwellers of Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar, 10% were washing their clothes inside the bathroom and 90% near the sources of water.

Regarding the places for washing utensils, the dwellers of Shantipur, Bhutnath, 12% were washing their utensils inside the kitchen, 20% outside the kitchen and 68% near the sources of water. But the dwellers of Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar, 28% were washing their clothes outside the kitchen and 72% near the sources of water.

**Figure 8.** Places for Bathing

Awareness of the Slum Dwellers

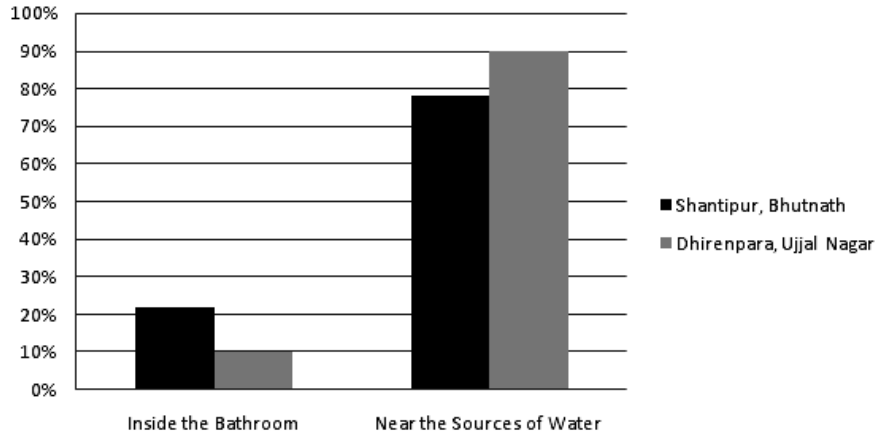


Figure 9. Places for Washing Clothes

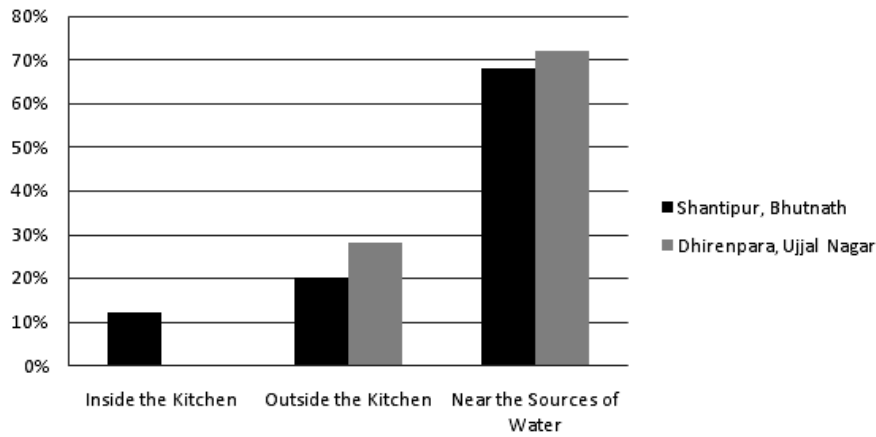


Figure 10. Places for Washing Utensils

**MAJOR FINDINGS**

The major findings of the present study were -

- From the study it has been found that the slum dwellers of Shantipur, Bhutnath were more aware towards education than the slum dwellers of Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar.
- Regarding the literacy rate of slum dwellers, the rate of Shantipur, Bhutnath was higher than Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar.
- The study also revealed that the awareness level of the dwellers of Shantipur, Bhutnath was comparatively higher than the

Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar.

- From the study it has been found that maximum dwellers of Shantipur, Bhutnath were using municipal supply water. But in Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar maximum dwellers were using water from other sources.
- Regarding the disposition of household waste, the dwellers of Shantipur, Bhutnath were found more aware than Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar.
- It was also found that regarding the drainage system, the dwellers of Shantipur, Bhutnath were found more aware than Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar.
- In Shantipur, Bhutnath maximum dwellers were used pit latrines for defecation. But dwellers of Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar were not aware of the pollution related to defecation.
- The study also revealed that regarding the places for bathing, washing clothes and utensils, the dwellers of Shantipur, Bhutnath, were more aware than the dwellers of Dhirenpara, Ujjal Nagar.

#### **OTHER FINDINGS**

- Most of the people of these slum areas were found to be unaware about their education as it is the fundamental right of every people.
- As most of the people of the study area were also found to be unaware about the problems associated with the environment and are unwilling victims

of the pollution at their house and at the working sites.

- Generally, these locations are in the area which is unfit for human habitation. Unhygienic conditions, open defecation system, burning of wood inside ill ventilated rooms, ill- habits such as chewing of tobacco, smoking, drinking, least care about health, domiciliary deliveries etc. are the major risk factors to the people of study area.
- In these slum areas all sorts of services are inadequate and general environmental scenario is hazardous.
- There were inadequate infrastructures, lack of proper sanitation and drinking water facilities.
- In the present study, the diseases such as cholera, dysentery, diarrhea Malaria and Viral fever, Respiratory disease, skin diseases and others were common in the slums.

#### **SUGGESTIONS**

- Government should provide more and more facilities for education of the slum dwellers.
- Educational awareness programmes must be organized by government as well as NGOs in slum areas.
- Child labour and early marriage should be stopped, they should be given education.
- Government must introduce adult education programme to educate the

adult slum dwellers.

- The promotion of education will help in the overall development of slum dwellers and will also make them aware about their rights and to a greater extent will improve the conditions of the poor and illiterate especially women. Large number of programmes has been launched by the Government
- Environmental awareness programme must also be organized by government as well as NGOs in slum areas.
- Environment related awareness programmes like – cleanliness of surroundings, safe drinking water, etc. should be organized.
- Facilities like water supply, sewerage and drainage, community toilets and bathrooms should be provided for the slum areas by the Government.
- Proper housing provisions, free education, free medical aid etc. should be provided by the government.
- Mass media like radio, television, newspaper, posters etc. can play important roles in making slum dwellers aware towards education and environment.
- Government should improve sanitation facilities, solid waste management, electrification, proper drinking water supply etc.
- Courses such as dairy, farming, weaving and tailoring, candle making, mushroom cultivation, etc. should be started by the Government and Non-

Governmental Organizations (NGOs) so that their economic standard can be uplifted and at the same time their quality of life can be improved.

- Rural and cottage industries such as rice-milling, garment industry, cotton and wool industry need to be upgraded with subsidies and incentives, which will prevent the migration from the native town to other states.
- Government as well as NGOs must take up developmental projects in the slum areas.

### CONCLUSION

- The Government should not allow slums to increase in the city; rather the Government should abolish the settlement of people in the slum areas step by step so that in course of time the slums are totally abandoned for healthy growth of the city. The State receives fund from the Union Government should be effectively utilized for upliftment of slum areas which is undertaken for improving the overall living conditions of slum dwellers by constructing low cost houses with proper toilets, drinking water provisions, health care centers, schools, community halls etc. The educational and environmental problems of the slum areas can be solved by making slum dwellers aware towards education and environment.

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