

Primary Education For Deprived Urban Children in Kolkata

Exclusionary factors and inclusive strategies

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1. Introduction

72 million children in the world today are not participating in education, and close to 6.4 million of these children live in India (EFAGMR 2007). The majority of children who are out of school belong to the lower socioeconomic strata. In addition to being deprived of education, many of the children also suffer from severe poverty and marginalization (Bernard 2001). Education is a powerful tool for poverty reduction and an increase in education may decrease the inequalities seen in India today (Drèze and Sen 2002). Every child should have the chance to create opportunities in their lives, and education is the tool to create and take advantage of these opportunities.

India is a land of great contrast. It is one of the fastest growing economies in the world today, yet 358 million people live below the poverty line (World Bank 2001). The nation has a strong tradition in higher education, and has some of the best universities in the world (Varma 2004). Yet, India also has the world's largest adult illiterate population (Tilak 1999) and many children never set their foot in a primary school. In this context, it is imperative to focus on the education for the marginalized children. With the opportunity to participate in education, children and their families will be able to develop and generate positive changes to improve their life situations and participate in society. However, if education is not provided, the children may experience further marginalization, and the socioeconomic differences may deepen.

1.1 The study

This study focuses on the educational opportunities for the poor and deprived urban children residing in slum and squatter settlements in Kolkata. The overall objective and main research question is:

How is education for deprived urban children provided? A case study of deprived urban children in Kolkata, India.

To answer this I will focus on and explore two research questions:

1. Explore the reasons for exclusion for out of school children in the slum and squatter settlements in Kolkata.
2. Explore how the education programme by CINI Asha may include deprived urban children in education with community mobilization and empowerment

The study is based on an educational programme by CINI Asha, an Indian based non governmental organization (NGO). The outset for this study is to provide insight in possible strategies for including deprived urban children in education. The focus of the study is on the holistic picture of an education programme. This implies a broad approach, both exploring reasons for exclusion and the strategies for inclusion. Hence, in order to create a viable strategy for inclusive education, it is necessary to look at the underlying factors of exclusion, and to develop inclusive strategy accordingly. In a programme like that of CINI Asha the NGO created an approach and response to a problem they recognized among many families in the slum areas, in this case exclusion from education. Initially, I intended to include only a small part on the exclusionary factors. However, quite early in the research I realized that further analysis of exclusion is necessary in order to investigate the strategies for including the children in education. I therefore decided to cover it more extensively. The other research question to be explored is how urban deprived children may be included in the school system. The community mobilization and empowerment strategy of the CINI Asha education programme will be discussed. I will explore how the strategy is attempting to include children in education, and if they are successful in the endeavour. Further I will explore the means for retaining the children in school.

It is also my opinion that in order to create opportunities for education there is a need to involve the excluded themselves; the children and their parents. This research is therefore based on a programme that set out to do exactly this; involving all the stakeholders in a child's education. During the research it was important for me to gain knowledge of the experience of the actors involved, thus, most of this thesis is based on their experience, feelings and opinions. The analysis and discussion is based on the findings from the research. I chose to focus on urban areas, seeing that cities in low income countries have large pockets of very poor areas. Yet, educational services are more or less readily

available. It is therefore interesting to explore why children are excluded, and how inclusive solutions are made in such situations.

1.2 The structure of the thesis

Chapter two is the background chapter for the thesis. Definitions are outlined, and primary education for all is put on the agenda. West Bengal and Kolkata is presented, followed by the education system and the urban slum and squatter settlements of Kolkata, in order to contextualize and provide a better understanding of what will be discussed later. I will also outline the education programme of CINI Asha. In chapter three, I describe and discuss the methodology of the research, and the fieldwork will be outlined. Chapter four gives the theoretical framework. It is divided in two parts, which can broadly be characterized as cause and strategy. The first section focuses on poverty and social exclusion, which will be related to exclusion from education. The second section has a focus on the strategy for inclusion. The strategy presented is empowerment. Since the objective is to see the holistic picture of the programme, the theoretical framework as well as the following discussion of the findings are based on the factors of exclusion and the strategy for inclusion. Chapter five is a discussion on the exclusion from education, drawing on findings from the research and will be discussed in light of the first section of the theoretical framework. Chapter six discusses CINI Asha's strategy for inclusion, also drawing on findings from the research, and discussing this in the light of empowerment. To conclude, chapter seven will give a brief summary of the thesis. Then I will give a conclusion where I will conclude on the research questions posed for this thesis. Finally, I will give my recommendations for further study and future work of CINI Asha.

2. Contextual Background

This chapter will provide a background and contextual setting for the rest of the thesis. First, concepts that will follow throughout the thesis are defined and outlined. Second, I will briefly argue for rationale for the importance of primary education, and education on the international agenda. Then I go on to talk about the education situation in India and Kolkata in particular. Finally, I will outline the work of CINI Asha and more detailed describe their education programme.

2.1 Definitions and Concepts

2.1.1 Deprived urban children

The main focus of this thesis is on deprived urban children. Deprived urban children reside in urban areas, in slum and squatter settlements or in the streets, and endure poverty, marginalization and vulnerable life situations. It is a heterogeneous and large group which makes it difficult to characterize with a clear and specific definition. This is clear from the following definition, stating the deprived urban children may be:

Children living in slums (authorized or unauthorized), children living on the streets, children living on railway platforms, along railway lines, children on construction sites, children as domestic workers, children engaged in household chores and sibling care, it includes children working for wages in dhabas, mechanic shops, as rag pickers, shoe shine boys, children of sex workers and children involved in sex trade (Annexure 1).

CINI Asha defines deprived urban children as children who are deprived of their basic rights, such as the right to development, shelter, protection, health and education. The NGO has established a multitude of programmes, each catering to deprived urban children according to need. In regards to the education programme, deprived urban children are mainly children living in slum or squatter settlements, with both or one parent. The household lives below the poverty line and/or in chronic poverty. The children are not

living in the streets, but many of them are roaming the streets during the day, playing and searching for the casual job. Lacks of health and education opportunities are common denominators. Many of the children are child labourers, or potential child labourers. The majority is not engaged in hazardous labour, rather informal activities such as rag picking, rickshaw pulling, working in leather factories or tea stalls. The older children are also affected by an adolescence factor, many engaged in criminal activities and addictions.

2.1.2 Slums and Squatter settlements

UNHABITAT (2004:10) defines slums as:

neglected parts of cities where housing and living conditions are appallingly poor. Slums range from high density, squalid central city tenements, without legal recognition for rights, sprawling the edge of the cities.

Slum settlements and housing are mainly of two types. One is the legal, which is set up on legally titled land. Even though the housing conditions are poor, it is a legal setup. The second is the illegal settlements that pop up throughout the cities. These are mainly shacks set up along main roads, railway tracks and outskirts in urban areas. In Kolkata the two types are termed registered and unregistered slums. The registered slums are recognized by Kolkata Municipal Corporation. The unregistered slums are set up on 'free' land, temporary housing and are not legally recognized. Throughout this thesis, it is not imperative to make a difference between the two, because it does not have an effect on educational participation¹. Therefore, when referring to slums or squatter settlements, they cover both the legal and the illegal setup.

Slum and squatter settlements are often intimately connected with severe poverty, lack of basic services, insecurity and high crime rates. Conditions are physically and statutory

¹ However, the difference is imperative in regards to slum clearance. Slum Clearance is when the government and/or private corporations clear the settlements for new constructions, often commercial. Families are forced to move to other parts of town, or other towns, and children may drop out of school.

manifestations that create barriers to human and social development. “The term ‘slum’ is used in a loose sense to designate areas that are overcrowded, dilapidated, faulty laid out and generally lacking in essential civic services” (Mander 2004: 190). Slums are often overpopulated, the environment is appallingly bad and health conditions of many slum dwellers are poor.

2.1.3 Formal and non-formal education

Formal and non formal education are terms that will be widely used throughout the thesis. Coombs and Ahmed (1974:8) defines formal education as “highly institutionalized chronologically graded and hierarchically structured ‘education system’”. This is usually referred to as the formal school system, established by the national or state government. In this paper, formal school will refer to government and private schools.

Non formal education may be defined as “any organized, systematic, educational activity carried on outside the framework of the formal system to provide selected types of learning to particular subgroups of the population” (Coombs and Ahmed 1974:8). Non-formal education centres, or alternative schools, refers to education services set up outside the formal education system of the government, and may or may not follow the same curricula or schedule. It is often known for a more flexible and responsive education alternative.

2.2 The rationale for primary education

The outset for this thesis is that every child has the right to go to school. In addition to education being a right in itself, the basic skills of reading and writing are essential tools for survival (Drèze and Sen 2002). Education is one of the most powerful factors in reducing poverty and strongly influences social, economic and political development (EFAGMR 2007). It may be summed up in the following:

The rationale for making a good quality education universally available is compelling. It contributes to economic well being and cohesive, stable communities; and it empowers poor people to bolster their incomes and leave the pain of poverty behind. No

country ever achieved sustained economic growth without reaching the critical threshold of literacy for its population. Another way education transforms lives is through equal schooling opportunities for girls, since they correlate closely with women's choice later in life, the number of children they have, the survival rates of their infants, how their children perform at school, and how productive their livelihoods subsequently become (Matssura *et.al.* 2001, quoted in Mehrotra and Srivastava 2005:3).

Education may help to overcome traditional power structures that have been working as barriers to participation in a society. Education may also increase the empowerment and choices that households have. Drèze and Sen (2002:143) claim that “the spread of education helps to overcome the traditional inequalities of caste, class and gender, just as traditional inequalities contributes to spread of education”. They also add that the empowerment value of education is so obvious that it is strange it has not been given more political and economic attention.

However, for deprived urban children, education is still none existent in their daily lives. Just as education and poverty reduction is intertwined, poverty and lack of education are also mutually exclusive. Lack of education makes it very difficult for deprived urban children to escape the viscous circle of poverty and poverty in turn makes it difficult for deprived urban children to access education. Putting the focus on primary education for all does not just put education in the spotlight, it also sheds light on the poor economic and social conditions that many children live in. Despite this, 72 million children in the world today are out of school. According to UNESCO, the most evident reason for this is poverty (EFAGMR 2007).

2.2.1 Education and development on the international agenda

The recognition that education yields great benefits both for individual and national socioeconomic development, put education in the limelight on the international arena in the late 1980s early 1990s. Previous to that, education was recognized as a right in the United

Nations Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. In the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) the issue was given new attention. The CRC declared that

“state parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity , they shall in particular a)Make primary education compulsory and available free to all” (CRC 1989, article 28).

The obvious benefits of education given in the previous section are underlying reasons why education is a focus internationally. In 1990, the Education For All (EFA) commitment was launched in Jomtien, Thailand. EFA was an ambitious and promising dedication to primary education for all children, stating that “every person-child, youth and adult, shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs” (WCEFA 1990). Yet, when reaching 2000, 113 million children were still lacking education opportunities. It was recognized that new efforts needed to be made, otherwise the inequalities would increase and marginalized children would still be missing out of school. A new EFA conference was held in Dakar, Senegal. It was recognized that government initiatives and international aid and programmes were only reaching the easily accessible children. The most marginalized and hard to reach children were still missing out of education. This divide increases the inequalities in education and living standard. The EFA initiative was renewed, and the aim and initiative is “ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory education of good quality” (WEF 2000: goal ii). The Millennium Development Goals are also committed to elementary education.

Putting the education issue on the international agenda, and pressing the individual states to action is important to secure the right to education for every child. Still, these international agendas have many critics. Samir Amin (2003) emphasizes that these universal goals are constructed from the western world. This is especially in regards to the notion of universal primary education. In addition, he argues, the universal goals have a strong link to a give

and take relationship, were low income countries are made dependent of richer aid giving countries to build and 'improve' their education system. He claims that by forcing these goals upon a nation we are creating development on the basis of outsiders, not on the country itself. Another point is when making primary education a quantitative goal, the discussions on the quality of education may be lost (Kumar 2006).

2.2.2 Inclusive education

Education planning by governments should concentrate on education for **all** persons, in **all** regions of a country and in **all** economic conditions, though both public and private schools (Salamanca Statement 1994:13, emphasis in original).

Inclusive education has in the later years been strong on the education agenda, especially in the discussion of the EFA initiative, and how to bring every child to school. I argue that there is a need to broaden the concept of inclusive education to involve all children who are not in school. Inclusive education is often equalized with education for disabled children and persons. Disability is in this meaning equalized with a physical and/or mental disability, where children with one or more disability are characterized children with special education needs. However, there can also be made a distinction between impairment and disablement when talking about inclusive education. Impairment is when the child has a loss of physical, mental or sensory function. Disablement is when children have minimal opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community, due to physical or socioeconomic barriers (Peters 2004).

The concept of inclusive education than only considers disabled children is too narrow, and it may be serving well to include other excluded groups as well. "The vast majority of children excluded from their rights to education are those living in conditions of absolute poverty. Poverty is the most persistent and inexorable of all exclusionary factors" (Bernard 2001:14). Considering this, inclusive education, the concept and the policies of inclusion implies a broader meaning. Peters (2004) states that some countries may also include non-impaired children in the definition of special needs education such as refugee children,

street-and working children, children who become orphans due to HIV/AIDS epidemic or civil strife and children from ethnic minorities and nomadic population. In India, the largest group of children out of school is street-and working children and children living in poor socioeconomic condition (UNESCO 2001).

The Salamanca Statement is an international framework recognizing the need to give special attention to all children out of school. “Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children (...) children from disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups” (Salamanca Statement 1994:6). Further it states that the term special needs refers to all those children and youth whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties, and the inclusive school must have a focus on those who have serious disadvantages and disabilities (Salamanca Statement 1994). Socioeconomic and cultural barriers to education are disabilities for many deprived urban children, keeping them away from the classroom. Inclusive education therefore means particular emphasis on those groups of learners who may be at risk of marginalization, exclusion and underachievement. This indicates a responsibility to ensure that those groups that are statistically most ‘at risk’ are carefully monitored and that steps are taken to ensure their presence, participation and achievement in the education system (UNESCO 2005).

2.2.3 The state of primary education in India

India is home to the world’s second largest population with approximately 1.1 billion people (UNHDRWB 2004). The country has over the last years had remarkable economic growth. However the growth in India as a whole has not led to much improvement and development for a large share of the population, and has increased economic vulnerability. The economic boom of India is leaving the poor behind, exacerbating inequality and poverty (Datt and Ravallion 2002). 6 395 000 children of school going age are still not in primary school (EFAGMR 2007). Poor and marginalized children are often worst off, and “the literacy status of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and minority community households is significantly worse than for other households” (UNHDRWB 2004:148).

The paradox of this large number of out of school children is that education has a long standing tradition in the Indian society, and after independence in 1947 there was much discussion on education's role in development and nation building. It was recognized early on that education was necessary both for a unified India and for development and economic growth (Kumar 2006). In 1950, the value and necessity of education was recognized in the Indian constitution. Article 45 stated "The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years" (Constitution of India, article 45). Yet, article 45 was part of the directive principles, meaning that they were recommendables, and the state had no judicial responsibility towards it. Hence, education, and especially primary education for every child was not prioritized (Kumar 2006). India has in post independence years been a nation characterized by poverty. In the recent years, however, the nation has experienced high economic growth. However, in regards to investment in education, the country still has a long way to go.

In 2002 elementary education was made free and compulsory under the constitution. Article 21A states that "The State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years in such manner as the State may, by law, determine". Under the 86th amendment it was also added the duty of the parents, saying that the duty of the one "who is a parent or guardian to provide opportunities for education for his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years". (Constitution of Union of India, 51A (k)) The state of India is now legally binding to provide education for all its citizens. "The fundamental right to free education will have paramount importance as it means that the State is now under the legal obligation to provide free and compulsory education to all children between 6-14 years of age" (Bajpai 2004: 337). The state referred to here is the nation of India. It is worth noting that elementary education is now assigned to each state, and is now compulsory. The economics of education derives both from the individual states and also the national budget.

In India today, the emerging trend is increasing enrolment in elementary education (Srivastava 2005), and according to UNESCO it is likely that India will reach the EFA goal of universal primary education by 2015 (EFAGMR 2007). On the other hand, a third of the worlds illiterate are in India (Mehrotra and Srivastava 2005), and education opportunities are still highly unequal between social groups. Drèze and Sen (2002:151) claim that this scene of illiteracy and lack of schooling is an endemic phenomenon and the persistence of “illiteracy and schooling deprivation in the younger age group is the most shocking aspect of the educational situation in contemporary India”. For those who are deprived of education, it affects their employment opportunities, reduces health, exposes them to harassment and abuse and undermines the ability to participate in the society (Drèze 2004). Even though progress is reported and access is increasing there are still several issues to be solved. Attendance rate (increased access) and regular attendance are not the same issue, and many children officially enrolled in school do not attend on a daily basis. Also, children who are attending school are not necessarily progressing, and this is closely related to a third issue; that quality in education is very low. There are grave inequalities, with increased private schooling for the privileged and decrease in quality in government schools (Drèze and Sen 2002).

To respond to this grave situation the government launched the national education programme Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), which is the Indian equivalent to EFA. The programme aims at reaching all children between the age of 6-14 with elementary education by the year 2010. The programme is implemented in partnership with state government, and in both rural and urban areas. The idea is to establish a school where it is needed and ensure access for all children (Mehrotra and Srivastava 2005). The programme is mostly implemented on state level, and is funded both by the national government and the state.

2.2.4 The education system in West Bengal and Kolkata

The school system in primary education in Kolkata is under the West Bengal State school system. The primary level is from class I to class IV. A child normally starts class I at the age of six, yet some start at five or seven. Upper primary or secondary school is from class

V to class X. It is normal to divide this level from grade V-VIII, and grades IX and X. The students receive Madhyamic (graduation) when they complete class X. There is a possibility to study up to grade XII. After passing grade XII, the student is eligible to apply to college, and later university. After class X, it is also possible to pursue vocational education under the formal school system.

There are several types of formal schools. Government schools are funded and run by the government. They mostly have government appointed headmaster and teachers. There are also several privately run but government aided schools. Finally, there are the private schools, which are privately run and privately aided. In Kolkata, most of the private schools are run by religious congregations, such as the catholic Loreto Schools or the Baptist schools. There are also several Hindi and Urdu schools. The private schools are commonly known for their good quality schooling. They have high tuition fees and the students come from middle or high class families. They usually have good infrastructure, well-qualified teachers and quality teaching material. The government run and/or aided schools are not always in good condition. The infrastructure is in a low state. Schools are situated in noisy areas, classrooms are cramped, quality of teaching is often bad (even though the teachers themselves might be dedicated) and teaching material is scarce. Some schools have one or two toilets for all the students and staff (which may affect attendance of female students). These schools are supposedly free, but there are always costs. They may not always be labelled tuition fees, but maybe electricity fees etc, and students have to pay for uniforms, textbooks, notebooks etc. (personal communication and observations).

Under the SSA, the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and the state of West Bengal have initiated the Shikshalaya Prakalpa (SP). The SP schools/centres are part of the national SSA, initiative for universal elementary education. The centres are targeting out of school children, mainly in slum areas. They are held in local clubs, where the children undergo a bridge course program. The objective is to fill in the gaps of missing knowledge the children have from being out of school over a period of time. The children are then mainstreamed into the formal school system. Even though they are initiated and funded by the government, they are not called formal schools because they are run parallel to the

formal school system. Children are allowed to stay in the alternative education centres until completed class IV, and will then receive official documents for their merits. The SP is a cooperation between the Kolkata Municipal Corporation and 60 NGOs in Kolkata (personal communication 21.09.10, SSA Officer).

2.3 West Bengal and Kolkata

I now turn to the more specifics of this research. West Bengal is situated in the northeast of India. The state has a little over 80 million people (GoWB 2006), making West Bengal the fourth largest state in population and the state with highest population density. It is a highly rural state, with 72 % of the population living in rural areas. Rural employment has been growing at a very slow pace, and employment opportunities have not been keeping up with population growth. The inability to create jobs in the agricultural sector is creating a large migration to Kolkata (GoWB 2004). Kolkata is the main urban centre. Although there are other large cities Kolkata holds almost 80 % of the urban population (CINI Asha, no date a). Migrants also come from Bihar, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh in addition to rural West Bengal and Bangladesh. The migration is a result of lack of pro poor politics and failed reforms in the rural areas, and many seek to the city in order to survive (Nambissan 2003). West Bengal has politically been dominated by leftist political party since the early 1970s, which is rather unusual in India. The Ministry of Education of West Bengal is responsible for the education sector, and is based on the formal schooling institutions as well as the education schemes under SSA.

2.3.1 Kolkata and the slums of the city

Kolkata is a city of 4.5 million people, but it is estimated that about 14 million people are in the city on a daily basis, with work migrants coming into the city looking for jobs and economic opportunities. Educational deprivation is severe among the low socioeconomic groups. Even though urban areas have long been considered to be economically and socially developed, there are still large pockets in the society that are missing out on basic services

About 1.3 million of Kolkata's inhabitants live in slum areas (UNHABITAT 2004). However the number is probably much higher, with new squatter settlements and houses set up everyday. Kolkata has two types of slums.

1. Registered slums: recognized by the CMC on a basis of land title. Often rented or letting out to slum population
2. Unregistered slums: free land, constantly growing settlements, temporary housing, not legally recognized.

In 2001, 1.5 million slum dwellers lived in 3500 registered and 2011 unregistered slums. 40% of Kolkata's slum residents have been slum dwellers for two generations or longer. The average income is 500-1700 rupees, and $\frac{3}{4}$ of slum dwellers live under the poverty line (UNHABITAT 2004).

Slums are often connected with poverty, bad conditions and low civilization. There is acute denial of minimum basic amenities required for human survival. Slums are centres of dirt and crime which are threatening to the city. The urban middle class themselves feel highly threatened by the presence of the poor among them, although they need them as domestic servants, service providers, petty traders and small factory workers, while being reluctant to divert more tax revenue to address poverty eradication. Unemployment is surprisingly low, but so is also formal employment. Most slum dwellers are trapped in insecure, low paid jobs and debilitating working conditions (Mander 2004) There is a strong correlation between poverty and labour opportunities and according to de Haan (1997) people with a stable job are less likely to be poor than people with casual jobs. "Informal or unorganized sector represents the self-help survival response of the urban poor who fail to get integrated into the [...] formal sector" (Mander 2004:217).

The bustees are often set up around an economic activity, such as a specific trade or factory. In Topsia and Tiljala areas for instance the leather business is the main source of income. Most men in the area work in one of these factories. It is also easy for children to get a job in a factory. Most households have 5-6 members, living in housing of an average of 10-12 m². There is a large built up bed, where most of the family members sleep. Under

the bed, and on shelves over the bed, the mother stalks the cooking equipment and other belongings. Most houses have electricity provided in the locality to all the houses, so a household normally has one light, a small fan and a TV. Toilets are shared by several households in one neighbourhood. Large scale unemployment, rapid urbanization, rapid population growth, extreme poverty, increasing disparities, cutbacks in governments social and educational budget, high level of child abuse by parents and the society at large and breakdown of traditional family structures contributes to hard living conditions and makes it hard to protect children and their rights (personal communication and field observations).

In almost every community there is a local club. The clubs are initiated by members of the community, and there are often a few club members that run the clubs that has the key and controls the money and the activity. The members are only men. The clubs are mostly a social meeting place for men, and are especially popular hangout on nights with a cricket game on TV. The clubs however, are also a helping hand in the local community. One club member stated that his club does several things to help out in the community.

Every month we set up doctor's clinic for the parents as well as children. During the festive seasons we give new clothes. There are kids who have lost their fathers, or are orphans, so we take responsibility for their education and help out. Since families over here are very poor, we help when somebody gets married and need some help with the money (personal communication 11.10.07, Club member).

The local clubs are run in small houses or rooms. The size varies in anything from 15 m² to 30 m². Some have basic services such as water and toilets, but others just have to due with the room. Without exception, all the clubs have electricity so they can have a TV. TV watching is among the most important leisure time activities (personal communication and field observations).

2.4 Geographic area and demographic characteristics

The fieldwork was conducted in three wards of the city, wards 57, 58 and 66. Ward 57 and 58 are within walking distance of each other, while ward 66 is located in another part of the city. The household is usually a family with father, mother and 4-7 children. Some households are also extensive families, with grandparents living in the same house. However this was not so common in this study. The large majority of parents are illiterate. In a few cases, the father had education up to class IV or V, but no more. Mothers were in general completely illiterate. The few who could sign their name were very proud. In most families, it was reported that children older than 14 were not in school. (Field observations, personal communication).

The father of the household is the main wage earner. In ward 66, the majority of the fathers are mainly working in the leather industry, which is the main money generating activity in that area. In wards 57 and 58, fathers are engaged in various informal labour. Many work as painters, in construction, rickshaw or wan pullers. It was also reported that many fathers work on a day to day basis or a week basis, making both work and income situation extremely vulnerable for many. Mothers are mostly housewives. Those who work are mostly housekeepers in other households. Some are also engaged in pay-by-piece labour from the house where they cut straps for sandals, do embroidery and other handicraft. The household income was anywhere from 1500-2500 rupees, with most families making 1500 rupees. Mothers report their spending to be around 2000 rupees pr month, and the majority state that their spending exceeded the income most months, but that they managed somehow (personal communications and field observations).

The areas in this study have mostly Muslim population. Muslims are a religious minority in West Bengal, but is a fairly large population. Being Muslim and poor means a low status in the community. They tend to live in great disadvantage in urban areas, and 40% of Muslims are at the bottom 20 % income level (Kabeer 2006). The Hindu population living in the slums is lower caste Hindus. A study conducted by Kabeer demonstrates that dalit and adivasi children are more likely to suffer from lack of education than other caste

children An ongoing issue for marginalized groups is as Kabeer (2006:8) states that “higher levels of poverty among socially excluded groups translates, as might be expected, into poorer levels of human development, in terms of both health and education”.

2.4.1 Child in Need Institute and CINI Asha

Child in Need Institute (CINI) was established in 1974 in the state of West Bengal, with the primary objective to give health and nutrition support to mothers and their children in rural West Bengal. The NGO has expanded to several states in northeast India, and as well as geographically, CINI has also expanded its scope of programmes. In 1989 CINI Asha², the urban unit of CINI was established in Kolkata, to ensure the rights of children living on the margins in the city. Following rapid urbanization and increased migration to Kolkata, the slum and squatter settlements were growing day by day. Street children and children living in the slums under grim conditions increased rapidly in numbers. The overall aim and mission statement of CINI Asha is to improve the quality of life of the urban disadvantaged population and protect the rights of the child through education, health and social mobilization. CINI Asha (no data a.) operates with five non-negotiable principles:

1. All children out of school should be considered child labourers or potential child labourers
2. The goal is elimination of child labour, not regulation of child labour
3. All children belong in formal schools
4. Any work that keep children out of school is hazardous
5. Any law or social practice which supports or justifies child labour should be abolished

The NGO has a strong focus on child labour and children’s rights, as well as child protection, and run several programmes for children living in the streets (with or without parents), children of sex workers, children who themselves are sex workers and child labourers.

² Asha means hope in Bengali

2.4.2 The education programme

The focus of this study is on the education programme for deprived urban children. The education programme was established in 1992, following the Babri Masjid riots. The religiously motivated riot destroyed many localities, and neighbourhoods were looted and burnt down. The riots caused severe damage in the Muslim slum communities, and reduced Muslim slums in the eastern fringe of Kolkata to heaps of rubble (Das 2000). CINI Asha was one of the NGOs involved in helping to rebuild the areas. Staff was taken by surprise at the grim situation for the children in the localities. They soon realized that the majority of the children were deprived of education.

With the firm belief that education is the best tool for escaping poverty and also the best possible way to eliminate child labour, CINI Asha started with education schemes. First, it was ad hoc programmes, where education and learning were held in the localities 2-3 hours each day. The focus was some education input, nutrition and health services. However, with the lack of clear objectives and aim the initiative was not yielding results or any change and it was acknowledged that running ad hoc programmes was not sufficient. There was a need for a more stable and organized structure for education (personal communication 24.09.10, CINI Asha staff 2).

The education programme run today is catering to deprived urban children living in the slum and squatter settlements. It is based on the firm conviction that all children belong in formal school. The aim of the programme is enrolment and retaining the children in school. The children are educated for one year in a preparatory centre, mainstreamed in a formal school and are given academic and motivational support in the coaching centres. Each of these are outlined below.

2.4.3 The preparatory centres

The preparatory centres are the CINI Asha education centres. The overall aim is to educate the child to age appropriate level, and mainstream the student in a formal school. Age

appropriate level means the class level equal to her/his age according to a normal progress in school, e.g. a nine-year-old should be educated to enrol in class IV. The preparatory centre is where the education takes place. The children are enrolled in the centres for one year, and are mainstreamed in formal school upon completion. The children are educated in accordance to the bridge course, which is the academic programme. It is a programme developed by CINI Asha. The focus is on an accelerated learning programme, with the aim of educating the children to the age appropriate level. The bridge course is based on interactive learning, and the pedagogical aspect is very child friendly and fun. The learning method is based on practical use and similarities in the alphabet and numbers, rather than the conventional teaching. The programme is divided in two parts, class I-II, and III-IV. In the centres with two shishumitas the children are divided into two tracks according to age 7-8 and 9-14 years old. There are 25 preparatory centres run for the school year 2008/09.

The preparatory centres are run by a shishumita³. S/he is the teacher in the preparatory centres and the coaching centres. S/he also is commonly termed community worker, seeing that a large part of the job consists of mobilizing the community towards the CINI Asha education programme and education in general. S/he is a para-teacher, meaning that s/he may not be a teacher by profession, but in this case trained by CINI Asha to be a teacher in this specific programme. The shishumita must be educated up to class X, preferably class XII. S/he will receive extensive training. The training is on the issue of deprived urban children and children's rights, and specific training on the bridge course which is the academic teaching at the centre.

2.4.4 Mainstreaming into formal schools

After completing one year in a preparatory centre, the student is expected to enrol in formal school, in most instances a government school. This is the mainstreaming, and CINI Asha is involved in the process. The shishumita is responsible for preparing the children to enrol in a formal school by the education given in the centre. S/he then needs to find a school

³ Shishumita means a child's friend in Bengali

close by, or a school the parents express interest in, to investigate if there are available seats and when the child may take the admission test. S/he will also help out with the paperwork and school bureaucracy of enrolment. About 60 % of the children enrolled in the preparatory centres are mainstreamed in formal school. The majority are mainstreamed into a class lower than their age appropriate level. Only those students who have regular attendance in the preparatory centre are able to complete the bridge course in full and enrol in age appropriate level (personal communication, 23.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3).

2.4.5 The Coaching Centres

In the mid 1990s CINI Asha staff discovered that although children were being mainstreamed into formal school, the drop out rate was very high. The majority of the children are first generation learners, and there is not a conducive learning environment at home. As children enter formal school, the academic demands become harder. The Indian education system in general is based on the fact that private tuition outside of school is close to obligatory in order to succeed in school. Depriver urban children have little or no homework support in their homes, and the schools they attend are overcrowded which leaves the teachers with nearly no time to help each child individually. The families from poor socioeconomic background cannot afford private tuition, which result in the child lagging behind in her/his schooling.

The coaching centres were established in 1995/96, as home work support centres. The main aim is to help the children with homework, and help them prepare for tests and exams. The necessity lies in the fact that they need help to cope with school work, so the students don't loose interest, fall behind, drop a class and/or eventually drop out. In addition, it also gives motivation and support. They are run in local clubs and local libraries, where CINI Asha is given the space for free. The coaching centres are also run by a shishumita, trained by the NGO. His or her job is to ensure that the children come to the centres, and help them with homework and prepare for exams.

3. Methodology

This chapter will cover the methodology of the project. I will first discuss the research design of the project. Further I will discuss methodological issues related to this specific research by first describing the sites, access to the field and the sample. Next I will outline and discuss the data collection methods I have used. Lastly I will briefly discuss the validity of the data and outline the methods for data analysis.

3.1 Research design; qualitative study and case study

The first decision I made when I embarked on this research was the research design; whether to do qualitative or quantitative research. Bryman (2004:27) states that “a research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data”. This research project is a qualitative study. Marshall and Rossman (2006) give five characteristics for qualitative research. First, it takes place in the natural world, second it uses multiple methods that are interactive, third it focuses on context, fourth it emerges with the process of research and last it is fundamentally interpretive. According to Miles and Huberman (1994) the strengths of qualitative data is that it focuses on ordinary events, where the data provides richness and holism, and may reveal complexity of what is being studied. It has an emphasis on people’s lived lives and the meanings people put on events. These factors were important for me when framing the research.

Further, the research design is a case study. “Case study is the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (Stake 1995:xi). Stake (1995:1) further continues that “we are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality”. According to Yin (1994) there are three conditions to consider when deciding on research design. The first is the type of research questions. How and why questions are typical for a case study, they are more explanatory and seek to understand and explain the specifics of the case. Looking at my research questions I have one how and one why question. The second is the extent of control the researcher has over the behaviour and events studied, and lastly the degree of focus on

contemporary events. The case study is fruitful where the relevant behaviour of the study can not be manipulated. The aim of the study is to explore how the people use and create opportunities in their life, something which cannot be staged by a researcher. And lastly the case study is preferred when examining contemporary events. The topic of elementary education is highly relevant in India, and not least for the families who are affected by these issues. Yin (1994:9) summarizes the case study as a design where “a ‘how’ or ‘why’ question is being asked about a contemporary set of events over which the investigator has little or no control.” The case study design matched my research objectives.

3.2 Sites, access and sample of the study

This study is based on fieldwork. Patton (2002: 48) says that: “ ‘going into the field’ means having direct and personal contact with people under study in their own environments—getting close to the people and situations being studied.” Field access, sites and participants is the foundation for any fieldwork, and will be discussed here.

3.2.1 The sites

The main site of my research was the city of Kolkata, in the eastern part of India. My main working areas are two slum areas, namely Dhobiatala and Topsia. These two areas stretch over wards 57, 58 and 66, and have been established slum and squatter settlements for many years. For the interviews and field visits I mainly visited three categories of sites; the CINI Asha preparatory centres⁴, the CINI Asha Coaching centres⁵ and formal schools⁶, who are all located in the three wards listed above. I also spent some time at the CINI Asha office, where I would start every day when I had a field visit, and also where I conducted all the interviews with the CINI Asha staff. I was also allowed to use the office as a work space as much as I needed. In addition, I conducted interviews with government staff and education officials in their respective offices in the city.

⁴ Diamond Sports Club, Ekta, Basti Federation and Dhobiatala

⁵ Tiljala Library, Ekta, Chowbaga

⁶ Public Welfare Children’s Society School, Chowbaga High School, Shree Bhama Sah Arya Vidhyalaya

3.2.2 Access

At the very beginning of the research I was in contact with CINI Asha. After corresponding by email and upon my request, the director of CINI Asha invited me to work with them. CINI Asha staff was my gatekeeper throughout the fieldwork. A gatekeeper is someone who can provide access to sites and people the researcher wants to interview (Patton 2002). A clear advantage of working with CINI Asha is that they have full access to all sites I wished to visit. Field staff would accompany me to the preparatory centres, coaching centres and formal schools. When I was accompanied by CINI Asha staff I also experience that people in the communities were open to talk to me. The staff are known faces in the community and people are familiar and comfortable with them. The field staff did not only give me physical access to the field, but was also a gatekeeper of trust and cooperation with the interviewees.

A second clear advantage working with CINI Asha staff is that they know the field sites and communities well. In relation to practical matters it saved me much time. As we walked through the field sites, the gatekeepers were also able to explain aspects with society and culture in the areas. It gave me opportunities to do some observations and informal conversations with both staff and people living there. Lastly I should mention that since I cooperated closely with CINI Asha, the field staff would go out of their way in order for me to achieve the field aims most days.

Yet, there were also some challenges in the process. First, since I was working with CINI Asha I could not visit the field by myself. Staff rightfully argued I would not be accepted by the community and people would not talk to me because I am an outsider⁷, In addition it

⁷ I did have one experience in the field after having interviews with three girls at a coaching centre. The girls were normally not going to that centre and were supposed to be home after school hours, around 4 pm. However, they told us they used to go to the coaching, because they wanted to talk to me. When we left the center at 7pm with the girls, two mothers came running; screaming and crying. There was much fuss, a community leader came, a lot of men gathering around, and the situation escalated with much yelling. This specific neighborhood had recently experienced a lot of trafficking of young girls out of the community, done by a white woman and a young Indian, hence thought this was happening now. CINI Asha staff managed to explain the situation; however it could also have gone wrong. After this event I fully understood the importance of a staff member accompanying me in the field. they used to go to the coaching, because they wanted to talk to me. When we left the center at 7pm with the girls, two mothers came running; screaming

would be difficult to find the schools and centres. However, this constraint offered difficulties in my planning. At the time I conducted my field work, the NGO was at a very busy time (as could be expected), which meant they were short of field staff that could accompany me to the field. Because of a few communication misunderstandings I visited sites that were not necessary (all though very interesting) for my research, and also that I at one time visited the same site twice⁸. It resulted in a lot of frustrations on my part considering the time constrains I had. Another aspect was at times felt I had to be careful not to loose control over my own research, and was afraid the NGO would only take me to the good example places, having their own agenda. I had discussions with the person responsible for planning my field visits, and explained very explicitly who I wanted to talk to and where I wanted to go. This way I gained greater control of my own research.

Field visits were seldom cleared with the centre or school before the visit. In the CINI Asha preparatory centres it was not necessary to have an appointment in advance. The shishumita and the children had time for interviews, and while I interviewed the children, the teaching would go on as normal. In the formal schools it was more of a challenge to not have an appointment. On the first field visit to a formal school the headmaster was not informed we were coming, and did not have much time to talk. Neither did I have the opportunity to see the students or teachers, because school was ending early that day. I decided to come back another day, given the opportunity. After this experience, I requested that CINI Asha would clear any field visits with the school first, so that neither they nor I wasted time visiting a school where no one had the time to do interviews.

Access to talk to government officials was often not a problem, although finding the right building (which at one time meant a three hour taxi ride) and the right office could be a hustle. I made scheduled appointments, and they were normally kept.

and crying. There was much fuss, a community leader came, a lot of men gathering around, and the situation escalated with much yelling. I turned out that this neighborhood had recently experienced a lot of trafficking of young girls out of the community, done by a white woman and a young Indian, hence thought this was happening now. CINI Asha staff managed to explain the situation; however it could also have gone wrong. After this event I fully understood the importance of a staff member accompanying me in the field.

⁸ All though this misunderstanding turned out to be fruitful to the research, because I met mothers, community members and also drop outs both from the CINI Asha program and formal schools.

External factors also had its toll on access. A flood lasting for three days, flooding the streets as well as schools, bandhs (strikes) and religious holidays⁹ resulted in many days without access to the field. All the hindrances left me with incomplete field work, with field visit to only on preparatory centre, one coaching centre and one school by the time frame I had set out. Although a researcher can never be completely done in the field, I decided to stay behind another extra 10 days to complete as many field visits and interviews I had set out to do. This, to all my luck, worked out in the end, and resulted in more complete data material.

3.2.3 Sampling

Any researcher conducting qualitative research is dependent on informants. Marshall and Rossman (2006) state that in qualitative research, the main consideration when deciding the sample method is the purpose of the research project. I have chosen purposeful sampling, which is “essentially strategic and entails an attempt to establish a good correspondence between research questions and sampling (...) the research samples on the basis of wanting to interview people who are relevant to the research questions.” (Bryman 2004:333-334). The target group and the type of sample sites were purposefully selected.

In the preparatory centres, coaching centres and formal schools, my method of sampling was convenience sampling. According to Bryman (2004:100) “a convenience sample is one that is simply available to the researcher by virtue of its accessibility”. At the CINI Asha preparatory centres and coaching centres, I interviewed the shishumita/s who was working at that centre. I also interviewed 3-4 students, randomly selected by the shishumita. After the first field visits I experience that the older children were better able to reflect on and answer the questions, and therefore specifically asked to talk to children that were nine or

⁹ The holidays of Eid (Muslim festival) was the last two weeks of September Durga Puja (Hindu festival) the last two-three weeks of October hindered access to the field a great deal. Even though the festivals officially only last a few days, in practice they last longer, and children in these areas prepare for the festivals, work extra and hence seldom come to school during this period.

older. I strove to obtain a gender balance. Many siblings go to the same centre, as most households in the neighbourhoods of the site locations are large families. At times I had to specify I did not only want to interview children living in the same household, in order to get a wider sample. In interviewing mothers, the sampling was also convenience sample. The shishumita sent for the mothers, and the mothers who had the opportunity would come to the centre. This could potentially lead to a bias. However, most of the households in the localities have the same socio-economic profile.

In the formal schools I interviewed the headmaster, one or two teachers (depending on the time) and 3-4 students. Interviews with teachers were randomly depending on who had the time. Regarding the students it was important to talk to students previously enrolled in the CINI Asha program. I mainly ended up visiting boy-schools, which made it impossible to attain a gender balance in the sample.

CINI Asha staff was purposefully selected according to who was responsible for the education programme, and could share experience, knowledge and opinions on the questions I wished to explore. Government officials and international NGOs were selected from the same principle. With regards to government officials I used the snowball effect, where I got in touch with staff, who could refer me to other officers involved in education for deprived urban children.

3.3 Data collection methods

Before entering the field the researcher has to make decision on the collection methods s/he wants to use. Bryman (2004:27) says that “a research method is simply a technique for collecting data”. However, it necessitates a conscious choice on how to best collect the data, as well as prepare guides. The data collection methods I have used in this research project are qualitative interviews, observations and document review. This use of more than one method is referred to as triangulation, where using more than one method for data

collection gives the researcher has the opportunity to cross check the findings (Bryman 2004).

3.3.1 The qualitative Interview

The qualitative interview is the main data collection method in this research. The qualitative interview gives the perception, experience and opinion from people involved in the education programme for this case study. It also offers an effective way to gather data in a short time span. Patton (2002:341) states that “the purpose of interviewing (...) is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Qualitative interview begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit”. I have conducted mainly semi-structured interviews. In a semi-structured interview “the researcher has a list of questions or fairly specific topics to be covered, often referred to as an *interview guide*, but the interviewee has a great deal of leeway in how to reply” (Bryman 2004: 321, emphasis by author). The topics and themes to be explored are provided by the researcher who guides the interview in the direction related to the objectives of the study, mostly with open-ended questions. The questions also give the interviewee the opportunity and freedom to bring in their own ideas and thoughts, and may result in new and interesting information for the study (Willis 2006). The interview guide contains the topics to be covered. It is also flexible and gives the possibility to probe, add and/or subtract questions as the individual interview and fieldwork progress, “but by and large, all of the questions will be asked and a similar wording used from interview to interview” (Bryman 2004:321).

65 qualitative interviews were conducted for this research¹⁰. The large bulk of interviews are with CINI Asha staff, shishumitas at both preparatory centres and coaching centres, children in preparatory centres, coaching centres and formal schools and mothers to children enrolled in the preparatory centres. These interviews will be referred to extensively in the analysis and are the foundation for the findings and discussions. In

¹⁰ See Appendix A for an overview

addition I also conducted interviews with teachers and government officials. This information is predominantly supplementary. All the interviews were in Bengali, with the exception of the CINI Asha staff. This necessitated a translator.

The interviews were mainly conducted in the CINI Asha education centres, at the CINI Asha office and in the formal schools. The ideal interview is situated in a quiet place, having only the interviewee and the translator present. However, this was not possible in almost all of the interview situations. With the exception of CINI Asha staff and government officials, all the interviews were conducted in the CINI Asha centres or the schools. This was unavoidable because the interviews took place during school hours as this was the time I would reach the children, shishumitas and teachers. In the CINI Asha centres, I would conduct the interview in one part of the room, while the education would continue in another part of the room (the centres normally have one room, and are generally not large). In the formal schools I would conduct the interviews in the small hallways and space outside the classrooms, as there are no spare rooms in the government schools. I was always accompanied by CINI Asha staff (gatekeeper) and my translator. Because of the language barrier I did not have the opportunity to talk to the participant alone. However, I never experienced that this was a problem, and felt the interviewee spoke openly about the questions asked. The questions did not require answers on sensitive information. In addition, I experienced that all interviewees would also speak openly on their challenges and frustrations as well as positive aspects. During one field visit, I did experience a slight difficulty. An older member the club spent most of the day in the club on the day of my visit. He obviously had great respect among the shishumitas and children. He placed himself on a chair in the middle of the room, and would deliberately listen to the interviews. I attempted to conduct the interviews in the other side of the room, and had the interviewee sit with the back to him so they would not look directly at him and be affected. Since the information was not considered sensitive and would harm in any way, I decided to continue. However, during one of the interviews he started to argue with the interviewee, a previous student at the centre. This interview has been discarded from the data set.

All the interviews were tape recorded. It did not seem to affect the interviewee. I discovered that the tape recorder was also an ice breaker between the children and me. They were encouraged to press play and stop, and many of the children would read a poem or sing a song before the interview started. It created a comfortable and secure atmosphere around the interview situation. This was important in order to establish a good connection with the children. Since I do not speak their language I had to find another way. In addition to the recordings, I took extensive notes, in case I would not be able to hear all that was said. The interview setting allowed for a lot of noise. Also in fear of technical trouble, loosing recordings, and even deleting recordings, I wanted to be certain I had the information. I did the classic mistake of deleting half an interview, but luckily my constant thorough note taking secured the information. It also allowed me to write additional information during the interview, such as hesitation, facial expression, and external events that I observed that can not be recognized from a recording.

Close to all the interviews were in Bengali, which necessitated the use of a translator. Before entering the field, I prepared my translator on the aim of the interview. I thought it would also be wise to have a second opinion on the translations, and I had this opportunity. After a few interviews I would also run some of the recordings with a trusted Bengali friend who is well educated in the English language; and she approved the translations. I worked closely with the translator, and she could also share valuable information on culture and communication. Bujra (2006) says, the translators are not just a help with the language, but can also be helpful with information about culture and behaviour. The translator for this research project is from Kolkata. Because the translator is from the same communication culture (to a large extent) she would respond with facial gestures, head nods etc. This created a greater trust and response with the mothers especially, since they felt they were actually heard. I was still fairly new in the Indian culture and could not respond in the same manner.

Although the interviews went smoothly most of the time, I also experienced some language challenges. I mostly asked open-ended questions, which gave the interviewee the opportunity to express their opinion and experience. Still, on a few occasions the

participant could not respond because s/he felt s/he had not understood what was being asked. I had to specify the question in order for the interviewee to be able to answer. I had to be careful to rephrase and specify the questions without leading the participant. This was especially challenging when I was working with a translator, seeing that I had no control over the wording she would use in asking the question. Hence, my rephrasing or specifications might not have been translated in the way I intended the question. I also experienced some difficulties with language and culture when conducting interviews. I realized that not all the words I used in my questioning had a similar word in Bengali. One example of a situation I often faced was that the participants very seldom understood the word 'challenge', seeming like there is not a good word for challenge in Bengali. I soon realized that I often had to use the word 'problem'. The word 'problem' is a stronger and more value loaded word than 'challenge', assuming that there is a problem. In most instances, this rephrasing did not lead to any misunderstandings or leading of the participant. It is also a danger that some of the information would get lost in the translation.

When interviewing children I realized early in the fieldwork that the questions had to be more closed, specific and short. I sometimes found it useful to ask closed questions and then follow up with a why or how, using their own previous answer. For example Q: What do you like most to do in school? A: study, play. Q: Why do you like to study? A: So I can be a good person, my mother says I can do many things if I study well. The children would be more willing to answer and also seemed more interested and willing to talk because their opinions were heard. Interviewing children also gave me some challenges in the fact that the questions were not always understood, the children did not know what to answer and some of the also had some trouble remembering events. Bryman (2004) notes that a factor of interviewing that needs to be considered is that the participant may report a situation that is different from what actually happen, and may not remember events correctly. I experience that if the child did not remember s/he would simply not answer.

In addition to semi structured interviews I had opportunity to do what Patton (2002) calls informal conversational interviews. It gives information "depending on what emerges from

observing a particular setting or from talking with one or more individuals in that setting.” (Patton 2002: 342). There are no predetermined questions and questions emerge from the circumstances in the field where the researcher cannot predict beforehand what will happen and who will be there. When walking with the staff from CINI Asha to the preparatory centres or the schools, we walked through the areas where CINI Asha works. On occasions when we had some extra time, the staff from the NGO offered to show me around the localities. This gave me the opportunity to talk to some people in the neighbourhoods. I could ask them questions about the locality, how it is to live in this areas, what people did for a living, if their children went to school, and why’s and why not’s. It gave me background information, a context to the locality and valuable background and overview information. It also gave a starting point of an interview later on, when I could refer to the neighbourhood. However, Patton (2002) warns that during these conversations the participant may not know that data is collected for a research project. A researcher should always let her intentions known to her participants when collecting data. In this way, the participant has the opportunity to not take part in the research if s/he does not want to. Recognizing this, my intentions with the information from these conversations is to get a better understanding of the background and the context of the localities and people in the slum areas of Kolkata. I would always explain my work, and more specifically describe it upon request.

3.3.2 Limitations to interviewing

One of the greatest limitations I experienced during interviewing was the language barrier, and the language became a barrier between the participants and me at times. This was most evident when I interview children that were shy to answer, and I did not have the opportunity to chat and ask questions in different ways. I tried to limit this with playing games, singing and doing little hand shake games they taught me. This also happened when I interviewed adults, when I sometimes would feel I lost some contact with the participant. Bujra (2006:173) states that when working with an interpreter she as a researcher has felt that she has “lost most of the control which a researcher would normally have to guide the agenda of debate. I found myself side-lined and alien”. I tried to limit this effect by having eye contact with the interviewee even though not understanding, and give small responses to the answers. In India, the famous head nod is impossible for a foreigner to understand.

However, I tried the head nod, with some success, to show I was paying much attention to the interviewee.

As the research progressed I did experience some difficulties working with a translator. There is always the danger of losing information when working with a translator, as statements may not be directly translated, or put in the same wording. We had a good working relationship. However, after a few days in the field she felt so comfortable with the interviews and the questions that she would ask probing questions without translating, and proudly announced that she now started to give alternatives if they could not answer straight away. She would refer to the research as *our* project. I was afraid that this might have led to several issues. First, when asking questions on her own, she might forget to translate all the information given by the interviewee, forgetting all the information given. It might also result in leading questions and giving the answers rather than the question to the participants. We agreed that she would only translate what was said directly by the interviewee or me. However, it was not necessarily having a negative effect, and I realized, after a discussion on Indian culture with a good friend, that getting the response to an answer would most of the times lead the participant to talk more. The direction it was going was not leading in any way, and the participant was encouraged to elaborate and share more ideas.

There is always a danger that participants will portray information in a biased manner, not answer truthfully in order to 'please' the researcher or be afraid to provide their true experiences and opinions. As previously mentioned, talking to the participant without other people around was not possible in the majority of the interviews. I would sit in a different part of the room, creating some space between the interviewee and the others, even though the sites were usually small and crowded. Being a white woman also has its limitations. On some occasions, the interview was focused on the lack of money and the need of the families and the locality. In one situation, I also received a propaganda speech pro government. I had to make it clear that I was not representing the government, CINI Asha or a foreign NGO.

3.3.3 Observations

Observations consist of detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviors, actions and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experience (Patton 2002:4).

Observation is a common data collection method in qualitative research. Bell (2005) states that observation is a good method to better understand and capture the context in which people interact. In my research project I have mainly used observations to collect data as an addition to the qualitative interviews. According to Yin (1994) observational evidence is often useful in providing additional information about the issues that are studied.

Semi structured observations will have an agenda of issues, but the data will be collected in a less structured way (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000). When going to the field, my main objective was to conduct interviews. In addition I wanted to do some observations to better understand the context, confirm or disconfirm information given during the interviews and to get some additional information I would not get during the interviews. Thus, when entering the field I had a checklist of issues to better structure the observations in a plethora of information. These would be broad issues such as where is the school situated, size of the school, how many classrooms, how many students per classroom, how many students' per bench and tables. In the preparatory centres I also had access to the attendance lists, and made it a point to look at them to see if the information given by the shishumitas was the same as the attendance list would tell me. Thus, I also used observations to see if the information given during interviews corresponded with my observations, or if there was deviations and things to question.

When walking through the localities to and from the field visits I used the opportunities to capture as much information as I could by observing the surroundings, activities and interactions happening in the everyday life around me. Unstructured observations will not be clear on what the researcher is looking for, but will observe in general before deciding

what is pertinent to the research project (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000). These unstructured observations were helpful to me in many ways. First I tried to capture an impression of the neighbourhoods and livelihoods. Entering a completely different culture than my own, both because it is a different country and life situation than my own I found it useful to try to capture the context of the lives of the people affected by this study. I am aware that just a few walks through a neighbourhood will not bring nearly enough knowledge of the lives of the people living there, but it gave me an initial understanding.

3.3.4 Limitations to observations

One of the most common limitations to observations is the reactive effect. This is when the behaviour of the participant/s changes because s/he knows that s/he is being observed. This makes it very difficult to observe the actual behaviour in the natural setting, recognizing that behaviour may change (Bryman 2004). I did not experience this as a great problem, since I did not have a focus on observations. I noticed that the children were very preoccupied with my presence when I went to the centres and schools. But it didn't affect my research seeing that the focus of my research did not depend on them acting 'natural' in a classroom setting. I also quickly noticed that after I had been at a centre for a few hours, the children went back to their normal activities, such as the teaching, reading in their books or talking together.

Another limitation is the fact that I am an outsider in a new setting. First, being a white woman in India always attracts attention. People will at times stop what they are doing, and watch me with great curiosity. This may result in 'false' observations, meaning that what I observe is not normal behaviour, but a result of a reactionary effect. I tried to separate what was a reaction of my presence, and what was natural behaviour. In most instances this was not very difficult, because the change of behaviour was very obvious, and they were not trying to hide the fact that they were watching me. The downside was that I did not have the opportunity to always observe 'true' behaviour. The mere fact that I am an outsider is what I consider to be one of my greatest limitations. Being from a different country, culture and lifestyle it is difficult to understand the culture and behaviour. It can be difficult to understand behaviour and the meaning behind it. I may interpret a situation wrong or not

understanding the context and hidden meaning behind actions. Another danger is that I observe everything in the beginning, noticing things a local would not. This can mean that I observe things that are not anything particular interesting or important. After a while I got used to the surroundings, focusing my observations on the topics of my research. This initial culture difference may also mean that I may notice things insiders may overlook because it is too obvious to them. A third limitation by being an outsider is that there are cultural conditions behind actions that I do not understand. I may misinterpret actions, or even miss important situations. I tried to limit this effect by discussing these issues with Bengali friends and colleagues. They could often explain a situation I did not understand, and simply tell me about culture and behaviour in Kolkata, which was very helpful during my observations.

3.3.5 Document review and statistics

During my stay in the field I also collected documents from the different stakeholders and sites. I gathered reports and statistics data from CINI Asha, the government of West Bengal and international institutions. In addition I have also gathered statistics from the government of West Bengal. The documents and statistics are meant as background information, additional information to what I have collected and statistical overviews of the situation. There are also some reports done previously on different programs and projects that I can utilize.

I will use Scott's four criteria's for deciding the quality of the documents (Bryman 2004). These are authenticity; is the document genuine, credibility; is the evidence free from error and distortion, representativeness; is the evidence typical of its kind and lastly meaning; is the evidence clear. Most of the documents I found I judged to have credibility and to be genuine. Still, when using the CINI Asha document I read them carefully and with the assumption that they will promote the point of view of the NGO. Still, their point of view will be argued for several times in the thesis, therefore I find it important to also highlight these aspects. CINI Asha documents also gave me very good background information and numbers and findings from previous studies that I did not have the time to investigate myself, and that were also outside the scope of my study. However, I found it useful as

additional information. There were however some documents I had to discard, because they did not appear credible because of information given twice with different numbers and facts, errors all through the report and lack of information.

3.4 Trustworthiness of the study

Lincoln and Guba have argued for a different standard of measuring validity in qualitative research than quantitative research. They operate with the term trustworthiness (Bryman 2004), that I will adopt for this study. Trustworthiness has four different criteria. First, credibility refers to the fact that the research is carried out according to good practice and methodology (Bryman 2004). In my study I took methodological questions and ethical concerns into consideration in every step of the process in the data collection. The second aspect of credibility is that findings are submitted to members of the social world studies for confirmation that what the researcher has understood is correct. Due to time limitations and lack of access to the field sites twice, I did not have the opportunity to conduct such checks. I did however have the opportunity to ask additional questions to the staff at the CINI Asha office if I needed any clarification. This was not possible for the participants interviewed in the field.

In order to secure credibility I used triangulation. Triangulation is using more than one method of data collection to study the social phenomenon (Bryman 2004). I did this in order to confirm, or reject information I had collected through interviews and observations, mostly using my own observations to verify the information I had obtained during interviews. Some of the information I have collected from the participant is also verified in the studies previously done for or by CINI Asha. Hence, documents and reports are also valuable sources of information.

Second, transferability relates to generalization (Bryman 2004). Since this project is a case study, done in a specific setting and context in a specific time, and that a social world is dynamic, it is difficult to generalize the exact findings to another social world.

Transferability on the other hand means that by giving thick descriptions of the data and the findings, it is possible for others to make a judgment of the possibility of transfer these findings to other cases (Bryman 2004). I find this characteristic more useful than generalization when it comes to qualitative studies and here specifically case studies. It is my intention to conclude findings specific to this case. I also hope it will provide some useful insight and knowledge of the issues for others who are working in this field. I feel that although the contexts differ too much to make clear generalization, this case study will highlight issues that are useful in other, similar settings too. The aim of research is to learn from it.

Lincoln and Guba argue for dependability as a concept instead of reliability (Bryman 2004). According to Yin (1994) reliability is when the researcher will arrive at the same findings and conclusion if the study is replicated. The goal is to minimize errors and bias. This is very difficult in qualitative research, seeing that the social world is dynamic and impossible to freeze. Instead, Lincoln and Guba talk about dependability. They claim that by keeping record of all the data procedures and the data collected, it will be possible for a second researcher to conduct the same research in the same field, to see if the findings and conclusions are replicable (Bryman 2004).

Regarding objectivity Lincoln and Guba mention conformability as a fourth criterion for trustworthiness. They state that although complete objectivity is difficult, the researcher should have acted in good faith and not allow personal viewpoints or values interfere and affect the research (Bryman 2004).

3.5 Ethical considerations

My main concern when conducting the research was that the participants would not come to any harm as a part of or result of my research. When conducting interviews with the children I was careful to not ask questions that would make them feel uncomfortable or

questions that were too personal. Seeing that I visited centres and schools I do not think my research or behaviour could harm the participants in any way.

I had prepared a consent form for this research. Still, the consent form was not used during the research. All the informants did not find it of use to sign a consent form. CINI Asha assured me that in the preparatory and coaching centres they had full responsibility of the children, and consent forms were not necessary. In addition, most mothers are illiterate, and many do not know how to sign their names. The consent form was also in English. I did ensure that I had informed consent from all the participants. I received oral confirmation that they understood the research project, what their participation meant and that I was allowed to use the information I was given. I also tried to have the consent on the recorder (after clearing the ok for the tape recorder). Before conducting the interviews I explained (through my interpreter) the purpose of my research, offered them full anonymity and full confidentiality. Most of the participants when asked, wanted to have their names mentioned in the final paper, even though I will still refer to them by category and not by names.

When interviewing children I faced a problem with the consent. I initially wanted to have consent from the parents to interview the children. Staff at CINI Asha reassured me that this was not necessary, seeing that I would talk to the children while in the centres. They explained that when the children were in the preparatory centres, the parents trusted that their well being was taken care off, and that was sufficient consent from the parents. Still, it bothered me a little, and the issue was discussed several times. When I entered the field I realized that parents of the children in the preparatory centres did trust the NGO with their children, and as long as CINI Asha trusted my intentions they would too. I also cleared the questionnaire for the children with staff at CINI Asha, to make sure it corresponded with the child protection policy of the NGO.

3.6 Analysis of the data material

The analysis of qualitative material is quite different than from quantitative data. Weiss (1994) describes analysis of qualitative material as more reliant on the researcher's interpretation and integration of the material, rather than counting and correlation findings. Qualitative data "are a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local context" (Miles and Huberman 1994:1). It is therefore also dependent on rich and thorough analysis from the researcher, who interprets, categorize and find patterns and conclusions in the rich material. Miles and Huberman (1994) also point out that most analysis is done with words, often from qualitative interviews or extensive field notes. They can be organized to allow the researcher to analyze and compare, and find patterns in the words that evolves to conclusions. The first step in analyzing starts with transcribing interviews and organizing field observations. After transcribing, the process of coding and categorizing the material is an important next step. Finally, the categories are set in a context of theory, and the material is analyzed in relation to the theoretical strain, in accordance with the codes and categories produced. Finally, the findings are reported in a project report, such as a thesis (Johannessen, Tufte and Kristoffersen 2004).

One common method for qualitative analysis is coding and categorizing the data material. Bryman (2004) states that coding is the process whereby data is broken down into component parts. Codes and categories are themes and patterns the researcher discovers in the data, and is used to interpret the meaning of the data. According to Miles and Huberman (1994:56) "codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meanings to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes usually are attached to "chunks" of varying size- words, phrases, sentences, or whole paragraphs".

During my fieldwork I had the opportunity to conduct preliminary coding and categorization. This was done in accordance with the research questions and themes that would emerge during the field work. This preliminary coding was also helpful in

developing the interview guides along the way, as I discovered new information I needed to investigate further and incorporate in the interview guides for future interviewing.

The first task after collecting all the material was to transcribe all the interviews. The transcriptions are word for word of the interviews with the children, mothers, shishumitas, and the CINI Asha staff. I felt it was necessary to do these thoroughly as much of my analysis would be based on this information. It is worth noting that it is by the words of the translator, and may have been put in different wording by the interviewee. Other interviews that were useful for background information and context were done more by notes.

When coding the data material, I first read through all the interviews, colour coding the information according to the research questions. During this process I also eliminated information that was not related to the topics. The first broad topics were reasons for exclusion, inclusive strategies and stakeholders involved. The next step was to analyze the material with more specific codes under each of the broad themes. This allowed me to find a pattern in the data set, allowing me to analyze the material. Coding “builds a foundation for the interpretive phase when meanings are extracted from the data, comparisons are made, creative frameworks for interpretation are constructed, and conclusions are drawn” (Patton 2002:465).

4. Theoretical framework

I will here present the theoretical framework this researched is based on, and creates the base for the assumptions of this thesis. First is the assumption that deprived urban children are excluded from education because they live in severe poverty and marginalization. I will therefore outline different poverty paradigms, and later explore if and how poverty can explain exclusion from school. Different poverty paradigms have been developed throughout the years. Some have grown out of the fact that the former has not been able to give a reasonable explanation and have been proved false by the paradigms that have followed. Thus, the different views on poverty also contain criticism of the others.

The second focus of this chapter is on empowerment as a strategy for poverty reduction and development. Several other policies and strategies, both social and economic, have been implemented the past 50 years, however they will not be explored here. Empowerment is a popular strategy in many NGOs, seeing that they work mostly on the grassroot level, and they seem to be the most effective for the poor themselves. The foundation for the CINI Asha programme is participation and social mobilization from the community and therefore I wish to explore how empowerment of the community may bring children to school.

4.1 Poverty

The concept of poverty is a contested concept, with different theoretical approaches developing in particular after WW II. Two paradigms are presented here; one based on economic measurement and the other founded on social measurement. The theoretical viewpoints are outlined. Most theories of poverty also offer a strategy for poverty reduction in accordance to what is believed to be the cause. Due to the scope and focus of this thesis, this will not be presented. The reader may also find the theories outlined simplistic and lacking in more perspectives and theories. I recognize the danger of not looking at all the aspects of the poverty debate, but again, due to the focus of the project I will not go further into that debate.

4.1.1 Economic measures of poverty

The most conventional measurement of poverty is economic theories and the modernization paradigm. It assumes that lack of income is the main reason for poverty. Lack of income will further lead to lack of other amenities and basic goods such as education and health, and also result in lack of social and political participation. The main reason for lack of income is low national economic growth, unequal growth and lack of household opportunities and incentives to increase their income. In the line of the economic arguments poverty is measured and termed in absolute poverty. Absolute poverty is measured by a poverty line, and a person is considered poor when s/he is living for under \$ 1 ppp¹¹ per day. The poverty line may also be set at \$ 2. In these instances, it is shown that by lifting the poverty line with only \$ 1, there is a substantial increase in the headcount of the poor (Thomas 2000). This does not only show how many live under severe poverty, but also that millions live under extreme insecure conditions, fluctuating above and below the poverty line from day to day. In India 358, 2 million live under the \$1(ppp) poverty line. By raising the poverty line to \$2 (ppp) the number jumps to 852, 2 million, which is about 80 % of the population (World Bank 2003).

The pure economic measurement gained a more human face in the 1990s. The human development index, HDI, was introduced by UNDP, and offers a human centred definition of poverty. The HDI is based on the three indicators; income, education and life expectancy (measuring health). India is nr 128 of the 177 states accounted for in the index and characterized as a medium development country. Both education level and life expectancies are low (Thomas 2000).

¹¹ ppp is purchasing power parity calculates and adjust for the differences in currency and living expenses in a country. This is enabling a universal standardized measure and possibilities for comparison between countries. ppp is from the 1989 calculations

The obvious advantages of using an absolute poverty line is the quantifying and mapping of poverty, it is fairly easy to measure poverty. Hulme and Sheperd (2003) notes that the 'money-metric' permits measurements between households, countries and regions, it allows for measuring changes in household poverty and the data can be rigorously analyzed. It is a highly tangible measurement. In addition, in the economic theories, economic growth and modernization is the main objective (Potter *et.al.* 2004). In order to see if the objective is met, one also needs a compatible measurement.

4.1.2 Chronic poverty and vulnerability

A household living in chronic poverty is severely economically deprived, yet chronic poverty entails more than economic deprivation measured by absolute poverty standards. It may be defined as a living situation in which a person is experiencing severe capability deprivation and vulnerability for a longer period (five years or more) (Hulme and Sheperd 2003). Empirical evidence shows that people who stay poor for five year or more have a high probability of staying poor most of their lives. Many households living in chronic poverty experience a lifetime below the poverty line, while others may find themselves just above it over a longer period of time. Quite commonly households are fluctuating above and below the poverty line. This is depending on the income opportunities available at any given time (Hulme and Sheperd 2003).

Chronic poverty is persistent and multidimensional, and commonly passed on to the next generation. The concept of chronic poverty embraces socioeconomic aspects, such as lack of labour opportunities and exclusion from health and education services. The relationship between exclusion from opportunities and the vulnerability of living in the margins is highlighted. Even the smallest change or shock may affect the living situation (Hulme and Sheperd 2003). Being poor in India is especially vulnerable due to the fact that there is no economic safety net of welfare system. Therefore internal or external shocks may have grave consequences. Families may move into poverty or experience extreme poverty over a longer period.

The concept of chronic poverty is strongly related to vulnerability. Robert Chambers (1989) claims that while poverty is directly related to lack of money and income, vulnerability on the other hand is more related to defencelessness, insecurity and exposure to risk. Vulnerability has according to Chambers two sides; the external side of risks and shocks outside the control of the household, and the internal side which relates to the families defencelessness and/or inability to cope with shock situations. Households have different portfolios of assets and investments, and have strategies for the use of these assets in different situations. Vulnerability is not equal to absolute poverty, but may be equalized with, and a part of chronic poverty, always living in stress and finding livelihood strategies with the income and assets the household possess. When exposed to external or internal events, (such as closedown of a factory or illness in the family), the household may well fall below the poverty line.

Chronic poverty has a strong sense of intergenerational poverty, where a household may remain poor across generations. Lewis (1959) claim that there is a culture of poverty in poor families. He argued that the poor families are poor and remain poor because they have developed a culture and a way of life in which poverty will persist. There is a culture of resignation and fatalism, where the poverty is accepted. This fatalism results in very low level of self action to escape poverty, and a belief that there is little one can do for oneself to change the situation.

Hulme and Sheperd (2003) do not want to go as far as the culture of poverty concept claimed by Oscar Lewis. However, intergenerational poverty is a known fact in many developing countries. They claim that by looking at a livelihood perspective and the assets and capability a household possesses, one is also able to look at what is being transferred to the next generation. The factors keeping a household in poverty depends on financial and material capital, human capital and social and cultural capital, and in what ways these are being transferred. The authors claim that where the transition is status quo from parent to child, poverty is also transferred, with low income, ill health and illiteracy as common denominators. A household not able to cope with shock or stress (war, natural disasters, loss of job) will persist being poor, or even fall into poverty. If the household is not able to

use its assets to improve, due to internal or external factors, poverty is likely to prevail. On the other hand, a household able to escape chronic poverty, a so called ascending household, are able to use their assets to improve their situation, such as creating work opportunities, better health and educational opportunities. This is not only depending on the household assets, but also external economic, political and social factors, enabling the household to make use of their capabilities and assets (Hulme and Sheperd 2003, Sen 1999, Drèze and Sen 2002). Intergenerational transmission of poverty is also dependent on the education and skill level of parents and also the social attitude of the parent. The authors also state that educational qualifications are transmitted through investment in time and care and investment in time and capital. In addition, socialization and social opportunities play an important part in access to education (Hulme and Sheperd 2003).

4.1.3 Social exclusion

Social exclusion goes beyond the concept of economic poverty. The term was originally coined in France by Lenoir, who addressed the increasing inequality and poverty in the country. He argued that the excluded are those who have no access to the fruits of economic growth, and that there was an increasing lower class who was excluded from the rest by lack of opportunity to fully participate in the society in which they lived (Bhalla and Lapeyre 2004). The concept of social exclusion was not paralleled with poverty, seeing that poverty was in terms of severe economic poverty, mainly existing in developing countries. Recently, however, the concept of social exclusion has been more related to poverty, offering an opposite as well as complementary explanation to the conventional economic idea of poverty.

Most of the definitions encountered on social exclusion have two main factors in common. The first is that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. A central notion of social exclusion is that poverty and deprivation stretches beyond mere income and material poverty. As Jalal (2000, quoted in Sen 2000:V) argues “the exclusion of the poor from participation in and access to opportunities and activities is a major non material dimension of poverty, that also needs to be recognized and addressed”. Poverty can be measured in lack of social opportunities, not exclusively by economic measurements. Social exclusion

is more comprehensive and also considers the malfunctioning of the major social systems that could potentially secure full participation in society and create development (Bhalla and Lapeyre 2004). When states and national institutions fail to include the marginalized, they are creating barriers to development for the poor. Still arguing for a social exclusion approach does not necessarily mean rejecting the economic aspects of development. The perspective does not involve a

denial of the sensible view that low income is clearly one of the major causes of poverty, since lack of income can be a principle reason for a person's capability deprivation (Sen 1999:87).

The second point to be made is that institutions and processes are responsible for causing and reproducing deprivation (de Haan and Amaresh 2004). The focus is not on the cause of poverty on the individual level. Rather, the institutional processes that lead to deprivation and the consequences it has for the poor, are the imperative questions (de Haan and Maxwell 1998) Hence, poverty is not only the fault of the poor and the lifestyle they lead, but rather lack of opportunities in society, such as secure jobs, stable food intakes and education and health care arrangements. The World Bank has also recognized the fact that poverty is not just individual, but also based on external factors.

To be poor is to be hungry, to lack shelter and clothing, to be sick and not cared for, to be illiterate and not schooled. But for poor people, living in poverty is more than this. Poor people are particularly vulnerable to adverse events outside their control. They are often treated badly by the institutions of state and society and excluded from voice and power in these institutions (World Bank 2001:15).

Marginalization happens on several levels; material by lack of income, social level by lack of education and other public services and at the political level with lack of political participation (Bhalla and Lapeyre 2004). Social exclusion results in an income markedly lower than that customary in the society and failure or inability to participate in social and political activities. de Haan and Maxwell (1998:3) demonstrates the multiple aspects of deprivation

Exclusion in different arenas will overlap. Thus, poor in India are likely to be denied essential rights, such as access to courts; they will have less access to labour and product markets; and they will also suffer from lack of family support and wider networks. All these aspects of multiple deprivations are band up with the actions of elites.

de Haan and Amaresh (2004) show how discrimination can be a cause for exclusion. Discrimination is embedded within social structures and social relations, and expressed through both conscious and non-conscious actions. These actions may be the processes and institutions behind a particular form of deprivation, and brings forth the question whether poverty causes exclusion, or social exclusion causes poverty. If a family has no access to the labour market because of the process of discrimination and social exclusion, the consequence may be poverty. The question then becomes; who is to blame for the family's poverty? Lack of participation in activities may not only be based on income deprivation, but rather other factors that hinder participation. Social discrimination is particularly interesting in India, where the society is highly based on hierarchy and class. Scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and religious minorities such as Muslims are highly discriminated against, especially in the labour force, health and education (Nabmissan 2006). This will not only lead to social exclusion but also financial deprivation.

Issues of inequality and participation are particularly crucial in India, where social divisions (based on class, caste and gender among other sources of disparity) are pervasive and have tended to take a heavy toll on both economic development and social opportunities (Drèze and Sen 2002:11).

4.1.4 Urban poverty

In development and poverty research, it has been written extensively on urban and rural poverty. During the rapid of urbanization in many low income countries (still going on to a certain extent) it was long assumed that the population in the urban areas benefited from industrialization and the economic growth that was, and still is, taking place. Lipton (1977) claimed that there was an urban bias, where the cities were given all the attention and resources in development, and the rural areas were left behind. However, it was soon

established that the growth occurring in urban centres only benefited the middle and upper classes. Severe inequalities were not just between rural and urban, but also between different classes in urban areas. Today, migrants to the cities come in search for work and better opportunities, but most often find themselves in insecure jobs in the informal sector, living in squatter settlements and slum areas (UNICEF 2002). Wratten (1995) shows that the dependence on income is stronger in the urban areas and cities than in rural areas. The urban life is ruled by monetary exchange, where food, shelter, clothes, medicine and health care and educational services are only accessible with money (Wratten 1995, UNICEF 2002, Mander 2004). This may affect the participation in education. In addition, the low socioeconomic status makes many people vulnerable to abuse and harassment by the police and authorities, and find it hard to claim their rights (Mander 2004).

4.2 Education, poverty and social exclusion

I will briefly outline how education is related to poverty and social exclusion. Poverty is related to education in two distinct ways. First, it is believed that lack of education will continue the vicious circle of poverty on the individual and national level. Education has an enormous empowerment effect and creates opportunities for change in people's lives, for poor people in particular. No country has developed economically without a literate population. Although India is now experiencing rapid economic growth it is argued that she will not be able to reach her full potential without participation from the whole society (Dréze and Sen 2002, Shrivastava 2005, Kumar 2006). The second issue is that poverty is perceived to be a major barrier to education (Bernard 2001, UNESCO 2005). It is this last issue that will be discussed next.

Poverty as a barrier to education happens on several levels; micro, meso and macro. At the micro level household poverty may hinder education in two main ways. Low and insecure income is hindering the family in investing in education. Costs such as fees, school books, uniforms and other school material have made it difficult for households to provide education for their children. Studies from India show that education level is closely related to income levels. For the poorest 20 % of the population, there is an average of 2.3 years of

schooling (Carm *et al.* 2003). The indirect costs of education are related to child labour and the loss of income the family would have if the child was in school instead of working. Household poverty forces children into labour at an early age, when the income is imperative for the family's survival. According to ILO convention NO 138 a child labourer "shall not be less than the age of completion of compulsory schooling and, in any case shall not be less than 15 years" (ILO 2008:6).

At the meso level, poverty is a barrier to education when the nation fails to invest in education. The nation-state shapes the provision of educational opportunities and determines the education policies. In many low income countries, governments face substantial barriers such as severely limited economic resources. In low income countries the government lacks money to invest in infrastructure, educate teachers and give teachers decent salaries (Buckmann and Hannum 2001). When at state cannot provide a school building or well educated and paid teachers, much will depend on the private education field to provide primary education for all. The state is in several ways failing in providing education for all its citizens in school age. One major debate centres around the question whether it is a lack of resources or lack of political will to allocate resources and invest in primary education for all.

Sen (1999) argues that investment in education at the national level does not necessitate high levels of economic investments. Rather than being based on economics alone, it may be a support-led process. This is dependent on the fact that relevant social services such as basic education are labour intensive, and therefore relatively inexpensive in poor and low wage economies. Thus, providing primary education does not require a high amount of financial resources even in a low income country, and is therefore a question of political will. Sen (1999) further argues that in India, the government has faulted because of the skewed attention towards elitist thinking, with a strong focus on higher education and a massive negligence of school education. In addition, the global economy tends to favour those with higher levels of education, thus deepening the gap between rich and poor.

Blunt (1994) claims that lack of participation in education must be seen in a larger context, than just looking at national budgets and politics. Lack of investment in social sector in general and education specifically is a result of globalization. Low income countries are implementing economic reforms put forth by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). One of the most comprehensive reforms are the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP). There was a demand for severe cuts in the social sector, which gravely damaged the education sector in many countries. It led to introduction or reintroduction of school fees (Brock-Utne 2006). In India, elementary education is free by constitutional rights, yet education is still expensive for many households (Bhatty 1998). The Indian education system then is founded on the premise that those who can pay for education will receive education, resulting in exclusion for the poor (Kumar 2006).

However, economic poverty is not the only barrier to education. In addition to poverty, Anne Bernard (2001) argues that underlying conditions such as discrimination may also hinder education. Social class can be a discriminatory factor that keeps children out of school. She also refers to systemic factors that push the children out of school. Unsafe and insecure schools, unqualified and unmotivated teachers and low quality of education which are all part of the education system, may keep children out of school. These issues are closely related to economy, because investment in infrastructure, teacher education and teacher salary may help solve these issues. On the other hand, the social factors in the society also play a significant role (Bhatty 1998).

Discrimination by teachers and peers keep children out of school. When the environment is not child friendly and the child is harassed on a daily basis, s/he will have no interest in going to school. As de Haan and Amaresh (2004) remarks, discrimination is embedded in social structures and is also institutionalized in education. Discrimination by teachers has reportedly been a problem in India resulting in lack of interest in education for the children from poor socioeconomic backgrounds. Kabeer (2006:8) argues that

Processes of cultural devaluation are key mechanisms through which the social dominant groups are perpetuated as a property of social structures. These processes draw on beliefs, norms and values

to disparage, stereotype, invisibles, ridicule and demean these 'despised' groups and categories and thereby explain and justify the denial of full rights of participation in the economic, social and political life of that society. Such processes can have profound effects on the sense of self-worth and sense of agency of those who are treated this way on the terms on which they are able to access the resources and opportunities in different spheres of the society.

Kabeer (2006:8) further states that "those who face systematic discrimination are also likely to have fewer incentives to invest in improving their skills and education, given that both expected as well as actual returns to such investments are likely to be lower". Embedded in this is the belief that education is not for poor children, both with the families themselves and the society at large.

4.3 Empowerment of inclusive education

Empowerment strategy for inclusive education is primarily to put the poor in the centre of attention. It entails making the household responsible for creating opportunities for participation in education. The community mobilization strategy in the CINI Asha programme contains empowerment, considering the objective is that parents make decisions and create access. I will first present the concept of empowerment. Next the process empowerment is discussed, mainly by the ideas of Paulo Freire and Amartya Sen.

4.3.1 The concept of empowerment

The idea of empowerment implies that people who are relatively powerless are able to gain more power (Spicker, Leguizamón and Gordon 2007), and that once empowered, people who have been relatively powerless can become agents of their own opportunities and development (Craig and Mayo 1995). The strategy of empowerment entered the field of development arena in the early 1990s with the recognition that the traditional economic growth and modernization theories were not benefiting the people, and a call for a new and alternative development strategy was needed (Friedman 1992). Bhalla and Lapeyre (2004:21) stated that "implementation of social politics within the framework of people-centred development strategy is more likely to lead to an increase in the capabilities of

disadvantaged people rather than rapid growth strategies". According to Amartya Sen (1999) development must start with the participation of the people. He calls for a people centred development, where he puts human freedoms as focus. Freedoms have intrinsic importance, where the achievement of them has a value in itself, such as the freedom to have job or the freedom of education. In addition, freedoms also have an instrumental importance, where one freedom, such as education, may be used to expand another freedom, such as securing a job. Since freedoms have individual value, the want for change must start with the poor themselves. Equally, Wratten (1995:18) claims that it is important to look at participatory approaches to poverty and development, stating:

It is a prerequisite to devising anti-poverty programmes which address root causes of poverty and meet people's perceived needs. Not least, concentrating on poor people's priorities challenges a dominant view of the poor as passive or irresponsible, and the patronizing assumption of experts that poor people are to be planned for.

Through socioeconomic empowerment, individuals and communities will become managers of their own development and obtain responsibility for their own future progress (Titi and Singh 1995). A two step process is outlined by Rowlands (1995). First, it is concerned with how people become aware of their own interests, and makes decisions from these recognitions. Second it is concerned with how people are able to create action and change in accordance with the decisions they have taken. This definition and two step process of empowerment will be used throughout this thesis:

Enabling people to understand the reality of the environment (social, political, economic, ecological and cultural) to reflect the factors that shape their environment and to take steps to effect changes to improve their situation (Wratten 1995:18).

Empowerment, as the word implies, is concerned with power, more specifically with the distribution and redistribution of power relations in society. How this is defined depends on how the concept of power is defined. Some scholars argue for a zero-sum power relation. In this relation, power is a constant level and if one group is to gain more power, another group has to decrease in power. Therefore, there will most likely always be conflicting

interests because none of the groups will want to lose their power. This power relation is characterized by domination of one group over the other. The other strand of thinking is where power is flexible, and may increase and decrease according to need. Therefore, conflicts may be less. Cooperation and facilitation for more power to a marginalized group may be more inclined. However, this is not rejecting that domination does not exist. It may be that when a marginalized group gains more power, the more privileged will find ways to increase their own, in order to keep their advantages and domination (Rowlands 1995). There may also be made a distinction between power over and power to. Power over is characterized by a situation where some people have control and influence over others. As Freire (1970) describes, it is a dominative relationship where an oppressor will dominate the oppressed, with or without the knowledge of either part. Power to concerns the power to act, make decisions and transform these choices into action in peoples own lives. Liz Kelly (in Rowlands 1997) states that empowerment is about power to; power to create opportunities and action. Power to act will also increase the resistance to a dominative relationship.

Empowerment as a strategy may be implemented on different levels. The process may be on the individual level, concerned with the capabilities of the poor (Rowlands 1997). The advantage of using the individual level is that no one in the household or community is overlooked and all power relations are examined. Friedman (1992) claims that empowerment is a process that seeks to increase power of households and their individuals through their involvement in socially and politically relevant actions. The household is the main unit of decision making, therefore the household must be the main unit of empowerment. At the same time, each individual and the power structure and relation within the household is also recognised. At a higher level, empowerment strategies in development are often concerned with a larger unit, such as a community. The concern lies with the power of the community, to actively increase the whole communities' choices and development. This is often related to larger political issues. The household as described by Friedman (1992) will be the main concern of this thesis, because the decision to enrol a child in school must start with and involve the household.

4.3.2 The relationship between education and empowerment

Education and empowerment is often concerned with the strong effects and positive implications that education has on household empowerment, creating opportunities for change and development. Amartya Sen (1999) is one of the authors claiming that education may have strong impacts on other areas in life. He says that education is not only an intrinsic freedom, but also an instrumental freedom promoting development in other areas of life. Acknowledging that the empowerment value of education is strong, I will here turn the picture around, and discuss empowerment for participation in education. With almost 6.4 million children out of school in India, there is not only a need to talk about the empowering force of education. The discussion, rather, needs to be on how the poor families may gain empowerment and use this new power to participate in education.

4.4 Principles of empowerment for inclusive education

Given the definition of empowerment as a two step process, I will now discuss the principles of the two steps. Reasoning that the strategy of empowerment is founded on the involvement and action of different stakeholders, I will first discuss the role of these. I will then turn to how decisions are made, and how these decisions are turned into action.

4.4.1 Awareness and critical consciousness for empowerment

The definition given at the beginning of this chapter states that empowerment entails a two step process. The first step is enabling people to understand the social, political and cultural environment that is shaping their lives, and on the basis of this understanding making active and conscious decisions in their lives. Freire (1970) refers to this as an environment for critical consciousness. When people reach an understanding of their reality they may desire a change, and may be able to create it. This does not necessarily mean only political factors, as oppressive forces in society often is related to, but also cultural and social barriers.

Freire (1974) refers to the process of critical thinking as conscientization. Conscientization refers to learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions in their lives, and take action against these oppressive forces in their reality (Richard Shaull, forward in Freire 1970). Critical consciousness is necessary in order to create action. It is part of the praxis (Freire 1970). Humans live in and have their realities in a concrete situation, and reflection is based on that life situation. There is a need for a critical reflection upon our existence in order to thoroughly realize the situation we live in. It will result in an understanding of the life we lead, and what we want in our life. According to Freire (1970) when the oppressed reach a conviction that they are Subjects, the poor can make decisions they want, and demand their rights. “The awakening of critical consciousness leads the way to the expression of social discontent precisely because these discontents are real components of an oppressive situation” (Francisco Weffart, quoted in Freire 1970:18).

The opposite of critical consciousness is naïve consciousness, and will lead to self-depreciation. It derives from the internalization of the opinion the poor hold of them. “So often do they hear that they are good for nothing, know nothing and are incapable of learning anything, they are sick, lazy and unproductive, that in the end they become convinced of their own unfitness” (Freire 1970). The praxis is a two step process, where critical consciousness will lead to a conscious decision. The next step will be to act on these decisions; I will turn to this soon.

Freire’s (1970, 1974) concept of the dialogue is an interesting strategy to create an environment for critical thinking, and for the poor to better understand the world in which they live. The dialogue is a horizontal communication, where there is true conversation and discussion between the partners involved. It is built on trust, love, humbleness and critical thinking. For the facilitators to be an agent of change with the poor, s/he needs to listen to the world view of the poor, and have a discussion where the poor are the main actors. Ideas may be raised and discussed, and opportunities may be given by the facilitator, to make the poor aware of their oppressed situation. It is imperative that the poor are involved in a dialogue about their life, and their understanding needs to be equal to the external facilitators’ understanding. A power balance between the two actors is absolutely necessary

for the dialogue to function and critical consciousness to be the result. If information is given to the poor, but there is no discussion, there is a situation of anti-dialogue. In the anti-dialogue, there is no horizontal communication, giving the poor no chance to reflect and discuss, but only receive information which he or she will believe in and act from. There is a banking of information leading to action based on a reproduction of the oppressors' reality, without critical thinking and action based on reflection from the poor. The dialogue becomes an important tool for the facilitator to enable the poor to critically think of their life situation and opportunities. The reflections which will lead to decision making comes from the poor themselves, and will therefore be true reflections and actions, not just reproduction from the oppressed.

4.4.2 Action for empowerment

Conscientization and realization of the world cannot alone lead to transformation. Critical thinking may lead to the oppressed realizing they wish to make a change in their life, and are no longer afraid to take the responsibility for action. The second step of the praxis is the action taken by the poor to achieve change. This action needs to be based on the critical choice made, only then may the action and change yield results in development. It is imperative that it is based on the wanted change of the poor, because they themselves realize they want a change. Action will bring the critical reflections into life, and together action and reflection may transform the lives of the oppressed (Freire 1974).

On the other hand, action based on naïve consciousness will not truly result in development. Embarking upon change without critically thinking about what one wishes to achieve, will not lead to development. It may lead to a replication of other peoples' life. Facts and decisions are attributed to a superior power, the external agent, and change will be according to what the external agents want. Naïve consciousness may also lead to no action at all. If the decision and desire for change does not come from the poor, they will not invest time and effort in the actual change (Freire 1970).

It is now established that action depends on an intrinsic demand from the poor. Second, action needs to come from the poor themselves, not just the want for change. Sen (1999) argues that action must come from the freedoms and capabilities a household already possesses. Capabilities are freedoms a person already possess, and may use to achieve other freedoms. Work, good health and education may be such freedoms, and they are also a capability a person has, e.g. good health is of great benefit when obtaining a job. Capabilities differ between households and individual. Freedoms have both an intrinsic value and instrumental value. The intrinsic value may be related to freedoms a family or person wants to achieve, after initially reflecting upon their life situation. The instrumental freedom is more the tool for action. According to Sen (1999) the instrumental role of freedoms is the way different kinds of opportunities, capabilities and entitlements contribute to the expansion of other human freedoms. Freedom of one type may advance the freedom of another kind

Expanding the freedoms we have reason to value not only makes our lives richer and more unfettered, but also allows us to be fuller social persons, exercising our own volitions and interacting with- and influencing- the world in which we live (Sen 1999:15).

Sen (1999) lists five instrumental freedoms. First are the social opportunities. These are arrangements the society makes for education, health care and other social services that influence a persons' access to these freedoms. The second is economic facilities, which are opportunities to use economic resources for consumption, exchange and production. One important aspect to note is that the resources owned and available for use for each individual must derive from the opportunity to create this income. Third is political freedom which is the opportunity to determine who should govern, to actively participate and influence local as well as national politics. The forth is transparency, based on the fact that there needs to be transparency in a society in order for people to make decisions based on all true facts. The fifth is protective security, which implies that without protection from violence the other freedoms are hard to expand. The safety of people is a tool for further action of expanding other freedoms. It is only the first three instrumental freedoms that will be of further focus of this thesis. This is not to disclaim the importance of the two latter, but because it is the social opportunities, economic facilities and political freedoms that is of most importance when discussing access to education. However, it is important to look

at the instrumental freedoms as interlinked, and as Sen (1999:40) argues instrumental freedoms “directly enhance the capabilities of people, but they also supplement one another, and can furthermore reinforce one another”.

To have ownership of the transition is imperative. With full engagement of the poor themselves, they may be able to push the change in the direction they want to go. More importantly, external actors may not as easily remove the change, because the change is happening within the household (Sen 1999). Establishing that empowerment and action need to come from poor themselves, it is important to note that action also depends on external agents. Action needs to be facilitated, and external actors may be able to influence and set conditions for action.

4.4.3 Change agents in the empowerment process

Empowerment as a strategy takes a bottom up approach, making the poor themselves the main actors and change agents in their lives (Friedman 1992, Titi and Singh 1995). One of the main principles of the process of empowerment is the acknowledgement that the poor must be active agents of change. Many strategies for development have been based on the fact that the poor are passive and ignorant, and in order to escape poverty, they need to rely on strategies done for them. Friedman (1992:57) says that there is still a widespread conception that the poor are

dirty, dumb (...) wanting in skills, drugged, prone to violence and criminality and generally irresponsible. People with these traits must be controlled, institutionalized and managed. Those labelled as the poor have few options other than to acquiesce in the role assigned to them as the state's wards. For the most part, they are regarded as incapable of taking charge of their own lives.

However, Friedman (1992) strongly rejects this notion, and argues that development must be based on direct engagement of the poor themselves. People must not be developed, but rather be a part of a development process where the people make decisions and actions for themselves. Freire (1974:37) is a powerful spokesman for the participation of the poor, and

states that never “had I abandoned the conviction that only by working with the people could I achieve anything authentic on their behalf”.

The starting point of Freires’ ideas is that people live in relation with their world, and they are the only ones who are in the position of making the transition and development. The change needs to derive from the poor themselves, where the decision and actions are based on their own desires. Development imposed by others will not result in true development. Programmes need to take into account and respect the particular view of the world held by the poor in order to succeed. The aim of development programme is to create a change, and the demand for change needs to come from the poor (Freire 1970).

“Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. The oppressed have internalized the message of oppression. Freedom would require them to reject this oppression and replace it with responsibility (Freire 1970: 29).

Change imposed by others will not create real change in their lives, but rather create a reproduction of the reality of others. This may not lead to positive transformation for the poor at all, but rather a continuance of their oppressed situation. By the oppressed Freire is referring to the people with no power to change the opportunities nor the structures that hinders these opportunities. These are hindered by the oppressors, who have the power and domination in a society. The oppressors may not even think of themselves as oppressors. However, it is also in their own interest to keep the status quo, as not to lose their own reality which they have reason to value. As Freire states, some work to maintain the structures, others work to change them (Freire 1970).

Amartya Sen (1999) states that decisions for change and action must come from the people themselves based on two main reasons. First is the fact that people strive to achieve freedoms they themselves have reason to value, not what others value for them. The second reason is that reaching these freedoms necessitates the use of capabilities a person already has. This set of capabilities will be main contributing factors in decision making, and more

importantly to achieve change. Change for one person can not be based on the capability of another person.

However, empowerment as a programme strategy entails interference by other actors, outside professionals that wish to help the poor create changes, and development. This lies in the definition stating “enabling people to” (Titi and Singh 1995). Many poor households do not have the time and/or resources to reflect upon their own living situation, nor create new change in a daily life where covering the basic needs is a struggle. This is where the outside facilitator may help, getting involved with a specific target programme. They are rightfully called facilitators, trying to encourage and push for changes. However, according to Freire (1970) the external agents need to be careful not to bestow their own view on the poor as a source of information. It is important to approach the poor with projects which may correspond with their views of reality.

It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them, but rather to dialogue with the people about their views and ours. We must realize that their view of the world, manifested variously in their action, reflects their situation in the world. Educational and political action which is not critically aware of this situation runs the risk either of “banking” or of preaching in the desert (Freire 1970:77).

Empowerment necessitates a relationship where the external agent is working with the poor, within their world to create a change. This is not to say that the external agent should not try to bring in and discuss new ideas, or try to push for change. Yet, change and action needs to come from a cooperation with the target population and they need to be the key player in order to create change. The aim is empowerment, where people actually become the key players. Empowerment and power is not to be given and bestowed, because power bestowed may just as easily be taken away. Power needs to be claimed and controlled by the household itself. The external agents may create discussions for awareness and give tools for action, but the decisions and actions must come from the poor.

Empowerment not only entails change in the persistent behaviour and values which is dictating the behaviours of the poor, but in the behaviour and values of others as well. Empowerment requires social awareness and higher social participation at all levels (Titi and Singh 1995). External agents have two main roles to play. In addition to mobilize pressure within the household and groups, external agents must work to influence the state and non state institutions for favourable actions that will benefit the poor and create change. Where acceptance of the others does not exist it is nearly impossible for the poor to create actions because of external barriers (Bhalla and Lapeyre 2004). Rowlands (1997) states that people who are systematically denied power and influence in society internalize the message they receive about what they are supposed to be and their position in society, and perceive this to be true. This picture is also perceived to be true among the groups with power, and therefore, their superiority is not based on their domination, but rather on fatalism of the poor. As shown earlier, Friedman (1992) called for an alternative strategy because he believed this perceived picture of the poor to not be true. What Rowlands (1997) now adds is that in addition to the poor actively changing their lives, the rich and powerful also needs to understand that the current system may be working against the poor. External agents can facilitate this understanding and change. In order for empowerment to be a successful strategy it must involve changes in power structures both at local, national and international level (Thomas 2000).

NGOs are established change agents of the poor, and are especially known for working with the poor, from the grass root level and creating solutions in cooperation with the targets groups.

Progressive NGOs have been characterized as providing alternative approaches to the failures of the development industry and of paternalistic top-down state initiatives and services, alternatives based upon the participation and empowerment of the poor and the poorest (...) Working from the grassroots, in small scale, innovative, committed, cost-effective and environmentally sustainable ways (Craig and Mayo 1995:6-7).

NGOs have a long standing tradition of reaching out to the unreached children, and to find flexible solutions to fit into the lives of these children. They have developed a strategy for

working with and reaching out to children where the government schools cannot reach them, they offer flexible solutions and quick response to a problem. NGOs also harvest good critique for having a good connection with the local population and work from a grass root level which creates trust and link between families and education centres.

4.5 Critique to the empowerment strategy

One of the main critiques to empowerment and participation is when pushing all the responsibility for action on the poor, the responsibility of the government disappears. People are forced to create solutions to their poverty, which in many instances are created by outside forces, such as privatization, cut in employment, dislocation of factories, loss of homes under bulldozing of neighbourhoods, expensive schools, expensive health care etc. The Indian government has committed herself to the children of her nation, with free and compulsory education for all. With the breach of these rights the responsibility of the state is being put on the poor, when they have to look for all the solutions to a problem created outside the household. The inequality of power manifests itself in this crooked distribution of responsibility (Drèze and Sen 2002, Kumar 2006).

Empowerment is also based on the households' ability to create change for themselves and the community. However, this change is difficult to create when there are strong external forces the poor households can not control. Increased empowerment and increased access in society and to basic social services depends much on the demand from the household and their ability to create change. However, if the market economy is weak, labour market is going down, the informal sector is low and unstable jobs, it is hard to create an income to access basic services such as health and education. In addition, if a poor nation fails to invest in education and health because of lack of finance or political will, these services will not be easily accessible to the poor. Private services will mushroom to cater the poor, but as long as government services are not providing the facilities, the poor will not be able to access them even if the demand it.

The point of empowerment is to gain power and control over life situations. However, for a poor household, the reality is much different. It is nearly impossible for a mother and father to actively demand change with local politicians, when they are busy fending for food and a livelihood during the day. In addition, the Indian society is highly hierarchal in structure, and until the whole society is acceptable of change it. This is very difficult for the household to create change. It depends on the household in this strategy, and as long as the situation in the household requires other priorities, it is hard for a family to talk of empowerment. External forces also create barriers. The change needs to not only start from the bottom, but the top needs to accept and be receptive to change. This is not happening in India today.

Empowerment strategy will always involve an external actor when it comes to poverty reduction programmes and educational programmes. There will be an external actor taking initiative to change, whether it is the government, an international organization such as UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO or the World Bank, an NGO or smaller projects run by private initiatives. External actors will to some extent impose their programmes, with values, ideas and expected outcomes. Cooperation and collaboration with the poor themselves is not based on what the poor perceive as important, but more what the poor perceive as important within the framework presented to them by the external actor.

When it comes to the role of facilitators, NGOs have received a large amount of critique over the years, and some have argued that NGOs may not be the best facilitator of empowerment. Firstly, all NGOs have an agenda of their own. They only work in certain fields, with their policy and plan. Therefore, it may not be based on true empowerment coming from the people as Freire and Sen argues, but rather policy implementation based on the premise of the NGOs. In addition, all though NGOs are rapidly responding to changes in the society, they may also change too rapidly, following the trends in the discourse and discussion. With NGOs being more competitive, and funding more scarce, there is also competition for the money. The policy tends to follow the money, not the other

way around. This may actually lead to the voices of the poor not being heard. There is competition and a market for ideas and information, a competition for which target groups get the money (Titi and Singh 1995).

5. Exclusion from primary education; findings and discussion

In this section I will look at the causes for why children are excluded from education. This discussion will mainly base this on my own research, and supplement with research already conducted on the issue. I will first look at the characteristics of out of school children, whether they are drop outs or never enrolled, as this may have implications for inclusion. Then I will discuss the causes to why the children are out of school. I wish to explore whether the assumption that poverty is the main reason why children are not participating in education or if there may be other factors involved.

5.1 Drop outs or never enrolled?

Children that are of school age, but not participating in school can broadly be categorized into two groups; never enrolled and drop-outs. Children never enrolled, as the term implies, have not previously attended formal school¹². Children who have dropped out have enrolled in school at one point, but quit before s/he completes the education. Many of the children who drop out never return to school (Banerji 1997). Considering school going history may be important to provide explanations for why the children are excluded, as the differences in cause may demand different reasons for inclusion.

Of the 27 children interviewed in the CINI Asha preparatory centres, coaching centres and formal schools¹³, 19 stated they had attended school before, 4 children said they had never gone to school before, and 4 children did not answer the question¹⁴. Never enroller

¹²I do not consider if children have been enrolled in a non-formal education system. There was only one girl who had previously gone to a NGO education programme. However, this is not relevant in this context.

¹³ Students in the formal schools are previous CINI Asha Preparatory centre students.

¹⁴ Some of the children had difficulties remembering what they had done before they started the CINI Asha program, because they were too young. I did not have the opportunity to talk to the mothers of all the children, and could therefore not check the backgrounds.

children were either engaged in labour or just roaming the streets idle. The reasons for drop out were mainly economic difficulties, migration and harassment in school. CINI Asha stated that most of the students are drop outs, and from the classes III, IV and V mainly, when the academic demands become more challenging (personal communication 24.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3).

Nambissan (2003) demonstrates that schools situated in and catering to slum areas have large drop out rates. According to a survey conducted in Kolkata in 2000, the drop out rate is larger in schools that cover the slum population. Of a 100% enrolment in Class I, only 40,6% of the children continue to Class IV. This trend is also seen in other parts of India. According to UNDP (1994) India has a drop out rate of 40% in the primary levels. Banerji (1997) conducted a study in Gandhi Nagar, a slum settlement in Delhi, and found that between 25-35% of those entering class I do not reach class V¹⁵. From these findings there are two main challenges that are revealing. The first is how to bring children to school. Equally important, is how to retain students in the school system once they are enrolled. In the following section I will further discuss the reason for exclusion within the context of this study.

5.2 Economic poverty as a barrier to education

Economic poverty may hinder education. Both national and individual poverty have an influence of educational participation, and will be discussed accordingly.

5.2.1 National investment and access to education

Despite substantial economic growth in recent years, India has a long way to go regarding investment in the education sector. First, lack of school buildings and physical infrastructure is keeping children out of school. Children of school age have little

¹⁵ In the state of Delhi the primary level is from standard I-V, while in West Bengal the primary level is from standard I-IV.

opportunity to participate in school if there is no school available. Kumar (2006) claims that national investment in education in developing countries needs to involve increasing access by building more schools, making schools financially available and to create incentives to bring children to school. Many Indian state governments have not invested sufficiently in the education sector, hence the situation remains dismal. The governments' reluctance to act and the lack of preparedness of the school system for universal primary education in India is one reason why many children are still not participation in education (Dréze and Sen 2002).

In 1999, a large survey was conducted in all the 141 wards in Kolkata to map the schooling situation¹⁶. The survey found that in the age group 5-14, as many as 94 164 children were out of school, most of the children came from deprived and poor households, mostly from the different slum and squatter settlements in the city. While there were almost 100 000 children out of school, there was only discovered 10 000 available seats (Cyril 1999). As a result of this a great effort was made the following years to expand access. Formal schools were opened and the Government of West Bengal initiated the Sikshalaya Prakalpa. The Minister of Schooling and Education of West Bengal stated that there is sufficient access to primary schools in Kolkata. In addition to government schools, private schools are now mushrooming, catering mostly to the middle and upper class (personal communication 01.10.07, Minister of Schooling and Education West Bengal). The result is that more space is made available in government schools, and for the primary level there is sufficient availability to the schools (Mehrotra and Srivistava 2005).

According to Nambissan (2003), even though there are sufficient access to primary education, schools may not be available to children from poor socioeconomic background for a variety of reasons. Schools are overcrowded and often inconveniently located. What also needs to be considered "is not just physical distance but also 'social distance' taking

¹⁶ The survey was a collaboration between the government of West Bengal and NGOs in Kolkata, recognizing that many children were out of school. It was conducted to map the accessibility of schools in order to create a solution to the challenge.

into account various barriers that may prevent a willing child from reaching the local school” (PROBE 1999:17). Also a more severe problem arises when the child is to begin secondary school. There is a pyramid-like structure of schooling, where for every six primary school there is only one secondary school. Although there is access to primary schools, “for the majority of primary school children, upper primary and higher levels of schooling are just not available” (Nambissan 2003:16). CINI Asha staff state that many students stop going to school after class IV. One reason may be the lack of accessibility. One shishumita remarked that:

The government is at great false. Even though there are primary schools, there are no secondary schools over here. All the [secondary] schools are pretty far off. And the expenses are really high (personal communication 30.10.07, Shishumita 4).

Nambissan (2003:19) found the same in her survey, showing that “a majority of children of the poor who go to the CMS and the DPSC schools and who do manage to reach grade IV find that access to schooling for them physically stops there”¹⁷. The distance to school is an important factor. One mother said that she used to send her daughter to school, but now she is afraid to do so because the school is one hour away by foot, she has to cross the main roads and there may be boys that may harass her on the way (personal communication 04.10.07, Mother 4).

5.2.2 Household poverty

Household poverty affects participation to education because of the direct costs related to school.

Direct costs of schooling, even at the primary level, often adds up to substantial amounts imposing a burden on poor families, especially if there is more than one school going child in the family (Bhatty 1998:1735).

Households that live in absolute poverty and /or chronic poverty find it difficult to spend money on education. Even though free education is a Constitutional right in India, Tilak (1996) states that families have to pay tuition fees, examination fees and other nominal fees even in the government schools. For households living below the poverty line, the direct costs of education are experienced as unbearable.

Of the eight mothers interviewed, all responded that financial difficulties were the main reason why their children were not enrolled in a formal school. One mother stated

I did not admit my kids to the government school first and foremost because we are poor, we don't have the money. The children were admitted to another school, but we did not have the money for them to go to a government school. Whatever my husband earns goes to daily expenses, so I have no money left to pay for school (personal communication 30.10.07, Mother 5).

Another mother expressed the same concern:

I would like my children go to school. But what can I do? Do I feed them, or do I send them to school without giving them food that day? (personal communication 04.10.07, Mother 3).

Mothers complained that even in government schools that are supposed to be free, head masters and teachers ask for economic compensation of some kind. Financial constraints are strong disincentives when the family cannot fend for books, uniform and other schools related material. These concerns with the families imply that economic poverty is keeping children out of school. One girl that had previously gone to school stated

I did not have money for the dress, exercise books etc. The school used to ask for money. They did not pay fees, but they would ask them to bring money, for example if it was a teachers birthday. So

¹⁷ CMS are Calcutta Municipal schools, the government run schools. DPSC are district primary schools and are government aided schools. The abbreviations will not be used further in this text, but were used here because of the direct quotation from the author.

every week I used to pay 15 rupees. The teachers said you had to pay, there was no way out of that. The teachers knew about my economic standard, but did not care about that. When I was not in school I worked for a year in a factory. My sister works there now. She does not go to school because our family is very poor (personal communication 19.09.07, Child 7).

The girl is hoping to join formal school after she completes the bridge course. Yet, this will depend on the expenses of education. Free education is not a reality in urban localities such as is Kolkata. If enrolment fees and expenses are removed, most families in the survey will gladly send their children to school. One mother said with concern

I am too poor to hold the education of my son. He has joined CINI Asha because the school is free. He was not admitted in a government school because of lack of money. When he is admitted in a government school from CINI Asha, I will do whatever I can do financially. Then after that he will stop going to school (personal communication 04.10.07, Mother 4).

This statement demonstrates that the economic barrier are influential reasons for non participation in school. Families living in severe poverty do not have the money power to provide for education, and it is excluding children from attending school. Allow me to give an example. One woman interviewed has five children. Her husband makes about 1800 rupees a month, while she calculates her expenses to be a little less than 2500 rupees. The expenses are mainly rent, electricity and food. In addition her children often fall sick and need medicine, and her husband also spends quite a lot of money on drinking. Somehow, she says, she is able to manage, but this is why “families are more concerned about getting food and other things, and not concerned with education” (personal communication 04.10.07, Mother 3). It is estimated that education expenses are on average 318 rupees per year, which become quite an economic burden for many families (PROBE 1999). Due to poverty, many mothers did not believe they would be able to provide education for the children when they had to pay educational expenses.

However, it is not only a household's economic poverty that excludes children from education. de Haan and Amaresh (2004) remark that institutions and processes are responsible for deprivation. When education institutions charge tuition fees and require other expenses, they are creating exclusion from education. Deprived urban children come from families that experience absolute and/or chronic poverty. As demonstrated, mothers strongly feel they are not able to pay for education. They argued that as long as education is demanding money from the household, they are not able to send their children to school. When an education system that is supposed to be free, still requires payments for the child to go to school, the education system is excluding the children. In West Bengal, the schooling institution is based on the fact that parents are able to pay. Exclusion is therefore not only caused by household poverty. It is also caused by institutions that create barriers, such as school fees. When the state is responsible for providing education it should create opportunities, and not barriers.

Some children are forced to drop out of school because the family suffers a shock that affects their economy (Chambers 1989). Families living in slum settlements in Kolkata, live in vulnerability. The risk of external shock is present at all times, and many families fluctuate above and below the poverty line. This is mainly due to the fact that jobs are highly insecure. Many jobs are on a day to day basis. Many people also loose their jobs if factories are shut down or businesses go bad, which is quite common in Kolkata. A number of households are also the victims of loosing one or more family members. The consequence of such a shock may be that a family lose one or more incomes, and is no longer able to provide for education expenses. On boy who was now mainstreamed into formal school had previously gone to school when his family suffered an economic shock. He said that

I used to study before coming to the centre [CINI Asha]. I used to study in a English medium school. After that I could not continue because my fathers business went down (personal communication 01.10.07, Child 28).

The boy says he did not study for a one year, and during that year he did not do anything. After given the opportunity to go to a school centre for free, his father allowed him to go back to school.

As children enter secondary school the costs of education increase. The fees are normally escalating, and the children need uniforms, many schools demand two uniforms for each student and there is an increase in books, both reading and exercise books. In addition, the academic demands are harder. Many children from poor socioeconomic background with illiterate parents cannot get educational support from home, and private tutoring outside the schools is a must in order to keep up with the work and pass the class (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 5).

Tilak (1999:526) states that “on the whole, economic factors, including financial constraints and opportunity costs, are important reasons for the non-enrolment of the poor in schools”. I will now turn to the opportunity cost, or indirect cost, of education and explore this in relation to exclusion from school.

5.2.3 Is child labour keeping children out of school?

Indirect costs of education is most commonly viewed in relation to child labour. The predominant perception is that a poor family cannot survive without the income of the children. India hosts the largest child labour population in the world, and despite the efforts to stall and decrease the incidences of child labour, the number is increasing. It is estimated that there are approximately 113 million child labourers in India (GMACL 2006). A child at work is hindered from attending school. The child ay work during school hours. Children also work after school hours, do not do homework and study, fail exams and drop out. Many children are forced into work at an early age by family members. One club member remarked:

Many children start work early so that is why they do not come to school. They work in factories. Fathers have lost jobs because the factories shut down. So it is a necessity that these children work and earn some money. Whatever the people here earn is on a daily basis, maybe 50 rupees pr day, and what they earn is spent on rent and electricity. It is a necessity that the children work, the families will be in a major crisis if the children do not work (personal communication 11.10.07, club member).

Many families experience so severe poverty, that they see no other option than sending the children to work. As one mother stated, she is so poor that she can send two of her boys to school but the older one needs to work to earn some money for the family (personal communication 30.10.07, Mother 5). Investing in education may seem insurmountable to a household. Sending a child to school also means an investment over several years and the benefits are still unclear. The vulnerability and lack of risk taking is also demonstrated here. The club member goes on to tell that he would ask them to send their children to school.

When we ask why they cannot send their children to school parents say it is because of lack of money. When we say that we will give the money just send your children to school they still don't to. The parents say that if he child can bring me 100 rupees a month it is going to help me to a great extent, so I do not want to send the child to school (personal communication 11.10.07, Club member).

Although the parents recognize the benefits of education, it is not seen as a possible option for many. The poverty is perceived by the parents to be so severe that they see it as a necessity for the children to work. This experience and feeling of poverty is so strongly rooted in the household they do not see other realities and options. This reality will lead to the action and choice not to participate in education, despite their realities.

On the other hand, some argue that poverty is not regarded as the main reason for child labour. CINI Asha understands that financial difficulties play an important role in child labour. However, they still claim that it is not the main cause. The NGO rather believes that it is lack of awareness of the value and possibilities of education that keep children out of school. When they are not in school, they may as well be working in stead of running around in the streets all day. This understanding is based on a survey by the NGO (CINI Asha no date). From the survey it was seen that only about 16 % of the family's total income was from the child's earnings. Burra (2003:75) remarks that "it is seldom taken into account that children's earnings are pathetically meagre". Most of what the children make by working is spent on pocket money. Many children earn anywhere between 100

rupees to 500 rupees a month, the majority averaging on 200 rupees. The main work was bidi making¹⁸, paper packet making, sewing shirt labels, household jobs and van puller (CINI Asha facesheets¹⁹).

Many children claimed that their parents could not give them money for movies, candy etc. These children use their wages for this purpose (CINI Asha 2001:3).

With this understanding, CINI Asha argues that the child's income is not a necessity for the family. However, other factors, such as the lack of awareness of education have a stronger influence on exclusion. CINI Asha noted that when a family is aware of the benefits of education, the household is more willing to adjust the economy to cover to money that is lost. Mothers especially are willing to start working, or pick up extra work, to be able to send their children to school (CINI Asha 2001).

5.3 Culture of education and lack of awareness

There is a widespread notion that the causes of why children are not in school are illiteracy, ignorance and unawareness among parents. According to a CINI Asha survey children who are not in school are very often children of illiterate parents, and the parents were themselves child labourers (CINI Asha, no date). Consequently, the majority of the parents fail to realize the importance of education, and school is therefore neglected. This is not a new idea in the education debate in India. The following quote was printed in the Lucknow District Gazetteer of 1940: "the masses of the lower classes are ignorant, superstitious and unambitious, and care nothing for education". (Quoted in India today 2007). 50 years later the same idea is again put forth: "Illiterate and semi-literate parents see no reason to send children to school" (quoted from the Times of India 15.08.07, in India Today 2007).

¹⁸ Bidi is a cigarette, and rolling them is a by piece paid job which is popular among children and women.

¹⁹ Facesheets is one piece of paper for every child enrolled in the CINI Asha programme. It give biographical details, and inquiries on previous education experience, and on work experience.

CINI Asha believes that exclusion from education is based on lack of awareness in the communities and poor households. One of the CINI Asha staff remarked that

Poverty is an issue, but not the primary issue. Many families are definitely poor, they can not even afford the basic amenities. But not going to school is more an issue of priority. The families cannot prioritize education in their lives. Seeking a job, seeking food, seeking shelter is more important than going to school. Education is far behind on the priority list (personal communication 15.10.07 CINI Asha staff 4).

It is the experience of CINI Asha that as long as there is not an interest and value of education in the family, the child will be excluded from school. One shishumita said:

Most of the children, since they come from poor families are not much interested in studies. They are more interested in the things given to them. There is a big problem with economic condition, but many parents just don't want their kids to go to school. One father told me 'I am a fruit seller, so why should my son not also be a fruit seller? He'll be able to sell fruit so why does he need education (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 6).

The main argument is that illiterate parents do not see the value of education and do not have the culture of school embedded in the household. According to Lewis' rationale, the culture of the poor is a culture of not wanting or demanding change, but rather living in poverty, because in fatalism there is no room for change. The poor will remain poor. Illiteracy is, as well as poverty, an intergenerational trait that characterizes a life in the margins. However, Hulme and Sheperd (2003) are not so fatalistic, and argue that intergenerational poverty as well as illiteracy is dependent on some factors already in the household. Illiteracy will remain in the family as there is no change in the existing household assets. If vulnerability decreases, the household may find it suitable to invest in education, which may in turn have a long term positive effect on household assets. Yet, lack of education among parents will most likely lead to the children not going to school, because there is no culture of education, and it is passed through generations. This was also found to be true for the households in the slum settlements in Kolkata.

For the children who are in the slums, the problem is with their lifestyles. The way they live, the way their parents live. They are not habituated to go to school. For example, in the mornings the parents go away for work. Nobody is there to take care of the children. They have younger siblings, so the older stay back to take care of them. They also have to do some work, sometimes they have to pick up the fuel, they do small jobs here and there. So it is a different kind of lifestyle. Of course poverty is there, but there is a different kind of culture and attitude towards life. It is a cultural problem, awareness is a cultural problem, and awareness is not there (personal communication 01.10.07 Minister of Education and Schooling, West Bengal).

CINI Asha argued noted that ‘going to school is a culture. This culture is absolutely absent among these children. They are all first generation learners, so it will take time to impart the school going culture’ (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 4). Further, CINI Asha staff notes that:

In the localities we work, if the mother and father have a basic education, despite the fact that the family is poor, they send their children to school. Parents are not aware because they are illiterate, since they themselves are illiterate, and they don’t see the value of education (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 4).

Nambissan (2003) found similar attitudes with teachers in her study. Most teachers interviewed are of the opinion that the children from poor background were not in school because they were poor and their parents did not bother the least with education. Children who come from poor families were seen to lack the seriousness in their studies and were more prone to drop out. The culture of poverty, intergenerational poverty and illiteracy and the lack of school going culture seem to persistently keep children out of school. “Poor families are not merely poor, but parents are also seen to be largely ignorant of the importance of education” (Nambissan 2003:31). There is a strong sense of blaming the poor parents for not sending their children to school. It is parents who are not aware, they lack the sense of value of education in their lives and see no personal incentives for sending their children to school. The household is not using their assets to provide for education, and are therefore not creating a change in their lives. There is enough access in schools. Many schools also provide one free meal during the day, and the Government of

West Bengal is providing free school books for all primary levels (Srivastava 2005). Therefore, sending the children to school must be parents' responsibility, and they fail because they don't recognize the importance of education.

One interesting and important point to remark is the opinion of the cause of exclusion given by CINI Asha and the mothers. Although CINI Asha staff recognize the constraints poverty has for most households, the NGO still argues that lack of awareness and lack of school going culture is the main exclusionary factors. "Poverty notwithstanding, the poor can and do send their children to formal school, provided they get encouragement and access to education" (Mukherjee et. al. 2003:18).

Mothers unambiguously stated poverty as the first reason why they are not able to send their child to school. They do, on the other hand, claim that they are very interested in education, but they cannot afford the expenses. CINI Asha believes that one reason why children are not going to school is because the parents are themselves illiterate. However, quite the opposite is argued by the mothers, saying that it is because they are illiterate they want their children to learn.

I am illiterate and my husband is also uneducated. We don't even know how to write our names. So when I see my children in school and we see that they can do it we become very proud. And now my husband can see that the children know how to write their names. When the children come home from school, they show me the exercise books, and even if I don't understand, I say that it is very good what they have done in school (personal communication 30.10.07, Mother 5).

The majority of the mothers in the survey are illiterate, only a few are able to sign their names. Yet, all of the mothers attached great importance to education. The main preoccupation was the belief that education will lead to upward social mobility. Then, the second response was that education may lead to a stable job and stable income. There was not too much expectations attached to what education can do, but mere realistic ideas on what change education can do for the household. For example, very few of the parents

actually believed that their children could become doctors or lawyers, like most of the children dream of. However, they do believe that education can give a stable job, such as teacher, police or some small office job.

With at least a minimum of education, my children will be better off than me. Earlier they used to stay at home and cut straps for slippers and help me work. Then I felt they should really get an education. Even though my children will not become doctors, I will make them study. Then they can at least do something, like start a business of their own, they can do tailoring work, things like that by which they can earn some money, a little more than I earn now (personal communication 30.10.07, Mother 5).

Mothers were also concerned about their daughters, and believed education would bring a more secure future for them when they entered marriage. One mother specifically noted that when my daughter gets married, she could make some money on her own and fend for herself if she had to. Even if her husband can not read or write, she can make her own earnings (personal communication 29.10.07, Mother 6).

A survey in the northern states of India had similar findings (PROBE 1999). They found that parents attach great importance to their children's education. The 'typical' mother and father want their children to be educated. The myth that parents are to blame that children are not educated, that they lack both the awareness and interest to educate their children is not found to be true. There is an interest among parents, even illiterate, to send their children to school. Drèze and Sen (2002:154) points out that "there is much evidence that an overwhelming majority of Indian parents today, even among deprived sections of the population attach great importance to the education for their children". Education is seen as a promising mean for upward mobility (Drèze and Sen 2002). Bhatti (1998) also notes that there is intrinsic want for education among parents. There is therefore also need to look at other factors that may affect participation in education.

5.4 The discouragement effect; low quality of education

The quality of government schools in India in general, with Kolkata as no exception is in a grim state. Drèze and Sen (2002:153) argue

As things stand, average pupil achievements in Indian schools (particularly government schools) are extremely low, due to overcrowded classrooms, lack of teaching aids, absence of classroom activity, poor teaching standards, and related defiance's of the schooling system. Much remains to be done to enhance the quality of schooling, even if the quantitative goal of universal 'attendance' is getting closer.

What they wish to point out is that even if the child is physically in school s/he is not learning what s/he could (or should). Education in government school is non conducive for a child's learning. Banerji (1997) claims that much of the expansion of the school system in India is based on one specific goal; to bring all children to school. However, inputs such as more classrooms and more schools does not always bring results in more education and learning. The dismal quality of government schools keeps children out.

When quality of education is low, parents loose the interest to send their children to school. Bhatta (1998) shows that education is considered important by most parents and that most parents are willing to invest in education if they have the opportunity. On the other hand, parents are not willing to invest in education if they do not feel the child is learning and progressing. "Clearly, the education that is being offered is not perceived as beneficial enough or at least not worth the expense" (Bhatta 1998:1736). As one mother angrily said:

My son went to a government school for two years. After two years he could still not write the name of his father or the address where he lives. So I pulled him out of school. What is the use of keeping him in school when he is not learning? (personal communication 29.10.07, Mother 1)

The quality of teaching is low. The classrooms are crowded, teaching aids and materials are minimal and the teachers can not give each child individual attention. Many children do

not understand what is being taught in class and the teachers do not help them. According to policy on primary education in West Bengal, the teacher-student ratio is officially of a maximum of 1:40 (Nambissan 2003). Still in government schools in Kolkata the number varies anywhere between 1:25 and 1:75. This has two implications. The classrooms will obviously be overcrowded, which will make it difficult to teach, especially in a child friendly manner. Second, teachers will find it difficult to give individual attention and help the students who struggle with the subjects. In such unfavourable learning environment it is difficult for the children to learn and keep up with the work, especially first generation learners. Many children also loose complete interest in education. About 1/3 of the children interviewed said they had stopped going to school because they 'did not feel like studying' and 'lost interest in studies'. Students are pushed out of school by the strong discouragement of low quality of education.

From this we see that forces outside the household, existing in the institutions of education may be keeping children out of school. With an education system pressed to its limits the learning environment is not very enticing for deprived urban children. There are forces within the education system that are excluding the children, and the institutions of education must be put under scrutiny if universal primary education is to be reached. As Bhalla and Lapeyre (2004) and de Haan and Amaresh (2004) have all pointed out, exclusion is a consequence of the institutional system, in this case the education system.

The system is not ready yet for children who are first generation learners and hence lack support within the family to provide home based support for school education. In the absence of a supportive mechanism within the school system as well as at home, children are unable to cope with the requirements of the school and eventually drop out (Ahuja 2005:7).

Lack of participation in education is therefore not just caused by poverty and intergenerational illiteracy. Students are also pushed out by an education system that is not able or willing to make a quality school to retain children. As noted previously in this chapter, the majority of the out of school children are drop outs. They have previously attended school, which may weaken the absolute truth in the poverty argument. The family

was able to enrol the child in school at one point. Also, if lack of awareness towards education were keeping children away from school, many would not have been enrolled to begin with. Most drop out after class II or a few years later. This may signify that there are other factors keeping the children out of school, or rather pushing them out of school. There are institutional and educational factors that cannot be overlooked (Bhatty 1998).

Scolding and punishment is also still quite commonly found in classrooms. Scolding can be in the shape of verbal punishment and abuse, or even corporal harassment. It may be because children have not completed their homework, or other unjust reasons. A large number of the children complained of harassment in school. One boy said:

I used to go to school. But then I would be beaten. Both teachers and other students would hit me. The teacher usually beat us in class. He can hit us for the smallest thing. If you have not done your homework he will scold you and maybe hit you. I always did my homework because I did not want to be beaten in class I did not like it. I told my mother and she pulled me out of school. She did not want me to go to the school when I was being harassed (personal communication 30.10.07, Child 9).

Punishment and harassment by teachers and fellow students was clearly stated as a reason for not going to school. This calls for looking at causes and explanations outside the individuals hands, and rather looking at institutional causes for exclusion. Neil Harrand in Goal India²⁰ argues that

If we really want to look at inclusive education, we have to look at the education factors, the teacher's attitudes, teachers training, availability of resources, school environment itself, the infrastructure. We have to look at the problems with low income, living in an unhygienic environment, poor nutrition and poor environment leads to frequent child illness. Social and economic factors impact on a range of level, in terms of family livelihoods. Until we are addressing all of these scenarios, we can forget about

²⁰ And Irish NGO with strong roots in aid in India

retaining children in education (personal communication 16.10.07, Neil Harrand).

5.4.1 The discouragement effect; social exclusion

Caste, class and religion play a very important role in Indian society. There has been extensive research on the lower castes, the dalits and adivasis in relation to education. Nambissan (2006) notes that even though education is a constitutional right regardless of caste and class, the Dalit communities still experience barriers to education because of their former status as 'untouchables'. She also claims that much focus in education policy and programmes has been put on deprived groups such as Dalits, Adivasis and Muslim minorities

These are children who belong to socially vulnerable groups, denied education not only because of poverty but also because of low status derived from their position in the traditional social structure in relation to caste and culture. In addition, the fact of generations of educational deprivation has also meant that these children come from non-literate or poorly schooled backgrounds that are unable to provide the necessary cognitive, language and social skills that make for relatively greater school readiness among the more privileged classes. Thus, these communities are not easily able to access schooling, and when they are in a situation to do so, often do not have the economic, social and academic wherewithal to complete at least eight years of education (Nambissan 2006:225).

There are several important things to be noted in this statement. First, children of deprived groups are often discriminated against and are not considered suitable for school because of their background. CINI Asha staff noted that

Teachers in government schools are not very open to these children. They want ready made children that have had some pre primary education. They want children that understand in class and come prepared to class with all their homework completed. The children coming from illiterate homes find it hard to keep up with the work and prepare all the homework. The teachers don't find them suitable for education because they come from families with poor backgrounds. This discrimination still exists in schools (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 4).

Second, the parents of these children have previously been denied education, either because of their low caste or other religious minority, mostly belonging to Islam. Therefore, the children are suffering double discrimination. They are being discriminated against because they come from a religious minority and poor socioeconomic background. The children are also being discriminated against because they are badly prepared for formal school, because their parents have not received any education and are not able to help with schoolwork. Here it is also worth noting that parents are often blamed for not putting their children in school.

Illiterate parents were also victims of poverty and social exclusion, and did not have the opportunities of education based on their poor background, class, caste and religion. Dreze (2004) agrees that one barrier in education is strongly related to class and social barriers. Institutional factors and processes are preventing people from fully participate in education. Kumar (2006a) claims that the schools do everything they can to keep the child out. They make demands no parents can easily fulfil, and internal dynamics of schools are hostile. The teachers' attitudes towards the poor are not conducive for learning, and discriminatory based on background. Children of the poor can not cope with these negative forces and sooner or later leave the school, usually with the stigma of failure. Bernard (2001) notes that children who are excluded from school are those who are not considered 'fit' into majority based classrooms, defined by the accepted norms of who should and should not learn.

With this background, it is easier to understand why so many children drop out of school, despite the high level of parental interest in their education. There are massive hurdles on the way. Many children have been bored, beaten and humiliated out of the schooling system (India Today 2007).

5.4.2 External factors; migration

Migration is one of the main causes of exclusion from education in this research sample. Migration leads to exclusion for several reasons, I will here cover three. Migration from rural areas does not necessarily mean permanent migration. Many families migrating from

rural areas to Kolkata own a piece of land or have family that is still behind in the village. They come to Kolkata to seek work during the non harvest season. The seasonal migration has no concern for the well being of the children. Many parents take the children with them from the village where many already are in school. When they come to the city, parents are more preoccupied with finding shelter and work, and school does not become a priority. One girl said she came here from the district.

When I came here, I did not know the streets, I did not know the locality. So I used to just sit at home and get bored (personal communication 19.09.07, child 5).

Seasonal migration may result in exclusion for another reason as well. Families travel to their villages for harvest time and festive seasons. One boy currently attending the CINI Asha preparatory centre used to go to what he himself calls a regular school in Kolkata

I used to go there, and studied until Class II. Then I went for vacation to my village with my family. When I came back I saw that my name was taken off the board. So I did not go to school, I just went home (personal communication 30.10.07, Child 4).

He told me that neither he nor his mother went to talk to the teachers. The lack of interest to resolve the problem can hardly be blamed on the child. In addition to migration being a problem, the school system is also facing a challenge in regards to migration. However, in the formal school system there is no culture of second chance if a child is absent too long.

Another problem in regards to migration is within city migration, which happens quite often still. When whole areas are bulldozed and torn down, the family needs to find a new place to live. This consequently leads to a change of school. Schools and urban administrators do not make concessions for children who are forcefully evicted. There is no attempt from the school to admit the child into a new school (Rampal 2007). Very few parents have the interest in going out searching for a new school. In addition, the parents are busy finding a new place to stay and new income opportunities. Eviction may also happen in the middle of the school year with no regards for the children, and changing

schools becomes even more difficult. One last, but not least problem is in regards to language. India is a multilingual nation. Many families that have moved to Kolkata have Hindi as their native language, and poor families with mostly uneducated members do not have a second language. However, primary schools in Kolkata are largely Bengali medium schools, while the Hindi medium schools are fewer in number (Nambissan 2003). Many families find their children can not cope with school because of the language barriers.

5.5 Summary

Throughout this chapter I have discussed several reasons for exclusion from education for deprived urban children. As I have discussed, there are multiple causes for exclusion. Bernard (2001:12) states:

Exclusion from education, then, is not a single 'one-off event' in the lives of the children affected. Having no access to school, or access only to those that are ineffectual and harmful, needs to be understood as part of a pattern of systemic exclusion, and linked to other social, economic, political conditions.

What I found in this research is that the different stakeholders have different ideas as to why children are excluded. Mothers unambiguously stated poverty as the main reason for why their children were not enrolled or pulled out of school. Economic constraints are keeping children out of school, even if the parents find education to be important. Child labour is widely recognized as one of the main barriers to education. However, in Kolkata it was found the majority of the children in the study were not engaged in work. Those who were, were involved in ad hoc jobs because they wanted to earn some pocket money or simply 'had nothing better to do'. Children are not working because of a necessity for money and is therefore not in school. Many drop out of school because they do not find school interesting or they are harassed and do not feel like continuing. Whether this is because they can not keep up with expenses, can not keep up with the academics or whether they simply lack the interest to study is very individual.

CINI Asha staff claim that children are not in school because of a culture of poverty and illiteracy. Children of illiterate parents are not enrolled in school because the parents do not see the value of education, and would rather the children stay at home, take care of the siblings and do some work. Several studies support this argument, demonstrating that children from illiterate and poor homes, where the parents are illiterate. However, this has been strongly contested the last years. Parents, especially mothers say that they want their children to go to school. Social mobility is important, and most mothers recognize the value of education in order to secure a stable job, better health and more secure future.

However, looking at household poverty and culture of education is not enough. It is clear that external education factors play just as a vital role. The low quality of school makes the children loose the interest in education, and parents are not willing to invest in education when they already live in poverty. Secondly, a majority of the children experienced harassment in school. When the children do not feel safe from verbal and physical harassment, from neither fellow students nor teachers, the school day will not be a pleasant experience, and the children will do what they can to get out of it. External factors are important factors that are easily overlooked. Social exclusion based on class and socioeconomic background is evident in the government schools in Kolkata.

6. Empowerment and community mobilization for inclusion; findings and discussion

This chapter deals with the strategy of the programme. The CINI Asha strategy is based on the premise that children are out of school because there is not a school going culture in the family, and a lack of awareness of the value of education. The main objective is to explore how CINI Asha is trying to create awareness. As mentioned in chapter four, empowerment is based on the awareness of the situation you are in, and a conscious choice based on critical thinking. The second step is to act on the decision to create a change. These will be discussed in turn.

6.1 Community mobilization and outreach

Community mobilization and outreach for participation in education is the core of the CINI Asha education programme. The objective is to bring knowledge about the possibilities of education to the poor households and to the communities. The strategy is based on the recognition that there is sufficient access to at least the primary levels of education. The problem however is predominantly seen to be at the demand side. Studies conducted by CINI Asha demonstrate that households are able to adjust to the expenses of education and send their child to school if they are willing. (CINI Asha, no date). CINI Asha developed a strategy from the acknowledgement and experience that children are not going to school because of lack of awareness of the value and benefits of education. Due to this lack of awareness families are not prioritizing school. The NGO obviously recognized the grave poverty and vulnerability of deprived urban children, but does not believe that this is the main cause.

The core of the programme is the community mobilization. It is an outreach strategy in the localities where large number of deprived urban children is out of school. It is founded on the idea that creating awareness on the value and benefits of education in the household will increase participation in school. Reaching the children where they are. It involves

engaging the stakeholders in the whole community which may have an affect on the education of the children.

6.2 Mapping of supply and demand

CINI Asha conducts a survey in the locality when they start working in one area. The task is to determine how many children in the area are out of school and the reasons for exclusion.

We are working in the slums. We do need assessment studies before we set up a centre. A survey is conducted in order to find out whether there are children who are not in school when they should be. Then we are trying to find out the reason why they are not in school. Is it due to economic condition? Is it due to awareness? By the survey we do a need assessment in that area (personal communication 23.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3).

CINI Asha field staff go out to households in the localities and talk to the parents and the children. In addition, the NGO also has close ties with the local clubs. The demand for education in the poor communities is revealed when club members and community leaders contact CINI Asha to get an education programme started in their neighbourhood.

We speak to the local counsellors, whether there is a need. We also speak with the local clubs. Sometimes they have come to us and asked us to work in their slums. So at times the need come from the community itself, and we start from that need (personal communication 23.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3).

The demand for education also comes from the communities. One club member said

Three of the club members and I talked to a doctor who told us how to get in touch with CINI Asha. We contacted them, and soon after we started the school here (personal communication 11.10.07, Club member).

Mapping the demand is helpful in order for the NGO to know where there is a need, or rather where the need is greatest. According to CINI Asha staff there has been a decrease in

preparatory centres during the last years. The centres are closed down in areas where it is seen that the number of out of school children has decreased significantly. This is especially in areas where more children enrol directly in school in class I. Accordingly, centres are opened in other areas upon request from the community and/or CINI Asha recognizes a need. For the school year 2008/09 25 preparatory centres are open. In 2007/08, 32 preparatory centres were run. The NGO underlines that this is not because of lack of funding or success of the programme. Rather the need is not there because children are enrolled in formal school.

6.3 Creating awareness and enrollment

Creating awareness on the prioritization of education is one of the pillars of the programme. As one shishumita argued:

If there had been some kind of awareness, or they [the parents] had themselves been educated, they would send their children to school. Parents are responsible for making decisions, if they find it important, they will send their children to school (personal communication 30.10.07, Shishumita 5).

CINI Asha considers it a main task to create this awareness in the households, and in this section I will discuss how the NGO engages in dialogue with the parents attempting to achieve this.

6.3.1 Home visits for enrolment

The first task is to enrol the children in the CINI Asha preparatory centre. The enrolment process starts with the shishumitas going directly to the households where children are not in school and talk to the parents about education. By initiating dialogue on the possibilities for participation in education and the importance of the child going to school, the shishumita hopes the parents will enrol the child in the CINI Asha centre. The main objective is to make the parents start thinking about education as an option that is actually viable for their children.

We try to motivate the parents to send their children to school. If the parents are not motivated they will never send the children to school. But if we can get that motivation in the parents they will try to bring the children to school. They will try heart and soul actually to keep the children in school. They will also start spending money on education. The parents are our primary concern. We aim to make them aware of the importance of education (personal communication 23.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3).

The home visit is the key in the outreach and community mobilization strategy. The first task is to go directly to the homes in the communities related to one specific area and centre. A shishumita informed

I use the survey sheet given by the CINI Asha office. I go to the house and find out how many family members are living in the household. Then how many kids are going to school and how many are not going (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 6).

The home visits are central in the community mobilization. CINI Asha reaches out to the parents in order to create attention on the issue. By initiating dialogue parents start thinking about their own living situation in a critical way. The objective is to make parents aware of the benefits education may have on their living situation. The predominant perception is that most families are not so bothered about education. Therefore, the home visits are considered as a very important part of the job. The majority of the shishumitas said they spend much time conducting home visits.

There is a strong importance attached to the relationship between parents' literacy level and participation in education.

Parents with education valued education for their own children as well. The households where the head of family (...) has attained some educational qualifications, children of these households are found going to school. On the other hand, children born to illiterate parents, who themselves have not attended any educational institution do not give same importance to putting a child into school. It clearly indicates that parental education has a direct

bearing on the educational status of their children (CINI Asha, no date:11).

In a survey conducted in a little over 300 households in the slum and squatter settlements, 70% of the adults were illiterate (CINI Asha, no date). The research for this thesis shows the same pattern, where I found most mothers to be complete illiterate, or only able to sign their name. Because the children are first generation learners, the school going culture is absent from the household and education is not a habit. Hence, the children are not enrolled in school when they reach school-going age. Home visits are therefore imperative in order to create awareness on education.

6.3.2 The arguments to create awareness

Home visits are conducted at the beginning of every session. The shishumita goes directly to the house of the family. During these visits the shishumitas job is to persuade the parents to send their children to school. All the mothers interviewed said the shishumita came to the house and talked about education. In order to create enrolment, shishumitas enter in a dialogue with the parents. The shishumitas use several arguments to convince the mothers, hoping it will result in an active choice to send the children to school.

One of the first arguments is to create awareness of the value of education. A shishumita said she would try to inform of the importance of education

Education is something we cannot do without. We have to generate awareness that education is really very necessary. The idea which is now ejected into the parents is that education is optional. I say it is not optional. In today's world, everybody is educated, so your children should be equally progressive. You wouldn't like it really would you if your children get left behind (personal communication 27.10.07, Shishumita 8).

The sharp divide between the well off and the poor is put in a context dividing the educated from the non-educated. One shishumita would tell the mothers that if they did not send

their children to school, their future would be blank, just as the present they live now (personal Communication 30.10.07, Shishumita 9). The shishumitas appeal to the mothers' concern for social mobility.

I say that if your children get at least some education, they can lead a better life than you have now. They may be a little bit better off, and not as poor as you are (personal communication 30.10.07, Shishumita 5).

There is an attempt to create awareness on the poor families' living situation, and how it may be improved. As Freire (1974) says; critical consciousness is about understanding the social, political and cultural environment of their life, in order to make a decision for change. The shishumita tries to initiate to this thinking by pointing to the reality they live in now. S/he is asking questions like: Is this the life you want for you children? The questions are posed to start a process of critical thinking with the parents. At the same time they are presented with the opportunities available to them. The shishumita wants to make the parents aware of the possible changes that can be realized with education. The important issue for the shishumita, which also poses the main challenge, is to create a dialogue that is based on true critical thinking from the part of the parents, and not founded on only the shishumita giving the parents information, naïve consciousness. It also needs to be a reflection. This is the most impetrative point in order for mothers to make an active choice to send their children to school.

In order to open up for this thinking the shishumita uses arguments and issues s/he knows concern the mothers, and help them understand how they can act on it. The mothers' perception of life situation has a strong focus in the arguments of the shishumitas. As discussed in chapter five, mothers attach great importance to social mobilization. There is a firm belief that education will lead to higher social status, better jobs and more respect. The majority of mothers said they wanted their children to lead a life at least a bit better than what they experience now. One mother remarked

I feel that even if my children will not become doctors I will make them study. Then at least they can do something, like start a business of their own, or do some tailor work. Things by which they can earn some money, more than what I do now (personal communication 30.10.07, Mother 5).

Obtaining better jobs with respectable earnings is important for social mobility. There is great respect attached to a decent job. The shishumitas use these arguments because they know that this is important in the minds of the mothers.

I tell them that see, I am a teacher here. If you send your daughter or son to school, he or she might be in the same position as I am today. So he or she will be able to teach the children. The status symbol is important. I say, look at you and look at me. Maybe I'm just a graduate, but still if your kids also study to class 10 or 12, s/he can also teach (personal communication 30.10.07, Shishumita 5).

Another shishumita said that:

I try to make them understand that because they did not study, education will not give their children any kind of loss. I say you are the one who works in a factory but by giving your child education he might work in some office and earn more. That is how I convince (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 1).

The starting point is to create a reflection of the life the parents live now. Further, the shishumita tries to persuade by using examples of what changes that education may give. Education is used as an instrumental freedom or tool (Sen 1999) for a better life in trying to bring forth a change for schooling. "The reaction is quite good from most of the parents. One thing is that they are very interested in the rise in social mobility" (personal communication 30.10.07, Shishumita 5).

Social mobilization may be the main benefit the mothers recognize in education. Yet, in the discussion from the previous chapter, it was demonstrated that the main reason parents do not send their child to school is because of financial difficulties. Shishumitas and other CINI Asha staff recognize this as well and noting that people living the in the localities are very poor. The argument that education is free is therefore powerful and widely used. One shishumita remarked: "I say we are giving free education, you don't have to pay anything. It is very important for them [parents] that they are given free education" (personal communication 19.09.07, Shishumita 3). This argument is what seems to be decisive for mothers: Another shishumita said:

The community worker [shishumita] came to the house twice. She said you can send your kids to my school, we give education for free. I said that we are very poor, we cannot admit our children in school. The community worker has said that don't worry, we'll put your kids to school. She talked about how education is free, and said they also would give free food (personal communication 30.10.07, Mother 5).

It seems to be clear that what makes the parents decide to send their children to school are the factors that will benefit the children and the families in daily life. Education will not lead to additional expenses, food is given for free and the children get books and other school material they cannot afford. The economic and practical benefits from education are strong incentives.

Parents ask what they can get. What will you give me? I tell them that for one year, when they are studying, I am going to give them all the support. We are not going to ask anything from you (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 6).

Another shishumita said she used to convince parents by arguing that

I convince them that you don't need to have any money. Everything will be given by us. We'll give you food, we'll give you the books. Everything will be given by us. All you have to do is send your children to school. Finally they send them (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 6).

It becomes clear that the argument of economic benefits is an important incentives for the parents to send the children to school. The economic benefits of education are also imperative to argue with the parents, since this is also of concern to them. Another important argument is the benefits of trivialities in everyday life. Shishumitas argue that education may in fact be an instrument and tool to manage different situations as well. Daily happenings such as taking the bus or reading and writing a letter is easy with education, but almost impossible without it. One shishumita said that a common argument for her is to tell the mothers that when the child is older, he or she will not be able to take the bus alone because s/he is not able to read the numbers on the bus. She would also say that if the daughter wants to visit her family after marriage and moving to the in-laws she

will not be able to travel alone. Neither will she be able to write or read letters (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 1).

6.3.3 Dialogue or naïve consciousness

The previous discussion has demonstrated how the shishumitas enter in dialogue with the mothers. The aim is to make them critically think of how education is beneficial for their children's lives. The main focus has been on attempting to make the mothers reflect upon the life they lead now. Then urge them to understand how schooling may change the situation they are not happy with. All the mothers stated that they thought education will lead to a better life than what they lead now.

Freire (1970) states that action must come from the poor themselves and must build on the reflections on their own reality. This is what the shishumitas are trying to achieve, when entering in a dialogue. A horizontal dialogue is based on the poor's' perception of reality and where there is a conversation of shared opinions. However, on one hand, in conversations between the shishumita and the mothers, there is a tendency to a top-down approach. The shishumitas use arguments to convince the mothers, where convince is the key word. There is a dialogue where one part has the knowledge, and the others need to learn. This can be seen in the following statement:

the majority of the parents are uneducated and illiterate. Awareness has to be put in them, convince the parents that if you send the child to school they will be something better. But most parents are not able to understand everything their children can do if they have education. Parents are the least bothered about the education of the kids (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 1).

The shishumita directly tells the parents what to think about education. If they do not agree that this is important for them, mothers are described as ignorant and with lack of awareness. There is a hint of demeaning attitudes towards the parents among the shishumitas, although it may not be intentional. Yet, parents who do not send children to school are still characterized as illiterate, abusive and ignorant. This is more an anti-

dialogue, where there is no true and mutual conversation, but rather the shishumitas tell them how to feel in regards to education. The thinking and decision is decided by CINI Asha staff.

On the other hand, parents seem to agree with the shishumitas. Even though their views on exclusion differ, the main objective is the same. They all see the value of education for the children. Given that the shishumitas are considered to be of higher social status because of their literacy and job as a teacher, the mothers greatly respect what they have to say. One of the shishumitas commented on this stating that “since the parents are poor, they are humble, and because I am a man of higher power they show respect” (personal communication 30.10.07, Shishumita 9). The respect and trust from the parents poses the question if there is a top-down approach. Since the shishumitas come from the localities they are accepted in the communities and have the trust of the parents. Yet, s/he is of higher standard exactly because of education and better job status. This makes the mothers respect and listen to what they say. This in turn starts the process of reflection.

One important factor in the dialogue is the shishumita using arguments they know are of concern to the mothers. They attempt to look at their living situation, what concerns them and what they would like to improve. By using education as an instrumental value to reach the freedoms the family wants, they are taking the parents perception of the world as a starting point. This is imperative in Freires dialogue. Freire (1970) also argues that a true dialogue is built on respect and trust. The shishumitas are able to create that trust with the mothers. Firstly, because they are from the community. Second because they prove they keep what they promise. One shishumita noted:

They think we are like any other people that give a promise but not actually keep what we promise. Like food and admission to school. They don't believe that we will give that. Then again, I go down for the second time, and they think that this is the second or third time she has come here, maybe there is something to this after all (personal communication 30.10.07, Shishumita 5).

Whether there is a dialogue that has resulted in critical consciousness and choice may be determined by the action to follow. If there is a conscious decision taken by the family, the next step will be to actually send the child to school. However, if there is an anti-dialogue founded on naïve consciousness, the choice to send the child to school will not be primarily from the family but rather by the external agent, CINI Asha. This will be discussed next.

6.4 From decision to action; sending the child to school

The strategy of CINI Asha is founded on strong similarities to the two step process of empowerment and the theory of the praxis by Friere (1970). The objective is to create awareness of education. Once that awareness is created it is believed that parents will take action to bring the children to school.

Freire (1970) states in his theory of the praxis that decisions need to be based on critical thinking but without action they just remain thoughts. On the other hand, actions without a base in a decision founded on critical thinking will not be true and not lead to any result for the person involved. The experience is that if a household sends a child to school without making the choice based on the belief that education is right, once the incentives for school is gone the child will stop going. When free meal, free books and a place close to the home is traded with a formal school a bit further away, with tuition fees, uniforms and school material expenses, many families will stop sending their child to school. On the other hand, when it is based on the firm decision to educate the child, then the household will, as CINI Asha staff has remarked ‘try heart and soul in order to send their child to school’ (personal communication 23.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3).

Community mobilization is also important to bring the children to school. The home visit is the main tool in the strategy, and the previous section focused on home visit to create a dialogue for awareness and the importance of education. The objective was to have parents enrol their children in school. The home visits are also important to actually bring the children to school.

6.4.1 Home visits; bringing the children to school

The home visits are important in bringing the children to school, in getting the children to school on a daily basis, reaching them where they are. Most of the shishumitas said that even though the children were enrolled in the preparatory centres they still experience many difficulties in getting the children to actually come. Irregularity in attendance is a problem and a challenge. There is a strong emphasis on home visits for daily participation from the students.

The home visits are especially imperative in the beginning of each session, when the children are first enrolled. Since the children have never been to school, or been out of school for a while, they lack the school going habit in their daily routine.

In the beginning the main task is to make them feel at home. Because in the beginning, well there is nothing like education on their agenda. They [the children] were doing anything and everything but education. So the first few months is getting them to come, bringing them to school. Support them and help them with counselling. It is a bit difficult for the children to adjust to coming to the centres. But after coming to the centres for a couple of weeks, talking with friends, doing some work, they are habituated to the centres. Then there is no problem, they will come to school automatically. It is important to give that routine (personal communication 23.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3).

At the beginning of every year, children are highly irregular. The home visits in the morning are especially crucial the first two or three months after the child has enrolled in the centre. The majority of the shishumitas complained of high irregular attendance:

During the beginning of the session, I go every day. At the end of the year, I will find many families that I still have to go to and ask the children to come. The children often come with their friends, but there have been some stubborn kids I have to go for daily (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 6).

This irregularity may reflect a lack of will and action from parents to send their children to school. If they have not made their own choice on enrolling them, based on their own critical thinking, which is according to Freire (1970) imperative for change, the parents will not put in the effort for the child to actually attend. If the decision is not based on their wants, it must be based on someone else's choices, therefore also someone is responsible for making sure the child attends, in this case, the shishumita.

The irregularity and the fact that the shishumitas have to go for home visit, implies that there is a lack of action in relation to education. Attendance is reliant on regular home visits to actually bring the children to the centres. The majority of the shishumitas experienced difficulties in talking with the parents about education, and therefore also experienced difficulties with bringing the child to school.

I have to try to convince them. Parents are not so interested in if they are sending their child to school or not. The most important thing for them is that they want money. Education is not important, what they get is important (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 6).

Another shishumita remarked:

Most students are not interested in studies. So we make it a point to go to their house and call them to school. When I come to school at 10 am I always make it a point to go to their house. Some students are coming, but maximum of them are not coming. They are more interested in games and running around the lanes (personal communication 19.09.07, Shishumita 3).

There are still many parents that are reluctant towards the child participating in education. When the shishumitas talk to the parents, they are 'surprised' their children are not in school. Mothers then promise they will send them, because they think education is important. Still shishumitas go for home visits on a daily basis. The fact that shishumitas still have to physically go to the homes and call for the children implies that the household is not truly involved in the process of education. If there was praxis of education according to Freire (1970), the parents would make a decision founded on critical reflection to send their child to school. Based on this, they would then actively find a way for the child to participate in school on a daily basis, and engage themselves in this reality. When the

involvement comes from the family itself the children will go. However, when a family has made the decision for educational participation for the children, some mothers also find that the children are reluctant to go. One mother who attach great importance to education and wants her children to go every day said:

Pushing the children to go to school is the responsibility of the parents. Kids are mysterious, they run here and there, so parents should find them and scold them and bring them to school. When the children don't want to go to school, they give lame excuses like I'm sick, I don't feel well, I don't feel like going. Then I scold them, but they are still stubborn enough and say they don't want to come. (personal communication 04.10.07, Mother 2).

On the other hand, parents are positive to the idea of education. However, many families may find it very difficult to actually commit to education. One point to remember is that poverty and lack of financial resources is still considered the main reasons why mothers are not sending their children to school. When poverty is still considered as the major barrier, the strategy to create awareness may no be very effective. In their opinion education is important, however, the financial matters are a restraint. This may necessitate a focus more based on what the parents perceive to be the problem.

An important point when considering inclusion in education is that most of the parents are themselves illiterate and have never been to school. Bernard (2001) states that a main difficulty for first generation learners and their families is that parents have their own negative experience with education. Parents who are themselves excluded from school are less likely to have the knowledge, skills and/or motivation for feeling comfortable in a school setting. There is a very big adjustment in bringing in a daily school culture into the home. Therefore, even if they wanted their children to attend school, action for participation may be difficult for many. There may be several barriers to participation. As Drèze and Sen (2002:158) argue:

In addition to the financial costs, sending a child to school demands a good deal of time and attention, e.g. preparing the child for school in the morning, stimulate his or her interest, help him or her with homework, and establish a rapport with the teachers. In any

respects, these efforts are much more demanding for underprivileged families, especially when the children are first generation school goers.

This concern was also expressed by the shishumitas, one stating:

Parents are working. They don't have the time to send their children to school. Fathers go off to work early, and the mother may be out cleaning someone's house. So even if they wanted the children to go to school, the child goes off and plays, because the parents cannot watch them all the time (personal communication 19.09.07, Shishumita 2).

Despite severe poverty, many households will adjust their daily routine and economy in order to bring the child to school. CINI Asha has recognized that by increasing awareness of education, the majority of the mothers are preoccupied with their children's education, and will stretch to enable their children to attend school. Most of the families send their children to government aided schools, which will charge some fees. Studies demonstrate that families are able to pay for most of the expenses themselves. Mothers changed their schedules. Children needed to be prepared for school, and cooking routines changed as to fit into the schedule of the children's school (CINI Asha 2001). The mothers put great importance in their children's education, and will make adjustment, both economically and practically in the household to enable the children to attend school. Increased awareness in the households imparts the idea of the value of education in mothers. When presented with the value of education, mothers are willing to adjust, and the strategy of community mobilization and awareness raising is seemingly increasing children's participation in school.

Many mothers are therefore positive to education. Still, the shishumitas claim they meet a lot of challenges when they talk to the parents about sending the children on a regular basis. CINI Asha staff noted that:

Mothers have become more aware, there is not doubt about it. But a lot more needs to be changed in terms of awareness. They know that the children need education, but they do not prioritize it (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 4).

Another mother noted a similar experience but also said that if parents are strict enough children would go to school. She strongly felt that ignoring the children's excuses and send them to school despite their protests is the only way to make sure they attend. On the other hand, several mothers experienced the same difficulties as the one quoted above. Another mother noted that unless they were given some incentive, her children would not go to school. So every morning she gave them one rupee to buy a toffee or something, otherwise they would not go. "This is a struggle I have to face daily" she concludes (personal communication 29.10.07, Mother 6). However, there is a lack of action seen in the fact that the shishumita is the one who is responsible for attendance in many instances.

The issue of actually sending the children to school is complex. There are the economic barriers to education, lack of school going culture, lack of interest in the children and lack of awareness to create decisions and change towards education.

6.4.2 Habituation to school

After completing one year at the preparatory centre the students are moved to a primary school. However, going to school can be a terrifying experience for many children. As already remarked, the children come from homes where education and going to school in the morning is not a part of the daily routine. In addition, many children also have negative experiences with school. Several of the children told me frankly that they had quit school because they were scolded, hit and harassed, both by teachers and staff. When out of school, children spend their days running errands, playing around in the streets, household duties and maybe even some work (UNICEF 2002). Whatever the reason, going to school every day to a certain time may be difficult for many.

The CINI Asha preparatory centre is not just educating the children, it is also preparing them to enter formal schools. In the formal schools tardiness and irregular attendance is not accepted. Neither is not paying attention in class and/or not doing the work assigned. When there is no school going culture in the family and a student has been running his or her own

day for the past two or three years, adjusting to a routine life with school and constantly being told what to do may prove difficult for many. Therefore, going to the preparatory centre for a year before enrolling in formal school is imperative for many to succeed with the school day.

The best part of this program is that it habituates the child to enter proper school, formal school. It prepares the way, it adapts the child, it habituates the child. Otherwise most children, they get scared by thinking about the large school, they are scared of getting lost, they are always in awe of fear of formal schools. This practice, this habit of coming to school and then undergoing the bridge course, habituates them to the concept of school, of going to class. Because the proportions are smaller over here. They become used to going to school without being intimidated (personal communication 19.09.07, Shishumita 3).

CINI Asha staff argues that after undergoing the bridge course and completing one year at the preparatory centre, the students will adjust well in formal school.

The preparatory centres are quite formal, and run in the same manner as the formal schools. The number of school hours, demand for regular attendance, and the discipline they have to follow. The only problem is punctuality, but that has to start with the teachers. However, one problem is the kind of individual attention they receive in the centres. That is lacking in the formal schools, due to overcrowded classrooms and too few teachers (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 4).

6.5 Mainstreaming; the importance of inclusion in formal schools

After completing one year at the preparatory centre, the students will enrol in a formal school. The importance of mainstreaming is to create a sustainable progress in education, and not just an ad-hoc project. First, parents invest time and money in education and it is therefore important to create a viable opportunity for change. Hence, it is important to give an opportunity of formal education which may open up for possibilities later. Many ad-hoc, non formal education schemes are also run for poor sections of the society. It has been argued that this is the best way to reach the unreached and be flexible on their terms.

However, CINI Asha is convinced that the only way to help the families create a change is through formal education.

Just because they are poor does not mean they should be deprived of formal schooling and education. We should not give them vocational training in alternative centres just because this is their reality. We aim to change this reality. Giving them vocational training for a year or two will give them a skill, and they can get a job. But we want to wean the children away from labour and put them in the school system. Giving them vocational training will just make them get to work faster. After ending primary school, if they do not wish to continue with academics, they can go on with vocational paths if they wish. But then they have the basics, and they have the opportunity to go to school and exercise their rights as a child of India (personal communication 24.09.07, CINI Asha staff 1).

CINI Asha staff also argues that children should not be written off as being weak in academic studies just because they are poor. They may be strong academically, but have never been given the chance to prove it.

Another point to be made is that non-formal education systems with alternative education centres are further entrenching inequalities. UNESCO (2005) demonstrates that the specialized programmes and institutions the past years have created a differentiation between groups of children.

If 'second-track' schooling facilities means 'second-rate', the expansion of alternative schooling facilities involves a real danger of diluting the right of underprivileged children to quality education. While these facilities might help them in short term, this might be done at the risk of perpetuating the deep inequalities of India's schooling system, whereby children of different social backgrounds have vastly different educational opportunities" (Drèze and Sen 2002:170).

It will discriminate and create further stigma towards the poor. Poor children go to poor schools. Kumar (2006) claims that with creating alternative schools and non formal education institutions the government is disclaiming their responsibility in providing

elementary education for all children. It is creating a system where the alternative centres are good enough for the poor, because the government has a lack of will to provide education for all. Providing different education for different groups is institutionalizing inequality in education. Although CINI Asha has alternative education centres, they are not meant as a permanent solution, but rather as a means to help the children enrol in a formal school. Therefore, the mainstreaming is imperative to CINI Asha work.

6.5.1 Linking the children and parents to school

Upon completing the bridge course in the preparatory centre, the children are enrolled in a formal school. The shishumita is responsible for the enrolment process. One shishumita said that the mainstreaming is an important part of the job. Her responsibility is to

check the progress of the students before enrolling them into a proper government school. Then I get the admission papers from the different schools. There are many children here without the birth certificates, so then I inform the CINI Asha office which children needs the birth certificates (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 6).

The majority of the mothers was positive to the idea of formal school and would like their children to enrol and attend as long as they could afford it. Still, even though they have taken this decision, there is an attitude that the child's education is now the responsibility of the shishumita. One mother said she did not know much about the education programme. Whatever the shishumita would tell her to do, she would do. She would send the child to the school the shishumita wanted (personal Communication 30.10.07, Mother 5).

One of the most imperative tasks in the mainstreaming is to link the parents with the schools. Many parents have never previously been to a school, and therefore may be unfamiliar with the routines of enrolment and also a little intimidated by the process. A shishumita said

When the children are ready for enrolment in formal school I organize a mother teacher meeting. I ask the mothers were they want their child admitted. Then, I check with the school for available space. I take the children to that school (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 1).

Many of the students have bad experiences with going to school and do not feel comfortable going on their own. As previously mentioned the majority of the parents are also illiterate and would not be able to fill in registration forms. Sen (1999) says that change and action must come from the poor themselves, because change needs to be based on the capabilities a person has. These capabilities are tools in development and progress. However, in this situation the necessary capabilities are lacking. Parents do not know what forms they need because they are not familiar with the bureaucracy of enrolment. Since they also are illiterate, they are not able to fill out the forms. Hence, the lack of these capabilities is therefore a barrier to education. There is a need for external actor to facilitate, which in this case is the shishumita. When external agents are working with the poor they are true facilitators (Freire 1970). The shishumita will do her best to enrol the student in a school of the student and the parent's choice. Sometimes the parents want to send their children to well renowned, expensive schools because they only want the best education for their children now that they see their child can actually cope with school. CINI Asha staff then tells them they will not be able to pay for it, and together find another solution in a government school (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 4). In addition, the educational costs in the formal school needs to be provided by the parents. However, if the NGO sees that the household cannot cope with the expenses, they help with up to 50 % of the expenses in some cases. However, it is important that the largest share comes from the parents, so the ownership of education belongs to them (personal communication 23.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3). The shishumita will further help with the formalities, but in the end the decision to enrol a child in school depends on the parent. Bridging the gap between the schools and the parents becomes imperative. On the other hand, the shishumita needs to be careful not to overstep the role as facilitator, in order for the decision and change to still be with the family.

6.6 Coaching centres; retention in school

The coaching centres are back up support and home work centres for the children mainstreamed in formal school. These centres were established because it was recognized that students who were enrolled in formal school would drop out after only a short time in school. The demand of school are too tough and the majority of the students need help with their homework. The need for the coaching centres is because of intergenerational illiteracy, quality of education and economic poverty. All these factors may be causes for drop out from school. However, recognizing the problem CINI Asha are able to retain a majority of the children mainstreamed in school. “About 60 % of the students mainstreamed in formal school complete primary education” (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 4).

The coaching centres are imperative for children from low socioeconomic background and children of illiterate parents. The home environment is not conducive for learning. The household capacity for educational help is very weak, and they are not able to help the students’ progress in school.

In the absence of a supportive mechanism within the school as well as at home, children are unable to cope with the requirements of the school and eventually drop out (Ahuya 2005:7).

One student in the coaching centre said she likes studying there because:

They teach us here, and then we prepare for tests which we take in school. I feel like this centre is helping. I was second in my class this year. If I don’t get sick I get quite good grades. If I get sick, then obviously my grades drop. It would not have been like this if had not come to this centre and would have to study on my own. I might have done well, but I would not have been able to stand first, second or third in my class (personal communication 27.09.07, Child 18).

Another student expressed similar experience:

It is easier to sit for exams if you come to the coaching centre. Because even if you miss school, there is no one who bothers to go back and explain things to you. But here, the teachers are willing to explain a text line by line. It becomes far easier to tackle the exams. It is easier to understand every subject in school, because we are also doing it here (personal communication 27.09.07, Child 29).

Parents do not have the capabilities necessary in order to help the children in the studies. Since parents are illiterate they are not able to help the children with their homework. There is a need for external help. The coaching centre provides academic support with home work and preparation for exams so the students are able to cope with school (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 5). The capabilities of the parents in this situation are not sufficient, and there is some need for outside help. CINI Asha recognizes what the children need in order to succeed, and acknowledge that because parents are illiterate they are not able to provide this help themselves. CINI Asha again becomes the facilitator. Parents still have to be the main decision makers to send the child to school. However, they recognize their limitations and some of the mothers also said that even though they are not able to help with school work, they try to be supportive.

So far it is established that with the coaching centre the shishumitas play a role as facilitator, to help where the capabilities of the household does not suffice. The coaching centres are also closely related to the issue of poverty

Since these people live below the poverty line, they cannot afford to pay for extra tuition. So it is better that they can come to a free coaching centre, where we come and teach them (personal communication 05.10.07, Shishumita 7).

Students coming from the CINI Asha programme live in poverty. Parents are poor and barely able (or willing) to pay for educational expenses. The families are not able to pay for extra tuition. CINI Ashas' coaching centres therefore offers an opportunity that may help

the children complete their education and realize the change they are now pursuing in their life.

Finally, the coaching centres also have a motivational aspect, keeping the children interested in school. Many children experience harassment in school, both by peers and teachers. The feeling of social exclusion is experienced by many. Schools are not always receptive of first generation learners. Classes are filled to the breaking point and there is no room for individual attention. The students are expected to keep on own merits. The coaching centres are therefore also support centres, beyond the academic support. An evaluation done for CINI Asha stated that

The children being first generation learners had no support and encouragement from the families. The teachers in school were not sensitized on the needs and challenges of the children from disadvantaged backgrounds owing to an unattractive school environment and lack of motivation amongst children attend school (...)Families who has just about started to manage their re-organized lives were not in any state to provide resources for additional support (Ahuja 2005:11).

The coaching centre also functions as a tracking strategy. When a child is absent from the coaching centre the shishumita task is to go the household and see why the student is not coming to the centre. When a child does not come to the coaching centre for homework help, it is plausible that the student is not attending school altogether. The shishumita will track down the student and her/his family, find out why s/he is not coming and whether the absence is just in the coaching centre or if it is also for school in general.

From this discussion it is safe to say that the coaching centres are important to keep the children in school. CINI Asha then, becomes an important actor in the children's education. A shishumita said:

I will say that many of the children would not be able to continue their education [without the coaching centre]. Because although the parents are somewhat motivated about the children's education,

they still need back up support and incentives to keep them motivated (personal communication 30.10.07, Shishumita 9).

Ahuja (2005) states that the children are encouraged to continue in school through the coaching centre because they get help with the homework, receive support and motivation, and children are able to keep up with the pace of their fellow students. The coaching centres also keep the parents motivated and interested in education. Parents of the children who are mainstreamed are increasingly motivated to ensure that their children are doing well in school, and are increasingly ensuring individual support. The motivation is also because the parents see that the time and money they have invested in the children is not a waste and it actually is bringing something to their and their children's lives. On the other hand, what the coaching centre is demonstrating, equal to the preparatory centres is that there is still a need for an external agent, either for enrolment and/or retention in school. Findings from the field indicate that students mainstreamed from preparatory centres to formal school would not be able to cope with the school work without the support from the coaching centres.

6.7 The stakeholders

Anyone who can in any way influence a child's education is a stakeholder (personal communication 23.10.07, CINI Asha Staff 3).

6.7.1 Involving the mothers; parent-teacher meetings

The outreach programme must be based on participation from the parents. Titi and Singh (1995) claim that empowerment is about people understanding their reality, and from there take steps towards action and change. From this viewpoint it is important to involve the parents, who need to be the main stakeholders in the child's education. The strategy for CINI Asha is to create awareness that will make the parents responsible, and one of the staff remarked:

The parents are the main stakeholders in education. If they are not motivated, no matter what you or I or anybody else does it is not going to make a difference. The parents have to understand the

value of education and the impact it will have on their lives (personal communication 24.09.07, CINI Asha staff 1).

Anne Bernard (2001:22) states that “programmes which are able to engage with marginalized families, to work with them in the context of constraints and strategies of their own setting, and which bring them together to support one another are most effective”. The main objective is to make the parents responsible in order for the decision for education to be made by them. In order to create awareness and motivated among the parents, CINI Asha preparatory centres arrange parent teacher meetings once every month. It involves and includes the parents in the process of education. One mother who comes to the meetings regularly argued:

Typically, the shishumita tells us how the children are progressing in their studies. They show the exercise books and examination papers. They tell us that the children are doing good and that the parents should give the interest to study at home (personal communication 29.10.07, Mother 6).

Friedman (1992) states that empowerment is to increase the power of the households through their involvement in socially relevant actions. CINI Asha is aiming at empowering parents to take ownership of the child’s education by directly involving them. Govinda (1999) agrees and says it is imperative for the parents to feel responsible for the participation in education to break the social, economic and cultural barriers which are responsible for exclusion from education. By directly involving the mothers it gives increased awareness and motivation, and many say they feel proud. In addition, it also gives the parents the responsibility

In the centres, our primary concern is how to make parent’s responsible for the children’s education. We are outsiders; we can not provide everything for the children for a number of years. To make the parents responsible about the children’s education is very important. So at the parent teacher meeting, we try to tell them about the child’s performance in school. We inform them about the child’s attendance of their children, how they can admit them to formal schools. We tell them how to get the forms for the formal school, about the admission fees and what they need. Our only objective is to make them responsible (personal communication 23.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3).

The majority of the mothers said they were going to the meetings. They took pride in the education of their children, they were proud the children were getting an education, and had aspirations for their futures with the benefits of education. One mother remarked that her son could now write his name and the name of his father. Her husband was also now interested in the son going to school (personal communication 30.10.07, Mother 5). Hence, by involving the parents they also start taking responsibility when they recognize that their child actually is fit for education.

On the other hand, a few of the shishumitas also experienced very poor response on the meetings.

The response of the parents is very, very poor. People hardly come for the meeting. Most of them work. The fathers don't come. The mothers, if they come at all, only stay for five minutes and go again. But the meetings sometimes help. Because I feel that when I go to their house and they come here I can show them how their children are doing. I show the exercise books or the exam paper. They get very satisfied seeing their kids being able to write their names and read and write. Sometimes the parents get interested and they take the initiative for the kids to study (personal communication 29.10.07, Shishumita 1).

Again, as long as the parents are involved, they seem to take an interest, and therefore also responsibility for the children's education. Still, there is a challenge to make the parents aware enough to attend the parent teacher meetings.

6.7.2 The shishumita; para-teacher from the local community

The shishumita role has been discussed throughout this thesis. However, I will still outline some points. The shishumitas are recruited from the communities. They function both as a teacher and facilitator for education. It is mainly because of this lastly mentioned role as a facilitator that is important they come from the communities. CINI Asha programme staff noted:

If you use a person from the community, she knows it well. If you bring someone from the outside, maybe it becomes difficult for her to move around from door to door and talking to them [parents]. If she is from the community, they accept her more readily (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 5).

Freire (1970) states that the dialogue to create critical thinking must be based on trust, humbleness and mutual respect. This is where the shishumita plays an important role. S/he will be more easily trusted because s/he is 'one of them', from the same background. Shishumita has completed education and is now a teacher in the education programme. For this reason the parents also have respect for her. Yet, one fault is still that there is not mutual humbleness between mothers and shishumitas. This is broken by the fact that the shishumita is perceived as the one with the right knowledge. They do not show a humble attitude towards the parents, and when parents do not agree they are thought of as ignorant. Besides this, there is an imperative trust and respect towards the shishumita because s/he is from the same background, yet of higher social status.

6.7.3 The local clubs and the community

The clubs play an imperative role in the education programme. In the instances where the demand and request for education comes from the community, it is usually initiated by the local clubs. This will of course differ between the communities. The local clubs provide the physical space for the preparatory centre. CINI Asha does not have their own education structures and are therefore dependent on the provision given by the clubs. In addition, the clubs are in the proximity of the house and therefore parents know where their children are going. It is not far from home, and children can walk/travel to school on their own. CINI Asha staff notes that the closeness of the school is important with the children because they do not want to travel far. On the other hand, there are also challenges of working with a club. CINI Asha staff remarks that at times the club will ask for favours in return, and some clubs charge rent.

The local clubs are providing the space, premise and electricity. We don't have the space, so they provide us with the space for the schools. The children will not have to go far, that is very important. If they have to go far, many children will not come to

school, or will not be allowed to go (personal communication 23.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3).

The club members are also important stakeholders in creating awareness and accept around the issue of education for the children from these low socioeconomic communities. When a preparatory centre is started in their communities they are genuinely concerned.

The club members are much bothered about the education of the children. They are concerned if the children are coming to the centre or not, and they are also concerned about the children's performance (personal communication 23.10.07, CINI Asha staff 3).

One dedicated club member said that:

The role of parents is to actually send their children to school. But the condition over here is so bad that they cannot fill the role. I go to the house to ask the parents to send their children. I go to see if the teacher has come or not, and if the students have come or not. And then I will, with the other club members and the teachers, bring them to school (personal communication 11.10.07, club member).

Because club members and community leaders are respected it is important to involve them. In order to create a general accept for education in the communities at large, the club members are important stake holders.

6.7.4 Working with the school and the teachers

CINI Asha also works with sensitizing the teachers. In chapter five, the discouragement effect was discussed. About half of the children said they were not going to school because they had been abused by either teachers or fellow students, or simply lacked the interest in studies. Lack of interest is generally related to lack of the quality of the education, non inspirational learning results in lack of interest (Drèze and Sen 2002).

CINI Asha therefore recognizes a need to work with the teachers and their attitudes towards these children. Schools have to take in children from a certain class that they maybe didn't want before. The Minister of Education and Schooling in West Bengal acknowledge the problem:

We have schools, we have structures. We have a number of teachers here. But sometimes they are not of the special quality of bringing those children in slums and streets. There is a lack of communication between the teachers and the children coming from the slums. There is a clear recognition that many teachers do not know how to cope with children from this background (personal communication 01.10.07, Minister of Schooling and Education West Bengal).

CINI Asha has understood that to create a child friendly environment in the schools for all children is important for the children to continue in school. The NGO has started a course for building awareness among school staff and teachers as well. The awareness and knowledge on this issue needs to be embedded in them as well as the parents and the rest of the community.

We are mainly sensitizing the government schools. We are sensitising the main office. We are running awareness programmes. We take classes with the teachers on Saturdays, training them on child rights and gender issues. This is for the SSA and the government primary schools. We are also trying to renovate schools to make them child friendly, so at least the children will be attracted to come to school. The main problem is with the teachers in the secondary level, and children from such background are not meant for this kind of education. They don't even have the time to spend for this kind of children. They want readymade children who quickly grasp the lesson (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 4).

This is also an important part of the CINI Asha community mobilization. Building bridges between the different stakeholders is an objective in the programme. This is especially important when it comes to the schools. The parents still need backup support to go to the schools. However, CINI Asha staff says that now parents are fairly comfortable by going to the primary schools. However, they are not comfortable with going to the secondary

schools. In order to retain children in school, it is important to build a link between the children, parents and the teachers. In order to bridge this gap, parent's needs to be made aware and teachers need training on children from this background, in order to remove stigmatization barriers.

6.8 Summary

The first part of this chapter was looking at how CINI Asha is aiming to create awareness for education with the families. The NGO firmly believes that by creating awareness and making the parents responsible for the children's education, parents will decide to send their children to school. To create this awareness and involve the parents, the shishumitas go for home visits, where they argue for the benefits of education, focusing on social mobilization and the benefits education may have in everyday life. Recognizing that most mothers are very concerned with the poverty they experience, it is also imperative that the shishumitas argue for free education.

However, the relation between the parents and the shishumitas are not always built on true dialogue, in accordance with Freires' ideas. It is rather a situation where the shishumitas holds the knowledge, and aims to convince the parents. Parents are seen to be ignorant on the issue. It is not fully including the perspectives of the poor themselves. The mothers strongly argue that they want their children to be educated, however they lack to financial means to do so. The shishumitas do not reject the fact that the majority of the families live in great poverty, however they are not willing to take this as a starting point for inclusion. There is a different understanding, where the one of CINI Asha and the shishumita seem to be more powerful. Yet, according to Freire (1974) it should be based on the mothers' perception. Still, I argue that the strategy is creating participation in education, and the children are enrolled in the preparatory centres.

What is seen next is that even though a family has decided to send the child to school, there is still irregular attendance in the centres. The shishumitas go out in the communities and call the children to school on a daily basis. This implies that despite the clear decision

made by the families, it is not followed through by action. There are also other reasons why the children do not attend, one being that children are more interested in playing outside than studying. There is a need for a strong external facilitator for the children to attend school. After some time, however, the children are habituated and will come by themselves.

The capabilities in the household are low with regards to education. Parents are illiterate and don't have school going habit. This implies that a facilitator plays a key role for the children to participate. In addition, the children also receive academic support outside school, because the parents are not themselves able to help. This is due to illiteracy and lack of money.

The shishumita is imperative for the children's participation. S/he plays a role as the teacher, community worker and facilitator for education. It is imperative to involve the parents. If parents are interested in the prospects of education and cooperate with the shishumita, they will also take part in sending the children to school. Involving all the stakeholders is important in the education programme. The issue of education is complex and needs to include more than one or two actors in order to create sustainable change towards participation.

7. Summary and conclusion

In this final chapter of the thesis I will first briefly sum up the previous chapters. Further I will give answers to the research questions posed in chapter one. However, education for deprived urban children is a complex issue, and there is not one clear answer to the questions. Finally, I will give a few recommendations for future work and research.

7.1 Summary of the thesis

Chapter one provides the research questions and outlines the purpose for the project. Chapter two gives a background to the study. I give the broad perspective of the education situation, both on the international agenda and the current situation in India. Next, I outline the CINI Asha education programme.

The third chapter is an outline of the methodologies applied in this research and the field work, where I outline the data collection methods for the research. I mainly conducted qualitative interviews, 65 altogether. The majority of interviews are with children, mothers, shishumita and CINI Asha staff. I also discuss the access to the field and participants, the trustworthiness of the study and data analysis methods.

Chapter four outlines the theoretical framework. The framework is based on a holistic picture of an education programme. First, I focus on poverty paradigms; discussing both economic and social measurements of education. The second part is on empowerment as a strategy for inclusion. The principles for empowerment for action are discussed; namely the stakeholders in empowerment, awareness for critical choice and action based on the capabilities of the poor.

In chapter five, I go directly into the findings, discussing the reason for exclusion from education. It was seen that mothers perceive economic difficulties to be the main reason for

exclusion. CINI Asha staff on the other hand claim that lack of awareness of the value of education is the main cause. While most of the children reported that they dropped out of school either because they lost interest in studies or because they were harassed so they did not feel comfortable going to school anymore, which is related to social factors.

In chapter six, I outline and discuss the strategy for inclusion. The first step is to engage in dialogue with the parents to create critical thinking on the issue of education and convince them to send the children to school. As was demonstrated, most of the mothers found education valuable and was convinced by the argument that education is free. The second step is actually bring the children to school, and the community mobilization plays an important part in both enrolment in the preparatory centres, mainstreaming process and the retainment in school by the coaching centres. The last part of chapter six also outlines the different stakeholders in regards to education, discussing the role of the mothers, shishumitas, the community at large and the school system.

7.2 Conclusion

I will now turn to the research questions. The first research question posed was: Explore the reason for exclusion from education for deprived urban children. This issue was thoroughly discussed in chapter five, where it is demonstrated that there are no clear reasons why children are not in school. One important point to remark is that the different stakeholders in a child's education hold different opinions.

Mothers are mostly concerned about the financial aspects of education. The families live in severe poverty, and mothers said they could not afford to pay the school fees and other school related expenses. This point was unambiguously stated by the mothers, and it was clear that direct costs of education are initially excluding children from school. The indirect costs of education are somewhat more unclear. The majority of the children had not previously been engaged in labour, which implies that child labour is not the main cause for exclusion. Still, a few of the mothers stated that their older children need to work

because the family is poor, and may therefore not participate in education. The need for child labour is therefore still a challenge to inclusion, yet not the most important cause for exclusion. However, there is a danger that children who are out of school for a longer period of time will engage in some kind of labour in order to do something useful.

CINI Asha believes that financial difficulties are not the main problem for a child's attendance in school. They claim that although the families live in severe poverty, the issue is rather lack of awareness of education. It is seen that most parents are illiterate and have never gone to school. This leads to a lack of culture of education in the family. Parents themselves have not gone to school and therefore do not have a school going habit. There is an intergenerational transfer of not participating in education and illiteracy. Because parents themselves are illiterate they do not see the value and benefits of education. Hence, there is a lack of prioritizing education, and it is argued that parents will not put in time, money and effort for their child's participation in education. When it is not considered important it is not prioritized and children are excluded from school.

On the other hand, for a child to go to school is not an easy adjustment, neither for the family nor the child. It was seen that the majority of the children had a school going history. Most of the children were previously enrolled in formal school but had dropped out in Class II or III. The main reason for drop out given by the parents was financial reasons. However, the majority of the children said they had dropped out because they 'did not like going there'. Many of them had experienced harassment from teachers and fellow peers, which was reported to be anything from verbal scolding and abuse to physical punishment. This brings in the external and social factor. Even though parents are willing to send children to school, it is difficult when there is not a social accept for the children from a low socioeconomic background to participate in education. Low quality of education is also a strong discouragement factor in the studies. There are factors outside the household that have an effect on the decision of the children to actually go to school in the morning. These external factors are a pattern of social exclusion, where discouragement factors in the school system is pushing the children out of school.

What then, are the causes for exclusion from education? The issue is complex and it is demonstrated that poverty and financial aspects are keeping the child out of school. At the same time illiteracy and lack of school going culture leads to not prioritizing education. In addition, social factors such as barriers created by the education institutions are also excluding the children from participating. It is important to note that when the reasons for exclusion are multi dimensional, the strategy for inclusion needs to take all the aspects into consideration.

I will now turn to the second research question: Explore how the education programme by CINI Asha may include deprived urban children in education with community mobilization and empowerment. There is a need to look at the holistic approach to the programme. The CINI Asha strategy is founded on the premise that children are excluded from school because of parental illiteracy, lack of awareness and lack of school going culture. Because they believe this is the main reason for exclusion, the NGO believes that by involving the parents and making them aware of the opportunities they have for education, parents will make an active choice for their children's participation in education. CINI Asha believes families are able and willing to adjust their economy if they find education to be important for their children. Due to this, the objective is to engage in dialogue with the poor households where it is seen that children are not in school, and make parents aware of education. The community mobilization strategy is the main tool to achieve this. Shortly outlined, the programme is enrolling the child in a CINI Asha preparatory centre, and by the bridge course educates the child to age appropriate level. Upon completing the bridge course the student is enrolled in a formal school. Because CINI Asha experience that children would drop out soon after enrolling in a formal school, the NGO responded by establishing the coaching centres for academic support and motivation.

The first task is therefore to enrol the children in the CINI Asha preparatory centre. In order for this to happen the aim is to create awareness with the family, and by creating awareness the family will make a decision to send the child to school. To make the parents aware of the possibility and the benefits of education the shishumita will go directly to the

family's house. They engage in dialogue with the parents, using arguments they know concern them. The arguments are often issues and challenges in their daily life, and the shishumita attempts to highlight how education may help overcome those challenges. However, the parents are still most concerned about the financial aspect of education. Therefore, even though mothers agree with shishumitas on the benefits of education; that education will probably give a better job and higher social status, the main preoccupation is still how they will be able to pay the school expenses since they are poor. The majority of the shishumitas said it was important for them to highlight that education was free and therefore the household would not suffer any loss. This argument is imperative, seeing that mothers see financial restraints as the main reason for exclusion. In chapter five it was discussed that mothers attach great importance to education. They see education as a means for social mobility and opportunities for better job prospects in the future. The shishumitas also use these arguments when discussion with the mothers, recognizing their concern and using education as a tool to achieve the changes mother's desire.

The shishumitas still argue that parents are illiterate and unaware of education, are therefore not able to prioritize school. The dialogue is based on the fact that the shishumitas enter the conversation with the conviction that exclusion from education is caused by lack of prioritization from the family. Therefore, causes stated by the parents are not considered as the main problem. Hence, the dialogue is based on two different ideas, where the shishumitas claim to be right, and instead of entering a true dialogue tries to convince the parents. Yet, the shishumitas recognize that the majority of the households experience severe poverty, and it was important for the shishumitas to use this knowledge when convincing the parents to send their child to school.

Titi and Singh (1995) claims that empowerment is a two step process where there first needs to be made a decision, and action for change needs to follow from that decision. Freire (1974) argue that when a conscious decision is made by the poor themselves, they will also actively be involved to create change. In regards to education, when parents have taken the decision to send their children to school, they will also send them to school every morning. However, the shishumitas remarks that irregularity is high, and they have to go

and call for the children every morning. This implies that parents have not made the conscious decision, and the shishumita needs to remind the constantly to send them to school. As long as the decision to send the child to school does not come from the parents, but rather from the shishumita, the parents will not make an effort to follow through with the decision, and mothers will also most likely perceive the responsibility of education, including attendance, to be the work of the shishumitas. Without their support as an external facilitator, many of the children would not attend the centre. It is argued that awareness is still not embedded in the parents, and they are therefore not willing to prioritize education.

Still, one point is to remember that there are also several other factors keeping children out of school. If the child does not have a school going habit, they don't consider going to school in the morning a part of their daily routine. Children are more interested in playing in the streets with their friends than study. These factors are related to parent's interest and prioritization for education. It is argued that parents who are concerned with education would be sending their children to school, despite the child's desire to do other things. Parents do not have the capacity to walk the children to school everyday, because they are dependent on work. The educational institutions may also keep children out of school, because of low quality of school and harassment from teachers and fellow students. Considering these factors as well, it is not clear that there is a lack of will and decision from the parents, and mothers are highly interested in education for a better future for their children. One thing that seems to be clear however, is that CINI Asha and the shishumitas still need to be a facilitator for both enrolment and regular attendance in school. Many children are coming to the centres when they are reminded implying that the community outreach is including children in school.

After completing the bridge course at the preparatory centre, the children are enrolled in formal school. The process is a cooperation between the mothers, children and the shishumitas. The families alone are not capable of getting through the process without external support, mainly because of the bureaucracy of the education system and illiteracy with the parents. Again the shishumita is the facilitator. Once the children are enrolled in a

formal school, they are also connected to a coaching centre. The majority of the children enrolled in CINI Asha are drop outs and have therefore previously been enrolled in formal school. Hence, keeping the children in school is just as important as enrolling them, “because once they are enrolled there is a 101 reasons for why they drop out as well” (Personal communication 24.09.10, CINI Asha staff 1).

The coaching centres are important because parents are illiterate and therefore cannot help the children with homework. The non conducive learning environment at home creates the need for an external agent. The capability of the household due to intergenerational illiteracy is not sufficient to help the children cope with education. The tradition of homework is strong in the Indian school system, and most students have a tutor outside school to help with homework is so common it is almost an obligatory in order to do well. The poverty factor also plays a role. Parents who struggle to make ends meet and are finding it hard to pay for the educational expenses for just going to school find it almost impossible to send the children to school. The students, as well as the shishumitas, say they do not think they would do so well or even be able to pass the classes if they had not gotten help with their homework. Therefore, the coaching centres are ensuring retention, and there is the need for the external actor in order to retain the children in school. CINI Asha has acknowledged that there is a need for this centres to retain the children in school, and has included this in their strategy.

The CINI Asha programme is founded on the principle that every child should participate in formal school, and the mainstreaming in education is important. The programme is successful in including children in school, and as many as 60 % of the children who are mainstreamed into formal school complete primary education (personal communication 15.10.07, CINI Asha staff 4). The main goal is to make parents responsible for education, believing that children go to school when parents are able to prioritize education. In terms of empowerment, CINI Asha is still more than a facilitator for the children to enrol and complete their education. Although parents are more aware and more interested in education, they are not yet capable of taking full responsibility of the child’s education. This is due to household poverty. It is also due to the intergenerational illiteracy, they

would not be able to cope with the necessary paperwork and school bureaucracy. Social factors may also hinder education, and there are great discouragement effects in the school system that pushes children out of school.

CINI Asha is successful in bringing the children into the fold of education. However this is still strongly dependent of the action by CINI Asha. This may be due to the fact that there are different opinions of the cause for exclusion in education. The success of the empowerment in the CINI Asha strategy is based on the fact that lack of awareness is the reason for exclusion. The ability to make a decision for education is according to the NGO the realization of the value of education. They complain that many parents are still not able to prioritize education. On the other hand, the parents are of a different opinion, stating that they do realize that value of education, but due to financial reasons, they are not able to send their children to school. Therefore, their decision for participation in education will be based on this premise, rather than the lack of awareness claimed by CINI Asha. Although the will and interest is there, and parents are neither lazy nor stupid because they are poor, they are simply not capable to handle the education for the children without help. Not for the first generation learners. The hope is that this process of empowerment will bring a school going culture to this generation's children, and empower them to make use of the education services for their children. CINI Asha also experience that once awareness is created, many families will realize they are able to cope financially with sending the child to school. Still, it is important to remember that the reason for exclusion is the foundation for the decision making in educational participation.

The CINI Asha education programme is successful in bringing children into the fold of education. The community mobilization is enrolling children in school and is successful in retaining the majority. CINI Asha is able to create inclusion by involving the parents, reaching out to the children and providing support where it is needed. Yet, there are external factors that are keeping children out of school. Poverty, illiteracy and social exclusion are still challenges. It is also seen that families needs to be devoted to the education of their children. Even though the majority of the households are not able to take

full responsibility for the education, empowerment may be achieved over time. Meanwhile the strong interference by CINI Asha is including many children in education.

7.3 Future recommendations

There are several issues that would be interesting for future studies. One interesting study is to see how the children who are mainstreamed into a formal school perform, seeing that they have completed only one year of accelerated learning. The effects of education are an interesting study in this case, which can be done by following a cohort for maybe two-three years. From conversations with CINI Asha staff, many note that the empowerment and awareness may be stronger for the next generations. When children receive education now, they will have the seeds of education in them and pass it on to the next generations. How will this be for the coming generation when their parents will have at least some education? Will they enrol in school at their age appropriate level? Will they go even further in their education? Or will the situation we see today remain? A study for the near future may be to explore the effects of education for the children. Will they be able to obtain better jobs, develop and achieve higher social status and live a better life than what their parents now claim to live?

As for future work in CINI Asha I recommend that the NGO remains a strong agent in the education scene in the future. It is clear that there is a need for an external agent in order to bring and keep the children in school. There is still a number of children who are without the access to education. There is a need to strengthen this, reaching out to children who are out of school. Although CINI Asha has had quite some success, there are still children without access to education. To further strengthen the programme, reaching this last group of children will become a new challenge for the NGO. Understandably, CINI Asha is terminating the preparatory centres in areas where they do not see a need. However, I will strongly suggest that this does not happen on the expense of the areas where there still is a need. Also, when deciding to no longer work in one area, they may consider starting in a new site. The education programme is reaching out to the children and families who want to participate in education and the NGO should therefore continue to provide this

opportunity. At least until the families can provide this themselves. The relationship with the mothers and the families could however be strengthened. There is a tendency to a top down approach, yet working from the grass root level. There are external and social exclusionary factors which are hard for CINI Asha to change, outside the education programme. These are factors such as providing secure jobs for the families so they are able to invest in education and create an acceptance that deprived urban children are fit for education.

I do, however despite the challenges, recommend that CINI Asha continues with the education programme as long as children in Kolkata are out of school and there is a need for external support for inclusion. It is without doubt giving children the opportunity to participate in education. If they are interested!

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Appendix A Overview of Interviews

Ekta Prep	Dhobiatola Prep	Diamond Sports	Basti Federation
Shishumita 1	Shishumita 2	Shishumita 4	Shishumita 6
	Shishumita 3	Shishumita 5	
Child 1	Child 4	Child 8	Child 12
Child 2	Child 5	Child 8	Child 13
Child 3	Child 6	Child 10	Child 14
Child (no interview)	Child 7	Child 11	
	Child drop-out 1		
	Child drop-out 2		
Mother 1	Mother 2	Mother 5	Mother 6
	Mother 3		Mother 7
	Mother 4		Mother 7
		Club Member	

Ekta Coaching Center	Tiljala Library Coaching	Chowbaga Coaching
Shishumita 7	Shishumita 8	Shishumita 9
Child 15	Child 18	Child 20
Child 16	Child 19	Child 21
Child 16		Child 22

Chowbaga High School	Shree Bhama Sah	Public Social Children's
Headmaster	Headmaster	
Teacher 1	Teacher 1	Teacher 1
Teacher 2	Teacher 2	
Child 23	Child 26	Child 29
Child 24	Child 27	Child 30
Child 25	Child 28	Child 31

CINI Asha Staff	Government Staff	Other
Staff 1	Minister of Education and	Neil Harand (GOAL)
Staff 2	SSA officer	Sanat Ghosh (academic)
Staff 3	SP Secretary	
Staff 4	SP officer Loreto	
Staff 5	Local counsellor Ward 57	

²¹ Coaching centre close to the Chowbaga High School.

Appendix B Interview guide, childre preparatory centre

Background information

- How old are you?
- Where do you live? Do you live nearby this school?
- Who lives in your house?
 - o How many sisters and/or brothers?
 - o How many of you sisters and/or brothers study?

About the CINI Asha preparatory centre

- Can you tell me about your first day in school? Did you come with your mom/alone/with the teacher? When did you start coming here?
- What do you like most about coming to this centre? What is your favorite subject?
- What are some things you don't like?
- Did you know how to read and write before you came here?
- Can you tell me about some things you do in school, when you come here?

- How did you learn about this school (centre)? Who told you?
- Did anyone come to your house? Who?
- What are some things the Shishumita (often use the word Didi²²) would say to you?
- Do you remember what she would talk to your mother about.
- Do you come to school everyday?
- On the days you don't come to school, what are the reasons for that?
- What does your mother say when you go to school?
- What does your mother say if you don't want to go to school?

- Do you want to go to formal school? What school? What class?
- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Why is education important to you?

Previous school going history and activities

- What did you do before you started the CINI Asha centre?
- Have you gone to school before?
- If yes; why did you stop going to school? How long did you go to school before you stopped?
- Did you do some work before? What kind? How much money would you earn? What did you do with the money you earned?

²² Didi means aunt i Bengali, and is often used as a word of respect, of someone older. The older aunt is wise, caring and respect are deservingly shown to her. At the same time, it is also a word of affection, portraying a certain trust.

Appendix C Interview guide children in formal school and/or coaching centre

(only children who have been mainstreamed from a CINI Asha preparatory centre)

Background information

- How old are you?
- Where do you live? Do you live nearby this school?
- Who lives in your house?
 - o How many sisters and/or brothers?
 - o How many of you sisters and/or brothers study?

School related

- What are some things you like about school? What is your favorite subjects?
- What are some things you don't like about school?
- How is your relationship with the other students? Do you like the teachers here? Why/why not? Do the teachers scold? If yes, why? How? How do you feel about that? (school and socially related questions)
- Do you come to school everyday? Why/why not?
- On the days you are not in school, what is the reason for that? When you are not in school, what do you do during the day?
- Do you work before/after school? What? How much money do you earn?
- Before you started coming here, have you been to school before?
- Before starting CINI Asha preparatory centre, were you in school?
 - o If no, why not?
 - o If yes, why did you stop going? How long did you go to school? How long were you out of school?

Coaching centre (for children interview in the coaching centre, this part was focus on)

- Do you come to this coaching centre everyday?
- What are some things you like?
- What are some things you don't like?
- Do you do all your homework?
- Who helps you with your homework?
- How would you do in school if you were not going to this coaching centre?
 - o Would you do well on your exams?
 - o Do you think you could pass to the next grades?
 - o If you do not pass to the next class, will you still continue in school?

General

- What do you want to be when you grow up?
- Why is education important to you?
- Do you want to continue in school? For how long?
- What do your parents think about you going to school?

Appendix D Interview guide mother

Background:

- How many children do you have?
- Who lives in your house?
- How many children do you have in his school?
- Do you work? With what?
- Does your husband work? With what?
- What do you earn? What are some of your expenses?
- Have you gone to school? Your husband? If yes, for how many years

School related:

- How did you learn about the CINI Asha preparatory centre?
- Did the shishumita come to your house? If yes, how many times?
- What were some things she would tell you?
- Why does your child/ren attend CINI Asha?
- Did she or he go to school before?
 - o If yes, what are some reasons for drop out?
 - o If no, why not? What did the child usually do during the day?
- Does your child/ren attend school everyday?
- Do you face any challenges with sending the child to school?
- What are your costs of education?

- What do you know about the CINI Asha programme?
- Do you want your child/ren to continue in formal school upon completing this programme?
- Where? What class?
- Why do you think it is important for your child to get an education?
- How does your husband feel about your child's education?
- Does your child tell you what he or she is doing in school? What they learn?
- Do you attend the parent-teacher meetings?
 - o If yes, what are some things that are discussed?
 - o What is important to you?
 - o If no, why not?
-

Appendix E Interview guide shishumita preparatory centre

Background

- How long have you been working here? How did you learn about CINI Asha? How did you become a community worker?
- Do you come from this area? What is your educational background?
- How is access to school in this area? Can you tell me a little bit about this community?

The Preparatory centre

- What is your job as a shishumita?
- Can you tell me a little bit about the teaching? What do you like about the bridge course? What do you not like? Do you feel the students are able to complete the bridge course? Able to reach the expected learning in one year?
- Can you tell me a little bit about the community mobilization?
- In your opinion, why are children out of school?
- What is your job in enrolling the children? How often to you do home visits? What are some things you tell the mothers? How is the response from the parents? Who do you talk to, mothers/fathers/both/other head of family?
- What is the importance of home visits?
- Do children attend school regularly? What are reasons they don't come to school?
- In case of drop outs, what are some reasons for that?
- Do parents face challenges in sending the children to school? If yes, what? How are they overcome?

Formal school and mainstreaming

- How do you get the children enrolled in school? Home visits? What do you say to convince them?
- What do you do to retain them in school?
- In your opinion, do you feel mainstreaming into formal schools are important for these children?
- How do you feel children adjust in formal school?

General

- In your opinion, why is education important for the children?
- In your opinion, do you see changes in the children? In the community?
- What are strengths and weaknesses about this program?
- In your opinion, who is responsible for educating the children?

Appendix F Interview guide shishumita coaching centre

Background

- How long have you been working here? How did you learn about CINI Asha? How did you become a community worker?
- Do you come from this area? What is your educational background?
- How is access to school in this area? Can you tell me a little bit about this community?
- Why were children not attending school? When they were not in school, what are some activities they could be engaged in?

The coaching centre

- What is your job as a shishumita?
- Can you tell me a little bit about the teaching?
- Can you tell me a little bit about the community mobilization? Is it a large part of your work? How often do you go for home visits? What are some reactions from the parents?
- In your opinion, why are the children not going to school?
- In your opinion, why are the coaching centres important? What are you teaching the children? Do you feel that coming to the centre helps them in their studies? How does it affect performance in school?
- Do children attend school regularly? What are reasons they don't come to school? Do children attend the centres regularly? Why/why not?
- In case of drop outs, what are some reasons for that?
- Do parents face challenges in sending the children to school? If yes, what? How are they overcome?

General

- What do you like most about this job? What do you think is important? What are some challenges you face?
- In your opinion, do you see changes in the children? In the community?
- In your opinion, why is education important for the children?
- What are strengths and weaknesses about this program?
- In your opinion, who is responsible for educating the children?

Appendix G Interview guide, CINI Asha staff

General questions: (education programme staff and director)

- What is the main picture of education for urban deprived children in Kolkata?
- How many children are excluded from education? Are they drop outs? Never enrolled? Why are children excluded from education? What are some reasons they are not in school? What are some main challenges with the situation/this target group?
- How is access to education in Kolkata? In the areas CINI Asha works? Sufficient schools? Teachers?
- How may excluded children be included in school?
- What is the main aim of the education programme? Why is it based on this specific strategy?
- Who are involved in the children's education? Are parents cooperative? Will they send children to school? Why/why not? What are some response you get from the parents?
- What is your role? Who are some other stakeholders? Children, community, schools, teachers?

Preparatory centers

- Explain how the preparatory centers function? The main objectives?
- In your opinion, are you reaching the objectives?
 - o What are the successes?
 - o What are some challenges?
- What areas do you work in? Why these specific areas?
- What are the characteristics of these areas?
- Household characteristics? Family size? Average earnings? Litteracy among parents?

- How many children are enrolled?
- How many children drop out?
- What are the reasons the children are out of school children (never enrolled and drop-outs)?

- What is the role of CINI Asha in including the children in education?
- What is the main responsibility/ies of the community workers?
- What are the strengths in using locals as teachers/community workers?
- What are weaknesses in using locals as teachers/community workers?
- What is your relationship with the local community? What is the importance of the local community in education for the children?

- What are the objectives of the bridge course?

- What are the strengths of the bridge course program?
- What are weaknesses in the bridge course program?
- How many children can be educated within the timeframe?

- Can you tell me about the mainstreaming? Main objectives? The reasons for this specific strategy? Strengths? Weaknesses?
- Explain the process of mainstreaming when the children end the bridge course program?
 - o What is the role of CINI Asha?
 - o What is the role of the community workers?
- How many schools do you mainstream into?
- How many children are mainstreamed every year?
- How many students drop out? When students drop out, how long have they been attending school before they drop out?
- What is the rate of continuance from class IV to V?
- How are the students adjusting from the CINI centers to formal school?
- What are some challenges?
- How is the performance rates of the students from the bridge course?
- What relationships do you have with the schools? What are strengths? What are weaknesses?
- What is the attitude of the teachers towards the students coming from a low socio-economic background?

Coaching centers

- Explain the function of the coaching centers? What is the main objectives? Why do you run coaching centers?
- What are the strengths of the coaching centers?
- What are the weaknesses of the coaching centers?
- How many coaching centers are run?
- How many children are enrolled?
- How many children drop out? What are some reasons behind this?

- What is the job of the community workers?
- What are the strengths of using local persons as teachers/community workers?
- What are the weaknesses?

- What is the role of the local community in running the coaching centers?

- What is the cooperation with CINI, the school, the government?
- Do you feel the teaching at school is good? Do you feel that the school environment is sufficiently good to do good teaching?