

Urban Poverty and Vulnerability: Literature and Perspective

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Abstract: *The Government of India has been taking various steps towards identification of the poor (and vulnerable through the Socio Economic Caste Census) and measurement of poverty with the help of various Expert Groups right from the Task Force that was set up in 1962 to the Task Force on Poverty Elimination of the NITI Aayog. There have been many researchers as well who have been suggesting the ways in which the poor and vulnerable can be identified and poverty can be measured besides the suggestions given by the Expert Groups. However, it may be considered as a 'national shame' if we are unable to identify the needy even after 75 years of independence. Through the review of around 100 books, research papers and articles, an attempt has been to understand the strengths and shortcomings of suggested ways to identify the poor and vulnerable and suggest a comprehensive methodology to identify the needy. Unless we are able to identify the poor and vulnerable sections of society correctly, planning and implementing poverty alleviation programmes for "ending poverty in all its forms everywhere"¹ would be a futile exercise!*

Keywords: Urban Poverty, Vulnerability, Methodology of identification of Needy, Pavement Dwellers

I. INTRODUCTION

Identification of the poor and vulnerable sections of society and estimation of the prevailing percentage of poverty and vulnerability in any region has been a burning issue for many years now. Still, "ending poverty in all its forms everywhere" continues to remain the very first Sustainable Development Goal to be achieved yet². This necessitates undertaking a review of suggested ways to identify poor and vulnerable; understand its strengths and shortcomings and come up with a comprehensive methodology to identify the needy. Unless we accurately identify them, targeting for provision of welfare entitlements will be of no use in eradicating the roots of poverty and vulnerability in any region.

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¹ <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>

² <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/poverty/>

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND PERSPECTIVE

From time to time, the Planning Commission has convened numerous Expert Groups to study India's poverty estimation methodology. In 1962, the first Working Group was formed to determine a desirable minimum standard of living for the population. Then, in July 1977, under the chairmanship of Dr. Y. K. Alagh, a Task Force on 'Projections of minimum needs and effective consumption demand' was created. However, the methodology of estimating poverty, suggested by Alagh committee, was criticized on various grounds.

Hence, in September 1989, the Planning Commission established an Expert Group under the chairmanship of Professor D. T. Lakdawala to re – examine the methodology of poverty estimation. It broke down the national poverty lines into state – specific poverty lines to account for price differences between states (Planning Commission, 2014) [35].

Again, in December 2005, the Planning Commission formed an Expert Group under the chairmanship of Suresh. D. Tendulkar. This group did not establish a poverty line. Rather, it used the officially measured urban poverty line of 2004 – 05 based on Lakdawala group methodology and converted this poverty line (which is Uniform Reference Period – consumption based) into Mixed Reference Period – consumption. Further, it used a particular form of pricing the products and services that make up the poor's consumption basket. However, one of the major departures made by the Tendulkar committee was consciously moving away from the calorie anchor (Planning Commission, 2012).

On September 20, 2011, the Planning Commission, upholding the Suresh Tendulkar Committee's findings, had filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court updating the official urban poverty line to Rs. 32 per capita per day at June, 2011, prices. However, since the Planning Commission was highly criticized for giving such a low poverty line it then declared that the information gathered by the Socio Economic Caste Census (SECC) would be used to classify those who are considered eligible for benefits under various central government programmes.

Dreze and Sen (2013) have very well illustrated (in a simplified manner) how the official urban and rural poverty lines of Rs. 32 and Rs. 26 per capita per day respectively are actually 'destitution lines', which do not ensure anything above bare subsistence. Furthermore, the government passed the NFSA in 2013, expanding the benefits of subsidised food to 70% of the rural population and 50% of the urban population, despite the fact that the percentage of BPL households in these areas was only 26% and 14%, respectively.

Despite the fact that the poverty line for rural and urban areas was set at Rs. 27 and Rs. 33 per capita per day in 2011 – 12 (the author refers to it as the ‘*kutta – billi*’ line, since only cats and dogs can survive on such a low income), 70% of rural and 50% of urban people lived below Rs. 50 and Rs. 70 per capita per day respectively, which was barely enough to meet all basic needs (Saxena, 2015) [39].

Hence, in June 2012, the Planning Commission established an Expert Group, chaired by Dr. C. Rangarajan, to study the methods for measuring poverty once more (Planning Commission, 2013) [34].

The Rangarajan group calculated the average calorie, protein and fat requirements. It has also taken into account a residual collection of behaviourally defined non – food expenditures (education, clothing, transportation, and house rent), as well as a normative level of consumption expenditure for critical non – food item classes (education, clothing, conveyance, and house rent) (Rangarajan and Dev, 2015) [37]. It increased the daily per capita expenditure for the urban poor to Rs. 47 from Rs. 33 and estimated the total number of poor in the country at 363 million or 29.6% of the population (Sharma, 2014) [41].

However, the Rangarajan committee has been chastised for squandering an opportunity to make the case for a multidimensional view of poverty. Indeed, the work of authors such as Jayaraj and Subramanian (2009) [20] suggests that it is indeed possible to provide accurate estimates of multidimensional poverty, that have the benefit of corroborating the evidence available from ordinary observation that India remains a country of significant poverty, without claiming to be exhaustive or imprecise (Subramanian, 2014) [47]. However, the Rangarajan group states that it understands the importance of multidimensional poverty. As a result, non – income measures such as education, health, sanitation, clean water, infant mortality and so on can be analyzed alongside income or consumption poverty. Non – wage indices of poverty, on the other hand, are reflections of insufficient income. As a result, in most countries, identifying poverty in terms of income or, in the absence of such data, in terms of expenditure appears to be the most suitable approach (Rangarajan and Dev, 2015).

In addition to this, it was criticized for not taking into consideration health and sanitation as essential non – food items (Mishra, 2014) [27].

It’s unclear why the Rangarajan committee overlooked micronutrient requirements in particular, given that iron deficiency is a major cause of anaemia and maternal ill health in India (Ray and Sinha, 2014). While the authors correctly emphasize the value of micronutrients for nutrition, there is insufficient evidence to include them in the poverty line’s food component (Rangarajan and Dev, 2015).

Rather, some ‘practical knowledge’ of the socially necessary means of avoiding the harsher aspects of deprivation in India would suggest command over a monthly income of at least Rs. 12,500 for a family of five persons in 2011. Thus, even the enhanced poverty lines suggested by the Rangarajan Committee are substantially low in relation to the actual needs (Subramanian, 2015) [48].

Further, the proposed poverty lines by the Rangarajan Committee have sparked a public uproar over its appropriateness. However, according to the Rangarajan report, every poverty measure is always judgemental, and

therefore the normative basis for its estimation might not be acceptable to everyone (Mishra, 2014).

It is important to remember that there are many non – economic aspects to consider. Poverty can be linked to powerlessness, isolation, and exclusion, according to socio political concerns. Additionally, attempts should be made to classify the poor while not ignoring the needy, who may be on or above the poverty line or vulnerable according to certain dimensions that are not considered (Mishra, 2014).

Prof. Angus Deaton rejected most of the recommendations of the Rangarajan committee except for the one seeking that entitlement programmes in India be delinked from the poverty line and urged giving up of the BPL – targeting (Mehra, 2015) [25].

The NITI Aayog, which is charged with devising ways to minimise poverty, has supported the contentious ‘Tendulkar poverty line’, which classified people earning less than Rs. 33 per day as poor, claiming that the line is mainly intended to be a metric for monitoring progress in combating poverty. Furthermore, the line is not intended to assist in the identification of those who are eligible for government assistance. Instead, the state governments identify the poor on the basis of the BPL Census and the latest BPL Census is the SECC (Mehra, 2016) [26].

The Aayog proposed four options for tracking the poor: continue to use the Tendulkar poverty line; switch to the Rangarajan or other higher rural and urban poverty lines; track progress of the bottom 30% of the population over time; and track progress of specific parameters such as nutrition, shelter, drinking water, sanitation, power and connectivity (Singh, 2016) [43].

Besides the issues that have been discussed so far, there are other issues regarding governing bodies’ poverty estimation and identification of the poor and vulnerable, viz; deciding the poverty line basket, using income or consumption expenditure, decline in calorie consumption, comparison of NSSO and NAS estimates, length of reporting period, price adjustments, BPL Censuses, etc.

The Planning Commission established an Expert Group under the chairmanship of Professor S. R. Hashim with the goal of establishing uniform criteria for identifying Below Poverty Line (BPL) households in urban areas, ensuring objectivity and transparency in the delivery of benefits to the target groups (Planning Commission, 2012) [33]. The expert group proposed a three – stage identification process after extensive deliberation and discussion: (i) Automatic Exclusion; (ii) Automatic Inclusion; and (iii) A Scoring Index. However, several studies have shown that adding those who should not be included, while excluding those who should be included, is a common practice (Saxena, 2015). Further, Alkire and Seth (2013) show that relatively minor methodological differences lead to the identification of different sets of poor households [2].

Against the background of the strenuous efforts taken by the expert groups, it would be interesting to analyse the attempts made by various researchers to identify the poor and vulnerable and estimate poverty.

After understanding the methodology suggested by the expert groups and researchers, an attempt has been made to come up with a comprehensive methodology to identify the poor and vulnerable sections of society. It

should not be forgotten that identification is the very first and essential step, to ensure proper targeting w.r.t provision of welfare entitlements, so as to eradicate poverty and vulnerability across the globe.

Rowntree conducted one of the first surveys on poverty (1901). Families are considered to be in primary poverty if their total earnings are insufficient to meet the “bare minimum necessities of physical performance”, according to him (Son, 2011) [46].

People are poor if they lack the means to fully engage in the society in which they live, or if they are “afraid to appear in public”, as Adam Smith put it, even if their incomes would suffice in another society (Deaton, 2004) [12].

The needed food energy consumption was calculated using an average calorie standard of 2,250 calories per capita per day for both rural and urban areas (Dandekar and Rath, 1971) [11].

However, poverty does not imply unfulfilled desires, a lack of resources, or a disadvantage over others. Rather, it refers to insufficient resources to meet what are considered to be essential needs in that place and time (Karelis, 2009) [21].

In addition to this, policies and programs to combat poverty should be given shape only after contextually relevant reasons for descent and escape have been identified. Characteristics such as family size, age and gender of household head, and level of education are some of the reasons of descent in addition to social and customary expenses, including expenditure on funerals and marriages, debt bondage, alcoholism, drug addiction, and laziness (Krishna, 2010) [23]. Moreover, five behaviours, or better yet, non behaviours, are among the most significant causes of poverty: not finishing school, not working, not saving for a rainy day, not limiting alcohol intake, and not abiding by the law. Obviously, not all poor people struggle to do these stuff, but a disproportionate number of them do (Karelis, 2009). It is a common misconception among non – poor people that poor people inherently “live hand to mouth” and have a short term perspective. In reality, however, they repeatedly demonstrate tenacity and self sacrifice in attempting to take the long term view and safeguard the foundation of their livelihoods (Chambers, 1995) [10]. Rather, the vast majority of poor people do not sit idly by, waiting for programmatic benefits to arrive. They do make spirited efforts to break out of poverty but these efforts are too often compromised by negative events (Krishna, 2010).

Poverty is not a medical condition, a personal disaster, or a symptom of a behavioural disorder. It exists instead as a result of systemic inequality in the initial endowment of land and other assets, lack of exchange entitlements to participate in the economy, and the government’s inability to provide equitable access to healthcare, education, and jobs, among other things. Hence, poverty is inextricably linked to the development model you choose and is the product of the development process itself (Oommen, 2015) [30].

Poverty by itself imposes a heavy tax on one’s cognitive abilities (Mani, Mullainathan, Shafir, and Zhao, 2013; Oommen, 2015) [24]. This ‘cognitive tax’ in turn can lead to poor economic decisions, perpetuating poverty (Oommen, 2015). The immediate financial worries of the poor leave them with much less mental ‘bandwidth’ to deal with other problems relative to those who are better off. Moreover, dealing with uncertain incomes and juggling finances to make ends meet is a difficult task which results in divided

attention, making it harder to concentrate and grapple with other issues in a successful manner. It was found out that there wasn’t any significant difference between the rich and the poor in New Jersey when they were assigned to the easy task. But the poor volunteers performed significantly worse than the rich when assigned the hard task. Similarly, in case of farmers, it was found that when they have more money they are more intelligent (Mani et al., 2013).

Poverty is a set of specific issues that, once identified and understood, can be addressed one at a time. The poor seemed to have several options, and they did not want to spend as much money on food as they could. They often lack vital knowledge and, as a result, opt for costly cures rather than inexpensive prevention in the event of illness. Further, the poor are responsible for far too much of their lives. In addition to this, many of them own small businesses in highly competitive sectors, and the majority of the rest work as casual labourers who must constantly worry about finding work (Banerjee and Duflo, 2013) [4].

The choice of poverty line depends in large measure on the intended use of the poverty rates (Haughton and Khandker, 2009) [17]. Hence, the poverty lines are as much political as scientific constructions (Deaton, 2004). Rather, the poverty line must be unvarying in some relevant space for instance, the space of human functionings (not the space of real incomes (World Bank) or that of commodity bundles (Planning Commission)) [18]. Moreover, if this unique poverty line were the ‘maximum’ of individual – specific lines, no individual whose income is less than what is required to avoid deprivation in functionings space will be excluded from the count of the poor (Subramanian, 2015) [49].

What’s surprising isn’t so much how low the official poverty line is, but how many people fall below it even with such a low baseline. The startling revelation that it is difficult to live a dignified life on or below the poverty line brings attention to the appalling living conditions of India’s poor, which attract too little attention in public debate and go unnoticed. This is, at least in part, because poor people have learned to live precariously with such deprivations, and keep a low profile, somewhat fatalistically (Dreze and Sen, 2013) [14].

In India, most poverty alleviation initiatives have historically focused on rural areas. According to Agarwal, Taneja and Patra (2006) [1], since the 1960s, this, along with other causes, has resulted in a comparatively faster decline in rural poverty than urban poverty. Rather, it is only since the 1980s that official attitudes have shifted toward acknowledging the vast and increasingly growing population of the urban poor, the likelihood of continued rapid growth in the near future, and the urgent need for appropriate policies and programmes to alleviate their poverty and other disabilities. The transition from slum eradication to slum improvement as a policy goal of the Government of India, as described in the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980 – 85), was a significant result of the recognition (Nath, 1994) [28].

Poverty can be described as the lack of basic capabilities, rather than simply as a lack of income or the inability to meet the ‘basic needs’ of specific commodities (Sen, 1992; Son, 2011).

Poverty includes not only material deprivation,

but also many other types of deprivation such as unemployment, ill health, lack of education, vulnerability, powerlessness, and social exclusion when viewed in terms of capability deprivation [29]. Furthermore, the most successful way to reduce poverty is to enact policies that address particular types of deprivation that have been established. Finally, using the capability deprivation approach does not preclude the use of the income approach; rather, all methods should be used in tandem (Son, 2011).

However, the same limitations that limit one's ability to earn income, such as age, disability, or illness, may also make it more difficult to turn income into capability. As a result, individual variations in these personal and social characteristics will make the conversion of capital and primary goods into freedom to achieve equally variable (Sen, 1992) [40]. Furthermore, given the inter – temporal and inter – contextual variations in the capacity to turn resources into functionings, one must expect, poverty to be an absolute concept in the space of functionings but a relative concept in the space of incomes or commodity bundles or resources in general, as Sen (1983) put it (Subramanian, 2014).

Nussbaum (2006) has provided a well – known list of prescribed capabilities grouped together under the heading 'central human capabilities': life; bodily health; bodily integrity; senses, imagination and thought; emotions; practical reason; affiliation; other species; play; and environmental control. She defends this list by claiming that each of these capabilities is needed for a human life to be 'not so impoverished as to be unworthy of a human being's dignity'. However, Sen (2005) refuses to defend 'one pre – determined canonical list of capabilities, selected by theorists without any general social discussion or public reasoning' on a consistent and explicit basis (Robeyns, 2011) [38].

The 'informalisation' of labour markets is a significant economic shift with significant hidden costs (eg: longer working hours, higher insecurity, lower status, and deteriorating work conditions). In the income / expenditure – based poverty analyses, this is largely concealed from view (Deaton and Dreze, 2002) [13]. In addition to this, according to Radhakrishna, Ravi and Reddy (2010), when income poverty and malnutrition are combined, they can provide a better approximation of the multi – dimensional poverty than any of them individually [36].

In fact, Jayaraj and Subramanian (2010) pointed out a straightforward way to make headcount indices sensitive to an individual's 'range' of deprivation, with the range of deprivation being captured by the number of dimensions in which the person is deprived. Moreover, despite India's technological growth, which has resulted in the emergence of an affluent few, 200 million out of the country's 600 million people lack access to electricity and have never been connected to power (Dreze and Sen 2013), symbolizing the darkness they face on many levels (Gopikumar, Narasimhan, Easwaran, Bunders, and Parasuraman, 2015) [15].

Further, the HDI has always shown how India's rapid increase in income since the early 1990s has not been equitably distributed and fully translated into social development, especially in health and education. Rather, with the economic data warning of tough times ahead and the government lacking both political will and clarity on policy to address education, health and poverty, India will

find it increasingly difficult to even maintain the existing poor level of human development (EPW, 2016).

Furthermore, adding food insecurity and vulnerability slows the pace of poverty reduction. Food security can be improved by enhancing food availability, affordability and access, and stabilizing food supply. Furthermore, risk mapping can help identify and evaluate those who are most vulnerable, as well as what tools are available to respond, in order to cope with growing vulnerability (Asian Development Bank [ADB], 2014) [3].

Gupta et al. (2014) have created an 'Empowerment line'. It is a calculation of a household's minimum economic cost of meeting eight basic needs: food, electricity, housing, drinking water, sanitation, healthcare, education, and social security [16]. It was found out that 56 percent of India's population, i.e. 680 million Indians, (in contrast to 29.5 percent of BPL population as given by the Rangarajan committee) lacks the means to meet these essential needs. After taking into consideration the value of government spending on basic services that already reach the people, India's empowerment line has been estimated to be at Rs. 1,336 per capita per month. According to Kundu (2011), as a top priority, the government should concentrate on households that do not have enough food, are unable to send and keep their children in school, and are unable to manage their illnesses.

In fact, inequality is created by the growth mechanism, which often fails to produce employment, exacerbating the issue of low wages for the majority. Further, Dev and Ravi (2007) conclude that poverty would have declined much faster in the absence of the increases in inequality in the urban areas (Basole and Basu, 2015) [8]. Hence, it is critical to reduce poverty by reducing inequality by balancing the many deprivations that the poor face (Oommen, 2015). However, from an ethical and social standpoint, inequality of opportunity is more important than inequality of outcome (like income). In a country like India, inequalities of opportunity would almost certainly be determined by land distribution, educational attainment, and social identity. Furthermore, inter – generational mobility is more significant than stagnant inequality in the long run (Bardhan, 2013) [7].

Boo (2012) strongly emphasized the role of corruption in making the slum dwellers highly vulnerable to poverty. She also highlighted ill – health and high health care costs resulting into deaths, indebtedness, lack of provision of basic amenities and low quality of public services provided at schools, hospitals, detention home, etc. as the primary causes of poverty and vulnerability [9].

Participatory Research in Asia [PRIA] and Indicus Analytics (2013) incorporate all the settlements that meet the Census of India's definition of slums, as well as those with equivalent or worse living conditions than slums, by referring to it as 'informal settlements'. Instead of focusing only on slums, it is proposed that efforts be directed at all of these informal settlements.

Given that urban GDP accounts for roughly 60% of total GDP, the total contribution of informal settlement dwellers to India's urban GDP was calculated to be 7.53%.

Furthermore, direct asset transfers, inoculation of savings

patterns, inclusion into microfinance groups, and additional training were all part of a program designed to meet the poorest of the poor and lift them out of severe poverty. It increased household consumption by 15% and had positive effects on other indicators of household wealth and well-being, such as assets and emotional well being (Banerjee, Duflo, Chattopadhyay and Shapiro, 2011) [5].

The pavement dwellers appear to have filled a significant niche in the urban economy. However, they have been denied access to the fundamental benefits taken for granted by much of the urban population. It was found that they have a higher than average participation rate in the workforce because more people in the families need to work to make ends meet (Shelter Associates, 1997) [42]. Furthermore, slums and pavement dwellers must coexist in a culture that allows and even relies on a large mass of unskilled and underpaid labour (Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centres [SPARC], 1985) [45]. They do not want to live on the streets, but their circumstances force them to live in deplorable conditions in what amounts to an apology for shelter. Nonetheless, they continue to be viewed as suspects rather than victims (Bapat, 1992) [6]. Moreover, the poorest sections of the population are also the sections that are the weakest in their bargaining capacity. Hence, when faced with the prospect of hunger, they give in to their survival instincts and accept whatever is given to them, fair or not. In such circumstances, the economy offers them no more than their survival (Dandekar and Rath, 1971). Rather, the pavement dwellers must first be assured that they will be able to remain where they are, followed by the provision of basic facilities such as toilets, water, sewerage and drainage (Karn, Shikura and Harada, 2003) [22].

The most economically backward, under-developed and drought-prone districts of each state are the ones from which people are forced to leave to seek a livelihood in the urban areas (SPARC, 1985). So, it is rural poverty, rather than a dream of riches in an urban setting, that drives people to leave their homes (Shelter Associates, 1997). Rather, more than half of modern India's city spaces have been turned to slums as a result of the haphazard and insensitive urban development initiatives. Further, more than the poverty of the slum and pavement dwellers, it is the impossibly gigantic and complex task of uprooting and transplanting them away from the vicinity of their work places (Tiwari, 2010) [50].

Pavement dwellers are a section of the population we may call 'muted'. They are unable to raise their voices, unable to be heard and even to exercise their right to vote. Rather, being victims of social abuse, physical and mental torture has become part of their system (Tribhuvan and Andreassen, 2003) [51]. Further, the government recognizes and tolerates the old settlers. The new immigrants, on the other hand, are often the victims of municipal authorities' house demolitions and evictions (Karn et al., 2003). In the case of relocation and recovery, a participatory, decentralized, and bottom-up solution equates to a high level of self-governance, with limited reliance on the state or municipality (Tiwari, 2010) [32].

Poverty is essentially dynamic in nature. It is basically the result of frequent downward tugs and restricted upward mobility. Furthermore, change constantly reconfigures the pool of the poor, which is simultaneously both ebbing and growing. However, since the flow aspect of poverty has not been given nearly as much attention as has been given to

measuring and explaining its stock, we have remained ignorant about the reasons that underlie the changes observed (Krishna, 2010).

Vulnerability is a forward-looking concept. While estimates of who is poor now are incomplete predictors of who will be poor next year, the latter is essential for public policies aimed at reducing poverty. As a result, the answer is to recognize those who are at the risk of falling into poverty. It's frequently linked to the consequences of 'shocks', such as a drought, a decline in agricultural prices, or a financial meltdown (Haughton and Khandker, 2009).

The notion of vulnerability in the academia was systematically defined by Robert Chambers in the context of poverty studies focusing on communities and livelihoods. He has defined vulnerability as 'exposure to contingencies and stresses and the difficulty, which some communities experience while coping with such contingencies and stresses'. He suggested 'external' and 'internal' aspects of vulnerability, with the former referring to exposure to external shocks and stresses and the latter referring to defencelessness and inability to cope without suffering significant losses (Parmar, Visvanathan, Ramakumar and Juvva, 2009) [31].

The term vulnerability is used to describe the risk of people's abilities and choices being eroded. A person's capacity to reach maximum human growth potential is severely hampered by a lack of timely and ongoing investments in life capabilities. Furthermore, systemic vulnerabilities arise when social and legal institutions, power structures, political spaces, or customs and socio-cultural norms build structural obstacles for certain individuals and groups to exercise their rights and choices. Deep inequality and widespread poverty are common manifestations of these weaknesses. Hence, to reduce these recurrent vulnerabilities, individuals and communities must continue to improve their capabilities. Furthermore, in order for change to be fair and sustainable, vulnerability must be consistently tackled by reforming policies and social norms. The universal provision of basic social services, improving social security, encouraging full employment, and building capacities to plan for and recover from crises are just a few of the policy recommendations made (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2014) [52].

Further, a slum or a cluster of families should be the focal point during the planning and implementation of any poverty alleviation program, and a tool for assessing slum vulnerability using a multi-dimensional approach to urban poverty aids in identifying needy slum clusters. It is critical to identify and map all slums in order to locate non-notified slums, which are much more vulnerable and seldom receive government assistance. Moreover, recognizing and including local vulnerability factors aids in a greater understanding of specific needs and the development of context-specific intervention strategies (Agarwal et al., 2006).

Finally, attention needs to be given not only to the aggregate number of poverty escapes in a country but also to the nature and quality of individual escapes. Moreover, the problem of creation of poverty should also be discussed along with the problem of moving people out of poverty in

order to prevent the growth of future poverty. The communities that are better served by physical and communication infrastructures have experienced proportionately higher numbers of escapes. In addition to this, better education, effective health care and institutions providing reliable career – related information are essential (Krishna, 2010).

The changing demographic, social, economic and environmental characteristics of slum and pavement dwellers should be regular monitored. It would seem to be a pre – requisite to making effective long – range policy, planning and programme decisions (Singh and De Souza, 1980) [44].

In addition to this, given the cognitive overload of the poor, it is important to simplify things for them (Mani et al., 2013; Oommen, 2015).

Finally, until large differentials in earning opportunities between cities and rural areas are reduced, the rural poor will continue to migrate and prick the conscience of the urban elite. Hence, for eradicating urban poverty we have to speed up rural development (Dandekar and Rath, 1971; Jagannathan and Halder, 1989) [19]. In addition to this, the only permanent solution to the problem of urban congestion is rapid and equitable development of rural areas and small towns. The policy makers should take cognizance of further in – migration in their planning exercises – particularly as regards housing development and land use (SPARC, 1985).

Therefore, there are many unresolved and highly debated issues out of which the present study aims to address ‘identification of the poor and vulnerable’ which is the most basic and first step to help the poor and vulnerable to come out of the poverty trap. In addition to this, though the SECC is in the process of identifying the poor and vulnerable households on the basis of their residential, occupational and social vulnerabilities the poor households have to go through various other vulnerabilities. Hence, in addition to these, asset ownership and social networks at village, health care, access to basic services, social security, food security and corruption and harassment can be incorporated as essential dimensions of vulnerability. However, it is important to note that these are very basic dimensions and do not form a complete enough list.

III. CONCLUSION

A detailed critical review and analysis of the various methods suggested, for identifying and estimating the number of poor and vulnerable, by the expert groups and researchers has been presented. The methodology to identify the poor and vulnerable has under gone many important changes over the years. The expert groups and researchers had started with attempting to identify the needy ones by suggesting a poverty line. Gradually, it has been realized that we need to go beyond the poverty line and take into consideration many other non income determinants of poverty like lack of education, malnutrition, capabilities, vulnerability w.r.t various dimensions. All these efforts have enabled designing of a better and comprehensive methodology for identifying the needy. Hence, an attempt can be made to identify the number of vulnerable people in the country w.r.t residential, occupational, social, asset ownership and social networks at village, health care, access to basic services, social security, food security and corruption and harassment dimensions of vulnerability.

Theoretically, it may help in understanding the economics of inequality from a multi – dimensional point of view. Empirically, it is of immense use for identifying the poor and vulnerable. These steps can ultimately lead everyone towards ‘ending poverty in all its forms everywhere’!

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