

High Risk Groups for the Polio Programme

While the polio programme has achieved very high coverage in almost all SIA rounds, there is a need to place added emphasis on the groups most at risk for virus transmission in the final stages of the programme. The recent epidemiology and case analysis has identified the following groups as the most vulnerable to polio virus transmission:

1. Brick Kiln and Construction Workers
2. Nomads
3. Temporary and permanent slum dwellers
4. Underserved communities

In order to ensure consistent identification and tracking of these groups, it is imperative for all partners to have a common working definition for them. Based on existing research and evidence, as well as programme monitoring data, the following definitions have been developed and should be used by all partners working in the Polio Eradication programme for tracking, identification, coverage and monitoring:

Brick Kiln and Construction Workers:

These groups are migrant laborers, but are the most geographically distinct categories of migrants – therefore at risk of being missed out when covering other migrant populations who would be covered in the Underserved or Slum dwellers categories.

Brick Kilns: should be covered in their entirety, children should be identified and covered both at the labour camps as well as the “pather” fields where the bricks are prepared

Construction sites: these are labour camping sites where construction is going on nearby. Laborers camp in “jhuggies”, brick sheds and within and under the construction buildings themselves. Construction sites should be thoroughly checked to identify children living in and around these areas. **Although construction sites may also be considered temporary slums, they should ONLY be counted in the construction workers category.**

Nomads

Nomads are groups of communities who travel from place to place for livelihoods; setting up **dera's** whenever and wherever they stop. This group could be confused with migrants, but they are generally mobile for longer than they are fixed; their mobility is an essential economic strategy. Nomads often perform services as blacksmiths, basket weaving, puppeteering, acrobatics, fortune-telling, singing and dancing. They often squat in villages or on the outskirts of large existing colonies, railway stations, along the railway tracks, open fields, market places and in urban and peri-urban slums. Nomads make up approximately 0.7% of the population and can be clustered within five major nomadic groups in Uttar Pradesh:

- Kanjar's: This is a widely dispersed group of nomadic artisans and entertainers that has been often branded as a criminal community.
- Gadia Lohars: Gadia Lohar literally means “metal workers of the bullocks cart” Originally from Rajasthan, small Lohar groups can be seen on the outskirts of any large northern city where they live in small settlements centred around their beautiful bullocks carts. Low mud walls enclose each cart demarcating their residence.
- Nat: Usually known as Acrobats, this group performs acrobatics for bypassers in the streets or at religious or social congregations

- Gandhiley: This group is very adaptable and socially complex group as their allegiances to religion and culture vary according to the opportunities and gains presented by each. Their religious and cultural affiliations may switch instantly depending on who is requesting the information. This group can often be involved in illicit activities like poaching and prostitution and begging.
- Banjara: Women who go door to door selling simple goods in villages (e.g. combs, bangles, etc)

Temporary and Permanent Slumdwellers

About 4.4 million people reportedly live in slums in Uttar Pradesh. Slums can either be notified, "officially recognized" dwellings, or informal temporary settlements on the outskirts of urban or rural centres. In U.P. 71% of all existing slums are not registered, meaning temporary slum dwellers are ubiquitous and highly vulnerable. **Although most permanent slums are already mapped out in existing microplans, they may not all be consistently identified. Therefore, the focus for the polio programme should be on temporary slum-dwellers who are unlikely to be mapped, AND permanent slum dwellers to ensure they are consistently identified and covered.**

Slums are generally located on marginal lands along the riverbanks, drains, low-lying areas, hill slopes, and railway tracks. The average temporary slum dwelling has approximately 150 households (700 people); registered slums are slightly larger, accommodating about 200 households. However, these figures are just indicative to help recognize a slum and should not be taken as prescriptive. Slums have been characterized by the UN and the 2001 GOI Census as having the following characteristics:

- High population density within small living space (e.g. overcrowding); AND
- Insecure residential status and construction (e.g. Pucca or Kaccha housing structure); AND
- Poor drinking water source (e.g. tap or tube well) and high number of people per public stand pipe (>150 people per stand); AND
- Inadequate sanitation (e.g. no latrine facilities, no garbage disposal system)

Slums generally have all of the characteristics listed above, but a location having at least 3 should be characterized as a slum.

Underserved Communities

All of the above mentioned groups of people – migrants, nomads, slumdwellers – are in fact underserved communities, as they have limited access to basic services. Historically within the polio programme, however an underserved community has meant a minority muslim community since Muslim children have generally shown higher vulnerability to the polio virus. Reaching the underserved community means continuing to focus on Muslim minority groups. However, it is important to acknowledge that programmatically, the Underserved Strategy will go beyond the Muslim minority groups and expand to all vulnerable groups mentioned above.

The operational definition of an underserved community is any community that is:

- Lacking access to healthcare, sanitation or other basic service
- Predominantly Muslim
- Predominantly composed of scheduled castes or scheduled tribes

Any combination of the 3 criteria above should be characterized as underserved