



Management of Social Welfare Hostels in Telangana: Insights, Opportunities and Challenges

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The Context

During the post-Independence period, India as a welfare state has undertaken a host of social welfare programmes for the well-being of the marginalised communities. A social welfare programme is usually designed to protect citizens from the social and economic risks and insecurities of life of vulnerable sections of the society. A welfare programme or service usually includes public provision of basic education, health services, pensions and housing (charging nominal price or providing free of cost).

As part of educational programmes, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India, started the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of construction of hostels within or near to the campus of educational institutions to enable and encourage students belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SC) community to improve their access to quality education. The scheme for establishing Social Welfare Hostels (SWHs) was first initiated for the SC girls in 1963-64 so as to give an impetus to education of girls.

During 1989-90, based on the recommendations of the Working Group on the Development and Welfare of SCs and STs, the SWHs scheme was extended to SC boys as well. The main objective of Social Welfare Hostels is to provide free board and lodging facilities in the hostels for SC boys and girls studying at different levels – schools, colleges and universities. In order to integrate the SC students with the mainstream, 10 percent of total accommodation in such hostels was reserved for non-SC students. The scope of the scheme was enlarged in phases to cover institutions of higher education or learning such as colleges and universities.

Status of Social Welfare Hostels in Telangana

As of 2017-18 there are 863 SWHs (684 are pre-matric and 179 are post-matric) in Telangana and a total of 76,568 boarders (both boys and girls) are availing the hostel facility. In spite of the best efforts of the

Government, the major concerns of the functioning of SWHs include the availability, adequacy of facilities and quality of services across the State. The average number of pre-matric hostels, students per hostel and students per district in the state are - 22, 80 and 1,757 respectively. The average number of post-matric hostels, students per hostel and students per district in the state are - 06, 123 and 712 respectively. The highest number of pre-matric hostels are in Nalgonda (47) followed by Khammam (40) district; the lowest number of such hostels are in Medchal (07) followed by Komuram Bheem (8) district. With regard to post-matric hostels, Hyderabad (16) has the highest number followed by Nalgonda (15) and Warangal Urban (12) districts; while the lowest number of such hostels are found in Jayashanker-Bhupalapally and Jogulamba-Gadwal districts with two hostels each.

Initiatives of Government of Telangana

Over the past five years the Government of Telangana has taken certain initiatives to improve the conditions in the hostels and to attract more eligible students to come on board to avail the hostel facilities. In 2016-17, the Government has enhanced the mess charges to Rs 950 from Rs 750 for the students from Class III to VII; the amount has been raised to Rs 1100 from Rs 850 for students of Classes VIII to X; and from Rs 1,050 to Rs 1,500 for the post-matric hostel students. The other important interventions made by the Government include: introduction of *sanna biyyam* (super fine rice) and detailed food menu; display of food menu within the premises of social welfare hostels; providing tutors for 10th class students for four subjects, i.e. English, Hindi, Mathematics and Science; supply of bedding material for each student at the time of joining hostel; increase in the number of uniforms (to four pairs); supply of school bags and two pairs of shoes; and organizing educational excursions for the inmates. Plans are on the anvil to take up construction of hostel buildings in a phased manner so as to house all hostels in government buildings.

The above analysis provides the context in which the present study was undertaken to examine the status of

infrastructural facilities and academic environment at social welfare hostels; it also looks at the governance structure and participation of boarders in the management of SWHs.

Salient Findings of the Study

This study was conducted in four districts – Khammam, Karimnagar, Nalgonda and Nirmal. It covered 24 hostels in all with each district representing 6 SWHs. Of the sample selected from each district four hostels were pre-matric and the remaining two were post-matric. Equal number of boys' hostels and girls' hostels were covered from each category. Post-matric hostels are located in mostly urban locations while the pre-matric ones are generally from rural areas. The study also covered other stakeholders such as HWOs (Hostel Welfare Officers), ASWOs (Assistant Social Welfare Officers) and Deputy Directors.

The study finds that the SWHs are catering to the lodging and boarding needs of the target group; and they also promote education among the weaker sections across the districts. It is evident from the above table that in the case of pre-matric hostels, the highest number of new hostel buildings is in Khammam district and lowest is in Nirmal district. However, this study found that the pre-matric buildings - boys hostel Khammam town, boys hostel Tipparthi (Nalgonda), girl's hostel Ramadugu (Karimnagar), girls college hostel in Nirmal and girls college hostel in Nakirekal (Nalgonda) - are of semi-pucca in quality as the structures are covered with corrugated asbestos sheets.

The study also reveals that an overwhelming proportion of pre-matric hostel buildings (14 out of 16 buildings) are government-owned, whereas almost two-thirds of the post-matric hostel

buildings (5 out of 8 hostel buildings) are government-owned and the remaining are housed in rented buildings. It needs to be stressed here that these buildings are deficient in basic amenities such as accommodation, bathrooms and lavatories with running water. The HWO of a post-matric girls hostel stated that they somehow manage the hostels as it is difficult to get rented buildings for hostels, particularly in accessible locations of urban areas and within the budgetary provisions of the government. Almost all pre-matric hostel buildings have compound walls. The differences between pre-matric and post-matric hostels in the way the students are accommodated in the rooms provide a contrasting picture.

More than half of the pre-matric hostels (9 out of 16) do not have security facility. None of the hostels in Nalgonda and Nirmal districts (both pre-matric and post-matric) has security system. A similar pattern can be seen with respect to post-matric hostels as well. CC camera facility is available only in Karimnagar and Khammam districts. The students reported that playground and sports material are insufficient for organizing games and sports competitions in the hostel premises. None of the post-matric hostels has playground. Some boarders reported that they go to open spaces around their hostels to play which are far from their respective hostels.

Regarding health facilities at hostels, though first aid box is available in every hostel, there are no health functionaries (such as nurse or ANM) to attend to the health issues of boarders – particularly the personal hygiene of girls during menstrual cycle. The HWOs, however, stated that they provide basic medicines to the sick boarders and take them to hospitals depending on

Table 1: Infrastructure Facilities and Other Services in the Selected Social Welfare Hostels

District	Hostel type	Building Status		Bldg owner ship	Com-pound wall	Security	Play ground	Drinking Water	Food Quality	Bath room	Toilets	Study hours	Library	Tutors Class X
		Old	New	Govt.	Yes	Yes	Yes	RO/GP	Satisfactory	Adequate	Adequate	Conducted/Available		
Karimnagar	Pre	2	2	4	4	3	3	GP/RO	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		Yes
	Post		2	2	2	2	0	GP	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	
Khammam	Pre	1	3	4	4	4	1	RO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
	Post	1	1	1	1	2	0	RO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Nalgonda	Pre	2	2	3	4	0	3	GP/RO	Yes	No	No	Yes		No
	Post	1	1	1	2	0	0	GP/RO	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
Nirmal	Pre	1	3	3	3	0	4	GP	Yes	No	Yes	Yes		No
	Post	1	1	1	2	0	0	GP	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	

Source: Primary field data

the severity of the condition. It was found that the following are the main sources of drinking water: public tap provided by the local Gram Panchayat, bore well and mineral water or RO plant. Public taps and RO plants are the major sources for both pre-matric and post-matric hostels. All the sample hostels in Nirmal district depend on the piped water supplied by the local governments. With respect to the quality of food, it was reported to be satisfactory; however, the prescribed food menu is not adhered to quite often. There is, however, a need for creating awareness among students and parents with regard to the quality and quantity of food.

The status pertaining to the availability of bathrooms presents a mixed pattern. More than half of the hostels do not have adequate number of bathrooms in the pre-matric category. This problem is more acute in the hostels of Karimnagar and Nalgonda districts. These hostel buildings are quite old hence do not have adequate number of bathrooms. Inadequacy of toilets is also evident across the hostels. Some boarders from pre-matric boys hostels of Tipparthi (Nalgonda) and Gangadhara (Karimnagar) said that they prefer open defecation which highlights the gravity of the problem. In several hostels, a majority of boarders reported that there is no running water in toilets and urinals. These findings indicate that the boarders stay in unhygienic conditions at the hostels.

Library facility, which is available in post-matric hostels, is accessed by boarders; they read newspapers, particularly those boarders who appear for different competitive examinations. The study hour facility is available both in the morning and the evening in pre-matric hostels across the districts. HWOs in pre-matric boys hostel Khanapur (Nirmal) and girls hostel Wyra (Khammam) take personal interest to clarify doubts raised by boarders on different subjects. Moreover, there is a provision for tuitions for class X students in four subjects, i.e. English, Hindi, Mathematics and Science in pre-matric hostels. But the norms for managing such arrangement vary across the districts. In the districts of Karimnagar and Khammam, tuition is available even if there are 10 students pursuing class X; while in other districts such as Nalgonda it is available only if there are 20 or more students. This inconsistency in the norms needs to be addressed by the government.

The endeavours of the government towards supplying materials such as bedding, woollen blankets and sweaters; and serving quality food according to the prescribed menu are noteworthy. However, the major deficiencies in both pre and post-matric hostels include inadequate and below par infrastructure with

respect to - space for living, playground, security measures and WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene).

It may be highlighted here that the initiatives on the part of HWOs and higher officials in organizing study hours and engaging tutors and paying special attention to slow learners have contributed towards creating a conducive academic environment and increasing the pass percentage among students. Nevertheless, other services - library facility, study hours and tuitions - need to be extended to all boarders irrespective of their classes.

From the government or management perspective the following critical issues need immediate attention: delay in the supply of provisions/supplies and cosmetic allowance; delay in releasing the budget; inadequate budgetary provision for purchase and repair of different fixtures in the hostels; denial of admission to students, particularly in pre-matric hostels; inadequate number of post-matric hostels; cumbersome and time-consuming procedures for establishing new hostels; insufficient number of government buildings; stay of unauthorised non-boarders in post-matric hostels; location of hostels being far away from the schools; dysfunctional committee system; inadequate staff/functionaries; dereliction of duties and lack of accountability on the part of functionaries; absence of effective monitoring by higher authorities; non-cooperation between the staff of SWHs and school functionaries; and inadequate health facilities and lack of security, particularly for girls.

Key Policy Takeaways

- Construction of new hostel buildings, particularly for post-matric students, needs to be initiated on a priority basis.
- Renovation of existing buildings and improving basic infrastructural facilities also need immediate attention.
- Enhancement of annual budget for day-to-day maintenance of hostels to Rs 40,000 from the current Rs 20,000 per annum.
- Greater awareness among the students and parents needs to be created about the provisions and services available to them - in terms of quantity and quality- at the time of admission into the hostel.
- The uniforms provided to the hostel inmates need to be tailored to the individual requirements of the boarders; the present policy of “one size fits all” is inconsistent with personal requirements of the inmates.

- In view of the escalating prices of cosmetics, the monthly allowance for toiletries needs to be raised to Rs 250 from Rs 50 for classes III to VII; and it needs to be increased to Rs 300 from Rs 75 for classes VIII to X as reported by boarders.
- Introduction of biometric system for ensuring attendance of boarders and accountability of hostel employees as well.
- Regular meetings between HWOs and heads of the institutions (schools/colleges) need to be convened for collecting feedback on the performance and welfare of hostel inmates.
- Regular interactions between Assistant Social Welfare Officers and boarders should be organized to collect feedback on the functioning of hostels.
- The process of filling of vacant positions in hostels needs to be initiated.
- Relevant committees - hostel advisory committee and parents committee – need to be activated in order to periodically review the functioning of hostels.
- Tuition facility may be extended to all the boarders; one tutor (all subjects) for Classes III to V; three tutors (Mathematics, English, Science) for Classes VI to VIII; and four tutors (Mathematics, English, Science, and Hindi) for Classes IX to X. This would enable the boarders to compete with or outperform other students.
- Remuneration of tutors may be enhanced to Rs 3,000 from the current level of Rs 1,500 per mensem.
- Special health needs of adolescent girls need to be addressed.
- Personality development or soft skills classes to boarders need to be conducted to enhance their self-confidence and communication skills.



Study hour at a Social Welfare Hostel
(Khammam District)



Residents having dinner at a pre-matric hostel
(Karimnagar District)

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