

The Hindu, Madras, 03 Sep 2007

Study says slum residents live in sub-human conditions

R.Sujatha

86 per cent of the 900 surveyed survive on one meal

HEALTH CARD OF URBAN POOR

CHENNAI A study of 900 people living in Chennai's slums and pavement has found that 86 per cent survive on one meal a day.

Only 13.5 per cent of youngsters aged below 19 and 21 per cent of adults surveyed have two or more meals. This has affected their health adversely. Around 44 per cent of the women are anaemic and 9 per cent of the respondents above 40 years are borderline diabetic cases.

Among the common disorders that the respondents complained of is dryness of eyes, a direct result of anaemia, said Vijay Viswanathan, chairman, Tamil Nadu State Indian Medical Association Research wing that conducted the study.

A total of 326 males and 574 females were studied. The samples were randomly



selected from the north and south Chennai areas. The yearlong study, conducted between June 2006 and May 2007, was carried out by trained health workers, who prepared detailed questionnaires, assessed the living conditions and tested the sample population for hypertension and impaired glucose tolerance besides conducting routine blood tests.

It found that 97.4 per cent of the respondents were immunised, but most of them live in sub-human conditions. Most of those surveyed did

not have access to quality water, drainage and electricity.

Added to this were the low literacy and employment levels. About 75 per cent of adult women and 48.2 per cent of adult men are illiterate and over 46 per cent of men and 65.6 per cent of women unemployed.

Dr. Vijay said, "The IMA formulated a project to study the health issues of urban poor to understand their common health problems." It underlined the need for alternative strategies to stem malnutrition and anaemia.

- Trained healthcare workers conducted a yearlong study.
- The respondents lack access to quality drinking water, drainage and electricity.
- 97.4% of them are immunised.
- Illiteracy and unemployment are high among both men and women.