CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The world is undergoing the biggest wave of urban growth in history. It is an integral process of development. In 2008, for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population resides in towns and cities. By 2030 this figure will be almost 5 billion and most of the urban growth will be concentrated in Africa and Asia. While mega cities have already witnessed the growth and captured public attention, this recent urban growth will take place in smaller towns and cities, which have less resources to respond to the magnitude of the growth (World Bank, 1999).

Urbanization is an important demographic shift worldwide. Developing countries accounts for a large and rapidly increasing proportion of world's urban dwellers. Yet men and women migrating to cities in search of greater opportunities and more secure livelihood frequently fail to find either and eventually add to the existing number of poor.

Anticipated better economic opportunities, in terms of availability of more jobs and higher income in urban areas are the "pull" factors for the population to migrate to the urban areas. One of the major consequences of the rapid urbanization process has been the burgeoning supply of job seekers in to both the modern (formal) and informal sectors of the urban economy. The supply of workers far exceeds the demand, the result being extremely high
rates of unemployment and under employment in urban areas. At time these urban areas work only as a "mirage in the desert" for the rural poor masses. A close relationship exists between high level of unemployment and underemployment and widespread poverty. For the most part, those without regular employment or with only scattered part time employment are also among the very poor. Those with regular paid employment in the public and private sector are typically among the middle to upper income groups. But it would be wrong to assume that everyone who does not have a job is necessarily poor or that all those who work fulltime are relatively well off (Todaro, 1993).

Although cities are centres of production, employment and innovation, the rapid urbanization also manifests itself in the form of congestion, inadequate infrastructure, housing shortage, poor access to basic urban services and proliferation of slums with degraded environment.

At the conceptual level, the first requirement for a full appreciation of urban poverty is to discard ingrained notions that poverty for all intents and purposes means rural poverty and that there is scarcely such a thing as its urban cousin.

It is true that poverty, whether rural or urban have many common characteristics. Both urban and rural poverty are characterized by lack of empowerment, security and influence. But the urban poor are more dependent on cash than their rural counterparts, because they must purchase
almost all essentials of daily life, so income-based poverty indicators may understate the relative degree of poverty in urban areas (Satterthwaite, 2001). The Report of the National Commission on Urbanisation (NCU, 1988), while accepting that rural and urban poverty are inter-linked, also takes the view that urban poverty is not merely a spill-over of rural poverty. According to the Commission, it is an autonomous and independent phenomenon. Therefore, rural poverty and urban poverty must be looked and addressed simultaneously as two aspects of a single problem and at the same time as autonomous problems that need to be addressed in distinct ways.

Following are some problems that urban poor face but the rural poor do not face.

a) The cost of living in urban areas is higher than in the rural areas.

b) The rural economy is still not fully monetized while in urban areas, one has to pay for everything in money.

c) The social security systems, both formal and informal, which prevail in the rural areas, are not nearly so developed in the urban areas.

d) The physical environment in which the majority of the urban poor live are degraded and sub-standard and mostly illegal, in comparison to that available to the rural poor.

e) In the rural context security of tenure is not a valid issue and hence it is treated as a non-issue in terms of urban poverty despite the fact that a minimum secure living place is fundamental to any human life and human growth.

f) Issues like hawking and selling by the roadside do not impede traffic in villages and therefore do not attract public ire and police and municipal
extortion or alternately decimation of business for violation of civic rules. But it is becoming a big issue in the urban market.

g) Most rural poor people have some land and animals which is their insurance against bad times. The urban poor have no such asset security but only their labour power.

h) Urban migrants from the countryside are new to the urban environment and are therefore not adjusted to it. They feel alienated and lonely in this new urban system.

Thus rural poverty and urban poverty have fundamental dissimilarities imposed by the character of human settlements in which they exist and since the urban settlement is infinitely more complex and varied than its rural counterpart, it follows that urban poverty is enormously more multifaceted and would vary with the kind and size of urban settlements. Moreover, due to rapid urbanization and globalization the urban poverty is becoming a significant area for intervention.

Perceptions of urban poverty started to change in the late 1980s (Becker et al 1994). There are a number of ways to define poverty in general and urban poverty in particular. The narrower view defines poverty as inadequate income or inadequate consumption. But the broader conception of urban poverty involves eight interrelated sets of deprivation: inadequate income, inadequate shelter, inadequate provision for public infrastructure, inadequate provision of basic services, limited or no safety net, inadequate protection of poorer groups rights through the operation of the law and poorer groups voicelessness and powerlessness within political systems and bureaucratic structure (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2003).
Estimation of the extent of urban poverty, based on the criterion of calorie intake or its money equivalent alone, does not portray a complete picture of urban poor because poverty is much more than under-nourishment. It is held that the quality of life of the urban poor gets severely affected because of inaccessibility to state employment, shelter and basic needs viz, education, health, water and sanitation which they cannot afford to buy from private sources.

UNESCAP, (2000) identified three important dimensions of poverty: Poverty of Money, Poverty of Access and Poverty of Power. Poverty of Money is a case where the urban poor lack sufficient resources to afford acceptable quality of shelter and other services. Conventional economic definition of poverty use income and expenditure. This involves use of a "headcount" measure, which takes in to account the number of persons having income below a certain level of income to be considered as poor. From income aspect, poverty can be of two types- absolute and relative. Absolute poverty is defined as the cost of minimum basic necessities needed to sustain human life. Whereas relative poverty is defined as the minimum economic, social, political and cultural goods needed to maintain an acceptable way of life in a particular society. Poverty of access refers to the inability of the poor to access basic infrastructure and services. The poor in most urban settings live in overcrowded and unsanitary slums and squatter settlements. They lack good health facilities, housing and services. The poor at the same time lack tenure security and are vulnerable to insecurity, diseases and natural and man-made disasters. Because of their vulnerability and inability to influence
decisions in their settings, the poor also suffer from poverty of power. More often than not, the poor lack information to advance their case.

Urban poverty is thus a multidimensional phenomenon which cannot be measured by a unidimensional indicator like income. It is generally associated with various deprivations, which make the working, living and social environments of the poor extremely insecure. These severities severely limit the options for improving the lives of the poor.

1.2 Urban population and urban poverty in India

In 1901, only 25 million people constituting 10.8% of the total population lived in urban areas in India. In the 100 years since then the urban population has grown 12 times and it is around 285 million people constituting 28% of the total population.

India has the second largest urban system in the world with 329 million people living in urban areas in 2007. It is projected that by 2041, India will have 50 percent of its population living in urban areas (AMDA, 2008).

Poverty in India is officially measured in terms of the expenditure corresponding to monthly per capita expenditure of Rs.49 in rural areas and Rs.57 in urban areas at 1973-74 all India prices, with people below this expenditure considered as poor. This expenditure was considered necessary to achieve specified levels of calorie consumption, namely 2400 calories/day in rural areas and 2100 calories/day in urban areas. At 2004-2005 prices the
new poverty line expenditure varies from state to state from Rs. 450 to Rs. 550 per month per capita in urban areas.

In 1983, urban poverty in India was 43.6% which declined to 25.9% in 2004-05. But the absolute number of urban poor has in fact increased from 67 to 80 million during 1983-2004, and their share in the total number of poor has increased from 21% in 1983 to 24% in 1993-94 to 26% in 2004-05. Poverty is thus increasingly becoming urban as seen from table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Number of poor in millions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>247</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban share</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: GOI-UNDP Project 'National Strategy for Urban Poor'

Although, urban poverty did reduce between 1993-94 and 2004-05 but if urban poverty is redefined as suggested earlier, there would be massive increase in urban poverty.

In India, poverty has always occupied a center stage in development planning. This concern, however, has been for rural poverty. This is because poverty, whether rural or urban have many common characteristics. However, after a certain point, the two part ways to develop fundamental dissimilarities. In India there are glaring socio-economic inequalities in urban areas than in the rural areas. The country's urban poor constitutes 25.70% of the urban
population whereas the rural counterparts form 28.3% of rural population. Though the percentage of urban poor population is less than the rural poor, but the poverty issues in urban areas are enormously complex.

Poverty alleviation programmes in India have had a marked rural bias as is evident from the decrease in absolute numbers of the rural poor from 261 million in 1973-1974 to 220 million in 2004-2005. This is in sharp contrast to the rise in the numbers of the urban poor from 60 to 80 million over the same period. This is due to the fact that strategies for rural poverty were replicated for urban poverty. Thus urban poverty must be detailed differently from rural poverty and policies, programmes and strategies need to be configured afresh, devised in the context of the nature of urban poverty.

1.3 Urban population and urban poverty in Assam

Haldar and Roy (2008) constructed a multidimensional poverty index of Indian states by collecting raw data from Census of India, CSO, and Annual Reports of Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education, Government of India for the census years 1981, 1991 and 2001. A set of variables has been used to measure the deprivations in respect of various facets of life:

- **Demographic and Health**: population distribution, percentage of persons aged 60 and above, total fertility rate, infant fertility rate, under five fertility rate and crude death rate
- **Socio-Economic**: percentage of population living below the poverty line, unemployment rate and female unemployment rate, percentage of population living in kutcha houses, not having electrified housing
and safe drinking water, male child labour index, proportion of slum population etc

- **Cultural**: adult literacy rate and drop-out rate

Then they calculated the mean and standard deviation of each variable for three decades and greater value indicates a higher state of deprivation. Table 1 (Annexure-I) shows MDPI and their corresponding ranks in 1981, 1991 and 2001.

The authors then divided the states in terms of their poverty index values:

- **Poorest states**: poverty index ranging from 0 to 7
- **Moderately poor states**: poverty index ranging from -5 to 0
- **Richer states**: poverty index value from -5 to -11.

They observed in their study that Assam, which had performed very well in 1981 (-7.56, rank 30), fell from its position in the later decades and became one of the poorest states. According to them the reason behind this may due to drop of employment in 1991 and 2001.

Assam, situated in the extreme Northeast corner of India, has a population of 266 lakh (2001 census) with a density of 340 persons per square kilometer (2001 census). The urban population of Assam constitutes only 12.90 % compared to 27.78% for India (2001 census).

If the narrower definition of poverty is considered, urban poverty of Assam has decreased from 21.73% in 1983 to 7.73% in 1993-94. Though there has been
some improvement in percentage terms, the absolute number of poor shows only a marginal decline between 1993-94 and 1999-2000 (from 96.36 lakhs to 94.55 lakhs) and an increased from 1983, when the number of poor were 77.69 lakhs. At 2004-05 prices, the new poverty line expenditure in Assam is Rs. 378.84 and the urban poverty is 3.3% based on URP consumption and 2.4% based on MRP consumption (Planning Commission).

Thus if the narrower definition of poverty is considered, urban poverty is very less but if the wider definition is considered urban poverty will increase substantially and become more serious and alarming as compared to the rural poverty.

1.4 Statement of the problem

Assam is one of the least urbanised states of the country. Among all the districts of Assam, kamrup is the most urbanized with 35.81% urbanisation (City Development Plan, Guwahati, 2006) as shown in figure 1.1. Though urbanisation provides opportunities in terms of better services, education etc, but it also creates formidable problems to its residents. Problems of deprivation, lack of access to essential needs of human beings, inadequate income etc, which are all manifestations of urban poverty, are quite common in urban areas.

Guwahati has been taken up as a case study because it is a fast growing metropolis and the most important city of the North East India. The city with a population of 8.9 lakhs (Census 2001) is by far the largest settlement, while
Fig 1.1: Urbanisation Trend of the last decade
Source: City Development Plan, Guwahati, 2006
Shillong and Imphal, with population size of only 2.7 and 2.5 lakhs respectively are second and third largest city in the North Eastern Region (City Development Plan Guwahati, 2006). Guwahati is not only the gateway of north-east but is also the stepping state to south-East Asia as well. During past few decades it has experienced unprecedented spatial expansion and steep rise in population. In 1971, area of the Gauhati Town was 14.24 Sq km and is bounded on the north by the river Brahmaputra, on the east by the Navagraha hill and Rajgarhali, on the south by the Bharalu river and the Kalapahar hill and on the west by the Fatasil and the Kamakhya hills. The growth of population is remarkably rapid. The total population of the town according to 1971 census was 123,783 which increased to 818,809 according to the 2001 census. Guwahati has been experiencing above average growth of population due to a mix of factors such as annexation, natural growth and migration. It is the largest urban centre in Assam and it alone contributes 55% of the combined population of the significant towns of Assam. The population density of Guwahati has been steadily increasing as shown in figure 1.2.

The growing urban population has also given rise in the number of urban poor in Guwahati. They live in slums, pavements, railway tracks and other blighted areas. Urban poverty, which is a cruel reality, is considered to be the most demanding urban challenge and number one urban problem because it is poverty, which leads to many other problems in the urban areas. Thus urban poverty is both a cause and consequence of urban problems. A clear understanding of the magnitude, nature and intensity of urban poverty is needed in order to address the problem. This is the reason that the study focused on urban poverty.
Fig. 1.2: Population density of Guwahati
Source: City Development Plan, Guwahati, 2006
The present study will try to assess and analyze the multidimensional nature of urban poverty in Guwahati and strategize for its reduction while trying to understand poor peoples' perception of poverty.

1.5 Description of the study area

A case study has been proposed in the city of Guwahati in order to carry out the research. The main objective of this section is to provide a brief description of the study area. The largest city in the North eastern region of India, it is considered by some to be the "gateway" to the region. Dispur, the capital of the Indian state of Assam, is located within the city. Guwahati is one of the most rapidly growing cities in India; during the past few decades it has experienced expansion and also a steep rise in population. This study attempts to examine the poverty level in Guwahati because it is essentially one of the densely populated areas in Assam. Such a place is the natural abode of the unskilled and the poor. Moreover, it is also a natural abode of the rich and the affluent due to its importance as a major administrative, commercial and industrial centre. Hence this study will reveal the nature of urban poverty in Assam.

1.5.1 Guwahati- History and geographical location and climatic condition

Guwahati, the capital of Assam and the only metropolitan city in the entire North Eastern Region is also the entry point for the North Eastern Region. The city has a rich historical past. Earlier the city was known as Pragyyotishpur (literally means the city of Eastern Archaeology ) which finds mention in Mahabharat, Ramayana, Raghubansha of Kalidas, During British days Guwahati lost its political pre-eminence to Shillong which they chose as
Location of Guwahati City in Assam

Legend

- Guwahati City
- District Boundaries
state capital. In 1971 with reorganization of Assam State, Guwahati again recovered its political, pre-eminence in north east region by becoming capital of Assam.

Etymologically, the name Guwahati is derived from two Assamese words: 'guwa' (areca nut) and 'haat' (market place). The name used to be spelled as Gowhatty (pre-colonial and colonial), standardized to Gauhati (colonial-British), which was then changed to the present form in the late 1980s to conform to the local pronunciation.

The situation of Guwahati is extremely picturesque. To its north rolls the mightily river Brahmaputra, the south and the eastern sides are surrounded by two rows of semi-circular hillocks, the cardinal points of Guwahati are 26.10' north latitude and 92.49' east longitude. The average elevation of this plain is about 52m from the mid sea level though there are many higher as well as low pockets within the area.

Early settlement took place in this Guwahati plain along the river Brahmaputra and gradually extended up to the railway line and beyond in the south during the fifties and sixties resulting in new settlements like Sarania, Gandhibasti, Lachit Nagar, Santipur etc. During the same period Maligaon and Jalukbari area were also developed to the west of the Guwahati plain through the Kamakhya corridor, due to establishment of N.E.F Railway Headquarters at Maligaon and the University at Jalukbari. During the seventies due to shift of capital from Shillong the city further expanded into the Beltola plain through the narrow corridor like Fatasil, Dispur and Noonmati resulting in development of settlements such as Khanapara, Basistha, Kahilipara, Kalapahar, Narengi.
etc. However, further expansion of the city beyond the Beltola plain in the east and south is restricted due to the existence of Khasi and Jaintia Hills ranges.

A cursory look at the Guwahati Master Plan reveals that the topography of the city can be defined by six well distinct natural divisions - the river Brahmaputra, the Guwahati plain, the Central hill ranges, the Beltola plain, Jalukbari- Azara plain and the North Guwahati Plain.

Guwahati enjoys a sub- tropical humid climate with four distinct seasons: summer, monsoon, autumn and winter. The temperature varies between maximum 38° C and minimum of 20° C in summer and in winter it varies between maximum of 30° C and minimum of 10° C. The average annual rainfall of Guwahati is 1637.3 millimeter and 90% of this rainfall occurs between April and September and maximum rainfall period is July to August. Humidity is very high in Guwahati.

1.5.2 Guwahati's urban morphology

The process of urban growth of Guwahati shows a broad zonal and sectoral arrangement from the nucleus to the periphery. In the earlier part of the growth of the city, it is affected by sets of centripetal forces where Concentric Zone Theory and in the later part the Sector Theory seems to have operative with some modification consequent upon topographical and cultural barriers. A twin process of outward extension and internal re-organisation is also in operation (Bhattacharya, 2001).

Guwahati's 'urban form' is somewhat looks like a starfish. The major components of Guwahati's urban structure, in brief, are:
• The core or the ‘city center’ with Pan Bazaar, Paltan Bazaar, Fansy Bazaar and Uzan Bazaar, each one facilitating unique urban activities. When Paltan Bazaar is the hub for transportation and hotels, Pan Bazaar is for educational, administrative, cultural activities and for offices and restaurants, Fansy Bazaar is the hub for retail and wholesale-commercial and on the other hand Uzan Bazaar is for administrative, retail-commercial and residential activities.

• The extended core with Chandmari, Zoo Road and Ulubari which have a mix of retail-commercial and residential activities.

• The north-southeast Guwahati-Shillong (GS) Road corridor (almost 15kms from the city center) which is an important commercial area with retail, wholesale and offices developed along the main road and is also a densely built residential area in the inner parts. The capital complex of Assam at Dispur is situated in this corridor.

• The southern sub-center of Ganeshguri

• The corridor towards west (around 30kms from the city centre) is a railroad corridor linking not only Guwahati but also other parts of North eastern region and to the mainland India. The corridor links residential and historically important areas such as Nilachal Hill (Kamakhya), Pandu, Maligoan and separates into two- one towards North Guwahati and the other one towards further west to the LGB International Airport.

• The eastern corridor is towards east (around 15 kms from the city center) linking Noonmati and Narengi facilitating residential growth towards east.
1.5.3 Governance

Besides the state government, the local body responsible for governing, developing and managing the city is the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC). In 1900, the town comprised of a 2.95 sq. km. Area, but as it continued to grow gradually the Municipal area was extended to cover 7.68 sq. km. in 1951. By 1961, the area was 13.62 sq. kms. By 1974, just prior to the formation of the Municipal Corporation the city spread over an area of 14.24 sq. km., divided into 14 wards. The greatest growth has occurred since after the shifting of the capital. By 1980, the area was 261.79sq.kms. At present the city is subdivided into 60 municipal wards covering an area of 216 sq.km. Another agency currently responsible for planning and development of Guwahati Metropolitan Area is the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Agency (GMDA) which is a state parastatal agency. The GMDA covers an area of 340 sq.km. The Guwahati Development department, a special department of the Government of Assam has been recently formed for Guwahati's overall development.

1.5.4 Demography

Demographically, Guwahati is one of the most rapidly growing cities in India. According to a survey done by a UK media outlet, Guwahati is among the 100 fastest growing cities of the world, and is the 5th fastest growing among Indian cities. The city's population grew from just two hundred thousand in 1971 to more than five hundred thousand in 1991 and in the census of 2001, Guwahati's population was found to be 818,809. By 2011, it is estimated that Guwahati will be a million plus city.
From the table 1.2, it is clear that the decadal increase of population was very slow till 1911, but it shot up in 1961 to 130.90% and it is 38.6% in 2001.

1.5.5 Slum, blighted and other areas

Guwahati is more or less composed of slum, blighted and other poor areas with substandard living conditions. There were only 10 slums as per the estimate of the Town Planning Board when the capital of Assam was shifted from Shillong to Guwahati in the early 1970’s. They were – (1) Rajbari (uzan Bazar), (2) Athgoan, (3) Manipuribasti, (4) Fatasil horizon colony, (5) Tokobari, (6) Bishnupur, (7) Solapara Horizon colony,(8) Islampur, (9) Lakhtokia and (10) Kachari Basti (Das, 2009).

But the number of notified slums in the municipal areas of Guwahati at present is 26 covering a population of 1.6 lakhs which constitute 20% of the population of Guwahati. But there are other poverty pockets that have sprouted on private and vacant government land and are not recognized to be listed.
### 1.5.6 Land use pattern

The land use structure of Guwahati city can be shown in Table 1.3 and it is evident that the growth rate of the residential areas has been quite high for the last three decades.

#### Table 1.3: Change in land use patterns in Guwahati City

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area in Hectare</td>
<td>% to developed area</td>
<td>Area in Hectare</td>
<td>% to developed area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential</td>
<td>352.8</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>477.56</td>
<td>45.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>291.92</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>660.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>406.21</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public &amp; Semi-public</td>
<td>439.47</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>913.64</td>
<td>14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks and play ground</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>97.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>617.17</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>1671.74</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Developed Area</td>
<td>1083.04</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>3761.07</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Belt</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water bodies and hills</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area under special use by Govt.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>909.44</td>
<td>855.46</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3483.1</td>
<td>7047.87</td>
<td>21143.32</td>
<td>1093</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Report on poverty profiling, sSTEP

### 1.5.7 Guwahati Master Plan

Guwahati witnessed modern city planning only by the mid 60's after the formation of the Town and Country Planning Department within the Govt. of Assam. The department began by the task of preparing the Master Plan which would provide the framework under which urban growth in Guwahati would be guided.

The first Master Plan was prepared in 1971. Due to high growth rate experienced by the city, the master plan was subsequently revised and a new Master Plan was prepared by 1980 for a period of 20 years i.e upto 2001.
Presently, the Master Plan is being revised and a new final Master Plan and Zoning Regulation 2025 for Guwahati, prepared by the Guwahati Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) was formally approved by the state government in 9.6.2009.

The Master Plan encompasses within it the land use restrictions through the Zoning regulations, Green Belt etc. It also has the building Byelaws, the infrastructure requirements including housing and the cost of providing the core infrastructure within the urban area etc. Projects in different sectors have been identified for implementation during the period 2006-2025. The GMDA/State Government's major responsibility is of land assembly, land development and provision of basic infrastructure i.e. – water supply, sewerage, drainage, solid waste management, power and transformation. The building activity except for Capital Complex is to be left to the private sector and the Government and Non-government agencies concerned.

The Master Plan implementation requires (i) development of new areas (ii) redevelopment of existing developed areas and (iii) conservation of eco-sensitive areas. GMDA shall be the nodal agency for Master Plan implementation.

1.6 Objectives

The principal aim of this study is to explore the various issues of urban poverty by taking Guwahati as the case study and thereby strategize measures to alleviate it. The objectives of the research are following:

i) To sketch a demographic and socio-economic profile of the urban poor.
ii) To assess the adequacy and accessibility of the urban poor to the basic needs and services.

iii) To study their coping strategies in adverse situations.

iv) To identify the priority needs of the urban poor.

v) To analyse the role of the government and the civil society in reducing the multiple deprivation of the urban poor.

vi) To suggest suitable strategies and policies to combat urban poverty and promote sustainable and equitable urban environment.

1.7 Research Questions

Since the study is exploratory in nature, it is started with no prior hypothesis. Nonetheless, the study seeks answers to the following research questions:

1. How far are the basic needs and services accessible and adequate to the urban poor?

2. What are the causes of poverty as identified by the poor?

3. What are the coping strategies of the urban poor?

4. What are the priority needs of the urban poor?

1.8 Database and Methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources. The former has been generated through interview schedule and field observation method while the latter are acquired from various government and non-government agencies. The main sources of secondary data are various publications of census of India, Directorate of Economics and Statistics and so on. Besides these, reports and documents of various NGOs and other governmental agencies like GMC, GMDA, Dept. of Urban Planning of Govt. of Assam,
Ministry of Urban Employment and Poverty Alleviation and Publications of Various Individuals and Institutions are referred to. District Gazetteers of Assam are consulted for historical background. Various libraries and websites in the internet have been also visited.

1.8.1 Sample Design

The core of the study depended on the primary information collected through fieldwork. The sample for primary investigation has been selected with a two-stage sampling design fitted to the requirements to the study. In the first stage four wards with highest concentration of urban poor households have been selected from the 90 slum and urban poor pockets as identified by Guwahati Municipal Corporation (2008). In the second stage from each of the selected ward about 10% of the households have been selected at random.

1.8.2 Data Collection: Tools and Techniques

Tools and techniques used for field survey are i) Semi-structured interview schedule and ii) ranking have been used for problems/ priority needs ranking.

Before going to the field, the schedules have been pre-tested on few poor people. The pre-testing helped to find out few minor anomalies that existed in the schedules and consequently needed changes have been effected in the original schedules for the collection of the required data.

On the whole, a total of three hundred and fifty five (355) copies of interview schedules have been printed, out of which three hundred and twenty five (325) have been used for the analysis due to lack of cooperation from the
respondents and incomplete information from some others. Several reasons have been cited for their reluctance. The most important is that several groups have collected data promising some benefits which never reached the people.

After the collection of data from the field, coding was done for the information contained in the schedules and then they have been entered in the computer using the SPSS 9.0 and Microsoft Excel.

The data is processed by using simple statistical tools such as averages, percentages etc. for summarization and comparison of sample households under different conditions. For further validation of some of the findings, regression analysis has also been used.
Table 1.4: Database and Methodology

DATABASE AND METHODOLOGY

Data

Primary Data
- Urban poor areas
- Multistage Sampling
- Interview schedule, ranking

Secondary data
- Census report
- Directorate of E&S
- Assam Development plan
- GMC/State Govt. report
- NGO Report
- Library
- Internet

Processing

Analysis

Maps
- Statistical technique

Tables
- Computer technique

Write up
1.9 Significance of the study

The study has several areas of significance. Many of the studies of urban poverty in India are done in bigger cities but the characteristics of the urban poor areas in these cities may not be same for those in the medium sized cities such as, Guwahati. The findings and solutions to urban poverty in bigger cities may not be appropriate to the medium or small sized cities. Therefore, the theoretical significance of the study lies in the understanding of multidimensional urban poverty at the micro-level, i.e., at the local level. Practically, the study is expected to help the policy makers in designing effective strategies to reduce urban poverty by understanding the problem in the local context. As the study is based at the micro level, the study recommends a bottom-up approach to poverty reduction.

1.10 Organisation of the thesis

The systematic organization of the thesis is of paramount importance as it allows the prospective users of the thesis an easy and sequential comprehension. This thesis is comprised of six chapters including the present one.

Chapter one provides an introduction to the study by giving a background of urban poverty, urban population and urban poverty in India and urban population and urban poverty in Assam. In this chapter, the statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, description of the study area, database and methodology, significance of the study and the organisation of the thesis have also been incorporated.
Chapter two presents a theoretical discussion on the issues related to poverty, urbanization and urban poverty. The findings of some of the empirical works found relevant in the context of the present study have also been summarised in this chapter.

Chapter three presents the case study in Guwahati dealing with the various poverty issues.

Chapter four describes about the perception and causes of poverty, coping strategies of the poor, their problems and priorities and the help that outside institutions can provide to them for reducing poverty.

Chapter five focuses on the poverty reduction actions/projects in the city by the government and non-government sectors.

Chapter six summarised the findings and conclusions of the study. It also strategise and suggest a number of measures for reducing poverty in Guwahati.