Project Title:Aspirations of Poor Children and Their Educational Achievement (Case study in Kolkata) July 2020-June 2021

The Oxford English Dictionary defines aspirations as ‘hope or ambition for achieving something’. All of us have some aspirations for the future and this is especially stronger when we are young. However aspirations are also socially constrained, because people who are in poverty fail to aspire and have big dreams for themselves. Poverty stifles their aspirations and as a result they keep on accepting their poverty. Poverty is both the cause and result for failure of aspiration. This has been pointed out by Ray (2006) who argues that the poor may suffer from ‘aspirations failure’, and that poverty and a failure of aspirations may be reciprocally linked in a self sustaining trap. Hence looking at this poverty trap and persistence of inequality with a different dimension, that is, with their link to aspirations becomes important especially as we belong to a country where the number of people below poverty line is so high.

I want to focus on poor children because children are our nation’s future and tomorrow’s citizens regardless whether they come from a poor or wealthy background. A child has an entire future ahead of himself or herself. What a child aspires for is very important for he/she will grow up to become that. For a child in poverty, education becomes a medium through which he/she as well the family can come out of poverty and make a better future. Therefore I want to find out what aspirations the poor children hold for their future, how these aspirations are formed or influenced by various social factors and how their aspirations take shape in their educational attainment.