There is an emerging consensus that poverty reduction is what development is about, and poverty reduction is by now a major priority of the international development aid community. For example, the UN Millennium Declaration sets the goal of improving the living conditions of 100 million slum dwellers until 2020.

Poverty reduction is a multisectoral activity. Hence, various actors at the Central and Municipal levels will have a role in poverty alleviation. Government agencies, civil societies, the private sector will have a role to play in poverty alleviation. This chapter investigates the roles and programmes of urban poverty reduction by the government and non-government sectors in the city of Guwahati.

5.1 Government Actors

5.1.1 Central Government

The government is supposed to be the main actor in poverty alleviation. The key agency at central level is the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation which is a new Ministry carved out of the former Ministry of Urban Development.
The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation provide support to the following Centrally Sponsored and Central schemes:

**Centrally Sponsored Schemes**

i) Swarna Jayanti Shaharia Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY)

ii) Valmiki Ambedkar Awas Yojna (VAMBAY)

iii) Integrated Low Cost Sanitation Scheme (ILCS)

iv) Interest Subsidy Scheme for Housing for the Urban Poor (ISSHU)

**Other Schemes**

i) Building Materials and Technology Promotion Council (BMTPC)

ii) National Cooperative Housing Federation (NCHF)

iii) Central Government Employees Welfare Housing Organisation (CGEWHO)

iv) United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS)

v) UNDP Assistance for National Strategy for Urban Poor

vi) Mission Mode on Housing Data, Research and Survey

vii) Building Centre Scheme

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty and alleviation is since November 2003 implementing a 5 million $ UNDP project known as 'National Strategy for Urban Poor'. The objective of the project is to support adoption of a new national strategy for urban poverty reduction at the centre and states. The project aims to supplement the Ministry's endeavour to provide infrastructure and basic services to the urban poor in 63 select cities, while ensuring convergence with health, education and social sector programme for improving the overall living conditions of the urban poor.
In order to address infrastructure shortage and basic amenities needs of the urban poor living in slums in the urban areas, the Government of India launched Rs One lakh-crore Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) with effect from 3rd December, 2005. The UNDP project is designed to provide complementary ‘software’ support to the Mission in 13 cities across 12 states of India, while promoting best practices and pro-poor governance at the levels of local and state governments.

The 63 cities for upgradation under JNNURM are:

- **7 mega Cities:** Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Delhi, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad.


- **28 Other Big Cities:** Categorised (as per 2001 census) with population less than 10 lakhs, such as remaining state capitals, and cities of religious, historical and tourists importance.

The Mission comprises two sub-missions – Urban infrastructure and Governance (UIG) and Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP).

Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation is the nodal Ministry for Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP) and Integrated Housing and Slum Development Programme (IHSDP) whereas the Ministry of Urban
Need for sub-mission on Basic Services to the Urban Poor (BSUP) under JNNURM

The Centre have launched the BSUP sub-mission to ensure integrated development of slums by providing shelter, basic services and other related civic amenities to the urban poor. The BSUP sub-mission is needed for the ever-growing urban population and the resulting urban poor population. As per the 2001 census, 285.35 million people reside in urban areas. It constitutes 27.8% of the total population of the country. In the post independence era while population of India has grown three times, the urban population has grown five times. The rising urban population has also given rise to increase in the number of urban poor. As per 2001 estimates, the slum population is estimated to be 61.8 million. The increasing number of slum dwellers causes tremendous pressure on urban basic services and infrastructure. In order to cope with massive problems that have emerged as a result of rapid urban growth, it has become imperative to draw up a coherent urbanization policy/strategy to implement projects in select cities on mission mode.

The mission objectives of BSUP are:

- Focussed attention to integrated development of Basic Services to the urban poor in the cities covered under the mission.
- Provision of basic services to urban poor including security of tenure at affordable prices, improved housing, water supply, sanitation and ensuring delivery through convergence of other
already existing universal services of the government for education, health and social security. Care will be taken to see that the urban poor are provided housing near their place of occupation.

- Secure effective linkages between asset creation and asset management so that the Basic services to the Urban poor created in the cities are not only maintained efficiently but also become self-sustaining overtime.
- Ensure adequate investment of funds to fulfill deficiencies in the Basic Services to the Urban Poor.
- Scale up delivery of civic amenities and provision of utilities with emphasis on universal access to urban poor.

The main thrust of the sub-mission on Basic Services to the Urban Poor will be on integrated development of slums through projects for providing affordable shelter, security of tenure, basic services, and other related civic amenities with a view to provide utilities to the urban poor.

In order to meet the increasing need for urban growth, the urban development ministry said in June 16th 2010 it planned to include 28 more cities in the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), the central government's city modernisation scheme.

5.1.2 City Level: Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC)

The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act 1992 has redefined the role, power, function and finances of the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) wherein the Twelfth Schedule of the constitution lists additional function to be carried out by ULBs.
This would result in a substantial increase in the responsibilities of the Urban Local Bodies, which would in turn lead to a significant increase in expenditure incurred by the ULBs with a corresponding increase in requirement of funds.

Guwahati Municipal Corporation or GMC in short is the local government in Guwahati which was constituted in 1974 under the provisions of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation Act, 1971. Presently, GMC covers an area of 216 sq km under its jurisdiction. The Corporation has a council of 60 elected ward councilors. The council is headed by a Mayor and the Commissioner is the executive head of the Corporation.

The Corporation's activities are as follows

- Conservatory
- Water works tax division
- Public Works
- Building Permission
- Streetlight and Electrical Section
- Municipal Markets
- Sanitation & Health
- Death Body and night soil removal Branch
- Poverty alleviation
- Birth and death registration
- Garage Branch
- Accounts Branch
- Veterinary
- Enforcement
- Property Tax
- Mutation Branch
- Trade License
- Advertisement
- Slow Moving Vehicle

Thus the 74th Constitution Amendment Act envisages municipalities to handle poverty alleviation. The local problems like slums or poverty alleviation certainly cannot be handled at the national level or the State level. The local
people know about the residents and conditions in slums and urban poor areas.

Guwahati is one of the 28 cities covered under JNNURM mission under category C (cities/UAs with less than one million population).

According to GMC sources, under the first phase of the BSUP sub-mission, 1232 residential units would be constructed along with basic infrastructure in Fatashil, Morasali and Solapara areas of the city. It had proposed to construct 1,104 residential units at Fatashil and 64 each in Morasali and Solapara. The dwelling units under BSUP housing projects would have at least two rooms, kitchen, balcony and other basic facilities like electricity and running water.

Under the second phase of the BSUP sub-mission, 1028 urban poor families would get better housing facilities at Amingaon.

According to the housing project guidelines, the houses would not be provided free to the beneficiaries by the state governments and a minimum contribution would be stipulated while the contribution would be further lessened for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other weaker sections.

Till the writing of this thesis, (May 2010) it has been found that construction is in progress at Fatashil site but other places such as Morasali and Solapara, construction is yet to be started. It has been also found that those sites are GMC sweeper's colony.

At Amingoan site only earth filling has been done and moreover there is no mention of targeted section of the urban poor. Due to lack of clear-cut policy/rules for allotment of flats the genuine urban poor population is quite
likely to be left out. Besides, the targeted population, either in the formal or informal sectors, will have their travel to Guwahati for their earnings which will be a costly affair in terms of time and money.

A project taken under the Basic Services for the Urban Poor (BSUP) submission of JNNURM is the supply of water. The respondents have been asked whether they will be willing to pay for water supply initiated by the government. As seen in table 5.1, 72.3% of the respondents are willing to pay which shows that water is a very acute problem in urban areas and majority of the poor people are ready to pay for it. Poor peoples' motivation to pay for water supply can serve as a useful guide for the government to formulate stronger action plans.

Table 5.1: Distribution of households according to the willingness to pay for GOVT/GMDA water supply scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willingness to pay for govt/gmc water supply scheme</th>
<th>Wards</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ward 12</td>
<td>ward 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

Another project under JNNURM is the improved waste collection and disposal services for which the users have to pay Rs.50 per month. Ramky Enviroment Engineers has bagged the contract from the Guwahati Municipal Corporation for the integrated solid waste management project worth Rs.102.15 crore. The location is West Boragoan, where the GMC has provided a 60 acre site on a nominal lease rent of rupee 1 per sq metre a year. When the respondents have
been asked whether they would be willing to pay for the improved waste collection and disposal services, 47.4% are not at all interested in the scheme as revealed in table 5.2. 23.7% of the respondents are willing to pay if the improved services could be guaranteed. And 29.0% answered that Government should provide waste collection service at no cost and charge is too much. This finding indicates that the poor people do not have the motivation to live healthily due to their economic hardship and poverty shattered lifestyles.

Table 5.2: Distribution of households according to the willingness to pay for GMC's improved waste collection and disposal services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Willingness to pay for GMC's waste disposal</th>
<th>Wards</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ward 12</td>
<td>ward 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. should provide waste collection services at no charge</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to pay if the improved services could be guaranteed</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
<td>.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charge is too much</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not interested in the scheme</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Survey

The state government and the Guwahati Municipal Corporation have attempted to implement projects and programs that are related to some specific issues of poverty. But these projects however are done in an isolated fashion with little or no link with them. This is an indication of lack of coherent policy on the part of the city government to deal with poverty in the city.
Moreover in some projects the beneficiaries are high income groups rather than low income people.

The Government of India has already allotted an amount of Rs.111.94 crore to the state government to implement the BSUP for the period between 2005 and 2012. Timely execution of the programme would have enabled the State to receive additional allocations from the Union Government.

Again a municipal corporation is the highest form of an urban local body (ULB) in India. The mayors of ULB are the champions of the poor. But ironically, in Guwahati Municipal Corporation, the municipal body elected in 2004 was prematurely dissolved by the incumbent state government on some flimsy ground in 21st May 2008 just 6 or 7 months before the end of the term. According to the GMC Act, election to the post of the mayor should be held within 6 months of its dissolution but so far the dissolved municipal body has neither been reinstated nor a fresh election been held to elect a new body. It has been learnt that there is a case pending in Gauhati High Court in this regard. People are not aware whether the State Government have made any effort to vacate the case for holding the election of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation or at least to honour the assurances given to the National Institute of Urban Affairs to hold Guwahati civil polls by December 22, 2009 to fulfill the criterion to complete the JNNURM reforms. In the absence of an elected body in the Guwahati Municipal Corporation and without completion of the JNNURM reforms, it is a big question to be answered as to how to avail the JNNURM funds.
5.2 NGO’s Intervention

Apart from the government, the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) also play a role in poverty alleviation. But their role is always considered as subsidiary to government’s role. They also have comparative advantage over government organizations. In many cases government organizations are unable to provide the type of support needed, at the time when it is needed, while this can be provided by voluntary organizations at local level with immediate effect.

Numerous NGOs are involved in urban development in the city of Guwahati. NGOs are officially registered and they work with people at the grassroot level. Some of the NGOs working for the poor are Ambikagiri Memorial Trust, Bosco Reachout, CASA, NEM, Centre for Development Action and Appropriate Technology, North East Socio-Economic Growth Federation, Snehalaya, CRD, sStep etc. These NGOs work in different fields. The main focus of these NGOs are women, children, income and employment generation, health and education programmes. The most important target groups for NGOs are women and children.

Society for Social Transformation and Environmental Protection (sSTEP) is an active organization in Guwahati which is presently looking after several sectors like children, homeless, domestic workers, street vegetables vendors, daily wage labours, slums, micro finance and micro insurance, women empowerment, health and farming- organic and piggery. Its main motive has always been to ensure the rights of the poor.
The contribution of NGOs has been largely in the area of service delivery to the poor people but it is difficult to assess their performance in terms of poverty alleviation. NGOs assume a leading role by dealing with projects. But the sustainability of such projects depends on the involvement and the capacity of the community. In the absence of such crucial inputs, NGOs efforts will only be the provision of short terms poverty alleviation mechanisms and not long run poverty reduction programmes.

It has been found that the NGOs have been able to mobilize local resources and popular participation in the context of urban poverty alleviation programme. But it has been also found that, at times, these organizations are motivated by political affiliations and they tend to fulfill their own vested interests.

The NGOs face some constraints in the achievements of their activities like i) lack of formal mechanism between NGOs and Municipality which leads to the under utilization of the potential of working together in addressing the issues of poverty, ii) a difficult if not impossible task of organizing the poor people and iii) lack of funds.

5.3 The Private Sector

Besides the government and NGO’s, private sector is another major player that shapes our life. The private sector provides employment, goods and services for large number of people in the city. The formal private sector is organized under the chamber of commerce, which contains different
associations under it. The informal sector however is not found in organized form. The role of private sector in poverty alleviation is substantial, as increasing production will generate more employment, inputs and services.

5.4 Public-private partnerships

Public-private partnerships have emerged as an alternative arrangement for service provision by combining the public interest and social responsibility of the government with the efficiency and responsiveness to customer demand of the private sector. The government, the private for-profit sector and civil society should each do what they can do best. The roles they could play in service provision can be summed up as:

- The public sector tends to be best at setting priorities through a democratic political process, raising revenues, regulating, ensuring equity and preventing discrimination.

- The private sector tends to be better at performing economic tasks, innovating and replicating successful experiments, abandoning unsuccessful or obsolete activities, adapting to rapid change, responding and customizing services to user demands (provided they are prepared to pay).

- Civil society tends to be best at performing tasks that generate little or no profit, demand compassion and commitment to individuals require extensive trust on the part of customers and clients and need hands-on personal attention (Osborne and Gaebler, 1993).
The Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Care programme implemented in urban slum locations in Guwahati city in 2000 on PPP mode is one such RCH experiment in urban slums targeting women and children. Over a period of time this RCH Guwahati program is being touted as one most practical and successful model for health service delivery for urban poor. Its unique partnership model of Government-NGOs collaboration is to deliver timely health services of urban poor living in slums. In this case, the partnership is between Government of Assam and a Charitable Hospital (Marwari Maternity Hospital, Athgoan) supported by the European Commission for this urban health care programme. The RCH Guwahati is being implemented in 14 slum areas in and around Guwahati, mostly in South Guwahati.

But there are some drawbacks/limitations for RCH Guwahati as cited below:

i) Site selection in a difficult terrain with household surveys and suspicion and skepticism of people.

ii) There are objections for family planning services like sterilization or abortion practices.

iii) There is threat in such model like parties withdrawing from such program instantly, indifference of community, slackening of role of health professionals and so on.

Thus, in order to reduce poverty and achieve MDG's, governments should also broaden the range of providers of essential services beyond the government and recognize the effectiveness of alternative providers. Broadening the range of providers does not mean that the government can
relinquish its responsibility to ensure access for all to basic services. The government should facilitate and closely monitor service provision by others and hold providers accountable for the quality and coverage of their services. Broadening the range of providers not only increases the capacity to provide a service but also facilitates the matching of service provision with the needs, priorities and conditions of the poor because alternative service providers tend to be more responsive to the needs of their customers. Alternative providers include the formal and informal private sector and civil society as well as traditional providers such as temples, mosques and churches and non- or semi-professionals.

According to the poor peoples' perception of poverty, security of tenure, drinking water and housing are ranked as the three topmost priority areas for reducing poverty by the urban poor for reducing poverty followed by road, drainage, healthcare facilities, ration card, employment, streetlight, education, sanitation, garbage disposal, access to credit, electricity, transportation and social safety.

Moreover the respondents have been also asked about the types of help that they would want from outside institutions to alleviate their poverty situation. In accordance with the conceptualization of their situation, the causes of urban poverty perceived by the poor and the problems and difficulties faced by them, the urban poor have their own specific suggestions for the various institutions on supporting them. Majority of the responses indicated that the institutions, government and non-government, should focus on awareness and information, followed by security of tenure, drinking water, housing, roads,
income and employment, ration and BPL cards, skills and training, streetlights and drains, loans and electricity to alleviate poverty.

Thus, according to the understanding of the poor peoples' perception the actors of urban poverty reduction should undertake programmes focusing on awareness and information, security of tenure, drinking water and housing.