



Research Article

Access to Basic Amenities for Slum Dwellers in West Bengal: An Evidence from Old Malda Municipality

Mahfoozur Rahman ^{1*}, Kundan Sarkar ²

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Malda College, Malda, West Bengal, India

² Independent Research Scholar, Malda, West Bengal, India

Corresponding Author: * Mahfoozur Rahman

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.19539904>

Abstract

India is undergoing significant urbanisation, with projections indicating that 50% of its population will inhabit urban areas by 2050, an increase from 31% in 2011. Furthermore, 70% of India's GDP is derived from urban regions, and this contribution is steadily increasing. Urban residents possess superior economic prospects and access to civic amenities that are unavailable to rural populations. However, rather than being urban residents, slum inhabitants in India, and specifically in West Bengal, possess a markedly distinct narrative.

In West Bengal, 122 out of 129 statutory towns (94.57%) contain slums, which house 22% of the urban population; Old Malda Municipality in Malda District is among these towns. The Old Malda Municipality has been selected as a case study due to the absence of research conducted on it despite its extensive history and the fact that 36.65% of its population resides in slums. We regard studies on unusual issues as crucial.

Our comprehensive examination into the prevailing issue reveals that the slum dwellers of Old Malda Municipality are socially and economically backward, lacking essential municipal amenities such as housing, water, power, sanitation, and drainage systems. Both types of data have been used to get a productive conclusion. Primary data was obtained via a field survey from 120 respondents from several slums within the municipality, while secondary data was sourced from numerous research articles, census data and government reports.

Manuscript Information

- ISSN No: 2583-7397
- Received: 03-09-2025
- Accepted: 07-10-2025
- Published: 30-10-2025
- IJCRM:4(5); 2025: 652-656
- ©2025, All Rights Reserved
- Plagiarism Checked: Yes
- Peer Review Process: Yes

How to Cite this Article

Rahman M, Sarkar K. Access to Basic Amenities for Slum Dwellers in West Bengal: An Evidence from Old Malda Municipality. Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip. 2025;4(5):652-656.

Access this Article Online



www.multiarticlesjournal.com

KEYWORDS: Slums, Basic Amenities, Municipality, Sanitation, Housing.

1. INTRODUCTION

Urbanization in India is a significant phenomenon mostly propelled by the influx of migrants from rural areas. Urbanisation has a lengthy history dating back to prehistoric times, but urban administration is a British innovation that persists to this day. Urban administration is tasked with providing basic amenities to city residents. The Old Malda Municipality in Malda District, established in 1869, is one of the oldest municipalities in India. Old Malda- formally referred to as Malda- has a glorious past of being a manufacturing hub and a trade centre in the medieval period. But unfortunately, it lost its significance following the creation of English Bazar as a commercial and administrative centre. Since then, it continued to struggle for its survival in the 20th and 21st centuries. The area encompasses 9.58 square kilometres and has a population of 84,012, of which 30,788 (36.66%) of the total population live in slums, out of which 17,722 are male and 13,066 are female. A significant imbalance in sex ratio among slum dwellers in Old Malda Municipality is 737 females per 1000 male which is really an alarming situation. Old Malda ranks 66th out of 124 in the highest percentage of slum dwellers. The Municipality comprises 20 wards, with slums distributed over 12 of these wards. 70.38% literacy rate among the residents of slums in the municipality, which is a comparatively better situation.

Despite a significant number of people residing in slums, they encounter numerous problems and are largely deprived of basic amenities. The study seeks to critically examine their socio-economic status and the obstacles they face in availing these municipal services, offering recommendations to enhance their quality of life. The study will also generate data for policymakers and local authorities to make laws and schemes, guaranteeing their accessibility to basic services.

After a thorough analysis of literature regarding the accessibility of basic amenities to slum dwellers, we found that the majority of the research work has emphasised larger cities, ignoring smaller urban locales like Old Malda Municipality. There is a lack of research work regarding the challenges they face in these towns. So this research paper intends to bridge these gaps by offering a very localised and micro-level analysis.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the socio-economic conditions of those living in the slums of Old Malda Municipality.
2. To identify the problems faced by the slum dwellers in the town.
3. To assess the basic amenities available to them.
4. To examine the genuineness and honesty in addressing the challenges they face.
5. To provide recommendations for improving their socio-economic conditions and access to basic amenities.

3. METHODOLOGY

Both types of data-primary and secondary- have been used to reach a perfect conclusion. The primary data has been collected from 120 respondents from five different slums of Old Malda

Municipality, whose selection was based on stratified random sampling. These five slums, namely Lakhmipur Colony, Mahananda Colony, Sarada Colony (Eitbhata Colony), Bachamari Pal Para and Natun Pally, are situated in wards no. 16, 18, 19,20, and 13, respectively. The collected data have been analysed by using quantitative research methods. Secondary data in terms of census, government reports and research articles have been taken into consideration for further understanding of the situation.

4. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The data collected from 120 respondents via a schedule in various slums of the Old Malda Municipality has been critically analysed, and the results are shown below.

Table 1: Literacy Rate among the Slum Dwellers

Level	People	Percentage
Illiterate	26	21.67%
Primary	39	32.50%
Upper primary	24	20.00%
Matriculation	16	13.33%
Higher Secondary	10	8.33%
Graduation and above	05	4.17%
Total	120	100%

Table 2: Types of Work

Types of Work	People	Percentage
Vegetable/Fruit Vendor	14	11.67%
Rickshaw Pullers/Drivers	38	31.67%
Daily labours	20	16.67%
Small Businesspersons/Shopkeepers	07	5.83%
Domestic Workers	18	15.00%
Semi-Skilled Workers	23	19.16%
Total	120	100%

Table 3: Monthly Income of the Respondents

Monthly Income	Persons	Percentage
2000-4000	13	10.83%
4001-6000	17	14.17%
6001-8000	34	28.33%
8001-10000	42	35.00%
10001-12000	08	6.67%
Above 12000	06	5.00%
Total	120	100%

Table 4: Housing Conditions

Types	Persons	Percentage
Kuchcha	90	75.00%
Semi-Pucca	18	15.00%
Pucca	12	10.00%
Total	120	100%

Table 5: Places of Housing

Item	Houses	Percentage
Own House/land	14	11.67%
Vested Land	52	43.33%
Beside the Railway Track	22	18.33%
Beside Bridge	15	12.50%
River Bank	17	14.17%
Total	120	100%

Table 6: Roads

Status	Households	Percentage
No road	27	22.5%
Non-metalled road	57	47.5%
Metalled road	36	30.00%
Total	120	100%

Table 7: Sources of Water

Places	Sources	Household	Percentage
Inside Home	Municipality Tap Water	14	11.67%
	Own Hand-pump	11	9.17%
Outside Home	Municipality Tap Water	91	75.83%
	Hand-pump	04	3.33%
Total		120	100%

Table 8: Drainage systems

Types	Number	Percentage
Open	15	12.5%
Close	06	5.00%
No-Drain	99	82.5%
Total	120	100%

Table 9: Garbage Collection and Disposal

Item	No of Respondents	Percentage
Dustbin	32	26.67%
Garbage Spot	07	5.83%
Ground	00	00.00%
Beside Homes	65	54.17%
Drains	16	13.33%
Total	120	100%

Table 10: Sanitation and Public Toilet

Item	No of Respondents	Percentage
Private Functional	18	15%
Overcrowded	54	45%
Public Toilet	00	00%
Open-Defecation	00	00%
Traditional	48	40%
Total	120	100%

Table 11: Street Lighting

Items	No of Respondents	Percentage
No Street Lighting	52	43.33%
Partial Street Lighting	35	29.17%
Full Street Lighting	33	27.5%
Total	120	100%

The findings below have been identified from the data collected by the researchers through a field survey.

1. Overall literacy rate of surveyed people is 78.33%, 76% males are literate, while 50% female are literate. 21.67% of them never went to any educational institutions, 32.50% studied up to 4th standard, 20% studied up to 8th standard, 13.33% passed matriculation exams, and 8.33% passed higher secondary exams, while just 4.17% are graduates. Their literacy rate improved from 70.38% in the Census of

India-2011 to 78.33% as found in our field survey. Although their comparatively good literacy rate, they are lagging in passing matriculation & above and professional courses, as a significant number of children discontinue their studies at the elementary level, with barely 30% of the High School attendees completing Matriculation, 15% advancing to further higher secondary, and just 5% graduating. It's noteworthy that all individuals who graduated are from general degree courses; none of them is engaged in professional studies. This statistic reflects a poor educational status. (Table No. 01)

2. The slum residents can be categorised based on their professions, 16.67% are daily labourers, 5.83% are involved in small business and retail, 31.67% are rickshaw pullers, 19.16% are semi-skilled workers, including painters, electricians, carpenters, and 15% are employed in domestic work. Additionally, 11.67% consist of street vendors. (Table No. 02)
3. The data we collected reveals that their overall monthly income is significantly low, with an average monthly income of 10.83% falling between 2000 and 4000, 14.17% earning between 4001 & 6000, and 28.33% earning between 6001 and 8000. The largest proportion of respondents (35%) earn between 8001 & 10000, whereas 6.67% earn between 10001 & 12000. The remaining 5% make in excess of 12000 rupees per month. ((Table No. 03)
4. Housing is one of the significant challenges they encounter. Merely 10% of them possess pucca houses, 15% inhabit semi-pucca houses, and the remaining 75% reside in kuchcha houses constructed from tin and mud walls with tin or thatched roofs, and additionally, tirpal, clay, bamboo, grass, crop residues, mulch and unburnt bricks are used for the construction. The kachcha houses lack durability and are prone to damage due to rain & disaster, rendering them unsuitable for various weather conditions. Their adverse economic circumstances and lack of land ownership compel them to build kachcha dwellings. Regarding housing locations, 43.33% of residences are built on vested lands, whereas 18.33%, 12.50% and 14.17% residences are situated adjacent to railway tracks, bridges, and river banks, respectively. The remaining people (11.67%) have built their residences on their own land. ((Table No. 04 & 05)
5. 22.5% of residents lack access to roads, utilising narrow pathways suitable for only one person at a time; 47.5% have access to unpaved roads, while 30% have paved roads. (Table No. 06) Unpaved roads act as a major bottleneck to safety, daily life and development. The survey reveals that a path approximately one kilometre in length, situated between Malda Court and Old Malda Railway Stations, lacks a paved road. Their residences were in proximity to railway tracks. Approximately eight years ago, they were forced to keep a specific distance, which has been delineated with barricades. They created a non-metalled narrow road. Whenever they demand the

construction of a metalled road, the municipal authority consistently denies requests for a metalled road, asserting that the construction can be done upon receiving NOC from the railway authority, as it falls under the jurisdiction of its PWD and obtaining an NOC from Railways is deemed impossible. So, the metalled road remains a dream for them. Approximately 70% of the area is adequately connected with metalled roads, but these roads are excessively small and congested, hindering smooth transit and vehicle passage.

6. Water presents a significant challenge, as 84% of the households lack indoor water connections. They rely on roadside municipal taps (75.83%) or tube wells (3.33%), while only 20.84% have water connections within their residences. Among these, 11.67% have municipal connections, and 9.17% have installed handpumps indoors, and they do not need to go outside to fetch water. It's essential to recognise that over 90% of people utilise this water for drinking and other purposes, whereas fewer than 10% consume RO water and employ this supplied water for other uses. (Table No. 07)
7. The drainage system poses a considerable challenge for slum inhabitants, as our study reveals that 73.33% of houses lack any drainage system, 12.5% have permanent open drainage, 9.17% have temporary open drainage, and only 5% possess a closed drainage system. The inhabitants of the slum without drainage predominantly discharge wastewater into adjacent, neglected, contaminated ponds, while a minority have created pits and soakaways for disposal. These ponds pose danger to human health, safety and the local ecosystem. (Table No. 08)
8. Garbage disposal systems are essential for urban dwellers, particularly those residing in slums. Waste is collected by sweepers in 26.67% of cases, while 5.83% of individuals discard it at nearby refuse sites. The majority, comprising 54.17%, lack designated disposal locations, resulting in waste being placed beside homes, whereas 13.33% dispose of it in drains. Their unconventional waste disposal systems pose a health danger to the population. (Table No. 09)
9. In the surveyed areas, there is no public toilet; only 15% of residents possess more robust and cleaner, private, functional toilets, while 45% have shared and overcrowded toilets, and the remaining 40% rely on traditional latrines. Notably, the absence of open defecation represents a great accomplishment. No public toilets operate in these slum areas. (Table No. 10)
10. Street lighting is essential for enhancing the security and safety of all residents of slums, especially women and children. It was found that 43.33% lack street lighting, whereas 29.17% have some lighting and 27.5% have full lighting. The respondents indicated that street lighting in slums is being enhanced through the implementation of LED and solar energy in the municipality; nonetheless, a substantial portion of the slum area remains awaiting upgrade. (Table No. 11)

Suggestions

1. The government and other stakeholders should take initiatives to create educational and employment opportunities for slum dwellers.
2. Efficient garbage disposal systems are to be set up so that they can ensure the reduction of health hazards.
3. The whole area should be connected with a closed and permanent drainage system, and sanitation should be prioritised.
4. The local government should focus on creating community centres which can serve as hubs for health checkups, education and create an awareness among the people.
5. The municipality should prioritise paving streets.
6. Street lights to be placed in slum areas, especially on narrow pathways, to enhance safety and security.
7. The municipality should ensure that sufficient quantities of piped safe drinking and common-use water are provided to every household multi-time in a day to stop arsenic contamination and waterborne diseases.
8. Several stakeholders, such as the PWD of the Union and State governments and local urban bodies, should work collaboratively to rehabilitate them by providing them with land, construction of houses and roads.
9. They should be treated equally, their contributions to urbanization is to be appreciated.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, the socio-economic conditions of the slum dwellers are very pathetic in West Bengal in general and in Old Malda Municipality in particular. They are always overlooked by not only the local government but also by the state and central government. They are an integral part of the urban population, and they play a pivotal role in the development of the town, so their contributions must not be ignored. They should be uplifted into the mainstream wholeheartedly. But they are deprived of basic facilities of housing, education, water supply, sanitation, electricity, healthcare, etc., which are fundamental and minimum requirements for living a life. These problems must be solved as soon as possible by all the stakeholders.

REFERENCES

1. Directorate of Census Operations, West Bengal. *District Census Handbook: Malda*. 2011.
2. Development & Planning Department, Government of West Bengal. *District Human Development Report: Malda*. 2007.
3. Jamal S, Ali A. Ensuring safe drinking water access for the urban poor in the slums of english bazar municipality, Malda district, West Bengal. *Water Supply for the Urban Poor in Indian Cities Issues and Challenges*. B.R. Publishing Corporation: 2021:255-73.
4. Mukhopadhyay A. *Twin cities of Malda: Pre-colonial and colonial perspectives (1670–1910)*. Kolkata: Codex Publishers; 2019.

5. Mundhe N, Algur K, Deshmukh S, Boke K. Urbanisation and growth of slums in India: Evidence from Census of India (2001–2011). *Towards Excellence*. 2021;13(2).
6. Rains E, Krishna A, Wibbels E. Urbanisation and India's slum continuum: Evidence on the range of policy needs and scope of mobility. International Growth Centre; 2018 Feb.
7. Paul R. Urbanisation and growth of slum population in West Bengal: An analysis with spatial technique. *PanchakotesSays*. 2023;14(2).
8. Paul S. Analysing and mapping urban poverty of English Bazar slum: An approach of micro-level planning perspective from a developing country (India). *Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology*. 2015;12(2).
9. Sahoo J, Jaman H. Urban local self-government in India: An analysis of Old Malda Municipality in the District of Malda. *Research Review International Journal of Multidisciplinary*. 2017;2(9).
10. Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India. *State of Slums in India: A Statistical Compendium 2013*. National Building Organisation; 2013.

Creative Commons (CC) License

This article is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. This license permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited.