ABSTRACT

This research study was undertaken to appraise the performance of the various slum improvement programmes launched by both the governmental and non-governmental agencies. The area of study viz; Kanpur district of Uttar Pradesh is among those metropolises of India that have attracted a significant amount of industrial investment in the past. Consequently the city acted as a magnet due to the ample opportunities of livelihood that it provided as a result of its level of industrialization and urbanization.

Numerous immigrants particularly from the nearby adjoining districts started flocking to the city which, in turn, resulted in the creation of slums and squatter settlements on a wide scale. A number of schemes and programmes were introduced by the central Government as well as the state government and local bodies to tackle this seemingly unwieldy scourge. It was in the light of these schemes that the extent of development of the Kanpur slums was studied.

The thesis has been divided into six chapters. Chapter I is introductory in nature which deals with the phenomenon of slums in a conceptual context. This chapter acquaints the reader with the definition, meaning, prominent characteristics and nature of slums. It also delves into the fundamental relationship that exists between urbanization and slums. Though the phenomenon of slum exists both
in the developed and developing countries, the magnitude, nature and the extent of deprivation and wretchedness differs in the two cases.

The living conditions of slum dwellers in developing countries are much worse than those in developed countries. However, both the cases expose the fundamental distortion in the way the processes of industrialization and urbanization are taking place.

Chapter II specifically deals with the Kanpur slums and studies the way they have developed in this metropolis. The contents reveal the geographical distribution of slums in Kanpur, the most pressing problems that the slum dwellers face and the demographic composition of the slum inhabitants. The slum settlements dot the whole landscape of the metropolis with differences only in the degree of concentration. It’s not only the basic physical infra-structural deficiencies that have been responsible for the degraded living conditions of the slum dwellers but absence of adequate opportunities of livelihood also which perpetuates the poverty of the people and makes it difficult for them to come out of this quagmire. The demographic composition reveals the preponderance of traditionally disadvantaged segments of population among the slum dwellers like Scheduled castes, backwards and ex-untouchables.

Chapter III provides an exhaustive description of various slum improvement schemes that have been launched. It clearly
demonstrates the excessive focus that the policy makers and program planners have given to the physical improvement of slum localities while at the same time disregarding their pressing needs of employment and economic enhancement. The chapter discusses the slum development programmes in the historical perspective and concludes that initially the policy makers tendency was the eradication of slum localities through their clearance and demolition. However, later on, this approach was abandoned and a more humane approach was adopted which gave birth to schemes like Urban Community Development, Urban Basic Services and National Slum Development Program. The chapter discusses some landmark departures that took place in terms of entry of Non-Governmental organizations in the field of urban slums development in a vigorous form and the promulgation of the 74th constitutional amendment which aims at decentralization an democratization of urban governance.

Chapter IV explains the methodology adopted for carrying out the field survey and analyses and interprets the data obtained. The perusal of the data reveals the below expected results that have come out through the implementation of the programmes. Though improvements have occurred but still the problems abound. The economic deprivation of the slum dwellers has not been tackled in a significant manner. The magnitude of the problems like lack of physical facilities, livelihood opportunities, educational and socio-
cultural deprivation demands doubling of the efforts and a committed involvement of all stakeholders.

Chapter V studies the problem in the context of social work. What this professional discipline can contribute to help the slum dwellers ameliorate their conditions of living is the basic theme of this chapter.

It has been demonstrated that a social work professional can play a constructive role in stimulating the participation of the beneficiaries in the slum improvement programmes. Lack of participation of the target population in the developmental programmes has come out as one of the impediments in realising the objectives of these programmes.

Lastly, chapter VI contains the conclusions and suggestions. Some of the most striking conclusions include the absence of existence of population and the development agency, lack of adequate physical and infra-structural facilities in the slum localities etc. Agency personnel don’t seem to be interested in ensuring the active involvement of the beneficiaries in the programmes. Even the revolutionary change that is normally supposed to have taken place during the nineties as a result of the 74th amendment regarding urban governance could not inject any significant transformation in the thinking of the officials of the urban local bodies. Suggestions to
improve the effectiveness of the programmes include organization of periodical mobilisation meetings in the slum localities, increasing significantly the target segment’s awareness level about the programmes, constitution of active community based organisations like Project Committees and Self-Help-Groups, initiation of more employment-generating programmes, enhancing the earning potentialities of the slum dwellers etc.

In the conclusion, it can be said that the present study has tried to delve into the causes of success or failure of the programmes introduced for improving the conditions of slum dwellers. The facts that have come to light unfortunately, present a depressing scenario that prevails in the slum localities. However, it is hoped that the modified thinking that has dawned upon the policy planners and program makers in consequent to the landmark changes that are now unfolding in the whole system of urban governance as a result of the 74th amendment Act will go a long way in making the programs more successful and effective.