

**SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HEALTH CONDITIONS OF CHILD
RAGPICKERS IN SILCHAR, ASSAM**

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RAGPICKERS IN SILCHAR, ASSAM**

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**Submitted
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Contents

| | |
|--|---------|
| Chapter. 1 – Introduction and Methodology | 1 - 5 |
| • Introduction | 1 |
| • Statement of the Problem | 1 |
| • Area of Study | 2 |
| • Objectives of the Study | 3 |
| • Pilot Study | 3 |
| • Research Design | 3 |
| • Universe | 3 |
| • Sampling | 4 |
| • Sources of Data Collection | 4 |
| • Tools of Data Collection | 4 |
| • Data collection | 4 |
| • Data Analysis | 4 |
| • Difficulties Faced By the Research Scholar | 5 |
| • Limitation of the Study | 5 |
| Chapter. 2 – Review of Literature | 6 - 16 |
| Chapter. 3 – Data Analysis and Interpretation | 17 - 48 |
| Chapter. 4 – Conclusion and Suggestions | 49 - 52 |
| • Conclusions | 49 |
| • Suggestions | 52 |
| Bibliography | 53 - 55 |
| Annexure – I | |
| • Interview Schedule | 1 – 5 |
| Annexure – II | |
| • Particulars of the Candidate | VI |
| Annexure – III | |
| • Bio – Data | VII |

List of Tables

Section 1. Tables on Personal Profile

| Sl. No. | Title | Page No. |
|---------|--|----------|
| 1.1 | Age-wise Distribution | 17 |
| 1.2 | Sex-wise Distribution | 18 |
| 1.3 | Religion-wise Distribution | 19 |
| 1.4 | Educational Level | 20 |
| 1.5 | Distribution of School Going Respondents | 20 |
| 1.6 | Reasons for not Attending School | 21 |
| 1.7 | Native Places of the Respondents | 22 |
| 1.8 | Areas Where Respondents Are Accessible | 22 |
| 1.9 | Types of family | 23 |
| 1.10 | Family Size | 23 |

Section 11. Tables on Housing

| Sl. No. | Title | Page No. |
|---------|--|----------|
| 2.1 | Accommodation owned by the Respondents | 24 |
| 2.2 | Respondents Living with Other People | 24 |
| 2.2 (A) | Relation of the Person Living With Respondents | 25 |
| 2.3 | Reasons For Leaving Home (for migrants) | 25 |
| 2.3 (A) | Person with Whom Respondents Left Home (for migrants) | 26 |

Section 111. Tables on Working Conditions

| Sl. No. | Title | Page No. |
|---------|---|----------|
| 3.1 | Years of Working | 27 |
| 3.2 | Age of the Child When Started Rag Picking | 27 |
| 3.3 | Reasons for Preferring Rag Picking | 28 |
| 3.4 | Forcing Factors to Join as Rag Picker | 29 |
| 3.5 | Kinds of Rags Pick By the Respondents | 29 |
| 3.6 | Nature Of work | 30 |
| 3.7 | Daily Working Hours | 30 |
| 3.8 | Daily Collection of Rags by child Rag Pickers | 31 |
| 3.9 | Buyers of the Rags | 32 |

Section IV. Tables on Economic Conditions

| Sl. No. | Title | Page No. |
|---------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| 4.1 | Types of House | 32 |
| 4.2 | Housing Condition | 33 |
| 4.3 | Sanitation facility | 34 |
| 4.4 | Electric Facility | 34 |
| 4.5 | Daily Income of the Child Rag pickers | 35 |
| 4.6 | Pattern of Expenditure | 36 |
| 4.7 | Contribution to family/parents | 36 |
| 4.8 | Saving By Child Rag Pickers | 37 |
| 4.9 | Sufficiency of Income for Livelihood | 37 |
| 4.10 | Other Source of Income | 38 |
| 4.11 | Sources of Income | 38 |
| 4.12 | Personal Habits | 39 |

Section V. Tables on Health Conditions

| Sl. No. | Title | Page No. |
|---------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| 5.1 | Sickness/Injury of Child Rag Pickers | 39 |
| 5.1 (A) | Time of Last injury or Sickness | 40 |
| 5.2 | Types of Illness or Injury | 41 |
| 5.3 | Consultation for Illness | 41 |
| 5.4 | Person/Hospital Consulted For Illness | 42 |
| 5.5(A) | Ability to Afford Medication Expenses | 42 |
| 5.5 (B) | Reasons For Not Consultation | 43 |
| 5.6 | Kinds of Disability | 43 |

Section VI. Tables on Social Conditions

| Sl. No. | Title | Page No. |
|---------|---------------------------------------|----------|
| 6.1 | Physical Appearance | 44 |
| 6.2 | Interaction With Community | 44 |
| 6.3 | Relation with Community People | 45 |
| 6.4 | Perception of Social status | 45 |
| 6.5 | Job Satisfaction | 46 |
| 6.6(A) | Response Regarding the State of Abuse | 47 |
| 6.6(B) | Exploiter of Child Rag Pickers | 47 |
| 6.7 | Kind of Abuse | 48 |

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The word rag picking has no precise meaning. However, it has been defined as a refuse occupation, which can support people when they have no other opportunity for earning. More precisely, the rag picker is defined as one ‘who makes his/her livelihood by picking up waste paper, plastic, rags, bottles, tins, metal pieces, discarded and broken containers etc. from road side dustbins, streets garbage heaps and sells them to nearby retailers. Rag picking is one of the most inferior economic activity in the urban informal sector, largely undertaken by *children* belonging to weaker sections of the society, for the survival and for supplementing their family income. Rag picking is the profession mostly dominated by children aging 6 to 15 who do not have any other skill and thus by way of refuse collection contribute to household income or own survival.

According to UNICEF, rag picking is one of the worst forms of child labour, and falls under the street children category (UNICEF, 1997). The concept of street children and the definition of the term *rag pickers* appear to have undergone modifications over time. Initially, rag pickers were considered those children who literally work and live in the street, known as *children on the street*. Today, the denotation of rag pickers has been extended to include those working in the street but living with their families in homes, slums, squats, etc., known as *children of the street*. This study includes both cases, whether they belong to “of the street” or “on the street” category. Rag pickers, also known as 'garbage pickers,' live on the street, in slums or shanty areas, and he/she makes a living from sorting, collecting, and selling waste metal, rags, containers to the local junkyards or garbage collection centers.

In this chapter the research scholar explains about the methodology carried out in the present study. This chapter covers the statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research design, universe and sampling, tools of data collection and limitation of the study.

Statement of the Problem

The present study attempts to identify the socio-economic and health condition of rag picking children of Silchar city of Assam. Under the umbrella of rag pickers socio-economic and health condition, various aspect pertaining to the rag picking pattern will be identify for exploration and discussion with justification to their conditions in which they work. Their physical outlook, socio-economic characteristics, health conditions, forcing factors for taking up this occupation, and policies and programmes of governmental and non-governmental agencies are the focus area of the present study.

Children are the most valuable asset of human kind and any nation and mankind owes to the child the best it has to give. fundamental rights and the directive principles of the state policy discussed in the constitution of India prohibit employment of children below 14 years and speak about the education of the children, protection from abuse, exploitation, neglect and for providing just and humane conditions. Rag-picking is the other important area where a large number of children are found to be working who suffer from different kinds of behavioral problems, health hazards and skin diseases. To have a need-based corrective and rehabilitative strategy for the children engaged in rag-picking and sale, it is necessary to study the problem and come out with corrective and welfare programmes suitable to the children in the area of study.

Child labour is a big social problem in India and children in rag picking is also considered as a worst form of child labour, the study has significance because in Silchar no study had been made on this particular area, so it can be a scope for social worker to take it as a research problem for the study. And the outcomes of the present study will benefit the policy framers, planners and social worker at the various levels. The policy framers at the state and national level will be able to frame the appropriate policies and programmes for addressing the problems of child rag pickers.

Area of Study

The research scholar conducted the study on Socio-economic and Health Conditions of Child Rag pickers in Silchar, Assam. The study includes the following localities of Silchar municipality where the child rag pickers are more accessible these are Tarapur, Kalibari Chor, Meherpur, Fatak Bajar, Malogram and Ram Nagar.

Silchar is the second largest city in the state of Assam. The municipal area of Silchar comprises 15.75 sq km. According to 2001 India census, Silchar had a population of 144,003. But presently, it is considered that the population has actually crossed the 500,000 mark due to the constant increase in the city's population over the last 8 and 9 years, as well as increase the municipal area. 'According to 2001 census it was found that 3,51,416 working children in Assam in the age group 5-14 years' (*social welfare May, 2009*). In silchar city it is estimated that there are more than 300 child rag pickers and majority of them are boys. Many children begin working as rag pickers at the young age of five or six years. In Silchar, the majority of the rag pickers are between 7 and 12 years old. Most of them never attend school and don't have any formal education. Their families are generally in need of extra incomes from their children. There are two categories of child rag pickers: the street pickers, who collect garbage from street bins or residential areas, and dump pickers who work on dumping grounds.

Objectives of the Study

Following are the objectives of the study

1. To highlight the socio-economic background of children engaged in rag picking in Silchar.
2. To identify the health condition of children engaged in rag picking in Silchar.
3. To find out the factors forcing them to go into this occupation.
4. To examine the living and the working conditions of children in rag picking.
5. To suggest measures to improve the conditions of the children in rag-picking work.

Pilot Study

In order to know the feasibility of conducting the study, the research scholar visited few areas of Silchar city where the child rag pickers are more visible.

Research Design

Descriptive design is used to study the Socio-economic and Health Conditions of Child Rag Pickers in Silchar, Assam.

Universe

Whole Silchar town is selected as a universe for the present study. Some of the specific areas selected for collecting the respondents these are Tarapur, Kalibari Chor, Meherpur, Fatak Bajar, Malogram and Ram Nagar. Sample size of 150 is purposively selected for the study.

Sampling

Research scholar selects the purposive sampling method to collect the respondents for the present study and the sample size is 150.

Sources of Data

The research scholar utilized both primary and secondary data. The primary sources of data are the child rag pickers respondents of Silchar, Assam. Data collected through visiting different localities of Silchar where child rag pickers are accessible and working. While the secondary sources of data are collected from reports published by government and NGOs, books, news papers, journals and magazines.

Tools of Data Collection

A semi-structured interview schedule is used for collection of data. The interview schedule had broad aspects such as personal profile, socio-economic, and health aspects of child rag pickers.

Data collection

The data was collected from the field during the month of August to September 2010. The data was collected from the respondents in their work spot and from selling points.

Data Analysis

After the data collection work was over, the schedules loaded with the data were duly checked and some of the information written here and there on the schedule was filled up against appropriate questions so that such information could be used for analysis. A code book comprising different numbers allotted for different responses was developed in order to transfer all the data on a spread-sheet and SPSS software in computer and to analyse the data in different forms in the light of objectives set for this study. Statistical tools i.e., Chi-square test, percentage, and cumulative percentage

were used for analyzing the data wherever it is useful and it is represented through various diagrams like, pie chart, and others. After analysis and tabulation of data in different tabular forms, findings were gathered out of it, having duly discussed, wherever needed.

Difficulties Faced By the Research Scholar

1. They are not able to say their age/place of birth and other details properly.
2. Researcher founded few children who even not able to say when they started to work as rag pickers, their replies are varying on perusing.
3. Behavior of the ragpickers is found to be very bad, their languages are slang and they don't want to reply.
4. Teasing by adult rag pickers and rag buyers is very common while working with them.

Limitation of the Study

The present study is limited to rag-picking children living in Silchar, Assam. As per its limit in size and area, obviously, it cannot be generalized to all the areas of children in this occupation. Within the short period of time it was difficult to cover all area of Silchar city where the child rag pickers are available. Even though the research is willing to select the child rag pickers by adopting census sampling method due to the mobility of the child rag pickers , the research scholar adopts purposive sampling method to select the respondents. For assessing the impact of child rag pickers in the society attempt shall be made to overcome the problem of non availability of ready data research scholar conducted field survey. But prevailing social tension was an obvious limit to the endeavor in the matter of field study. Analyzing of collected data by using statistical tools may not show the perfect picture of socio-economic condition of child rag pickers in Silchar, Assam.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In urban centers, a large number of labourer's including child labour work and earn their livelihood. The child ragpickers constitute a sizeable section of child labour. While making preliminary survey and library work, research scholar came across a few books and articles on this area and related topics. Some of the important works are reviewed as follows:

A study on Garbage-combers of Delhi: Aspects of Deprivation (Bikramaditya Kumar Choudhary, 2002) waste-picking as a process strews the waste around bins and exposes the garbage-combers to direct contact with the decaying materials. In the process, they expose their own individual health to hazardous conditions, and thus play an important role in protecting the environment for others. Notwithstanding this danger, the role of the waste picker has been institutionally supported or recognized by the municipal body in Delhi. Except for a few scattered individual studies, there are no records that reflect the exact number of people engaged in this profession in metropolises (*Baud, 2003*). Government records do not show the existence of garbage-combers in the cities, which makes large-scale generalized studies of the group up more difficult.

It is also found that different types of garbage-combers, who come directly in contact of waste, are known as the first owners of the waste. They collect the reusable or recyclable waste from various places without paying anything except their labour power. They collect things that have market value like paper, broken-glass, bottle-caps, polythene and other plastic, small nuts and bolts, scrap metal, etc.

Waste-picking has been identified as a new phenomenon in the city, where the high cost of raw material has brought forward a spontaneous demand for recycling of waste. Garbage-combers are known by different names like waste-pickers, rag-pickers, scavengers, etc., at different places. In Delhi, they are commonly known as 'khatte-wala', that is, those who work in the khatta, which is local term for a pit. A study in late 1980s estimated the number of garbage-combers as one lakh in Delhi (*Macqueen. 1987*).

Waste-picking in fact grows in these cities despite numerous problems for the actors in this work sector. The problems vary for different age-group and some of the problems are specific to the location of waste-picking. The demographic profile and

socio-economic conditions of garbage-combers is related with their operation. On the basis of their work place, garbage-combers have been categorized into the following types.

These garbage-combers are mainly involved in the waste picking in municipal dumps or other community bins that are located either on the road side or in residential colonies. They usually walk along the railway line or roadside in search of waste. The number of children engaged in this activity is considerably high, as neither the residential associations nor local residents interrupt them.

The proportion of women in this category is more than that of men, because the latter presume that residential colonies yield only a meager amount of recyclable waste. Presence of the elderly is most common among street pickers. Children are rare in the street of residential colonies because they are sometimes accused of theft and other misdoing.

The presence of entire families is most common feature of this type. Mainly women and children pick waste in the market and male members of the family work at the garbage dump and later in the day help transport the collected waste. The women and children involved in waste-picking supplement the insufficient income brought in by the male members. Children are allowed by shopkeepers to pick in these places as they often help in cleaning the shops or the frontage of shops.

An analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of a group often helps to determine issues in this type of work. Socio-economic circumstances of a family determine the demographic characteristics like migration and social characteristics that include fate of siblings, their health status, possible nutrition levels, probability of enrolment in school and various other factors. Earlier studies have shown the impact of the prevailing low level of living on the garbage-combers and their family's economy in the metro cities of Third World countries. Different parameters of the socio-economic dimension directly or indirectly determine the process of development of garbage-combers.

Children between 5-9 years constitute nearly 10% of the total garbage-combers in Delhi and usually work with their family especially the female members. The grown-up children, that are between 10-14 years, instead of going to the school, are also

engaged in waste picking for the sake of survival. Run-way children are predominant in this group.

A situational analysis of neglected children in Bombay (Lima. D, 1989) shows that majority of street children did not get education, those who got opportunity to attend the school dropped out without even completing the primary stage. These children are not fresh migrants. A Bombay study reports that only 29.6 percent children migrated within three years. For those who came by themselves, the main motivation was to support their impoverished families at home. Others who left their homes are those who experienced intolerable poverty, neglect, Break-up of the family due to death or desertion, harsh working and living conditions and malnutrition. These children are primarily engaged in informal sector which do not require technical skills, training and money. One of the main occupations in which they are engaged is rag picking. Others are carrying loads as casual labour vending goods, shoe-shining, cleaning of vehicles and other similar types of jobs. Some of these children are engaged in more than one work during the same day. Their work in some cases changes from one season to another. The total working hours which they spend have wide fluctuations. In some occupations they work only in the early morning and late evening, e.g., selling of newspapers, flowers, balloons, etc. Further it has seen that most of the children work for long hours (8-10 hours). Their earnings are between Rs. 10 and 15 per day, but in case of rag picking and scrap material collection brings higher daily earnings (Rs 30 to Rs 50). The earnings of these children's, parents who are unskilled or who are self-employed are generally low.

In fact, these neglected children are deprived of getting bathing and toilet facilities and are forced to live in insanitary and unhygienic surroundings leading to various health hazards. The nutritional and health status of these children is poor because of inadequacy of food and limited opportunity for medical care. Moreover, these children are experiencing physical abuse, extortion by older children, adults, and local dadas. Rounding up by police on suspicion of being involved in thefts is another hazard when they not only land up in a lock-up, but also lose their money. Some occupations like rag picking have hazards arising out of getting hurt from sharp pieces of metal and glass and the risks of unhygienic and insanitary conditions and they also run the risks of sexual abuse. After earning and having the association of children

who are free from parental control, they develop habits of smoking and gambling at a very young age.

A study on rag-picking children in Delhi (NIPCCD, 1986) found that 90 percent children came from nuclear families. A large number, i.e., 90 percent lived in houses owned by them. Every three out of four lived in katcha houses with minimum civic amenities. These respondents were migrants from the state of Haryana, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. Similarly, 37.7 percent attended school. Out of them, 40.7 percent dropped out before completing their primary education. They contributed to the extent of 31.24 percent of the monthly income of the families. The circumstances which forced them to undertake this work were poverty, non-availability of suitable jobs for children and family occupation etc. according to parent 90 percent of the child-rag pickers took up this work willingly. The average frequency of cuts and injuries reported by parents and their children was six times more than average which occurs in a month. Every fourth parent/guardian did not report about any change in the habits and behavior of the children engaged in rag-picking.

Another study on living conditions of rag-picking children in Delhi (Bhatia, Minakshi (1988-89) found that of the children , 67.11 percent were from Tamil speaking areas, 27 percent from Hindi speaking areas whereas 39 percent from Rajasthan. Similarly, 9.2 percent boys and 66.67 percent girls were from nuclear family. Fifty-sixty percent felt their work as tiresome 27 percent did not feel so. Visual difficulty was found in the respondents between 5-10 years and in 11-15 years. 70 percent of the respondents did not use oil. 49 percent took bath on alternate days and the rest weekly and did not use soap. Similarly, 60 percent showed interests in study, 65 percent were not happy with work they took up. 70 percent of boys and 50 percent girls did not get pocket money.

A dissertation on situational analysis of girl rag-pickers in Delhi (Aggarwal, Ritu, 1989) found that the daily earning of rag-pickers are Rs. 4-6. On an average six to eight members had been found in the families of rag-picking children. They spend their leisure time watching T.V. and remaining in the rooms. Girls are allowed to go for collection of rags along either with their mother or father or elder brother and they work for three to four hours in a day.

Another study on Child waste pickers in India: the occupation and its health risks (Caroline Hunt, 1996) waste pickers make a living by selling materials they collect from dumpsites, bins and from along roadsides. Typically, this waste comes from domestic, industrial and commercial sources. Most of the indicators for home environment, nutritional status, health behavior and socio-economic status showed that the waste pickers came from poorer families than the other children. For instance, they were more likely to live in overcrowded, poorly ventilated huts made of dried vegetation (rather than clay). They were more likely to open ground for defecation than use public or private latrines. They are having more health problems. They were more likely to be malnourished. They were less likely to attend formal school

Most studies report that waste pickers constitute disadvantaged and vulnerable segments of the population. Developing country's waste pickers face multiple hazards and problems, Due to their daily contact with garbage. Waste picker are usually associated with dirt, disease, squalor, and perceived as a nuisance, a symbol of backwardness, and even as criminals. They survive in a hostile physical and social environment. Many most waste pickers like their occupation because of the money they earn, and the fact that they do not have a boss, and because they have a high degree of flexibility in their working hours. An important percentage of waste pickers would be unable to find a job in the formal sector, due to their low educational level, their young or advanced age- many children and older individuals survive by waste picking (*Medina, 2007*).

A study on Working Patterns of Child Rag Pickers: Their Problems and possible interventions (Mohd. Rafiuddin Nayyar, 2007) finding of the study was street children are more vulnerable to exploitation than other groups of children. They are prone to different kinds of exploitations and they are easily exploited and abused by a variety of individuals with whom they interact on the streets. Prominent among those are waste buyer, adult rag pickers, police, local dadas, commercial sex workers and to some extent women rag pickers. The study shows that the majority of street children are exploited economically, and more than one-fourth of the street children (28 percent) confirmed being physically exploited. The frequency of economic exploitation is much larger and needs more attention, the other forms of exploitation like physical and sexual cannot be neglected. It is particularly very difficult to collect data regarding sexual exploitation. There might be more incidents of sexual

harassment, but not all children dare to reveal it. The very fact is that sexual exploitation forms 12 percent need to be taken seriously.

A study on Reduction of Child Labour in the Waste Picking Sector, India: Review and Findings of an Evaluative Field Study in Bangalore and Kolkata (Anselm Rosario, 2004) waste picking is a class, caste and gender based occupation with women and children forming the majority. Large numbers of women in waste picking are from single parent families without any financial support from the male who have deserted them. Heavily in debt, they are not integrated into formal financial systems and continuously get trapped into a vicious cycle of debt and more debt. Circumstances force them to have many children who start early the occupation of waste picking invariably accompanying their mother on her daily picking activities. Waste pickers (both adults and children) are the foot soldiers of the solid waste management scenario in India. They work and live in unhygienic conditions with no access to health, education and other developmental support mechanisms for survival. Waste picking children apart from facing a hazardous occupation, frequently suffer from diarrhea, lack of sleep, dehydration, scabies, typhoid and malaria. And 12,000 rag pickers estimated in Bangalore.

In India, rag pickers are often dalits, or 'untouchables', not simply the lowest in the caste system but essentially outside it. Because of their caste, they are seen as being the lowest of the low, relegated to dirty work such as rag picking. The daily contact with garbage and sometimes even human excreta reinforces their 'untouchable' status. (*cf. Fonseca, 1994*). A UNESCO report shows that this attitude has even been adopted by rag pickers themselves. 'Comparative research and experiences have shown that the rag pickers consider themselves as a sort of social category associated with "sub-human characteristics"'. (*UNESCO, 2001*).

In Delhi, it is found that 24% of the waste pickers are children. A possible reason could be that most child waste pickers take up waste picking as a family occupation and collect waste with their parents. Most waste pickers are migrants from rural India. Unemployment and poverty are two prime reasons for their migration into urban setups. Child waste pickers can earn Rs 10-15 when he is assisting his parents. If he is working independently he earns Rs 20-30 as he can devote more time to his activity (*Solid Waste Management in Delhi- A Social Vulnerability study, Papiya Sarkar,*

2003). Kolkata child rag picker earns 30-40% of the family income. (*ILO report 2004*).

Many waste pickers belong to vulnerable groups: recent migrants, the unemployed, the disabled, women, children, and the elderly. They survive in a hostile social environment, sometimes rejected by society. They work on the streets and in open dumps, where daily contact with all kinds of waste—including hazardous and medical waste—poses risks to their health. Children are especially vulnerable. Children often in waste picking are contributing to the family income or to survive on their own. Waste picking, particularly at open dumps, is among the worst form of child labour. It can damage children's health and stunt their development (*Cointreau, 2006*).

Kolkata estimates 100,000 rag pickers. A substantial number of rag pickers are women and children. They usually live in urban slums or on city pavements in poor unhygienic conditions. They rarely use gloves, masks or other protective gear. Most wear sandals, usually retrieved from the waste, that expose a substantial part of their feet to garbage (*M.R Ray, 2009*). Medina, himself states the estimate that up to 2% of the population of the developing countries survives through informal waste-recovery activities. According to the *World Health Report (1995)*, 15% of children aged 10-14 years old were working in Asia and India has the largest percentage of child laborers in the world. According to the *UNICEF*, at least 14% of children aged 5 to 14 years of age are estimated to be involved in child labour in India. Estimates of the total number of rag pickers in the country are not easily available. However, some estimates, city wise have been recorded in some studies. In Ahmedabad city alone there are an estimated 30,000 rag pickers – a large proportion of them are women and children. In the state of Gujarat overall there are estimated to be over 100,000 rag pickers. Another study of Delhi estimates that the numbers of rag pickers in Delhi alone would be approximately 300,000. The total population of rag collectors in Pune is estimated to be 6,000 (*Kamala Sankaran, Shalini Sinha and Roopa Madhav*). There are more than 300,000 rag pickers in Mumbai of which 120,000 are kids below the age of 14. They come from different parts of the country, because the rural economy has not been able to sustain them. If they have no other support system, then they invariably end up doing this work. (*Parasher Baruah November 15, 2009*). The number of child labourers is increasing day by day in the country. The main reason behind this is poverty. Many of them are rag pickers who live on the footpaths,

spending their lives collecting and selling scrap and other junk. These rag pickers are mostly orphans who have failed in their attempts to earn their livelihood in a better way and so have little choice. It is also true that many children from families living below the poverty line are forced by their parents to take up such “jobs” to augment their meager incomes (*Papiya Chakraborty, 2006*).

Recycling takes the form of scavenging; the primary work which is done by poor and socially disadvantaged individuals who are known as waste/ rag pickers. Women of child-bearing age and children often comprise the majority of waste pickers in developing countries. And the number of people involved in this work is increasing in Asian cities (*Furedy, 1990*). It was found that waste picking to be the fourth largest occupation for street children in Delhi. (*National Labour Institute (NLI) in 1997-1998*). In many, though certainly not all, developing countries, scavengers have a different socio-cultural background than the majority of the population. It can be state that their socio-economic status is usually very low; the general population as well as the authorities often view and treat them as ‘part of the rubbish they work with’ (*Asmare, 1998*).

A report on women and child workers (K.D. Gangrade and J.A Gathia 1983) studies indicate that these children come from families earning less than Rs. 200 per month. Along with such self employed children are the rag-pickers of Delhi. The rate fixed for rags are 25 paise a kilo of waste paper, Rs. 2 for a kg. Of plastic waste Rs. 1 for a kg of iron pieces. These rates are reported to be much lower in other places. The children working in the garbage heaps with bare feet often get cuts by glass pieces and rest suffer from skin diseases and risk tetanus infections. The child labour is essentially a problem of poor and destitute families, where parents cannot afford education of their children.

Almost all street children of Kolkata do not have access to shelter in contrast with Chennai, Mumbai and Bangalore where almost 43 percent, 38 percent and 80 percent of street children respectively, have access to covered shelter at night (*CINI-IPER Report, 1994 and IPER Report, 1992*). There are thousands of children who live and work in the city streets of India. According to a study conducted among the street children in the city of Chennai, about 90 percent of them live with their patents in the streets (*National Labour Institution - 1992*). Contrary to the general conception that many street children are delinquents; the study revealed that only 6.6 percent of total

sample had served time in juvenile homes or correctional institutions. Studies in a few other Indian cities showed that the majority of the street children were doing rag picking for their living. Usually these children are unable to submit references or pay deposits to their employers to obtain any work (*Walolkar, 2003*).

Majority of the street children are working children. Compelled by their basic need to support themselves and often their families, these children take up many different type of work ranging from casual rag pickers to regular helpers in garages or roadside dhobis, tea stalls or shops. Many children are forced to spend most of the time in the street because of the nature of the work undertaken by them. The child who works as a helper at a tea stall start working as early as 5 a.m. and by the time he ends up it is almost midnight. With this routine of 30 days a month they have no opportunity for doing anything else, not even to spend a few hours for themselves. With the increase in the number of automobiles and two-wheelers in the city, there has also been a sharp proliferation of workshop for their repair and maintenance. To a large extent these workshops are unlicensed and do not have a regular place of work. So they run their trade on the open streets. These makeshift garages are thriving swiftly in city particularly in residential as well as where transport services operate. Almost all these workshops have at least two to three child workers who work from eight in the morning till the evening, spending 9-10 hours on the road, thus remaining exposed to obvious hazards of the street along with other material hazards that naturally go with such work.

Rag picking is another major occupation, which is taken up by many children living in the street because it does not require an employer nor any capital to run it. Many children living in sheltered houses turn into street children because of these profession taken up by them (*Sibnath Deb, 2006*). Although an exact estimate of the number of street children in India is not available, a situation analysis of street children conducted in seven estimated that there are nearly 100,000 street children in Delhi including children who live with their families on the street and are engaged in rag picking, vending etc., (*Pinto, and Nangia, 1988*). NGO activists say there are at least 50 girls – the youngest is a six year old- and more than double that number of boys who hang about the railway station, the busiest in the Indian capital. They scavenge for food in the bins on the platforms and trawl the tracks for discarded plastic for recycling. The girls are much fewer, only because most are taken away by touts and sold in brothels. Those who survive on the platform, provide sex to the gangs of boys

and men on the station in return for protection from the police and touts (*Patro, 1997*). In India though there are several research studies and statistics available on working children, information, which may contribute towards the understanding of situations and problems of working children is very limited. While some statistics place the national figure at a lakh, other studies indicate that there are one-lakh street children in Delhi alone (Nangia, 1988). In Chennai, there are about 27,000 street children (*Bosco Institute of Social Work, 1989*). It has also been estimated that there are approximately 100,000 street children in Kolkata. On the streets of Kolkata there are 50,000 children who have run away from homes (*Bose, 1992*). Street children run away from destitute or cruel homes and survive on the street in uncertainty, poverty and fear of abuses (*Teuns, 1990*).

Data reveal that more than one million children in Calcutta Metropolitan Area live in slums, of whom about half of a million are critically affected by poverty, malnutrition, lack of shelter and sanitation. Whatever be the actual number of street children in Kolkata, their extreme deprivation and living and living conditions make them a highly visible group calling for immediate attention of policy makers and the city as a whole. The majority of the street children in Kolkata are migrants, whereas in Chennai and Mumbai, more than 77 percent are non-migrants. More than 90 percent of the children in Kolkata migrated due to economic reasons (*CINI-IPER Report, 1994 and IPER Report, 1992*). Economic reasons for migration predominate in the other cities as well.

Street children mostly work as petty hawkers, shoeshine boys, scavengers of raw material or even thieves and street prostitution. By the nature of their work and lives, they are on their own, largely unprotected by adults, and become vulnerable to many dangers and abuses. If a street child cannot live on earnings from working or begging, then he or she turns to other means of survival like thefts, acts of violence, prostitution and drug peddling and other vices (*Teuns, 1990 and Thilagaraj & Priyamvadha, 2000*).

Stealing food from the roadside shops is a common act indulged in by many young children living on the streets. They often consider it as a sign of being 'smart' under the influence of the peer groups to establish their macho image. As a result, sometimes the people badly and/or mercilessly punish them when they are caught. In many instances, child street workers and their families can be thought of as winners, losers, and survivors. Street work cannot be evaluated every time in terms of a

simplistic dichotomy of 'good' or 'bad' in terms of its effects on children and families. In cases, where street life involvement brings positive benefits to the child and the family, these children can be regarded as winners. For some children, participation in street life brings negative results. These may be due to environment factors. Many children are unable to develop a street sense because their ability to deal with the demands of the busy street environment, particularly the traffic is not adequate. As an increasing number of children face severe economic hardship, more and more children become child labourers in whatever occupations are available, including a practice that the Indian government describes as, 'decadent social practices like scavenging...' in the forms of rag picking, and increasing criminal activity. The child on the streets must start working as soon as possible, or else perish. Guided by the peers and friends, the drifts into unorganized work like shining shoes, rag picking, massage work, loading and unloading, or doing odd jobs for a contractor in road repairs, construction, catering, in car garages. Some of the children start to work when they are only 5-6 years of age, and by the time they are 20 they are burnt out they are physically, mentally and emotionally exhausted so that they are no longer able to work and are doomed to unemployment even in cases when employment is available. The vicious cycle restarts when they want their children to work for them (*Sibnath Deb, 2006*).

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPERTATION

In this chapter the researcher analyses socio-economic and health conditions of child rag pickers in Silchar, Assam.

Section -I - Personal Profile

Table: 1.1
Age-wise Distribution

| Age | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi- square Value |
|------------------------|---|------------|-------------------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| 4Years - 6 Years | 11 | 7.3 | 37.5 | 25 | 31.867 |
| 7 Years - 9 Years | 37 | 24.7 | 37.5 | 25 | |
| 10 Years - 12 Years | 59 | 39.3 | 37.5 | 25 | |
| 13 Years - 15 Years | 43 | 28.7 | 37.5 | 25 | |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 150 | 100 | |

Df = 3

Significance at 0.0001level

Table 1.1 reveals that the Chi-square value of 31.867 at $df = 3$ exceeds the table value at 0.01level. It reveals that the distribution of responses to rag picking children turns out to be significantly different from equality. Hence, there is a clear trend of significant difference between different age group.

Further, it is clear from the table presented above that the age of child rag pickers exists between 4 - 15 years. By and large, 11 children have been found bellow 6 years start rag picking work on regular basis. The largest numbers of children have been found in this occupation is between 10-12 years i.e., 39.3 percent showed their participation. The second largest age group of these children comes between 13 -15 years, wherein 28.7 percent child rag pickers have shown their participation. A sizeable numbers of children have been found in the age group of 7-9, years i.e., 24.7 percent, showed their participation in this occupation.

It is significantly noted that child started rag picking at the tender age of four.

Table: 1.2
Sex-wise Distribution of Child Rag Pickers

| Sex | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi- square Value |
|--------------|---|-------------------|--|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Male | 133 | 88.7 | 75 | 50 | 89.707 |
| Female | 17 | 11.3 | 75 | 50 | |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 150 | 100 | |

Df = 1

Significance at 0.0001level

Table 1.2 reveals that the calculated value of the Chi-square for sex is 89.707 at df = 1 exceeds the table value at 0.01 level. It reveals that the distribution of responses to rag picking turned out to be significantly different from equality. Hence there is a clear trend of significant difference on rag picking between male and female.

Further it shows that the participation of male child rag pickers is 88.7 of male, whereas female child rag pickers participation is just 11.3 percent. Female child involvement in this work is very less may be because of high level of risk involvement.

Whereas secondary data shows that 51% of male and 49% of female constitutes in Silchar.

Hence it can conclude that except few all of the child rag pickers are male.

Table: 1.3

Religion wise Distribution of Child Rag pickers

| Religion | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi- square Value |
|-----------------|---|------------|-------------------------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Hindu | 87 | 58 | 50 | 33.4 | 73.560 |
| Muslim | 60 | 40 | 50 | 33.3 | |
| Christian | 3 | 2 | 50 | 33.3 | |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 150 | 100 | |

Df = 2

Significance at 0.0001 level

Table 1.3 shows that the calculated values of Chi-square for religion is 73.560 at df = 2 exceeds the table value at 0.01 level. It reveals that the distribution of responses to rag picking turned out to be significantly different from equality. Hence, there is a clear trend of significant difference on rag picking among religious group.

The table reveals that participation of children in rag picking is mainly from three religions; i.e., Hindu, Muslim and Christian. The participation of children belonging to Hindu religion is 58 percent i.e., 87 children whereas participation of Muslim children is 40 percent i.e., 60 children and participation of Christian children is just 2 percent only. This indicates that the rag picking by the children is mainly popular among Hindu families. The main religion is found in Silchar that is Hindu and Muslim.

Table: 1.4
Educational qualification of Child Rag Pickers

| Literacy | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi- square Value |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|--|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Illiterate | 105 | 70 | 75 | 50 | 24 |
| Literate | 45 | 30 | 75 | 50 | |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 150 | 100 | |

Df = 1

Significance at 0.0001 level

Table 1.4 shows that the calculated values of the Chi-square for literacy are 24 at df = 1 exceeds the table value at 0.01 level. It reveals that the distribution of responses to rag picking turned out to be significantly different from equality. Hence, there is clear trend of significant difference on rag picking between the children on aspects of their literacy.

Generally, the child rag pickers came from the families that are very backward in respect of education.

From the above data presented in the table it is clear that 70 percent of child rag pickers are found to be illiterate that is 105 children, these children have been deprived of education which is one of their important right. Only 30 percent have been found just literate.

Table: 1.5
Distribution of School Going Child Rag Pickers

| Response | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi- square Value |
|-----------------|---|-------------------|--|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Yes | 2 | 1.3 | 75 | 50 | 142.107 |
| No | 148 | 98.7 | 75 | 50 | |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 150 | 100 | |

Df = 1

Significance at 0.0001 level

Table 1.5 shows that the calculated values of the Chi-square for literacy are 142.107 at $df = 1$ exceeds the table value at 0.01 level. It reveals that the distribution of responses to rag picking turned out to be significantly different from equality. Hence, there is clear trend of significant difference on rag picking between the children on aspects of their attending school.

The Analysis shows that about 98.7 percent child rag pickers that is 148 children are not attending the school out of 150 sample whereas the children attending school is just 1.3 percent i.e., only 2 children have been found to attending the school. And it was observed that the children found to currently attending the school are basically occasional rag pickers and their condition is little better than others.

It can be concluded that except few all of the child rag pickers are not attending school.

Table: 1.6
Reasons for not Attending School:

| Reasons for not attending school | N | % |
|---|------------|------------|
| Can't afford | 88 | 59.6 |
| Parents did not send | 6 | 4 |
| Others (specify) | 54 | 36.4 |
| Total | 148 | 100 |

Table 1.6 shows that the majority of the child rag pickers they couldn't attend the school because of extreme poverty or very low family income which is 59.6%. A sizable percent of child rag pickers are not able to attend school due to their family migration, and they have to earn their livelihood by themselves that is 36.4 percent. Only a small percentage of them that is 4% reported that their parents are not sending them to school and prefer they should work to contribute in family income.

Table: 1.7
Native Place of the Respondents

| Native Place | N | % |
|---------------------|------------|------------|
| Silchar | 84 | 56 |
| Outside silchar | 66 | 44 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

Table 1.7 shows that majority of the rag picker children are from silchar that is 56 percent. And a sizable 44 percent are migrated from other districts namely Hailakandi and Karimganj as well as subdivisions of cachar districts.

Table: 1.8
Areas where Respondents Are Accessible

| Place/Area | N | % |
|-------------------|------------|----------|
| Meherpur | 35 | 23.3 |
| Malogram | 10 | 6.7 |
| Kali Bari Chor | 30 | 20 |
| Ghungur | 17 | 11.3 |
| Fatak Bazar | 14 | 9.4 |
| Tarappur | 35 | 23.3 |
| Any other place | 9 | 6 |
| Total | 150 | |

Table 1.8 shows that maximum concentration is found in three places, namely, Meherpur, Tarapur, and kalibarichor these 23.3, 23.4 and 20 percent respectively. kalibarichor is known as the major slums of Silchar. In Gungur, Malugram and Fatak bazar concentration is little less that is 17, 10 and 14 percent respectively. Few rag pickers children did not have any fixed place of staying and they used to stay at

various places like railway station, bus stop or under construction buildings that is only 6 percent of the total sample and basically they are street children.

Table: 1.9
Types of family

| Types of Family | N | % |
|------------------------|------------|------------|
| Nuclear | 141 | 94 |
| Alone | 9 | 6 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

Table 1.9 present that a vast majority of them are belonging to nuclear family that is 94 percent either with single parents or both. Few families are with grandparents also. And a small percent were found that they are living alone that is 6 percent.

Table: 1.10
Family Size

| Family Size/particulars | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi-square Value |
|--------------------------------|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 to 3 | 30 | 21.7 | 50 | 33.3 | 48 |
| 4 to 6 | 90 | 63.3 | 50 | 33.4 | |
| 7 to 9 | 21 | 14 | 50 | 33.3 | |
| Total | 141 | 100 | 150 | 100 | |

Df = 2

Significance at 0.0001 level

Table 1.10 shows that the calculated values of Chi-square for religion are 48 at df = 2 exceeds the table value at 0.01 level. It reveals that the distribution of responses to rag picking turned out to be significantly different from equality. Hence, there is a clear trend of significant difference on rag picking among family size.

Table 1.10 also shows that a vast majority that is 63.3 percent of children having 4 to 6 family members and a sizeable percent that is 21.7 percent having 3 or less than 3

family members. And a small percent of them are having more than 7 family members that is 14 percent.

Section - II - General Information

Table: 2.1

Accommodation owned by the Respondents

| Types of Accommodation | N | % |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Own home | 27 | 18 |
| Rented home | 89 | 59.3 |
| No fixed place | 9 | 6 |
| Other place | 25 | 16.7 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

Table 2.1 shows that majority of them are staying in rented home that is 59.3 percent. A sizable percent of them are staying in their own home that is 18 percent and another small percent of them are staying such places which includes destitute home, established tent on Govt land, near railway tracks and river bank as a temporary arrangement that is 16.7%. And a very small percent of them had been found as street children that are 6%, they didn't have any fixed place of staying.

(Only for street children)

Table: 2.2

Respondents Living with Other People

| living with others | N | % |
|---------------------------|----------|------------|
| Yes | 9 | 100 |
| No | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 9 | 100 |

Table 2.2 present that all of the street children are staying with others adult People, such as strangers, beggars are generally staying with them, especially in railway stations, and bus stands. They said, they generally prefer such places for staying where some people are available.

Table: 2.2 (A)
Relation of the Person Living With Respondents

| Person living with respondents | N | % |
|---------------------------------------|----------|------------|
| Co-workers | 2 | 22.2 |
| Others | 7 | 77.8 |
| Total | 9 | 100 |

Tables 2.2 (A) reveals that 22.2% which are generally staying with the co-workers and rest of 77.8% are staying with others, such as beggar, rickshaw puller, adult rag pickers and the strangers sometime.

Table: 2.3
Reason for leaving home
(For Migrants)

| Reason for leaving home | N | % |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Due to step father's ill-treatment | 1 | 1.3 |
| Due to step mother's ill-treatment | 1 | 1.3 |
| No one to look after | 7 | 9.4 |
| Parents/siblings came here | 60 | 80 |
| Other (specify) | 6 | 8 |
| Total | 75 | 100 |

It is found that, maximum of them are migrated with their family member either parents or siblings i.e., 80 percent. Negligible percentage of 1.3 each were found run away because of ill treatment by their step father or step mother. It is found that 9.4 percent were come in this profession because no one is there to take care them, they are orphans. And 8 percent were found, who came due to other reasons like, they lost their parents or abundant by their parents, or want to support their family.

Table: 2.3 (A)
Person with whom child rag-picker left home
 (For migrants)

| Leaving home | N | % |
|-----------------------|-----------|------------|
| With parents | 45 | 60 |
| With siblings | 17 | 22.7 |
| With relatives | 2 | 2.7 |
| Run away alone | 7 | 9.3 |
| Run away with friends | 2 | 2.7 |
| Any others | 2 | 2.6 |
| Total | 75 | 100 |

It is found that vast majority of child rag pickers who had left their home with parents only i. e., 60 percent. Sizable portion of them had left with their siblings i.e., 22.7 percent. Others, like with relatives, friends, and left home alone were in negligible percentage.

Section - III Working Conditions

Table: 3.1
Years of Working as Rag Pickers

| Years of Work | N | | % |
|---------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Male | Female | |
| 0 -1 year | 10 | 2 | 8 |
| 1 – 3 year | 20 | 10 | 20 |
| 3 – 5 years | 46 | 5 | 34 |
| 5- 7 years | 46 | 0 | 30.7 |
| 7 - More | 11 | 0 | 7.3 |
| Total | 133 | 17 | 100 |

It is found that 34 percent of them are working as a rag picker for last 3-5 years, next is 30.7 percent working as a rag picker even longer than them which is 5 – 7 years. 20 percent were working for last 1 -3 years. Just started which is 0 – 1 year is 8%. It was found that only 7.3 percent were working as rag picker more than 7 years.

Table: 3.2
Age of the child when started rag picking

| Age at which started work | N | | % |
|---------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Male | Female | |
| 3 - 5 | 2 | 0 | 1.3 |
| 6 – 8 | 31 | 7 | 25.4 |
| 9 - 11 | 95 | 10 | 70 |
| 12 – 14 | 5 | 0 | 3.3 |
| Total | 133 | 17 | 100 |

It is found that a vast majority of the child rag pickers are started rag picking at the age of 9 – 11 years i.e., 70 percent. 25.4 percent has started work at the age of 6 – 8 years. A small portions of them i. e., 3.3 percent has started work even after 12 years age.

Table: 3.3
Reasons for preferring the Job

| Reasons | N | | % |
|-----------------|------------|-----------|------------|
| | Male | Female | |
| Getting Money | 33 | 4 | 24.7 |
| Getting food | 91 | 13 | 69.3 |
| Getting freedom | 2 | 0 | 1.3 |
| Don't know | 7 | 0 | 4.7 |
| Total | 133 | 17 | 100 |

Table 3.3 shows that 70 percent of them chose this work for getting food. 24.7 percent says they prefer the work for money. A small portion i. e., 4.7 percent said they didn't know why they are in this profession. Whereas majority of the girls are working for getting food only.

Table: 3.4
Forcing factor to join Rag picking

| Who put you into this work | N | % |
|-----------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Voluntarily | 2 | 1.3 |
| Parents | 41 | 27.3 |
| Relatives | 33 | 22 |
| Self | 74 | 49.4 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

it is found that 50% have chosen the job by self. 27.3 % are forced by their parents to work as a rag picker. 22% of the children are put into this profession by their relatives. It is found only 1.3% are working voluntarily to finance their needs.

Table: 3.5
Kinds of rag's pick by child rag pickers

| Kind of Rags | N | % |
|---------------------|----------|----------|
| Plastics | 150 | 100 |
| Papers | 150 | 100 |
| Tins/irons | 150 | 100 |
| Bottles | 140 | 93.3 |
| News papers | 150 | 100 |
| Food items | 78 | 52 |

It is found that 100 percent of them are collecting plastics, papers, tin and iron, and news papers. Bottles are collected by 93.3 percent because of its high value. Few child pickers are not able to collect it because of its bulkiness and heavy weight as

well as where it is available access to that areas are difficult. Among these, 52% are interested to collect food items from the dustbins placed near reputed hotels in Silchar.

Table: 3.6
Nature of Work

| Nature | N | % |
|---------------|----------|----------|
| Regular | 105 | 70 |
| Part time | 43 | 28.7 |
| Occasional | 2 | 1.3 |

It is found that a vast majority (70 percent) of them are working as a regular worker. 28.7 percent are found as part time worker, they are doing bagging, working in small tea-stall and hotel near footpath for their food or additional income. Only 1.3 percent is found working as occasional rag pickers.

Table: 3.7
Daily working hours of Child rag Pickers

| Working Hour's | N | | % |
|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| | Full Time | Part time / Occasional | |
| 3 - 5 | 13 | 9 | 14.7 |
| 5 - 8 | 50 | 34 | 56 |
| 8 - 12 | 42 | 2 | 29.3 |
| Total | 105 | 45 | 100 |

It is found that, 56 percent of them are working for 5 to 8 hour per day, next to which is 29.3 percent is working even longer; they are generally working 8 to 12 hour. Only 14.7 percent were found that they are generally working for 3 to 5 hour per day.

Table: 3.8
Daily collection of Rags by Child Rag Pickers

| Daily Collection (in Kg) | N | | % |
|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------------|
| | Full Time | Part time / Occasional | |
| 1 – 3 Kg | 24 | 6 | 20 |
| 4 – 6 Kg | 44 | 29 | 48.7 |
| 7 – 9 Kg | 28 | 9 | 24.7 |
| 10 – 12 Kg | 9 | 1 | 6.6 |
| Total | 105 | 45 | 100 |

Table 3.8 is found that 48.7 percent are collecting rag ranging from 4 to 6 kg. per day. Who are collecting 7 to 9 kg. is almost 25 percent. A number of 20 percent of child rag pickers were collecting 1 to 3 kg. Who are generally very young and assisting their sibling or family members. Only a negligible 6.6 percent are collecting 10 to 12 kg per day, they are older and very careful about their profession. Though price of the rag varies from Rs. 3 to Rs.10 per kg, from this one can understand that majority of the rag pickers are only getting their livelihood, only a few can earn more than it.

Table: 3.9
Buyers of the rag

| Buyer | N | % |
|-----------------|------------|------------|
| Rag Dealer | 52 | 34.7 |
| Middle man | 8 | 5.3 |
| Adult Ragpicker | 90 | 60 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

Table 3.9 is found that, majority of the children's are selling their rags to adult Rag-picker which is 60 percent, because of rag-dealers are generally far away from the place of collection, reaching to rag-dealers need transportation, as well as extra cost for it, which generally they are not willing to pay or not able to pay. 34.7 percent are selling their rags directly to rag dealers, where they can get better price for their product. Only 5.3 percent of them are selling this to middle-man.

SECTION- IV ECONOMOIC CONDITIONS

Table: 4.1
Types of House

| Types of House | N | % |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| Own | 27 | 19.5 |
| Rent | 89 | 63.2 |
| Others (specify) | 25 | 17.3 |
| Total | 141 | 100 |

Table 4.1 is found that majority of them are living either on rented house or other places which is together 80.85 percent, under which 63.2 percent are living in rented house and 17.3 percent were living in other places which includes, destitute home, or temporary shelter in government land. Only 19.5 percent are found in their own houses.

**Table: 4.2
Housing Condition**

| Housing Condition | N | % |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|
| Kaccha | 32 | 22 |
| Terrace | 10 | 7.9 |
| Others | 27 | 19.1 |
| One room | 72 | 51 |
| Total | 141 | 100 |

Table 4.2 is found that 51 percent of respondents had only one room house, as well as maximum of them had kaccha house which is generally build by bamboo only. 22 % are living in kachha house. Children living in terrace were found 7.9%, generally in some government accommodations like, destitute home. 19.1 percent are found that they are living in other places, by making their temporary tent/ housing arrangements government or unoccupied land.

**Table: 4.3
Sanitation facility**

| Sanitary condition | N | % |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 33 | 22 |
| No | 117 | 78 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

It is found that maximum of them had not any access of sanitary facility i. e., 78 percent had not any sanitary facility. They used to go river bank, open field or public toilets in bus stop, railway station, hospitals or any such places where the facility is provided for the general people. And 22 percent have sanitary facility in their residence.

**Table: 4.4
Electric Facility**

| Electricity Facility | N | % |
|-----------------------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 10 | 7.1 |
| No | 131 | 92.9 |
| Total | 141 | 100 |

It is found that a vast majority i.e., 92.9 percent have not any electric facility in their place of stay/ residence. And 7.1 percent of the respondents have electric facility in their place of staying/residence.

Table: 4.5
Daily Income of the Child Rag pickers

| Daily Income | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi-square Value |
|---------------------|---|-------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| Rs.01 – Rs.30 | 72 | 50 | 37.5 | 25 | 72.773 |
| Rs.31 – Rs.60 | 52 | 34.7 | 37.5 | 25 | |
| Rs.61 – Rs.90 | 21 | 14 | 37.5 | 25 | |
| Rs.91- Rs.120 | 5 | 3.3 | 37.5 | 25 | |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 150 | 100 | |

Df = 3

Significance at 0.0001 level

Table 4.5 shows that the calculated value of Chi-square for Daily income is 72.773 exceed the table value of at 0.01 levels. It reveals that the distribution of responses to rag picking turned out to be significantly different from equality. Hence, children having different income per day differ significantly on rag picking. It implies that there is a clear trend of significant difference on rag picking among children of different level of income per day.

Further, the table is found that 50% of the child rag pickers are earning less than Rs.30 per day. 34.7% of them are earning Rs.31 to Rs.60 per day. It was found that another 14% are earning Rs.61 to Rs.90 per day. Only a meager percentage of 3.3% are found who are earning more than Rs.91 per day.

Table: 4.6
Pattern of Expenditure

| Expenditure | N | % |
|------------------------|----------|----------|
| Food(amount) | 150 | 100 |
| Lodging(amount) | 65 | 43.3 |
| clothing | 0 | 0 |
| Smoking | 75 | 50 |
| Drinking alcohol | 15 | 10 |
| Watching cinema | 15 | 10 |
| Using Drugs/Medication | 50 | 33.3 |
| Saving | 10 | 6.7 |
| Other purpose | 80 | 53.3 |

Table 4.6 is found that 100 percent of them are spending their money for food. 43% of them had responded that they are spending for their shelter (lodging), 50% responded had a bad habit of smoking and they are spending for them also. 10 percent of them are spending money for watching movies and for alcohol. 33.3% are spending money for their medication as well as few is taking drugs or material for amusement. It was found that 53.3% of them are spending money for other purposes also, like paying their family to run their family, and a variety of other needs. Only a negligible percentage of 6.7 are found they are also saving for their future needs or for some difficult time.

Table: 4.7
Contribution to family/parents

| Contribution to family/Parents | N | % |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 108 | 72 |
| No | 42 | 28 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

Table 4.7 shows that a vast majority of them are contributing money to their parents or family and a sizable percent of them are not contributing any money to their family or parents.

Table: 4.8
Saving By Child Rag Pickers

| Saving | N | % |
|---------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 10 | 6.7 |
| No | 140 | 93.3 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

Table 4.8 it found that only 6.7% of child rag pickers are saving money for their future purposes. It is found that majority of them are not saving any money for their future purpose i. e., 93.3 percent.

Table: 4.9
Sufficiency of income for livelihood

| Sufficiency of income | N | % |
|------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 128 | 85.3 |
| No | 22 | 14.7 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

It was found that 85.3% of the respondents are very much satisfied with their income and they said that this is sufficient for their livelihood. Only 14.7% had replied that their income is not sufficient for them.

Table: 4.10

Other source of income of Child rag pickers

| Other source of Income | N | % |
|-------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 42 | 28 |
| No | 108 | 72 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

Table 4.10 it is found that 28% of the respondents have other source of income apart from rag picking. Other 72% didn't have any other source of income; they are totally depending on rag picking.

Table: 4.11

Sources of income

| Other sources of Income | N | % |
|--|-----------|------------|
| Begging | 26 | 61 |
| Working in tea stall/ other establishments | 7 | 16.7 |
| Working as coolie | 9 | 21.3 |
| Total | 42 | 100 |

It is found that 42 child rag pickers, who have other source of income, 67% of them are involved with begging. 21.3% were found that they are working as a coolie in bus stand, railway station and in market place, if they get some work. Another 16.7% are found working as a part time helper to tea stall and other establishment in footpath or near their residential area.

**Table: 4.12
Personal Habits**

| Personal Habit | N | % |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|
| Chewing of pan/saada | 129 | 86 |
| smoking | 99 | 66 |
| Drinking alcohol | 45 | 10 |
| Using drugs | 03 | 2 |
| Consume tea/coffee | 150 | 100 |
| Any other | 83 | 55.3 |

It is found that maximum of them have some sort of personal habit, all most all have a habit of consuming tea which is 100%, and another 86% are found that they are chewing pan or saada. Children who are taking smoke are 66% and drinking alcohol is 10%. 2% of them are taking drugs or tablets for their amusement. It is found that 55.3 percent have personal habit of taking multiple things, like pan, smoke, and ganga also.

SECTION - V HEALTH CONDITIONS

**Table: 5.1
Sickness/injury of child rag pickers**

| Sick during last 6 month | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi-square Value |
|--------------------------|---|------------|-------------------------|------------|------------------|
| Yes | 93 | 62 | 75 | 50 | 8.640 |
| No | 57 | 38 | 75 | 50 | |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 150 | 100 | |

Df = 1

Significance at 0.0001 level

Table presented above reveals that the calculated value of Chi-square for health condition is 8.640 at $df = 1$, exceeds the table value at 0.01 level. It shows that the distribution of responses to rag picking is found to be significantly different from equality. So, children having different health status differ significantly. It implies that there is a clear trend of significant difference on rag picking among children of different health condition.

it is found that vast majority that is 62 percent of them have sickness or injuries during the period of last six months. Only 38 percent were replied, that they had not any kind of injury or sickness.

Table: 5.1(a)
Time of last injury or sickness

| Time duration | N | % |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| Last week | 12 | 12 |
| Last fortnight | 60 | 64.2 |
| Last month | 17 | 18.8 |
| Last quarter | 4 | 4 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

Table 5.1(A) reveals that, 64.2 percent of them had injuries or illness in last fortnight, next to which is 18.8 percent who has injuries or illness in last month. It was found that 12 percent have recent injuries or illness which was took place in last week only. Only 4 percent are reported injuries in last quarter only.

From this we can understand the job of rag picking is very dangerous in nature, because of its risk of getting injuries or getting infections quickly.

Table: 5.2
Types of illness or Injury

| Types of illness/injury | N | % |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Respiratory problem | 13 | 13.8 |
| Fever | 25 | 26.8 |
| Skin disease | 35 | 37.3 |
| Injury | 20 | 21.1 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

Table it is found that majority of them are suffering for skin disease and injuries which is combined 59.4 percent out of which 37.3 percent are suffering for various skin diseases and 21.1 percent are suffering for recent cuts in their body. 13.98 percent were suffering for respiratory problem. It was found that 26.8 percent were suffering fever; few of them had responded they were getting frequent attack of fevers.

Table: 5.3
Consultation for illness

| Consultation for illness | N | % |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 71 | 76.4 |
| No | 22 | 23.6 |
| Total | 93 | 100 |

it is found that 76.4 percent of them have consulted for their disease or illness. Only 23.6 percent of them had not consulted any doctor or alternate treatment because they

thought, disease or injuries is too minor to consult or they felt it be recovered naturally.

Table: 5.4
Hospital consulted for illness

| Hospital consulted | N | % |
|---------------------------|-----------|--------------|
| Govt. Hospital | 10 | 14.9 |
| Homeopathy | 17 | 23.4 |
| Others (specify) | 44 | 61.7 |
| Total | 71 | 99.99 |

Table is found that only a small percentage of the total respondents had consulted in government hospitals which is 14.9 percent, 23.4 percent who had consulted homeopathic doctors. Large number of respondent which is 61.7 percent has consulted other sources like medicine shop, self medication after the advice of elders, or lending medicine from other co-worker or family member.

Table: 5.5 (A)
Ability to afford medication expenses

| Ability to afford | N | % |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Yes | 59 | 83.1 |
| No | 12 | 16.9 |
| Total | 71 | 100 |

Table 5.5 is found that 83.1% are able to pay their medication expenses. 16.9% are told that they are not able to meet their medication expense; it is very hard for them to pay any extra cost.

Table: 5.5 (B)

Reason of not consultation

| Reason for consultation | N | % |
|--------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Lack of money | 1 | 4.6 |
| No health centre nearby | 5 | 22.3 |
| Not necessary | 7 | 31.1 |
| Others (specify) | 9 | 40 |
| Total | 22 | 100 |

Those who had not consulted for their injuries of illness, it was found in this table that 31.81% they felt that it is not necessary to consult any doctor, it may be cured after some time. 22.73% they said that health centre are not nearby, and if they visit private hospital then they have to pay huge as well as maximum places they were bitten by watchman. Only 4.56% were found they did not consult for lack of money. 40.90 % replied that they had not consulted due to some other region like, other co-worker given them some medicine, advice to go hospital later on where they can get free treatment and a variety of other reasons.

Table: 5.6
Kind of Disability

| Kind of Disability | N | % |
|---------------------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 5 | 3.3 |
| No | 145 | 96.7 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

It is found that, 5 out of 150 which are 3.3 percent are disabled and rest of them which is 96.7 percent is physically fit. They had not any kind of disability.

Those who are disable, major disabilities are orthopedic, deafness and dumbness were found.

SECTION – VI SOCIAL CONDITIONS

Table: 6.1
Physical Appearance of the child Rag Picker

| Physical appearance | N | % |
|---|------------|------------|
| Dirty & unclean | 54 | 36 |
| Looking suffering from some disease/ Malnourished | 90 | 60 |
| Good health | 6 | 4 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

About physical appearance of the child rag pickers, in this table it was found that, 60% of them are seems to be suffering from some diseases or malnourished. Another 36% were found that they are very dirty and unclean with long hairs, and big size clothes. Only a small percent of 4% were found with good health.

The physical appearance of these children when they move in for their work in search of rags, wearing long hairs and dirty and oversized cloths looking like the size of adult people, without taking bath and cleaning their teeth, in absence of foot-wear/slippers make one realize the level of poverty and hardships of their lives.

Table: 6.2
Interaction with Community

| Interaction With Community | N | % |
|----------------------------|------------|------------|
| Yes | 150 | 100 |
| No | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

When researcher wanted to know that they were interacting with community people or not, it was found that 100 percent of them are interacting with community people.

Table: 6.3
Relation with Community People

| Community Interaction | N | % |
|-----------------------|------------|------------|
| Friendly | 10 | 6.7 |
| Rejected | 120 | 80 |
| Others | 20 | 13.3 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

Researcher is found after analyzing the data, that 80% of the child rag pickers are feeling that community people's behaviour are rejecting in nature with them. Another 13.3% said that the response is mixed in nature, means sometimes it is very positive and sometime it is very negative or rejecting. Only 6.7% told that they find friendly with community people.

Here it is understood that due to their dirtiness and work, people may not take them as friendly as other people, sometime few people they thought that they child rag pickers may stole some thing from them.

Table: 6.4
Perception of social status

| Social life is affected by the profession | N | % |
|---|------------|------------|
| Yes | 2 | 1.3 |
| No | 13 | 8.7 |
| Cann't say anything | 135 | 90 |
| Total | 150 | 100 |

When researcher has asked the question, that their social life was affected by this profession or not, Majority of them were not able to answer, they can't say anything which is 90 percent. Only 8.7 percent says that their social life is not affected by their

profession. Another 1.3 percent says that their social life was affected because of this profession, for example they said they were not able to attend schools, and the friends and relatives of them refuses to recognize them because of their profession only. When they went for cinema hall and hotels, they were treated differently, because of their dress and look.

Table: 6.5
Job Satisfaction

| Job Satisfaction | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi-square Value |
|------------------|---|------------|-------------------------|------------|------------------|
| Yes | 35 | 23.33 | 75 | 50 | 42.667 |
| No | 115 | 76.67 | 75 | 50 | |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 150 | 100 | |

Df = 1

Significance at 0.0001level

The table above reveals that calculated value of Chi-square for job satisfaction is 42.667 at df = 1 exceeds the table value at 0.01 level. It also indicates that distribution of responses regarding job satisfaction regarding rag picking differs significantly from equality. Hence there is a clear cut trend of job dissatisfaction by most of the rag picking children.

Above table, it is found that 76.7 percent are not satisfied with the job for a variety of reasons like dirtiness, hazardous and unhygienic, but still they prefer it because of convenience, income is little more and flexible work hour and freedom. 23.3 percent are quite satisfied with their job.

Table: 6.6 (A)
Response Regarding the State of Abuse

| Response | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi-square Value |
|---------------|---|------------|-------------------------------|------------|---------------------|
| Abused | 135 | 90 | 75 | 50 | 96 |
| Not Abused | 15 | 10 | 75 | 50 | |
| Total | 150 | 100 | 150 | 100 | |

Df = 1

Significance at 0.0001level

Table: 6.6 (B)
Exploiter of Child Rag-Pickers

| Exploiter (The Person who Exploits) | N | % |
|--|------------|------------|
| By Friends | 26 | 17.3 |
| Others(specify) | 109 | 72.7 |
| Total | 135 | 100 |

Table 6.6 (A) presented above reveals that the calculated value of Chi-square with respect to the abuse or exploitation is 96 at df = 1 exceeds the table value 0.0001 level of significance. It shows that the distribution of responses regarding abuse or exploitation turns out to be significantly different from equality. Hence, there is a clear trend of significant difference with respect to exploitation of child rag picker.

Further, when researcher asked this question that they are facing any kind of exploitation or not, 90 percent of them were said yes, they are facing exploitation from their co-worker, rag-dealer, and shop-owner. Only 10 percent says that they are not facing any kind of exploitation.

Table 6.6(B) it is found that, 72.7 percent of exploiters are others which include non family member, like adult rag picker, buyer, shop-owner, and stranger and other children and adult people. Only 17.3 percent were found abused by their friend and co-workers.

Table: 6.7

Kind of Abuse

| Kind of abuse | No of Respondents/ Observed Frequency (Fo) | Percentage | Expected Frequency (Fe) | Percentage | Chi-square Value |
|------------------|---|------------|-------------------------|------------|------------------|
| Physical abuse | 37 | 27.4 | 45 | 33.3 | 10.844 |
| Economic abuse | 63 | 46.6 | 45 | 33.4 | |
| Others (specify) | 35 | 26.0 | 45 | 33.3 | |
| Total | 135 | 100 | 135 | 100 | |

Df = 2

Significance at 0.004level

Table 6.7 presented above reveals that the calculated value of Chi-square with respect to the types of abuse is 10.844 at df = 2 exceeds the table value 0.04 level of significance. It shows that the distribution of responses regarding abuse turns out to be significantly different from equality. Hence, there is a clear trend of significant difference with respect to abuse of child rag picker.

Further, from this table it is found that, 46.6 percent of rag-picking children are facing economic abuse, by the rag-dealer, middleman and their adult co-worker. They are not paying fully or paying according to the rate prevails in the market. Next 27.4 percent are facing physical abuse by their co-worker and adult coworker, shop-keeper and other people. Another 26 percent has reported other kind of abuses like, taking their services without any payment, abusive languages and some has reported sexual abuse also.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Part A - Conclusion:

- The child rag pickers are started rag picking at the tender age of four. A vast majority of them are found in the age group of 7 to 12 years, It is found that a vast majority of them are male, and a small portion of them are female. Female child participation in this work is very less because of high level of risk involvement in work place.
- Majority of child rag pickers are Hindus and a sizeable percent of them are Muslim. A negligible percentage of Christian children are also found working as rag picker.
- A vast majority of the rag pickers are illiterate; rest of them can write their name. Very few of them completed primary level. Except few all of them are not attending school.
- Majority of them are not attending school, because they can't afford. Others are not attending school because of various reasons like, parents were not sending, they have to earn their livelihood and contribute in their families.
- Majority of the child rag pickers were from Silchar. Others were migrated from different parts of Barak valley either with family or without family.
- A vast majority of the child rag pickers were belonging to nuclear families with a large number of siblings. It was found that few of them have grandparents also.
- Majority of the child rag pickers were staying in rented houses and other places. Only a small percent of them are living in their own home.
- A small percent of street children had been found. They were generally staying at railway stations, bus stops and other places; they are not staying at any fixed place. Generally other people are also staying with them.
- Majority of them are collecting rag for last 3 years to five years. A small percent of them were working for one years or less than that. And majority of them had started rag picking at the age of 2 to 11 years. Few of them have started even at the age of four. They are working mainly for two reasons i.e., getting food and getting money.

- Majority of them had chosen this work by their own. Other prominent portion was put in this work by their parents. These children's are generally collecting plastic, papers including news papers, tins and irons, bottles canes, and food items also. It is found that majority of them are generally working five to eight hours; another sizable percent were working even more than eight hours.
- A vast majority of them are regular full time rag pickers. A sizable percent of them are working as part time rag pickers. Part time rag pickers are generally involved with others job also, like begging, working as a coolie or part time helper at tea stalls or shops at footpaths.
- A vast majority of them are collecting 3 to 5 Kg rags per day. And a sizeable percent of them are collecting 5 Kg or less then it, and a small percent of them are collecting more than 5 kg.
- Vast majority of the child rag-pickers are selling their rags to adult rag-pickers for variety of reasons like, rag dealers are far away from the place of collection, and it needs extra cost to them. A sizable percent are selling directly to rag-dealers only.
- A vast majority of the child rag picker and their family are living either on rented house or other places. A small percent is found to living in their own houses. Again majority of them are living in a one room.
- It is found a vast majority of them didn't have any sanitary facility, they used to go river bank, open fields or public toilets in bus stops, railway station, or any such places where the facility is provided for general people. Except few all of them didn't have electric facility in their home.
- It is found that majority of them are earning Rs.30 or less then Rs. 30 per day. Majority of them are spending their money for fooding, lodging only. A vast majority of them are contributing in their family.
- A small percent of them were saving money for their future purposes.
- A vast majority of the child rag pickers responded that their income is sufficient for their livelihood.
- It is found that a sizable percent of the rag pickers are engaged with other income also. They are generally working as beggar, coolie part time helper at tea stall or other establishments. Others are working as full time/regular rag-picker.

- Majority of them have personal habits like, consuming tea, chewing pan or saada, and smoke.
- A vast majority of them had some sickness or injuries in last six months.
- Majority of them are suffering from skin disease or Cut and injury. Other is suffering from Respiratory problems and frequent fever.
- It is found that a vast majority they had consulted for their disease either doctors in government hospitals or medicine shops. Remaining who had not consulted for their illness, they felt it was not necessary, or other worker/parents has given some medicine or advised for curing that illness. Regarding affordability of the medication expenses, they had said, they can afford the medication expenses.
- It was found only 3.33 percent of child rag-pickers are physically disabled. Remaining of them is physically fit.
- Maximum child rag-pickers are dirty and unclean, they also seem to be suffering from some disease or highly malnourished.
- It is found that all of the child rag pickers are interacting with the people of community/ society. Vast majority of them feel that community people's behaviour is rejecting in nature. Only a small percent of them had responded that they find community people are friendly. And a very small percent of the child rag-pickers feel that due to their profession, their social life is affected. And almost all of them were not able to say anything regarding their social life.
- A vast majority of the child rag-pickers were not satisfied with their job.
- It was observed that except for a few all of the child rag pickers were the victims of different kinds of abuse, majority of them are generally abused by adult rag pickers, buyers, shop-owners, and adult people. Kind of abuses faced by them were generally economic and physical.

Part B - Suggestions:

After the study of socio economic and health conditions of child rag pickers, some suggestions are made for the betterment of child rag pickers.

1. After the implementation of Right to Education Act, 2010, it is the right of every child to get free education in this country. But this is far away from reality for these rag picking children because of their poor socio economic conditions. So, government should establish more and more residential school, like Jahawar Navadaya school model, for accommodating these children for education to be a better citizen of this country.
2. It was found that lots of NGOs were working for women, orphans, HIV-AIDS and other sector. But NGOs are not interested to work for child rag pickers, because of their family intervention and legal issues. We suggest here more NGOs should come forward for the rehabilitation and development for child rag pickers.
3. It was seen that child rag pickers are not able to get medical facilities in Government hospitals, because they have to show ration card or similar documents for accessing the facilities. For this we suggest, local Municipal Corporation or Government of Assam should come forward for extensive survey and issue some kind of ID card, through which they can access free medical facility, which is very necessary for rag picking children.
4. A social service centre, well equipped with the facilities of health checkup, treatment and other services need to be opened in urban slums for the treatment of poor people.
5. It is very essential to initiate night shelter home for child rag pickers so that they can stay in night in the shelter home and NGOs can initiate this type of activity.
6. Professional social workers who are trained manpower in understanding the people's problem and helping them in bringing the solutions by restoring their impaired capacity and making provision of new resources can play a significant role in this field. So, participation of social workers and NGOs can reduce this kind of social problem.

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ABSTRACT

SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND HEALTH CONDITIONS OF CHILD RAGPICKERS IN SILCHAR, ASSAM

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Introduction: The word rag picking has no precise meaning. However, it has been defined as a refuse occupation, which can support people when they have no other opportunity for earning. More precisely, the rag picker is defined as one ‘who makes his/her livelihood by picking up waste paper, plastic, rags, bottles, tins, metal pieces, discarded and broken containers etc. from road side dustbins, streets garbage heaps and sells them to nearby retailers. Rag picking is one of the most inferior economic activity in the urban informal sector, largely undertaken by children belonging to weaker sections of the society, for the survival and for supplementing their family income. Rag picking is the profession mostly dominated by children aging 6 to 15 who do not have any other skill and thus by way of refuse collection contribute to household income or own survival. According to UNICEF, ragpicking is one of the worst forms of child labour, and falls under the street children category (UNICEF, 1997). The concept of street children and the definition of the term ragpickers appear to have undergone modifications over time. Initially, ragpickers were considered those children who literally work and live in the street, known as children on the street. Today, the denotation of ragpickers has been extended to include those working in the street but living with their families in homes, slums, squats, etc., known as children of the street. This study includes both cases, whether they belong to “of the street” or “on the street” category. Ragpickers, also known as 'garbage pickers,' live on the street, in slums or shanty areas, and he/she makes a living from sorting, collecting, and selling waste metal, rags, containers to the local junkyards or garbage collection centres.

Methodology:

Statement of the Problem: The present study attempts to identify the socio-economic and health condition of rag picking children of Silchar city of Assam. Under the umbrella of rag pickers socio-economic and health condition, various aspect pertaining to the rag picking pattern will be

identify for exploration and discussion with justification to their conditions in which they work. Their physical outlook, socio-economic characteristics, health conditions, forcing factors for taking up this occupation are the focus area of the present study. The study has significance because in Silchar no study had been made on this particular area, so it can be a scope for social worker to take it as a research problem for the study. And the outcomes of the present study will benefit the policy framers, planners and social worker at the various levels. The policy framers at the state and national level will be able to frame the appropriate policies and programmes for addressing the problems of child rag pickers.

Objectives of the Study : Following are the objectives of the study

1. To highlight the socio-economic background of children engaged in rag picking in Silchar.
2. To identify the health condition of children engaged in rag picking in Silchar.
3. To find out the factors forcing them to go into this occupation.
4. To examine the living and the working conditions of children in rag picking.
5. To suggest measures to improve the conditions of the children in rag-picking work.

Research Design: Descriptive design is used to study the Socio-economic and Health Conditions of Child Rag Pickers in Silchar, Assam

Universe : Whole Silchar town is selected as a universe for the present study. Some of the specific areas selected for collecting the respondents these are Tarapur, Kalibari Chor, Meherpur, Fatak Bajar, Malogram and Ram Nagar. Sample size of 150 is purposively selected for the study.

Sampling : Research scholar select the purposive sampling method to collect the respondents for the present study.

Sources of Data: The study utilized both primary and secondary data. The primary sources of data are the child rag pickers respondents of Silchar, Assam. Data collected through visiting different localities of Silchar where child rag pickers are accessible and working. While the secondary sources of data are collected from reports published by government and NGOs, books, news papers, journals and magazines.

Tools of Data Collection: A semi-structured interview schedule is used for collection of data. The interview schedule had broad aspects such as personal profile, socio-economic, and health aspects of child rag pickers.

Data Analysis: Data were analysed with the help of Spread sheet, and SPSS. Statistical tool Chi-square, percentage, and cumulative percentage were used where necessary.

Results:

- The child rag pickers are started rag picking at the tender age of four. A vast majority of them are found in the age group of 7 to 12 years, It is found that a vast majority of them are male, and a small portion of them are female. Female child participation in this work is very less because of high level of risk involvement in work place.
- Majority of child rag pickers are Hindus and a sizeable percent of them are Muslim. A negligible percentage of christian children are also found working as rag picker.
- A vast majority of the rag pickers are illiterate; rest of them can write their name. Very few of them completed primary level. Except few all of them are not attending school.
- Majority of them are not attending school, because they can't afford. Others are not attending school because of various reasons like, parents were not sending, they have to earn their livelihood and contribute in their families.
- Majority of the child rag pickers were from Silchar. Others were migrated from different parts of Barak valley either with family or without family.
- A vast majority of the child rag pickers were belonging to nuclear families with a large number of siblings. It was found that few of them have grandparents also.
- Majority of the child rag pickers were staying in rented houses and other places. Only a small percent of them are living in their own home.
- A small percent of street children had been found. They were generally staying at railway stations, bus stops and other places; they are not staying at any fixed place. Generally other people are also staying with them.
- Majority of them are collecting rag for last 3 years to five years. A small percent of them were working for one years or less than that. And majority of them had started rag

picking at the age of 2 to 11 years. Few of them have started even at the age of four. They are working mainly for two reasons i.e., getting food and getting money.

- Majority of them had chosen this work by their own. Other prominent portion were put in this work by their parents. These children's are generally collecting plastic, papers including news papers, tins and irons, bottles canes, and food items also. It is found that majority of them are generally working five to eight hours; another sizable percent were working even more than eight hours.
- A vast majority of them are regular full time rag pickers. A sizable percent of them are working as part time rag pickers. Part time rag pickers are generally involved with others job also, like begging, working as a coolie or part time helper at tea stalls or shops at footpaths.
- A vast majority of them are collecting 3 to 5 Kg rags per day. And a sizeable percent of them are collecting 5 Kg or less then it, and a small percent of them are collecting more than 5 kg.
- Vast majority of the child rag-pickers are selling their rags to adult rag-pickers for variety of reasons like, rag dealers are far away from the place of collection, and it needs extra cost to them. A sizable percent are selling directly to rag-dealers only.
- A vast majority of the child rag picker and their family are living either on rented house or other places. A small percent is found to living in their own houses. Again majority of them are living in a one room.
- It is found a vast majority of them didn't have any sanitary facility, they used to go river bank, open fields or public toilets in bus stops, railway station, or any such places where the facility is provided for general people. Except few all of them didn't have electric facility in their home.
- It is found that majority of them are earning Rs.30 or less then Rs. 30 per day. Majority of them are spending their money for fooding, lodging only. A vast majority of them are contributing in their family.
- A small percent of them were saving money for their future purposes.
- A vast majority of the child rag pickers responded that their income is sufficient for their livelihood.

- It is found that a sizable percent of the rag pickers are engaged with other income also. They are generally working as beggar, coolie part time helper at tea stall or other establishments. Others are working as full time/regular rag-picker.
- Majority of them have personal habits like, consuming tea, chewing pan or saada, and smoke.
- A vast majority of them had some sickness or injuries in last six months.
- Majority of them are suffering from skin disease or Cut and injury. Other is suffering from Respiratory problems and frequent fever.
- It is found that a vast majority they had consulted for their disease either doctors in government hospitals or medicine shops. Remaining who had not consulted for their illness, they felt it was not necessary, or other worker/parents has given some medicine or advised for curing that illness. Regarding affordability of the medication expenses, they had said, they can afford the medication expenses.
- It was found only 3.33 percent of child rag-pickers are physically disabled. Remaining of them is physically fit.
- Maximum child rag-pickers are dirty and unclean, they also seems to be suffering from some disease or highly malnourished.
- It is found that all of the child rag pickers are interacting with the people of community/society. Vast majority of them feel that community peoples behaviour are rejecting in nature. Only a small percent of them had responded that they find community people are friendly. And a very small percent of the child rag-pickers were feels that due to their profession, their social life is affected. And all most all of them were not able to say anything regarding their social life.
- A vast majority of the child rag-pickers were not satisfied with their job.
- It was observed that except few all of the child rag pickers were the victim of different kinds of abuse, majority of them are generally abused by adult rag pickers, buyers, shop-owners, and adult people. Kind of abuses faced by them were generally economic and physical.

Conclusions: After the analyzing and interpretation of data, it can be concluded that most of the Hindu children between the age group of 7 to 12 years were found to be working in rag picking.

The study also showed that most of the children started rag picking at the age of 6 to 11 years and vast majority of them are male, only a small percent of female were found in this profession. Female participation is less because of various kind of risk involvement is there. As regards their literacy, a vast majority of them are illiterate. From the research it was found that major forcing factor for choosing the work of rag picking because of poverty, where children have to earn their livelihood by themselves only. The study also revealed that the average daily income of the children varies between Rs.10 to Rs. 120 But majority of them are earning less than Rs.30 only. A good number of children are working as a part time rag picker, they are also engaged in begging, working as a part time help in tea-stall and other small business establishments in footpaths. The poor economic condition lead them to take the job of rag picking, where as they are suffering from various diseases and injuries because of their work nature. These children are also facing lots of physical and economic abuses also. Majority of the child rag-pickers are dirty and unclean, they also seems to be suffering from some disease or highly malnourished.

Suggestions: After the study of socio economic and health conditions of child rag pickers, some suggestions are made for the betterment of child rag pickers.

1. After the implementation of Right to Education Act, 2010, it is the right of every child to get free education in this country. But this is far away from reality for these rag picking children because of their poor socio economic conditions. So, government should establish more and more residential school, like Jawahar Navadaya school model, for accommodating these children for education to be a better citizen of this country.
2. It was found that lots of NGOs were working for women, orphans, HIV-AIDS and other sector. But NGOs are not interested to work for child rag pickers, because of their family intervention and legal issues. We suggest here more NGOs should come forward for the rehabilitation and development for child rag pickers.
3. It was seen that child rag pickers are not able to get medical facilities in Government hospitals, because they have to show ration card or similar documents for accessing the facilities. For this we suggest, local Municipal Corporation or Government of Assam should come forward for extensive survey and issue some kind of ID card, through which they can access free medical facility, which is very necessary for rag picking children.

4. A social service centre, well equipped with the facilities of health checkup, treatment and other services need to be opened in urban slums for the treatment of poor people.
5. Professional social workers who are trained manpower in understanding the peoples problem and helping them in bringing the solutions by restoring their impaired capacity and making provision of new resources can play a significant role in this field. So, participation of social workers and NGOs can reduce this kind of social problem.