

Maternal and Child Health of the Urban Poor in India – Implications for Achieving the MDGs

Dr. Siddharth Agarwal, Dr. Aradhana Srivastava, Ms. Monisha Vaid
Urban Health Resource Centre
B-7/122 A, Safdarjung Enclave
New Delhi 110029
aradhana@uhrc.in

siddharth@uhrc.in,
sids62@yahoo.com,
sanjeevk@uhrc.in,
Monisha monisha@uhrc.in

Dr. Aradhana Srivastava
Consultant - Scientific Writing and Programme Research
Urban Health Resource Centre (UHRC)
B-7/122A, Safdarjung Enclave
New Delhi 110029.

Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 requires targeted focus on vulnerable groups, of which urban poor are a key constituent, forming a tenth of India's population and also the fastest growing segment. Slated to increase from the estimated 80.8¹ million in 2005 to 202 million in 2020,² they significantly influence the country's health outcomes. Poor living conditions and sub-optimal access to health and basic services makes them highly vulnerable to health risks.

The objective of the paper is to analyse maternal and child health status of urban poor in India, especially relating to targets set by the MDGs.

National Family Health Survey-3 (2005-06) data has been analyzed to assess the health status of the urban poor vis-à-vis the non-poor and urban overall. NFHS-3 wealth index based on 33 assets and household characteristics has been re-categorized to realistically reflect urban poverty. Lowest quartile in urban areas has been taken as representative of urban poor.

The study shows that maternal and child health indicators among the urban poor are worse than urban averages and far inferior than the non-poor. Key findings include under-five mortality per thousand among the urban poor at 72.7, much higher than the non-poor (41.8) and urban overall (51.9). Similarly, 56% of slum children were born at home as compared to 21.5% among non-poor and 33% among urban overall. Underweight prevalence among urban poor children below 3 years of age (47%) is also significantly worse than the non-poor (26.2%) and urban overall (33%). This analysis suggests that health and nutrition related programmes and schemes need to proactively reach all urban poor in order to effectively achieve MDGs.

¹ National Sample Survey Organization, 2007. Poverty Estimates based on 61st round, 2005-06. New Delhi : NSSO

² UN-HABITAT, 2006, *State of the World's Cities Report 2006/2007*. London: Earthscan.