

Pathways to Homelessness and the contribution of shelter homes to solve the problem: A Study based on Delhi Homeless

Motivation:

Delhi Government has invested over Rs 26 crore over a period of 5 years (2010-2015) in the maintenance of homeless shelters. Common sense suggests that the homeless should prefer to opt for the shelter homes than sleeping at the open streets during peak winters or summers. Yet quite a chunk of the homeless population prefers to sleep at the streets rather than opting for a shelter. The question to be asked is- Why is it so? To look at it with greater precision, we first study the pathways to homelessness.

It comes up in our observation that, even the population that chooses to stay at the shelters has several complaints about the characteristics of the shelters. Most of these people are unanimous in their opinion that a Shelter can't be a substitute for a home and what they really need is a house where they can live without interference from others.

Research Methodology:

The sample consists of 50 homeless people in New Delhi. The survey resulted into the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data in the form of both open ended (format of an interview) and close ended questions. We have talked to the people living in four shelters: Banglasahib (4), Jama Masjid (9), RK Puram (near JNU) (8) and Paharganj (3).

We have also talked to people staying at the streets close to the above shelters, namely Shankar Market (7), Cannaught Place (2), Jama Masjid (14) and Hanuman Mandir (3).

The structure of our sample is given as follows:

- 26 women and 24 men
- 24 people live in the shelter (15 women and 9 men), and 26 people live at the streets (11 women, 15 men)

Limitations of the study:

Respondents were often not comfortable sharing the details of the episode(s) that turned them homeless. We have 3 observations (all men) who partially or completely refused to answer the questions related to this and gave vague answers like "Things went wrong at home" or absolutely refused to discuss about it. Thus, it has been difficult to trace the pathway to homelessness for men.

We couldn't determine the ontological deprivation status for some people since they didn't feel comfortable responding to the associated set of questions.

Introduction:

Delhi has around 1, 50,000 homeless people. State government deals with the problem by providing a temporary solution via shelter homes. Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) manages these shelters. The DUSIB has 198 night shelter with a capacity of 16,338. In the winter of 2016 they also installed 67 tents with a capacity of 3,480. There are shelters, which are earmarked for children, women, families, differently abled women and addicts. These Shelters are being managed through 17 shelter management agencies and equipped with basic facilities like blankets, mats, toilets and drinking water.

This paper has the motive to understand the pathways into homelessness. We say “pathways into homelessness” and not “reasons behind homelessness” because our observations in the field suggest that it is usually not a single event but a series of incidents that push a person away from her home. In these series of events it is very much possible that one dominates others. Nonetheless, ignoring the dominated events would be an injustice to the stories of homelessness. We also try to explore the reasons why people don’t live in the night shelter/rain basera provided by the Delhi Government (DUSIB).

We interviewed people who are either pavement dwellers or stays at night shelters considering both these categories to belong to the “homeless” population. However after sometime in field, interviewing people with diverse culture and experiences, we realized that some of them have been living at their current location for decades. We looked around their place of stay and found that they have made quite a comfortable life for themselves as far as it is possible on a pavement or a night shelter. They have filled their little living spaces with furniture, utensils, small gas “chulha”, small television sets and other things of daily use and entertainment. They have friends, foes and acquaintances. Hence, even though everyone in our sample was “houseless” at the time we interviewed them, the above mentioned observations make us wonder whether these people do feel at “home” at their current location even without possessing a private living space. Thus we need a solid and precise definition of homelessness.

Homelessness is a multidimensional concept. It doesn’t only involve lack of residence or a roof overhead, but also the denial of several other factors. (Somerville 1992).

Following Somerville, we take into account five different dimensions:

1. Physiological deprivation- Lack of physical comfort or feeling unsafe.
2. Emotional deprivation- Lack of love or happiness.
3. Territorial deprivation- Lack of Privacy or a space to be alone if one wishes for.
4. Ontological deprivation- Lack of a space where one can return to if one wishes and “at least be recognised”.
5. Spiritual deprivation- Lack of hope or purpose in one’s life.

Amongst the 50 individuals that we surveyed:

- 19 people are physiologically deprived (10 women and 9 men).
- 25 people are emotionally deprived (13 women and 12 men).
- 41 people are territorially deprived (24 women and 17 men).
- 17 people are ontologically deprived (10 women and 7 men). For 5 people this couldn’t be determined (2 women and 3 men).
- 5 people are spiritually deprived (2 women and 3 men).

Again, following Somerville, we consider a person homeless if he/she is houseless as well as is deprived in at least one of the aforementioned dimensions.

Interestingly, none of the people we have interviewed have stood out to be only “houseless” and not “homeless”.

Night Shelters: Brief history and description

Night shelters or Rain Basera started with temporary winter camps, which later were extended. In 2010 DUSIB (Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board) Act came, which demolished many Jhuggi-jhopri in the name of urban improvement and redevelopment scheme. Places where demolition drives were huge; the people were shifted into RCC building. This also embarks the construction of porta cabins type Night Shelters in Delhi.

The porta cabins are big halls with cemented floor, and walls and roof made of tin material that is portable in nature, the walls are painted blue from outside and the roof is painted white. These shelters claim to have a capacity of 50 occupants. There is a tender system through which shelters are allocated to various Ngo's. They are given the monthly budget of around 50,000. Which is used to pay three caretakers per shelters and a cleaner. Each care take have a 8 hours shift. Other than this they are provided a mattress to sleep in night. In winters they are provided with warm quilts also. Coolers are installed in summers. A water tank comes every day in the compound for bathing, washing and drinking purposes. Toilets are also installed, but number of users per toilet is very high, which create lots of hygiene issues.

Description of shelters:

RK Puram:

At a walking distance from Jawaharlal Lal Nehru University lie three porta shelter cabins for men, women and families. These night shelters lay just opposite to very busy flyover. Between the men and women shelters lay the bathrooms and a water tank. The family shelter also has facility of lockers (Donated by some organization).The entire campus is very recently walled. According to the people this has increased the hygiene and it make them feel safer. There also exists an open kitchen consisting of around 8 to 10 “choolah's” aligned with the walls segregated by mud partitions. Medical camp is held in the shelter once a week in winters. However, the residents prefer to visit private clinics for treatment of their ailments. The people and the staff there are very proud of this setup and proudly say that one cannot find a similar shelter. Water dispensers were also put very recently in all the three shelters.

Majority of the people belongs to Madhubani District in Bihar (In the absence of infrastructure and endemic poverty it ranks among one of the least developed districts) where most have a house. Most of them go back to their villages at least once a year and stay there for a few months. The women work as maids in the nearby houses and the men work as daily wage labourers. Entire population is Muslim; one might different ethnicities of Islam here.

All these people have a very strong sense of community. Whenever anyone needs to get married they go back to their village because the rituals where they believe in exist only there. Even the issue of dowry is prominent among them. One respondent reports to have given a “Tilak” of 1.20

Lakhs in his daughter's marriage and talked about how it has shattered him completely financially.

Bangla Sahib:

These shelters lie at the back drop of Bangla Sahib Gurudwara. There are 5 cabins here- 2 for women, 1 for family, 1 for men and 1 is a de-addiction Centre for males. All the cabins have a water dispenser which is very recently placed and is not in functioning condition. They also had a cooler and two fans per cabin. People are provided with mattress to sleep at night but there is no separate division of space. In one of the two shelters, the women have divided the space amongst themselves. The female shelter is walled and the entry doors to it are shut at 8-8.30 pm.

Currently, there exists a health centre in the campus (this is an independent project of the Humana organization that runs the shelter) and separate washrooms for men and women. The residents have one common reason to stay in this shelter, the Gurudwara. Most people are from Punjab, have only heard about Bangla Sahib Gurudwara in Delhi. After reaching Gurudwara in search of some comfort, someone guide them to these night shelters and that's how they end up here. However this shelter also includes women who have been homeless for a very long time and find this shelter to have an efficient cost setting for them.

No one is allowed to cook in the campus and this is a reason for dissatisfaction of various residents too. There had been, in the past, a fire due to some carelessness while cooking, and hence the restriction. Occupation choices are quite diverse among the women here from working as house maid, begging to not earning at all.

Jama Masjid:

To reach this shelter, one has to walk through the lanes of the famous Meena bazaar. These shelter cabins are located in Urdu Park and Kabootar Market. Kabootar Market has women and Kids shelter cabins whereas Urdu park have 5 shelter cabins for kids, women, men and families. All the shelter cabins have tube light, fan, cooler, and very recently a water dispenser is also installed. All the inhabitants are provided with the mats and warm quilts in winters to sleep. Women Shelter is Urdu Park also had a T.V installed. However the environment of Urdu Parks Shelter was much livelier in comparison to Kabootar market probably because Kabootar market administration is very strict about the entry of outsiders in the periphery of the shelter cabins.

In contrast with other shelters, Jama Masjid doesn't have any common ethnicity from which everyone hails from. There are people from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Kolkata, Bangalore, Mumbai, and Jharkhand. Some of the people in our sample are born in Jama Masjid only but their parent came from the above places. Homelessness is the only common thread that binds them. Jama Masjid has developed its own homeless culture, where all of them stand as one against any outsider they seek harm from but otherwise there is no reason to bring them together. They spend most of the time pulling each other's leg, and this becomes very serious also many times. They learn to laugh over their misery with each other. They will tons of logistical complains and lots of hope for their future, but you will never find them cribbing. Another interesting feature of this population is the Hindu-Muslim mix, we witnessed handful of inter-religion marriages also.

Paharganj Shelter:

This night shelter is a RCC building, which are different from porta cabins containing 6 halls, 2 halls on each floor. These halls are double the capacity of Porta cabins. One hall is reserved for

single men and the rest are for families. Since the building is closed and hence lack open space in comparison to Porta cabins- hygiene problems get exaggerated here.

Most of the families in Paharganj shelter and in Shankar market trace back to Solapur district in Maharashtra. There was a large scale displacement from this district and the nearby regions due to the border dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra in 1987 (Belguda border dispute). Though these people have no family or land back in their villages, they are strongly connected to their ethnicities in terms of their dresses and religious sentiments. It is mandatory for them to visit a temple in their village every year at a particular time. They save throughout an entire year for this occasion. They stay in temporary camps or under open sky near their holy "Pithh" for one or two months, spend all their savings in sacrifices to the Goddess and other expenses there. Then they come back to Delhi and start saving from the scratch.

Duration of Homelessness

Duration of homelessness is calculated in terms of number of years for which the concerned individual is homeless. This duration can be further divided into three categories, (i) Duration of Continuous Homelessness (ii) Duration of homelessness with breaks (iii) Duration of intermittent homelessness. One can be homeless continuously without any break, there can be breaks in their homelessness journey as they might have a home for some time or they are in intermittent homelessness where they keep on dwindling between their home (back in their village) and Delhi (place where they work but doesn't have a home). Most of the people living in R.K Puram shelter are intermittently homeless.

In our sample, as we look into the population with higher and higher years of homelessness the proportion decreases. We have higher percentages of men compared to that of women, when the duration of homelessness increases. Number of men and women with less than equal to 10 year duration of homelessness is 3 and 14 respectively, whereas no. of men and women with less than equal to 40 years of homelessness is 4 and 1 respectively.

As we look into greater duration of homelessness, the percentage of people being continuously homeless declines and those being intermittently homeless rises monotonically. Meaning, those who have absolutely no place to return to and make a home out of it are fewer when we look at higher years of homelessness in comparison to others. We wonder if it is a sign worth showing optimism about.

Education:

On this note, only 28% of the people we surveyed have gone to school. Whereas, 70% of the sample with kids send at least one of their kids to schools. This clearly exhibits the changing mindsets of the parents about the importance of education in making life better. A woman in her forties whom we met near Jama Masjid has been homeless since her childhood when her parents brought her with them to Delhi. Her husband is on a run now and then or in Jail most of the time. She has four kids. However she realises the importance of education a lot, even regrets on not being educated herself. She lives at the streets near the shelter at Jama Masjid, even when she can't stay in this particular shelter due to menaces of dominant groups, only since her kids study under the NGO initiative in this shelter.

But we have cases which make us doubt the efficiency of the formal education system especially the government schools. We have a case of a man, who sleeps on streets and sits with weighing machine who has not been formally educated. But he can read and write very well (He learnt this on his own) and is an aspirant novelist. And then a 17 year old kid who has passed 8th standard but can't read a single sentence with ease. When asked how he managed to pass his exams he said, "agar ham log ko padha denge to begari k kam kon karega didi" ("if they educate people like us then who will do all the works of physical labour?").

Pathways to homelessness:

Anderson and Tulloch (2000) had found age to be the dominant factor that affects different pathways "through" homelessness. The second most important factor contributing to this, as found by them, gender. However, in this study, we have only looked at pathways "into" homelessness and not that "out of" homelessness. According to our observations, gender turns out to be the key characteristic. We haven't found any effect of age.

Next, we elaborate these pathways, gender-wise along with few stories as heard from the respondents.

Pathways into homelessness for women:

- *Husband and Parents:*

In our sample the main reason behind women turning homeless has been observed to be dependent upon their husbands (for married women) or family members (for unmarried women). Out of 26 women surveyed, 15 reported to have turned homeless due to the above-mentioned reason. The married women had been completely dependent upon their husbands for their survival until things went horribly wrong in this set-up.

We talked to Beena, a 60 year old lady, originally from Kanpur, currently staying at the Banglalahib shelter. She held on to her husband despite being beaten up and being cheated upon by him, in order to maintain the image of a "good" wife as per the "social decorum". Moreover the fact that she was financially dependent on him, made her stay with him until the day he remarried and finally took the initiative himself to throw her out.

Bhama, born to homeless parents, was married off at quite an early age to someone who owned a house. Her husband reportedly was addicted to alcohol. He earned nothing and used to beat her up regularly for money to satisfy his addiction requirements. Unable to bear the torture, she left her husband and came back to stay with her mother along with her the-then 2 year old daughter at the streets of Shankar Market.

These observations enhance the importance of analysing homelessness as a multidimensional concept rather than simple lack of a roof overhead, As Tomas and Dittmar (1995) states often "Housing is the problem- homelessness may well be a solution".

- *Demolition of their homes:*

In our sample, 4 women have reported to have been evicted from their jhuggis and thus turn homeless.

Yasmeen, currently staying at the shelter adjoining Jama Masjid, has claimed to have had a jhuggi of her own near the same area. However,

The jhuggi was demolished, many of her personal belongings were set on fire and she was left with no other choice but to stay at the shelter.

Kavita, born in a Delhi jhuggi, had been evicted from her home as the construction of Delhi metro began in 1998. She claims that some of the people evicted under similar circumstances have received certain compensations while she has received none.

- *Higher income opportunity:*

3 women have reported to have left their homes in their villages in order to earn a higher income in Delhi. This need for earning has been triggered by the death of the earning member of the family in the cases of 2 women and that by natural calamities in 1 case. However, while two ladies do go back to their villages for a few months every year, one is permanently detached from her village as she chose to sell off her house in order to repay back the loans left over by her deceased parents.

- *Run away from home to marry against the wishes of the family members (2 women)*

- *High housing rent that doesn't allow one to save:*

Though we only have one observation that fits this category, this lady is worth a special mention due to the fact that her family and she can actually afford renting a house. The element of surprise lies in that she is homeless by choice, probably in the most unorthodox form of the word given the population we are dealing with in this study. As can be seen from the income-savings analysis (done later), the savings tendencies are pretty low in homeless women. But Anjila chooses to stay in a shelter as it helps her avoid spending money on rent and as well as offers her higher income (she is the caretaker of the shelter she lives in) and hence she can actually save up. She plans to use this savings to provide for quality education for her children.

- *House given out on rent and couldn't be recovered henceforth:*

Quoting this reason many people criticise free housing policy. But looking at the reason on why people rent their house, one reason that pops out is that these houses are located at outskirts of the city and if one lives there one has to travel every day for work, as those places don't have any source of livelihood and this increase in transport and house maintenance cost crosses the net income earned by them.

Pathways into homelessness for men:

- *Better income opportunities:*

The main reason behind men being homeless in our sample is better income opportunities in Delhi. Out of the 24 men surveyed, 8 reported this particular factor.

Md. Aslam, from Madhubani district in Bihar, stays at the RKPuram shelter and works as a Beldaar. He feels that the income he could have earned by staying in his village and working under the MGNREGA scheme is definitely lower than what he earns now, even after adjusting for the additional costs incurred due to the stay away from home.

- *Anger with family:*

4 men reported to have left home as they were angry/upset with their family due to reasons like mockery by a sibling and being scolded and beaten up over studies or getting into fights with

others. It is noteworthy that 2 out of these 4 men had left home at their early childhood with an older friend, got abandoned in Delhi streets thereafter and couldn't find the way back home.

- *Death of parents:*

2 men in our sample accrue their homelessness to the death of their parents and absence of any relatives who would take care of them.

Shahrukh, a 16 year old boy, currently staying at the shelter adjoining Jama Masjid, had lost both of his parents in a road accident at a tender age of three. He moved from one orphanage to another- always ending up running away from one just to be caught by the police and sent to another. He hated the environment of the orphanages and claims to have got beaten up severely several times by the orphanage authorities. Finally he willingly got involved with an NGO two years ago and started staying at his current location.

- *Demolition of their homes (2 men)*
- *Family is homeless (1)*
- *High housing rent that is unaffordable (1)*
- *Lost home due to natural calamities (1)*
- *Mental illness (1)*
- *Addiction (1)*

Gender, in our sample, determines the pathway into homelessness in the sense that the most important pathway for women is dependent upon their husband/parents (primarily being abandoned or abused by the husband). While the most important pathway for a man is the need for a better earning. The second most important pathway for women is demolition of their dwellings while that for men arises due to running away from home as they were angry with their parents/siblings. Thus, it can be concluded that the pathways to homelessness in case of women arises out of compulsion and vulnerabilities. Whereas, in case of men in our sample this arises due to their own choice.

Streets versus Night Shelters:

The pavement dwellers reported of several reasons behind their choice of not living at the shelters. Even within the group that live in the night shelters, 60% of the women and 100% men have one or more complaints against various aspects of the shelters. Interestingly, the reasons for dissatisfaction reported by the residents of the shelters turn out to be a strict subset of the reasons given by the street dwellers for not choosing shelters. These reasons are given below.

Reasons for dissatisfaction with the shelter facilities:

1. Pets are not allowed in the Shelters (reported by people NOT living in shelters only):

Since the dawn of civilisation human beings and their pets have been sharing an inseparable bond. It is not even an option for some people to trade faithful companionship for somewhere legal and just a roof above the head to sleep.

This is the case of Narmada who takes care of a stray dog and her 4 pups. The day we met her, one of the pups had died of a road accident and she was visibly disturbed. She kept talking about the pup- how she has seen her mother grow up from a little pup and that she would never see

her grow up as she is dead. She said that she could not possibly stay in a shelter if that meant letting go of her pets.

2. Unhygienic Living Conditions in the shelter (reported by people living both in shelters and at the street):

People staying on the streets often attributed their not going to the shelters to the deplorable living conditions of the shelters. Bhamu Bai, a 25 year old lady says “Bahut Gandagi hai... bachhe ganda karte hai aur koi saaf nahi karta”, meaning “It’s very dirty... Kids make messes and nobody cleans it up”. However, the surprising element in the story is that she holds such a strong opinion about the shelters even when she has absolutely no experience of staying in a shelter. She has never even visited a “Rain Basera”. All these opinions are formed from what she has heard from her fellow street-dwellers and she doesn’t care to check the truthfulness of the information. This behaviour probably can be attributed to two distinct factors:

- (i) The strong and trustworthy information chain formed by the street dwellers.
- (ii) The self-sufficient mechanisms that they have created for themselves living in the streets are probably enough for them not to feel the need for using shelter facilities.

Family shelters have been observed to have the unhealthiest conditions, owing to the presence of small children who can’t use the washrooms on their own. The kids relieve themselves right on the floor of the shelter where the inhabitants are supposed to sleep. Moreover, the parents often deny the responsibility for the filth created by their children and not clean it up. Hence more often than not, the shelter floors remain dirty and the air smells foul even though the shelter management claims that the cleaning staffs do clean the shelters twice every day.

This is especially true for the MotiaKhan shelter (RCC building). When we visited this particular shelter at around 2P.M, we found it to be extremely dirty. Hundreds of Flies hovering around rotten human excreta, cough and discarded food materials right next to the main staircase and corridors. Since this one is an enclosed pukka building, the foul smell of the rotten wastes can’t escape the rooms. Thus the air that we breathe in at the living spaces of this shelter is heavy with filthy odour. According to Kavya, a woman in her mid-thirties, she lives in this shelter “Majboori se” (“out of compulsion”). The first time that we met her has been in her workplace (out of the shelter). She had complained about lack of proper hygiene in the shelter then. When asked about if the cleaning staffs are at fault here, she clearly says that it’s the inhabitants who are responsible for this and not the staff. The irony here is that when we met her for the second time in the shelter, while talking to us she spit out the remnants of the tobacco that she was chewing right next to her “Khatiya” (bed made of wood and ropes) on the floor of the room where she lives!

3. Freedom is curtailed (reported by people living both in shelters and at the street):

Shelters in Delhi have their own curfew timings for entry and exit at night. These time limits differ across shelters and are mainly set according to the judgements of the NGO that runs a particular shelter. Thus, while some shelters have very stringent rules for entry and exit (eg. Shelters near Jama Masjid), some do not have any such restrictions (e.g MotiyaKhan).

Rubina, a lady in her forties, known as Pagli to her neighbours for her slightly disoriented mannerisms, has reported to have been prohibited from staying at the shelter (near Jama Masjid) as she was a “consistent rule-breaker”. According to her, She failed to enter the shelter “in time” several times in the month of Ramadan as she was busy earning some extra money via begging. Last time we met her, she had been staying at the streets close to that particular shelter as her children avails the primary education facilities that the shelter provides.

Also, in some shelters (example- the shelter at banglasahib) the inhabitants are not allowed to cook. This has been the rule at the banglasahib shelter since a fire broke out a few years ago. The shelter doesn't provide food either. So what arrangements does an inhabitant make for her meal? Either buy from restaurants or eat the free food that the “langar” at Banglasahib Gurudwara offers. Now, it is obvious that buying already cooked food is costlier than getting the raw food and cooking them. Thus, almost all of the inhabitants at this shelter opt for the Gurudwara's “Langar” most of the days. “Bachhon ko achhe khane ka man karta hai, wahan to banane hi nahi dete, wahan rahe toh unlogo ka shaukh kaise puri karenge?” (“The kids often want to have good and tasty food, there cooking is not allowed, if I stay there then how can I fulfil my kids' desires?”), says Kavita a mother of four. This is the primary reason she refuses to stay at this shelter even though she admits this shelter being one of the cleanest of all that she has seen.

“Aap shelter me reh rahe ho matlab aap shelter ke naukar ho. Bahar rehne wale log kisike naukar nahi hai” (“You staying in a shelter means that you are a servant to that shelter. The people who stay outside (of the shelter) are nobody's servant”), says Sanjeev when asked why he chose to live at the streets over shelters. He is a 40 year old man who has been homeless since early days of his childhood. Freedom, in probably its broadest sense, has a lot of appeal to him. Freedom encompasses being master of one's own wishes and actions. Also not to be obligated and bound by codes that one doesn't, in the heart, want to abide by all the time. According to Sanjay, the moment one opts to utilise and be benefitted by all the facilities that a shelter offers, one must compromise with one's own freedom to be able to fit into that structure. Thus, those who feel that a legal place to sleep with a roof over the head is worth that compromise do go to the shelters. However, he is surely not a man to be comfortable with such a trade-off.

It is interesting to note that the lack of freedom (taking away the problem with not being allowed to cook) being a reason for dissatisfaction/living at streets has been reported **predominantly by men**.

4. Chaotic environment of the shelter and dominant group affecting adversely (reported by people living both in shelters and at the street):

Heated arguments consisting of the usage of abusive and hurtful words are a regular part of the shelter life as observed by us. Children learn and start to use offensive words at a very tender age. Fights often break out between the residents over the tiniest of disagreements leading to them being physically injured.

Yasmeen, a woman approaching fifties, reports of being at immense discomfort due to this particular feature of the shelter life. She spends the entire day sitting on her “chaarpai” outside the shelter and only goes inside when she is sleepy at night. She seemed quite unhappy with her stay at the shelter. When asked why she continues staying here despite being so dissatisfied, she

answers that Jama being her place of earning livelihood she has no other option as the police won't let her build a jhuggi in that area.

We have also talked to people who told us about other shelter-inhabitants ganging up and acting together against them or their family to cause severe discomforts. Kavita complains about 30-40 families being united against her family and friends in the Pahadganj shelter. She has to go through regular feuds, destruction of her belongings at times, disruptions in her day-to-day activities and faces other distresses.

Conversation with a caretaker of a shelter revealed that the inhabitants themselves, most of the times, take up initiatives not to let new people to come in and stay at the shelters even when there remains ample space for new entrants. He also claims that there exists no bar to new entries on the part of the authorities. This claim of his had been resonated in the words of the people who had been cornered by dominant groups and hence couldn't sustain at the shelters.

5. Lack of personal space (reported by people living both in shelters and at the street):

This problem becomes very obvious once one looks at the structure of a shelter. Each shelter consists of one big hall in which all the inhabitants are supposed to find a space to fit their frame, lie down and sleep for the night. Thus, even if one tried hard, one would never find a space to that ensures privacy in a shelter.

Sanjay, a passionate reader, feels that denial of privacy to a person is synonymous to depriving him of his solitude. And solitude, according to him, being truly a bliss, is what gives him peace. Raju, a middle-aged man with a cheerful façade, lives just outside the shelter in which his wife stays. When asked, he says "yeh koi zindagi hai kya? Parivar andar, hum bahar, baat bhi nahi ho pata man-marzi se". The translation would be "Is this a life worthy enough? My wife stays inside (the shelter) and I am outside, can't even talk to each other whenever and however we wish to". This observation directly paves the way to the next reason.

6. Family is separated (reported by people NOT living in shelters only):

This can be considered partially as an extension to the last point mentioned, as per our observations. Almost 26% of the men, who stay outside the shelters, stay very close to it in order to stay near their family. They report that their wives stay at a particular shelter and there is no men's shelter or family shelter adjacent to it and hence they are forced to stay out at the streets. The reason Raju (mentioned in the elaboration of the last point) chose not to live in a shelter is simply to stay as close to his wife as possible in the absence of a men's shelter adjacent to the women's one where his wife stays.

Narmada, an elderly lady who is in her sixties, stays at a footpath near Hanuman Mandir. She has a big family. However, a significant time of each day she spends in helping out her physically challenged son in his daily chores. When asked about reasons behind her apathy towards shelters, she narrated to us her experience of living at a shelter for two weeks. Immediately after entering the shelter premises (that consists of separate shelters for women and men), she was shown the way to the women's shelters and her son was sent to the men's one. The women's shelter had several restrictions regarding time of entry and exit at night. Also since he was already an adult, he was not allowed to see his mother as per his wish or need. Thus she couldn't

be with her son when he needed her and hence after two weeks left the shelter to get back to the streets.

7. Abuse, exploitation, theft- lack of security (reported by people living both in shelters and at the street):

It has been observed that some people who refuse to live at the shelters believe that it is in the shelters that they are more likely to be sexually abused than at the streets. When asked if they have ever experienced such instances, all of these respondents' answered in negative. However, they were pretty much convinced of this belief and almost all of them claimed that they have come to know about these events from trusted sources.

Also a few people who stay at the shelters themselves seem to be sceptic regarding the security of that place. They reported to be constantly cautious of their surroundings in order to avoid any sort of danger. Again, when asked about any such personal experiences at the shelters, all answers were in negative. Yet again, these beliefs seemed to be rock solid. This lack of security and worry of being abused and exploited has been reported **predominantly by men**.

While majority of our data within shelters do not report of any problem arising out of theft, some in fact do. 5 people out of 24 reports to have their belongings stolen from the shelter at least once during their entire period of stay. A few people living at the streets attribute their decision of stay to the fear of theft in the shelters as well.

8. Husband/family/community's choice (reported by people NOT living in shelters only):

This factor has been reported as a reason for choosing shelters over streets **predominantly by women**. And this is apparently one of the most important reasons behind their current location of stay.

Nagri, a ballon seller at Cannaught Place, stays in Shankar Market (near CP). She actually expressed her personal wish to go and stay at a decent shelter. When asked why she hasn't done it yet, her answer was twofold- first her husband doesn't want that, second "hamare jaatwale nahi rehte udhar" meaning "people of our community do not stay there".

9. Lack of ID proof (reported by people NOT living in shelters only):

This reason has been stated by only one person that we have talked to. Rani, a lady with 4 kids, has been homeless for the past 4 months and lives near Hanuman Mandir at the streets. She has reported to have been prohibited from entry at the Banglasahib shelter as she possesses no Identity proof.

10. Shelters are located away from the workplace (reported by people NOT living in shelters only)

11. Comfortable enough at streets (reported by people NOT living in shelters only):

According to our observation, some people are comfortable enough living and sleeping out at the streets that they don't really feel the need to look for other options of stay. These observations mostly come from people who have a big family or stays in large groups at the pavements where police, reportedly, do not interfere with their lives.

Bhama Bai has never even seen a shelter in her entire period of homelessness and is not bothered about it even a bit. According to her, she lives her life happily with her family and friends out in the streets. She has heard about shelters, even has encountered volunteers and social workers who had pleaded with her to at least visit a shelter and then make a decision. But she is quite nonchalant about it. She has clearly stated that she never wishes to stay in a shelter, the reason, first and foremost being- she is happy with her present life.

12. Dignity of being not acknowledged (reported by people NOT living in shelters only):

This has been reported **predominantly by men**. It has been observed that people who earn their livelihood as labourers sometimes consider beggars as inferior beings. The concept being that hard earned money from labour is more praise-worthy than easy money earned by begging. These people believe that shelters are mainly occupied by beggars and that living with them hurts their pride. They believe that once they move into shelters, society might consider their worth to be equivalent to that of the "inferior beggars". In a way, it can be said that the effort to distinguish their identity from that of the begging population is what prevents these people from opting for the shelter.

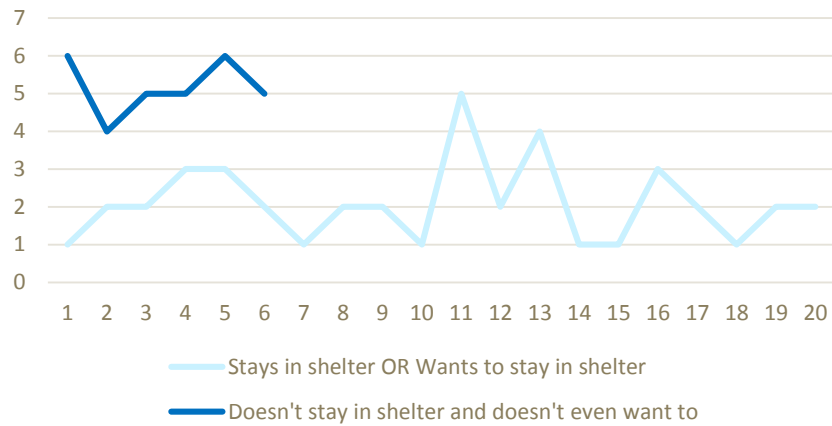
Kishan is registered at a shelter near the Jama Masjid. But he claims to not actually stay there ever as it hurts his "self-respect" to share the same room with beggars.

As mentioned before our data suggests that most of the people, who choose to stay at the shelters, are very much dissatisfied with them. And the reasons behind this dissatisfaction are the same ones that the people living at the streets have reported to be the reasons behind their not living at the shelters. So we can state that some people choose to live at the shelters only because their utility gained from having a roof over the head overpowers their disutility from having to endure all the additional discomforts that are attached with living in a shelter. This can be interpreted as a difference in preferences of the people staying in and outside the shelter.

Data suggests that there are more women than men living in the shelters and more men than women living at the pavements. Also looking only at the street dwelling group in our sample, it can be seen that more number of females wishes to stay in the shelter compared to their male counterpart, 45% of women compared to 27% of men. The reason these willing men can not avail the shelter facilities is the sheer absence of a men's shelter near the female one where their wives stay and thus opting for a shelter would necessarily mean them getting separated from their family. The main impediment that doesn't let the willing women use the shelter facilities is the presence of dominant groups that simply doesn't let them stay in the shelters.

Looking only at the male street dwelling population who are unwilling to stay at a shelter, we haven't been able to find a reason why their preferences are different that their shelter dwelling counterpart.

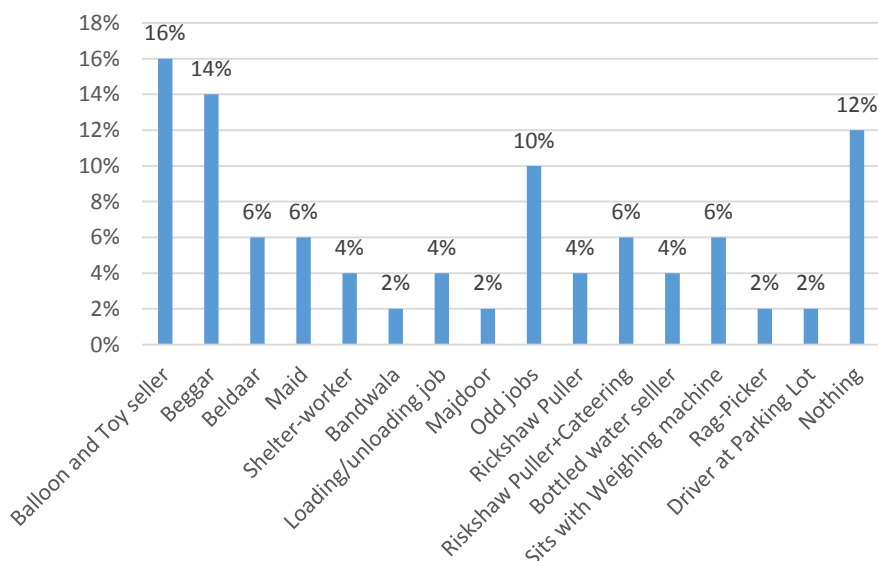
Number of people (Not considering children) in the family that She stays with in her current location



However, for the group of women, we can hypothesize that streets are supposed to be unsafe for women and hence single women or women who stay in smaller families would want to choose shelters over streets. Indeed in our sample we see that the number of adult family members that the street dwelling women who are unwilling to live at shelters live with at the streets is significantly higher than those women who are willing to or actually do live in the shelters (above diagram). Also it has been seen that it is not the women (in shelters or outside) who predominantly doubt the security in the shelters. Thus, we can say that our hypothesis has some evidence in its favour.

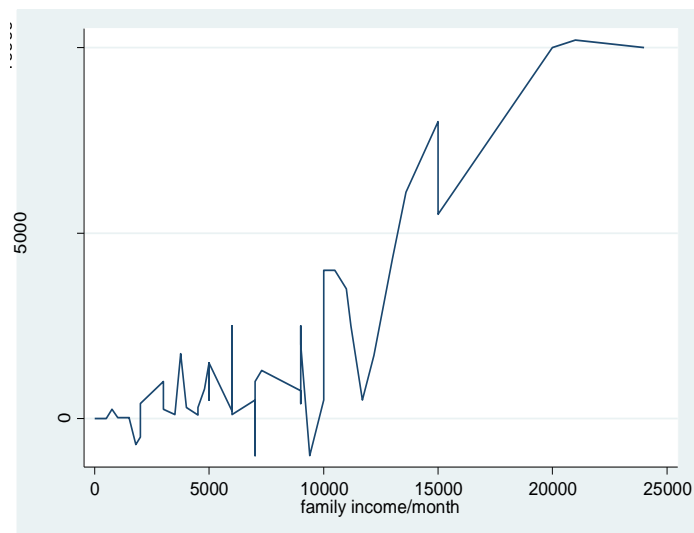
Income Savings Analysis:

Occupation Stucture



family income/month				
Percentiles	Smallest			
1%	0	0		
5%	750	500		
10%	1500	750	Obs	50
25%	3750	1000	Sum of Wgt.	50
50%	6000		Mean	7470
		Largest	Std. Dev.	5350.262
75%	10000	15000		
90%	14300	20000	Variance	2.86e+07
95%	20000	21000	Skewness	1.0541
99%	24000	24000	Kurtosis	4.052146

family Savings/mnth				
Percentiles	Smallest			
1%	-1000	-1000		
5%	-700	-1000		
10%	0	-700	Obs	50
25%	100	-500	Sum of Wgt.	50
50%	550		Mean	1846.8
		Largest	Std. Dev.	2796.156
75%	2500	8000		
90%	5800	10000	Variance	7818486
95%	10000	10000	Skewness	1.789743
99%	10200	10200	Kurtosis	5.485243



The occupations of the people in our sample have a common characteristic of being uncertain. Hence the income they earn is also uncertain. The rickshaw pullers drive rented vehicles and thus they are completely at the mercy of the owners. Since Indian marriages can be held during some specific months in a year, the people who are engaged in catering or cooking services earn a significant amount only in that part of the year and remain unemployed for the rest of the year. The daily wage labourers do not find work for some substantial number of days in a month.

Thus, for these people, whatever the savings might be in a month, most of it is finally consumed within a short period of time in terms of food and other necessities for living in months of zero earning. Even if they manage to save some substantial amount of money over a significant amount of time, they spend it on some festival or in the form of dowry in the marriages of their daughters. Except for one observation amongst our sample of 50 people, no one really saves up keeping in mind the education of their children or even for medical requirements.

We have collected data on the family income of the respondent for the last 30 days. The mean income is Rs 7470. This is higher than the Poverty line as outlined by the Delhi Government. Uncertainty of income and High house rent in Delhi together is what ultimately renders them homeless.

No savings pattern can be found up to the income level of Rs 12000, above which savings rise with income. The mean savings is very low at Rs 1847 per month. Since in our sample 75% of the observations lie below the income level of Rs 10000, not a significant amount of savings come out of this group of people.

Conclusion:

The state of homelessness is reached after a series of events. However, the core reason of remaining homeless is poverty struck kinship network and the lack of stable income opportunities.

“The violence of demolition was, for decades, tempered by a policy of resettlement which, even when partially and imperfectly implemented, gave demolition a veneer of legitimacy”- Usha Ramanathan (Illegality and the urban poor). Demolition, being one of the primary pathways to homelessness, is something that can be taken care of via proper policies. However, the existence of shelters acts as a façade for resettlement policies. As reported by the inhabitants of the shelters near Jama Masjid, the space has gone through numerous demolition drives in the name of “beautification” and “cleansing” and hence the people who had made jhuggis in that area had been (indirectly) forced to live at the shelters.

Shelters, which were supposed to be a temporary solution to homelessness, have been existing forever now with almost the same population staying there for years though with dissatisfactions. There is no doubt that these are not even close to a near-perfect solution to homelessness. The most common solution, a free housing policy, has been criticized by the argument that the allotted houses are given on rent and that “these people can’t be helped”. Though this “renting out” phenomenon is true as per our observations, there is a need to focus on the reasons behind this behavior. We encountered stories that reveal this other side of the argument. Sakina, a balloon seller by two generations, reports that her parents had been allotted a house after their jhuggi was demolished for the Delhi Metro construction. But they rented the house out and never got it back. The reason behind not using the house themselves, as she explained, was that it was located at a great distance from their workplace. Also, since the allotted house was at the outskirts of the main city, the scope of an alternative job opportunity was practically non-existent. This coupled with high transport costs, travelling time and house maintenance costs made it impossible for them to sustain at the house. Thus, it is not enough to just give away a house to these people, but to ensure an adequate scope of livelihood by keeping in mind the importance of distance of workplace from their house and/or creating sustainable job opportunities nearby the house provided.

Submitted by

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(All the names in the report are either fictional or written with the permission of the interviewee)