

Children, disabilities and well-being: The Case of Andheri East in Mumbai, India

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Purpose of Research:

From August 2 – 14 an exploratory action research was conducted focusing on children with disabilities reached by the ASHA community based rehabilitation programme of the Mumbai Cheshire Home . This research explored the different sources of vulnerability faced by these children. It built on the idea that sources of vulnerability do not relate to only one element of individuals' and groups' social identities, such as disability. Instead, it is the complex and often poorly understood relationship of the multiple-identities (related to gender, class, ethnicity/religion, age and disability) that generate barriers for the expansion of wellbeing.



Picture 1: Residents of Andheri East



Picture 2: Card Game

Methods

The research worked closely with the Mumbai Cheshire Home staff, applying a series of qualitative methodologies which aimed at communicating directly with children, as much as possible, to understand how they see themselves and identify the issues that influence their ability to pursue their aspirations. The methodologies developed included transect walks in the slums targeted by the ASHA programme, shadowing of CBR workers during their daily community visits, and semi-structured interviews facilitated by card and drawing exercises. Also a photo-elicitation exercise was conducted, where children were given cameras to take pictures about their daily lives, which were then used to facilitate an interview and given back to them.

Conclusions

The research proved to be a fruitful experience for all involved, as staff members of Cheshire Home mentioned that they learned about methods to engage with children with disabilities, while also appreciating the need to hear as much as possible from them about their wellbeing. This investigation identified the need for further research examining the ways in which the Slum Rehabilitation Scheme is impacting on the wellbeing of children with disabilities living in the area targeted by community based rehabilitation programmes. Such research aims to contribute to the understanding of theoretical debates about the relationship between social identity, wellbeing and social justice, as well as to developing strategic responses to respond to the social identities and urban processes that shape the vulnerability of children with disabilities.



Picture 3: Slums and Rehabilitation Scheme