

Research Study Series  
Number 28

Urban Poverty  
A Study in Perceptions

( Prepared for the National Commission on Urbanisation )

National Institute of Urban Affairs  
New Delhi  
March 1989

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the extent to which people's perceptions on different aspects of urban poverty diverge or converge. The study provides an understanding of the thought processes of different population groups - officials, non-officials and professionals, NGOs and the poor themselves, on questions as wide ranging as:

- i. Do the people know about the existence of the poverty alleviation programmes?
- ii. Do these programmes reflect the needs of the poor?
- iii. Have these programmes benefitted the poor?
- iv. What are the reasons for the ineffectiveness of these programmes?
- v. What causes poverty?
- vi. What are the problems and priorities of the poor?
- vii. Who are the poor? Do they represent certain income groups, castes or occupations?
- viii. Are the poor a burden on urban areas?
- ix. What can be done in the future to alleviate urban poverty?

The study establishes the need to complement the quantitative base with qualitative information, and sets out its use in policy making exercises.

A PREFATORY NOTE  
ON THE  
PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH ON URBAN POVERTY

In early 1987, the National Institute of Urban Affairs embarked on a major programme of research on urban poverty, with the primary objective of coming to grips with the nature and characteristics of urban poverty in India, and to arrive at a better understanding of the state of the urban poor, that is, "who they are, what they do, and where they live"<sup>1</sup>. The reasons for undertaking this programme of research are now history, but two factors which played a decisive role deserve to be mentioned in this note. One was the absence of any systematic work on urban poverty in India, and a total lack of data on the poor. The only nation-wide data that were available related to the number of the urban poor, which was derived indirectly from the expenditure data collected quinquennially by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO). Other studies on urban poverty were of a micro nature, and, therefore, had a limited value.

The second factor that induced us to take up this research programme emerged from the first one. If there were no data on the urban poor, their household characteristics and employment and shelter profiles, then, we asked ourselves, how is the content of the various poverty alleviation programmes determined? Are these ad-hoc exercises based on the judgement of a few? Could the judgement of a few on the needs and priorities of the poor be a substitute for empirical data

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1 This phrase has been borrowed from Rakesh Mohan and Nancy Hartline's study on the poor of Bogota. See, The World Bank, "The Poor of Bogota: Who They Are, What They Do, and Where They Live," Staff Working Paper No. 635, Washington, D.C., 1984.

and scientific analysis? Both these factors underlined the need to fill the vast data and knowledge gap about the poor.

In a somewhat imperceptible manner, other factors also influenced us. Ever since the disenthronement of "income growth" as the primary goal of development and the emergence of a new development ethos (basic needs approach, unified approach to development, participatory approaches, and full employment and poverty alleviation strategies), a considerable amount of work had been done on urban poverty at the international level, the results of which questioned in a sense, the traditionally-held notions about the poor and their attributes. Many myths about them were demolished in the process. What was important was that the impact of the evidence collected internationally began to be felt not only on the thought processes but also on the planning modes of several developing countries. The position of the National Institute of Urban Affairs was that irrespective of the merits and strengths of the international evidence and scholarship on urban poverty issues, the Indian policies and programmes should be founded on data from within the country and not of outside. There were no reasons to be overtaken or overshadowed by external evidence. This provided yet another rationale for the programme.

The programme of research on urban poverty thus came to be established at this Institute. The objective of the programme was clear: to create a proper data base on the urban poor and urban poverty questions. The Ministry of Urban Development lent full

support to the programme and provided funds for a primary survey of the urban poor households, and for desk research on poverty issues.

Almost coincidentally, the National Commission on Urbanisation (NCU) set up by the Government of India, constituted a Working Group on Urban Poverty (with the Director, NIUA, as one of the members) to review all that had been done in the country to alleviate urban poverty, and suggest strategies to deal with this growing problem. The Working Group proposed to mount a series of research studies including one on how different population groups perceived urban poverty and the problems and priorities of the poor. This study was entrusted to the National Institute of Urban Affairs. Other governmental departments too showed interest in knowing where we stood with regard to these issues.

The past one year's work at the Institute has resulted in five research studies of a complementary nature. These are:

1. Approach to Urban Poverty: A Position Note
2. Dimensions of Urban Poverty: A Situational Analysis
3. The Media on Urban Poverty
4. Urban Poverty: A Study in Perceptions
5. Who the Urban Poor Are, What They Do and Where They Live

The first four are being brought out in the Institute's research studies series. The fifth one, incorporating the results of a primary survey of the urban poor households will be published shortly.

Such a major research effort requires sustained work, not of any one individual, but of a team of dedicated researchers and experts. At this Institute, the coordination of the programme was entrusted to Usha P. Raghupathi, a senior colleague of mine. She has designed the field survey and the tabulation schemes, and prepared together with me reports of the first, fourth and fifth of the studies listed above. She has been assisted by several researchers whose names appear in the respective reports.

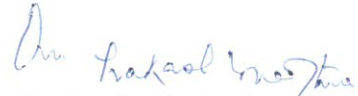
The study on Dimensions of Urban Poverty: A Situational Analysis has been prepared by Professor D.D. Malhotra, a senior member of faculty at the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) and a short term consultant to the Institute on this programme. The comprehensive nature of the study is a testimony to his perseverance and hard work. The credit for preparing the report on the Media on Urban Poverty goes to Dr. Gangadhar Jha, Assistant Professor at the IIPA. The National Institute of Urban Affairs would like to place on record its appreciation for their assistance.

Shri Kirtee Shah, Chairman of the Working Group on Urban Poverty and Dr. William Cousins, UNICEF Consultant have continuously interacted with us on the entire programme of research on urban poverty. Their incisive comments have been of utmost help to us in the articulation of our ideas and in the preparation of these documents.

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The problem of urban poverty in India cannot be encapsulated in a few research reports. It requires continuous probing and examination. The NIUA proposes to continue research on this subject.

March 1988

  
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## INTRODUCTION

'Poverty' has emerged in recent times as one of the most formidable of the crises that humankind has ever had to face. No other crisis in fact, and there have been several - the population crisis, the energy crisis, the food crisis, the environment crisis, the raw materials crisis, to name just a few, has presented planners, economists and scientists with as great a challenge as this crisis of poverty which, from almost every measure, appears to have grown in dimension as well as complexity. What is more, the crisis is neither new nor is it a twentieth century phenomenon,<sup>1</sup> but for reasons that are now becoming known it has not been able to engage frontline attention. Its scale, with almost one-third of the developing countries' total population not having incomes adequate for even a minimum level of consumption, is mind-boggling.

Intriguingly enough, the number of the poor in developing countries has risen, even as the countries have accelerated the tempo of their economic development and attained a higher level of gross domestic product in per capita terms. It has become painfully apparent that despite this growth, there can still be a large number of people below the line of absolute poverty. What Jagdish Bhagwati had said some time ago that growth can also immiserise itself, is a fact come true if one measures poverty on an historical scale.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See, Irma Adelman and Cynthia T. Morris, "A Typology of Poverty in 1850", in Manning Nash (Ed), Essays on Economic Development and Cultural Change in Honour of Bert F. Hoselitz, The University of Chicago, 1977.
  2. Jagdish Bhagwati, "Poverty and Public Policy", in Frontline, October 17-30, 1987, pp. 97-101.

Urban poverty, which is the focus of this study is far more complex and baffling than rural poverty. Unlike the rural poor who are somewhat more easily identifiable and, therefore, easier to target and reach,<sup>3</sup> their counterparts in urban areas are diversified in terms of their socio-economic and other characteristics. They belong to different castes, classes and occupations. Few know who they are, what they do, and where they live. People look upon them and their economic and social roles in incongruous ways. To design programmes or evolve development strategies for population groups having such diverse characteristics and traits is, therefore, not smooth nor is it a linear process.

Concern for 'urban poverty' in India like anywhere else in the world is comparatively new.<sup>4</sup> The few programmes that have been initiated in the country to uplift the 55-60 million people estimated to be living below the official poverty line have essentially been the outcome of expediency and the need to respond to the most immediate and visible forms of deprivation, rather than the result of a comprehensive analysis of poverty issues, problems and perspectives.

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3. Most rural poor are in the categories of landless labourers, agricultural labourers, small and marginal farmers, and low productive artisans.
  4. See for details, National Institute of Urban Affairs, "Approach to Urban Poverty : A Position Note," Research Study No. 27, New Delhi, 1988.

This study on people's perceptions of urban poverty is one in a series that has been undertaken by the National Institute of Urban Affairs to analyse and better understand poverty-related issues and problems. While other studies under the programme<sup>5</sup> are designed to create and establish a quantitative data base on the urban poor and their demographic, socio-economic and physical characteristics,<sup>6</sup> this one is meant to probe into the attitudinal and qualitative aspects of urban poverty. Its main purpose is to understand how people feel about and perceive poverty.

Apart from the need to bring into a mass of statistics a qualitative dimension, the raison d'etre for the perception study arose out of the growing evidence that there are large gaps in the way in which poverty is perceived by different groups in the population. Many, for instance, see it in economic terms; others, in terms of its physical manifestations and access to services. Some attribute the existence of poverty to the growing impoverishment of the countryside; while others view it essentially as a function of forces internal to the urban areas. Those who are responsible for policy-making or formulating anti-poverty strategies and programmes look at poverty in altogether different ways than the poor themselves.

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5. The NIUA's Urban Poverty Programme includes a major survey of the urban poor. It is designed to collect data from the urban poor households on "who they are, what they do, and where they live". In addition, it includes an analysis of the media's response to urban poverty questions, and a publication on the dimensions of urban poverty which is based on secondary data.
  6. Barring the NSS quinquennial surveys, there are no all-India level data on the urban poor. This constitutes perhaps the biggest obstacle to formulating realistic responses to urban poverty.

The profiles of the poor they construct as "observers" are generally<sup>7</sup> different from what the poor feel about poverty and about themselves. This leads to a different understanding of the situation by different sections of the population. The result is that antipoverty strategies and programmes often do not pay off; poverty and deprivation continue to proliferate, and investments stand wasted.

The purpose of this study, which has been conducted at the initiative of the National Commission on Urbanisation (NCU), is to test the tenability of the above statement; that is, to find out if the perceptions of the different population groups are really as divergent as is often contended, or whether there are aspects where there is some measure of agreement among them. The key aim, of course, is to use the perceptions survey data (along with the data from other studies) to evolve effective responses to the growing problems of urban poverty, and to design hopefully a process of social education for better appreciation and understanding of the urban poverty issues.

Perceptions have been sought on three specific aspects of urban poverty:

- i. The poverty alleviation programmes, that is, the awareness of, and acquaintance with the various programmes such as the Self Employment Programme for the Urban Poor (SEPUP), Urban Basic Services (UBS), Urban Community Development (UCD), Sites and Services, Slum Upgrading and Improvement, and others meant to assist the urban poor, the relevance of these programmes to the problems and priorities of the poor, and the degree of their impact.

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7. Peter Lloyd, Slums of Hope? Shanty Towns of the Third World, Penguin, 1979.

- ii. The causes of poverty, that is, the extent to which it is seen as the result of historical forces, or due to existing policies or sociological and cultural factors, and the extent to which it is viewed as a phenomenon that will stay or disappear in the coming years.
  
- iii. Who the urban poor are, and what problems they encounter, that is, the image of the poor among different population groups, the degree to which people see them as a burden, or identify them in terms of classes, castes, occupations, or other characteristics.

In the selection of these aspects, we have been guided by the order of their contemporary importance in the Indian context. For instance, there has been in recent years a growing disillusionment with most poverty alleviation programmes, with many questioning their reach, effectiveness, and even the manner of their implementation and management. The issue of what the needs and priorities of the poor are - whether these are shelter, services, better employment or education, training and motivation is now a matter of debate both globally as well as within the country. Similarly, the widely-held notions that poverty is endemic among migrants, and that it is caused by unemployment have been seriously questioned. These issues have, therefore, formed the central theme of this study.

This study has been carried out in twenty (20) urban centres of different population sizes, functions, and socio-spatial contexts. The main features of these centres are given in Table 1.



Table - 1  
Characteristics of Sample Urban Centres

State	District	City/Town	Population		Growth rate (%) 1971-81	Functional classification 1971
			1981	1971		
Andhra Pradesh	Vishakhapatnam	Vishakhapatnam U.A.	603,630	335,150	66.08	Serv., Trans., Indus.
	Warangal	Warangal	335,150		61.50	Indus., Serv., Trade & Comm.
Bihar	Bhagalpur	Bhagalpur	225,062		30.70	Indus., Serv., Trade & Comm.
	Nawada	Nawada	38,759		63.22	Trade & Comm., Serv., Indus.
Gujarat	Surat	Surat U.A.	913,806		85.36	Indus.
	Kutch	Mandvi	32,114		15.31	Serv., Trade & Comm., Indus.
Himachal Pradesh	Shimla	Shimla	70,604		27.52	Serv.
Karnataka	Dakshin Kannad	Mangalore U.A.	306,078		42.28	Indus.
Kerala	Kottayam	Kottayam	64,431		7.90	Serv., Trade & Comm., Indus.
Madhya Pradesh	Rewa	Rewa	100,641		45.47	Serv., Indus.
	Nagpur	Nagpur U.A.	1,302,066		39.94	Indus., Serv.
Maharashtra	Nasik	Nandgaon	17,768		-22.67	Prim. Act., Indus., Trade & Comm.
	Manipur	Manipur Central	Imphal		56.05	Indus.
Orissa	Sambalpur	Sambalpur U.A.	162,214		54.36	Serv., Trade & Comm., Indus.
Tamil Nadu	Madurai	Madurai U.A.	907,732		27.58	Indus., Trade & Comm.
	Ramanathapuram	Sivakasi U.A.	83,072		36.74	Indus.
Uttar Pradesh	Kanpur	Kanpur U.A.	1,639,064		28.53	Indus., Serv.
	Gorakhpur	Gorakhpur	307,501		33.17	Serv., Trade & Comm., Indus.
	Moradabad	Moradabad U.A.	345,350		26.66	Indus., Serv.
West Bengal	Medinipur	Medinipur	86,118		20.74	Serv.

Note: Serv.-Service, Trans.-Transport, Indus.-Industry, Comm.-Commerce, Prim.Act -Primary Activities

The 1981 census placed the total number of urban centres at 3301. Of these, 218 centres had populations exceeding 100,000, 2070 centres had populations of less than 20,000 with the rest falling in the range of 20,000 - 100,000. The question was how to select a sample out of so many which would be representative of different sizes, functions, and regions. We were generally aware that people's perceptions are often moulded and influenced by the environment they live in. People in larger metropolises and cities where a significant proportion of people live in slums, sleep on pavements, and go without services are likely to respond to the above sets of issues differently than those in smaller centres where such pressures are low. In places which are dominated by minority groups, scheduled castes and tribes, and backward classes, people's reactions to poverty issues are likely to vary. Regionally too, we postulated, people's perceptions are likely to be different. The process of selection has thus been interactive and relied on the NCU's preferences as well as our own analysis of the functions and characteristics of urban centres.

The survey has covered a total of 470 respondents belonging to different income, occupation and social strata. Here too, the question was whom to include in the sample and whom to exclude. The options were many. There were the different grades of officials — senior level and lower level bureaucrats, police officials, and the whole range of municipal staff; the non-officials and professionals of different categories - lawyers, doctors, industrialists big and small; the non-governmental bodies and, of course, the poor themselves. We took the decision of including all these categories. In taking a decision on the number of respondents in each category, we gave

highest weightage to the "poor," and lowest to the non-governmental institutions. The final tally of the respondents is as shown in Table 2.

Table - 2

Distribution of Respondents by Categories and Urban Centres

City/Town	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Kanpur	40	7	9	3	21
Nagpur	40	11	8	1	20
Surat	30	9	6	-	15
Madurai	28	6	6	1	15
Vishakhapatnam	30	7	7	1	15
Mangalore	28	8	5	1	14
Gorakhpur	20	3	5	1	11
Sambalpur	20	5	4	1	10
Imphal	20	6	3	1	10
Warangal	16	6	2	-	8
Bhagalpur	20	4	5	1	10
Moradabad	20	6	2	1	11
Rewa	20	7	2	1	10
Mednipur	20	7	1	2	10
Sivakasi	18	2	5	1	10
Shimla	20	7	2	1	10
Kottayam	20	6	3	1	10
Nawada	20	3	4	2	10
Mandvi	20	6	3	1	10
Nandgaon	20	5	3	2	10
Number of respondents	470	121	86	23	240

This study has relied for data collection on a questionnaire that was used mainly as a guide. This method was preferred over both a formally structured questionnaire and unstructured interviews. The use of a structured questionnaire would entail anticipating all questions of primary and secondary nature in advance of the study which led us to ask ourselves - was it really possible? Also, would the adoption of the method not constrain the NIUA's research team in probing the issues more deeply, if such opportunities arose in the field? On the other hand, the use of unstructured interviews, though fitting into the general framework of this study, meant placing too heavy a responsibility on the research team. Could we afford such a high risk? We settled, therefore, on a via media of a set of questions to which the research team could refer.

The question of how to use and group the responses has been equally important for this study. We had the option of using the responses as they "emerged" from the field surveys, or of interpreting them and putting them into clearly defined analytical categories. The former would have meant pursuing a case study approach, and would have required us to present "470 cases" - 470 being the final number of the respondents. Drawing general conclusions out of those cases would not, under such an option, be an easy task. The latter smacked of a bias towards statistical validity of the results. We have chosen the latter, notwithstanding the hazards involved, but have provided at places those responses which did not fall into any predetermined categories.

There have been other methodological issues too. For instance, we have been aware of the fact that the "instant" responses that we

have obtained in the study can well differ from those which are well thought out and "prepared" in advance. We have been aware of the contradictions within people, particularly on issues as sensitive as poverty, and asked ourselves what we should make out of it. Way back in 1944, Gunnar Myrdal in his seminal work on American race relations had drawn attention to the fact that mutually incompatible attitudes were not uncommon on questions such as poverty. According to him, "there are no homogeneous attitudes behind human behaviour but a mesh of struggling inclinations, interests and ideals, some held consciously and some suppressed." Even "the least sophisticated individual becomes aware of this confusion and the contradiction in his attitudes."<sup>8</sup> There have been concerns regarding the validity of the results of a study of perceptions. Are not such responses often perfunctory? Are not people in some classes vain and hypocritical in responding to poverty questions? What degree of confidence can be placed on such results?

The results of this study, about which the National Institute of Urban Affairs harboured such reservations, have been very rewarding, the benefits far outweigh the costs incurred. It has confirmed, for instance, the nagging fears that the perceptions of different population groups are different on several critical aspects of poverty. The study has uncovered a high level of ignorance about the various poverty alleviation programmes, with the level of ignorance higher particularly among those who are expected to benefit from them. It speaks of the failure of the implementing agencies to adequately publicise the programmes in the right manner.

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8. Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, Harper and Row, 1944.

The study reveals that people perceive a lack of commitment and conviction in most poverty alleviation programmes which would explain, in part, their ineffectiveness. A hundred and twenty-one out of the 240 poor respondents said they did not benefit from any of the programmes. What is significant here is that almost one-third of the respondents in the category of officials have attributed the failure of the various programmes to the same causes as the poor, that is, corruption, leakages, and lack of administrative commitment.

Migration of the rural poor to the urban areas has often been cited as one of the major reasons for the rapidly growing numbers of the urban poor. At least one-third of the officials continue to hold this view while about 50 per cent of the poor have attributed their poverty to low incomes/wages. Lack of education has also been stated by a significant number of respondents to be one of the major reasons for the persistence of poverty.

There is a consensus among different categories of respondents with regard to the problems of the poor. Almost two-thirds of the respondents have confirmed the widely held view that the main problems of the poor are related to incomes, employment, shelter and basic services; with incomes and employment being listed at the top of the problems.

The poor have been seen in the past in terms of castes, classes and occupations. It is significant that these perceptions continue to persist. At least 30 per cent of the respondents in the category of officials reported that the poor are the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Perhaps the most distressing feature of the survey is that a significant proportion of the respondents do not see an end to poverty in the near future. This view is held by 71 per cent of the poor, and, surprisingly, by 44 per cent of the officials too. For them, the crisis of poverty has deepened, and is now eating into the vitals. Or, perhaps, given an optimistic disposition, we could draw comfort from the fact that about 24 per cent of the respondents and at least 15 per cent of the poor think that poverty can be eliminated and will disappear in the near future. There is no despair among them. There is hope.

## ON THE POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES

How people perceived the wide-ranging poverty alleviation programmes constituted the main agenda of the perceptions survey.

It may be mentioned by way of preface that beginning with the Sixth Five Year Plan, 1980-85, a number of programmes have been launched to improve the quality of life and economic well-being of the low-income households and the urban poor. These fall, by and large,  
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into three groups :

- i. Shelter and shelter-related programmes, which include the widely-known 20-Point Programme, slum improvement and upgrading, Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums (EIUS), sites and services and other local support programmes for low-income housing.
- ii. Provision of basic services under programmes such as Urban Community Development (UCD), Urban Basic Services (UBS), and urban Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS).
- iii. Creation of employment opportunities under the Self Employment Programme for the Urban Poor (SEPUP).

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9. The three broad groups mentioned above are not mutually exclusive. Also, there are additional facilities which help the urban poor. These include the public distribution of essential commodities, and special programmes for backward classes, scheduled tribes and scheduled castes.



Though most of these have been taken up at the initiative of the central government, a few, such as the Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums (EIUS), have either been transferred from the central to the state sector,<sup>10</sup> or have begun with local initiatives. The 18-Per Cent Programme of the State Government of Karnataka falls into this category. In addition, there are the normal developmental programmes of state governments and urban local bodies which, though not meant exclusively for the urban poor, also reach them and tend to improve their quality of life. These include programmes such as the immunisation schemes, eradication of malaria and filaria and others which help the poor in a substantial way.

As stated in the earlier section, evidence has been building up in the country that these programmes have not been able to make any impact on the incidence of poverty, that they do not reach the poor, that they do not reflect the needs and priorities of the poor, and that they are borrowed and, therefore, misplaced in the Indian context.<sup>11</sup> It is often contended that these programmes have been implemented in a lackadaisical manner, and those who are responsible for implementation have no conviction in the effectiveness of the programmes. This survey was designed to find out how different strata of the population looked at these various programmes.

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10. The Environmental Improvement of Urban Slums began in 1972 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme.

11. See: National Institute of Urban Affairs, "The Media on Urban Poverty," Research Study No. 26, New Delhi, 1988.

The survey centred around the following specific questions :

- i. Are people aware of the various poverty alleviation programmes?
- ii. Are these programmes perceived to reflect the needs and priorities of the urban poor?
- iii. Are the programmes believed to have reached them and benefitted them? If not, to what have the people attributed this?

The results of the survey contained in Tables 3-9 are highly revealing. Perhaps the most striking result, shown in Table 3, is that 20.2 per cent of the total respondents expressed their total ignorance about any of the poverty alleviation programmes. They did not know of the existence of any programme for alleviation of urban poverty. The balance of 79.8 per cent, however, knew of at least one such programme. Given the level of economic development and literacy,<sup>12</sup> the high percentage of those who knew the existence of the government efforts in the area of poverty reduction should normally be a matter of satisfaction; at the same time, this high percentage cannot obscure the hard fact that there is ignorance about the various programmes, and the ignorance is particularly high amongst the poor, that is, those who are expected to benefit from them.

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12. For data, see: National Institute of Urban Affairs, Urban Data Sheet, 1986, New Delhi.

Table - 3

Acquaintance with Poverty Alleviation Programmes

Acquaintance	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Yes	375 (79.8)	111 (91.7)	80 (93.0)	21 (91.3)	163 (67.9)
No	95 (20.2)	10 (8.3)	6 (7.0)	2 (8.7)	77 (32.1)
Number of respondents	470 (100.0)	121	86	23	240

Note: Percentages in parantheses.

The table shows that a very large number of those who do not know about the various poverty reduction programmes are the poor themselves: 81 per cent or 77 out of the 95 respondents in the category of the poor. In relative terms, the percentage is 32.1 as compared to 8.3 per cent in the case of officials, and 7.0 per cent for non-officials and professionals. The level of ignorance is low among the NGOs. The concentration of those unacquainted with the various programmes among those for whom they are meant is a distressing aspect of the present socio-administrative system.

This proportion is also likely to be an understatement as many of the poor are unable to distinguish between a service or facility provided under a designated programme such as the SEPUP, UBS, UCD, or sites and services, and similar facilities provided under the normal developmental efforts of the government agencies. The officials involved in the implementation of the various programmes are expectedly more aware of the programmes in comparison with others.

Ten out of 121 officials stated that they had no knowledge of any of the poverty alleviation programmes. They claimed that their ignorance was due to the fact that their jobs dealt with areas and sectors which had nothing to do with such programmes.

The question of acquaintance with programmes was extended to find out which of the various programmes the different population groups were most acquainted with. Table 4 gives the results.

Table - 4

Level of Acquaintance with the Poverty Alleviation Programmes (%)  
(Number of Respondents - 470)

Level of acquaintance	Programmes							
	SEPUP	20-Point Programme	ICDS	UBS	UCD	EIUS	Slum improvement	Sites and services
No	58.9	80.2	87.4	88.1	92.8	94.9	89.1	95.7
Yes	41.1	19.8	12.6	11.9	7.2	5.1	10.9	4.3
High	51.8	65.6	74.6	51.8	97.1	91.7	45.1	65.0
Moderate	16.6	18.3	8.5	23.2	-	8.3	31.4	20.0
Low	31.6	16.1	16.9	25.0	2.9	-	23.5	15.0

As would be noted, the Self-Employment Programme for the Urban Poor (SEPUP) is the most widely known programme among the respondents of this survey. A little over two-fifths of the respondents and about one-fifth of the poor reported acquaintance with this programme. SEPUP, it may be mentioned, is the newest of the poverty alleviation programmes that has been taken up ever since the government became concerned with urban poverty issues. It has a national coverage. Next to SEPUP in terms of acquaintance is the 20-Point Programme

(Point No. 11) which seeks to bring about physical and environmental improvement of urban slums. This also is a nation-wide programme which has been widely publicised in recent years. The least known is the sites and services programme.<sup>13</sup> Only 4.3 per cent of the respondents expressed their acquaintance with this activity. One of the most significant revelations of the survey is the ignorance of three-fourths of the poor respondents about any major poverty alleviation programme of the government.

The level of awareness of the various programmes is generally high-to-moderate. Of those who know the Self-Employment Programme for the Urban Poor (SEPUP), 51.8 per cent indicated a high degree of acquaintance with its objectives and aims, and what it intended to achieve. Similar trends were noted for the other programmes too.

As one would expect, the awareness of the different programmes is high in relatively large urban centres and low in smaller towns. In Kanpur (1.63 million), all but one respondent knew about at least one of the various programmes. On the other hand, in places like Nandgaon (17,768) Shimla (70,604), Mednipur (86,118), and Imphal (156,622) the ignorance levels were particularly high as may be seen from Table 5.

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13. Among the many perceptive comments on the Sites and Services Programmes, one is worth citing: The sites and services programme has no support from political leaders as they are impressed more by concrete symbols of housing and subsidised multistoreyed construction rather than the provision of sites and services. Conventional engineering wisdom too supports pucca construction. Furthermore, the previous experience of serviced sites has not been happy as attention was not given to proximity to employment centres, availability of transport and adequate infrastructure. Even HUDCO is not fully committed to the sites and services concept. It does not provide for a separate financing pattern for such programmes.

Table - 5

Acquaintance with Programmes: Urban Centres

Acquaintance	Urban centres				
	Kanpur	Shimla	Nandgaon	Mednipur	Imphal
Yes	39	10	6	6	2
No	1	10	14	14	18
Number of respondents	40	20	20	20	20

How well are the various programmes perceived to reflect the needs and priorities of the urban poor? Almost 80 per cent of the total respondents have stated that, in their view, the various programmes have been drawn up on the basis of the needs and priorities of the poor, and that there is a strong relationship between the poverty alleviation programmes and the needs of the poor. Only about 9 per cent of the total and 14.6 per cent of the poor respondents feel that the programmes have no bearing on their needs. Another 12.8 per cent of the total and 17.5 per cent of the poor say that they "do not know". This indicates that over two thirds of the poor agree, but almost one third say "no" or "don't know." Table 6 gives the results of the survey.

Table - 6

Whether Programmes Reflect Needs of the Poor (%)

Response	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Yes	78.3	90.9	87.2	86.9	68.9
Overwhelmingly	50.0	75.2	73.2	65.2	27.5
Moderately	20.6	13.2	7.0	21.7	29.2
Marginally	7.7	2.5	7.0	-	11.2
No	8.9	0.8	5.8	4.3	14.6
Do not know	12.8	8.3	7.0	8.8	17.5
Number of respondents	470	121	86	23	240

Such an overwhelming response endorsing the link between the various programmes and the needs and priorities of the poor should, however, be seen in the context of the sharp variations that exist among the different categories of respondents. The table shows, for instance that only 0.8 per cent of the officials consider the various programmes as unrepresentative of the needs and priorities of the poor. This percentage is 14.6 among the respondents in the category of the poor. Equally important is the very high proportion of the officials (75.2%) who think that the various programmes reflect the needs in an overwhelming manner. In comparison, this proportion is only 27.5 amongst the poor. No less important is the ambivalence among the respondents about the nature of the programmes and the extent to which these reflect the priorities of the poor. The percentage of those saying that they "do not know" is uniformly high among respondents in the different categories.

The results presented in Table 6 provide evidence of major differences in the perception of the different population groups. The proportion of the poor who do not consider the programmes as representative of their priorities is high. The perceptions of officials here are quite the contrary.

The question whether the various programmes have benefitted the poor has been a coveted theme for discussion amongst many, with claims being made, on the one hand, that the various poverty alleviation programmes have resulted in the reduction of poverty, and on the other hand, that the incidence of poverty has grown, that poverty embraces today a much larger number of people than in the past, and that the programmes have failed. The Seventh Five Year Plan, 1985-90 has, for instance, argued that the proportions and numbers of those below the poverty line have declined on account of the impact of the various programmes, while the general notion is that the programmes are leading nowhere.

The survey sought the perceptions of the various population groups on this question and found that the majority of the respondents, 58.9 per cent of the total, stated that the programmes have benefitted the urban poor. Nearly one-third of the respondents have stated that the programmes have not benefitted them, with about 8 per cent of them stating that they "do not know". The statistics in the aggregate are thus comforting. Table 7 gives the results.



Table - 7

Whether Programmes have Benefitted the Poor(%)

Benefitted the poor	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Yes	58.9	82.6	69.8	73.9	41.7
No	33.4	7.4	25.6	21.7	50.4
Do not know	7.7	9.9	4.6	4.3	7.9
Number of respondents	470 (100)	121	86	23	470

The euphoria about the statistics, however, disappears when one disaggregates them according to the different population groups. In the category of the poor 50.4 per cent of the respondents and one-fourth of the non-officials and professionals do not think that the programmes have benefitted the poor. This proportion is, however, low for the respondents in the category of the officials, only 7.4 per cent.<sup>14</sup> This offers yet another evidence of the divergence of perceptions between the different population groups.

The above analysis should be seen in conjunction with Table 8 which shows the extent to which the various programmes have benefitted the poor, that is, substantially, moderately or marginally.

14. The relatively high percentage (9.9) of the "officials" as against 7.9 of the "poor" who say that they do not know whether the programmes have benefitted the poor or not, may tend to suggest that the officials preferred not to reply to this question.

Table - 8

Extent to which Programmes have Benefitted the Poor (%)

Extent of benefit	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Yes	58.9	82.7	69.8	73.9	41.7
Substantially	21.0	39.7	20.9	8.7	12.9
Moderately	17.7	24.8	25.6	17.4	11.3
Marginally	20.2	18.2	23.3	47.8	17.5
No	33.4	7.4	25.6	21.7	50.4
Do not know	7.7	9.9	4.6	4.3	7.9
Number of respondents	470	121	86	23	240

This table shows that only 21 per cent of the total respondents feel that the programmes have been of substantial benefit to the poor, with an almost equal number saying that the programmes have benefitted them only marginally. These positions provide a different impression than that obtained from the previous table which almost suggests that the programmes are a "success". Table 8 is revealing in as much as it shows that only 47.8 per cent of the NGO respondents, and 23 per cent of those in the category of the non-officials and professionals say that the programmes have made at best a marginal impact on the poor. When these percentages are added to those indicating that the programmes have not benefitted the poor, the overall position is far from comforting. The responses of the officials are equally important

here, with only 40 per cent saying that the programmes have benefitted the poor substantially. Half of the poor respondents stated clearly that they did not benefit from the programmes while 13 per cent stated that they did benefit substantially.

There are regional variations too as far as the question of the benefits reaching the poor is concerned. In Kanpur, as may be seen from Table 9, only 12.5 per cent of the total respondents stated that the programmes have benefitted the poor in a substantial manner. Fifty per cent of the respondents stated that the programmes did not benefit the poor at all, with 37.5 per cent saying that the programmes have benefitted them only marginally. Interestingly, the first two responses are almost identical statistically to those of the poor in the previous table. On the other hand, the programmes seem to have made their mark in Vishakhapatnam and Mangalore, according to the responses. Two-thirds of the respondents in Vishakhapatnam and 89.2 per cent in Mangalore felt that the programmes have benefitted them in a moderate-to-substantial degree. It needs to be mentioned here that there has been a successful urban community development programmes in Vishakhapatnam for some years, while in Mangalore, the incidence of overall poverty is low and confined essentially to the areas surrounding the port. Furthermore, the local programmes (18-Point Programme, for instance) have made substantial headway in Mangalore, which is also reflected in the responses.

Table - 9

Extent to which Programmes have Benefitted the Poor: Urban Centres (%)

Extent of benefit	Urban centres					
	Kanpur	Vishakha- patnam	Manga- lore	Sambal- pur	Imphal	Shimla
Yes	50.0	83.3	92.8	35.0	50.0	55.0
Substantially	12.5	50.0	71.4	20.0	15.0	10.0
Moderately	-	16.7	17.8	5.0	15.0	20.0
Marginally	37.5	16.7	3.6	10.0	20.0	25.0
No	50.0	6.7	3.6	60.0	15.0	40.0
Do not know	-	10.0	3.6	5.0	35.0	5.0
Number of respondents	40	30	20	20	20	20

Why are the programmes not effective? What factors explain the ineffectiveness of the programmes and why do the programmes not reach the poor? This question formed an important aspect of the perception survey, and was put to the different population groups to test the many existing hypotheses, centering around factors such as the institutional barriers, skewed structures, and also the capitalistic mode of production which prevents the benefits of the programmes from filtering down to the poor. The issue was to what extent do the

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15. This question was put only to those respondents who had stated that the programmes had either not benefitted the poor, or had benefitted them moderately and marginally. All those who had stated that the programmes had benefitted the poor substantially were not asked this question.

general notions and hypotheses match with those of the respondents of the survey.

This question has evoked multiple responses, meaning that the ineffectiveness is due to the operation of a multiplicity of factors rather than the result of a single factor. Various forces, according to the respondents, some seemingly interrelated and others in relative isolation, render the programmes ineffective. Table 10 gives the universe of the results.

The range of factors as the table shows, is wide and enormous which includes factors as wide-ranging as corruption, lack of administrative commitment, inefficiency in the implementation processes, political interference, lengthy and complicated procedures, lack of coordination, scarcity of resources in relation to the magnitude of the problem, misuse of funds, ignorance of the poor and their unpreparedness to make fuller use of the programmes, and the inability of the programmes to focus on the poor. Interestingly enough and perhaps to the dismay of particularly the academics, factors such as the capitalistic mode of production or the growth not being able to trickle down, do not figure in the range of responses. This itself is a fact to be noted as it shows the existence of a gap in the thinking of those who are in the "field", and those who, as the proverb goes, work and think from "ivory towers".

Table - 10  
Why Are Programmes Not Effective?  
(Multiple responses)

Reasons	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
<u>Relating to implementation</u>					
- Poor implementation	77	22	24	11	20
- Lack of proper publicity	64	21	13	5	25
- Lack of administrative commitment	59	22	26	8	3
- Beneficiaries ill-defined	29	9	5	2	13
- Lengthy and complicated procedures	15	1	3	3	8
- No coordination between various implementing agencies	6	3	2	1	-
<u>Relating to staff</u>					
- Inefficiency of staff	35	13	18	4	-
- Harassment of the poor	9	1	-	1	7
- Apathetic attitude of staff	9	3	3	2	1
- Lack of trained staff	6	6	-	-	-
<u>Relating to finances and management</u>					
- Inadequate funds	25	19	6	-	-
- Lack of cooperation from people	15	8	6	1	-
- Magnitude of problem	9	6	3	-	-
- Misuse of funds	5	-	4	1	-
- Banks lack of interest	2	2	-	-	-
- Problems of land acquisition	1	1	-	-	-
- Problems of encroachment by poor	1	1	-	-	-
<u>Relating to corruption and interference</u>					
- Corruption	144	24	46	14	60
- Political interference	31	14	11	3	3
- Influence required	15	-	1	-	14
- Poor misguided by local leaders and middlemen	6	4	2	-	-
- Favouritism	5	2	1	1	1
<u>Relating to education</u>					
- Illiteracy of poor	12	1	6	-	5
Number of respondents	335	61	64	20	190

According to the results, "corruption" is the single most important reason for the ineffectiveness of the various poverty alleviation programmes. Forty-three per cent of the total respondents (144 out of 335) think so. Significantly, this number includes all different categories of respondents - officials (16.7%), non-officials (31.9%), NGOs (9.7%), and the poor (41.7%). In relative terms, however, the percentages of those who attribute the ineffectiveness of the programmes to corruption are quite different, these being 39.3 per cent for officials, 71.9 per cent for non-officials including professionals, 70 per cent for NGOs, and 31.6 per cent for the poor.

A significant proportion of the respondents think that there is no commitment on the part of the machinery which is responsible for the implementation to the underlying objectives of the poverty alleviation programmes. The majority of those who consider lack of commitment as one of the principal reasons happen to be the "officials", which is a very significant response, coming as it does from the officials themselves. A related important factor which the respondents have identified is poor implementation and the inefficiency of staff responsible for programme implementation. It shows that adequate attention is not paid to what would normally be the most important aspect - the implementation of the programmes.

That the "poor" themselves are responsible for the ineffectiveness of the programmes is also implied by this survey. At least 12 respondents of which 5 happen to be the poor have identified illiteracy among the poor as one of the reasons. This is sometimes called "blaming the victim." Twenty-nine (8.7 per cent) of the

respondents think that there is lack of clarity about the 'beneficiaries' or the target groups, and evidently when there is lack of clarity about the target groups, it is not surprising that programmes remain ineffective.

Political interference is yet another reason for the ineffectiveness of the various programmes. As many as 31 respondents (9.3%) think it to be an important reason. Those who think it to be an important factor include 14 officials (23% of the responding officials), 11 non-officials (19.2% of the non-officials), but only 3 or 1.6 per cent of the responding poor.

Scarcity as well as misuse of financial resources have also been mentioned as possible reasons for the ineffectiveness of the programmes. While officials have talked about the shortages and scarcity of financial resources (19 out of 61), the non-officials and NGOs have focussed on the misuse of funds. The poor do not think these to be the reasons for the ineffectiveness.<sup>16</sup>

The question of misuse and diversion of funds meant for poverty alleviation programmes was pressed further in the perception survey, to find out whether, in the opinion of the different population groups, there were leakages of funds, and what was the extent of leakages. Table 11 which gives the results shows that 39.4 per cent of the total respondents think that funds leak out as compared to

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16. There are a few isolated responses as well. For instance, a few respondents have attributed the failure of the shelter and shelter-related programmes to the difficulties in land acquisition, and the inability of the poor to fulfil certain prerequisites for taking advantage of the programmes. A few have pointed out that the financing institutions show no interest in assisting the poor.



12.3 per cent who do not think so. Those who think that funds do not leak out include the officials and the non-officials but not the NGOs or the poor. An appreciable number of respondents have abstained from responding to this question including almost 68 per cent of the poor.

Table - 11

Do Funds Allocated for Programmes Leak Out? (%)

Response	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Yes	39.4 Estimate of leakage*	47.9 (10-100%)	66.3 (10-75%)	73.9 (10-80%)	20.8 (20-100%)
No	12.3	35.5	17.4	-	-
Do not know	11.5	11.6	11.6	13.1	11.3
No response	36.8	5.0	4.7	-	67.9
No. of respondents	470.0	121.0	86.0	23.0	240.0

\* Not every respondent provided the estimates.

The table shows that 47.9 per cent of the officials think that there are leakages of funds, and the leakages range between 10-100 per cent. An overwhelming percentage of the NGOs also think that not only are there leakages but leakages are significant, ranging between 10-80 per cent.

What does this analysis show, in sum? As indicated earlier, there are many disquieting features in the results of the survey, the most important being the inability of the various programmes to benefit the poor. It was apparent from the survey that most people

thought that the programmes have not benefitted them for reasons that are many and often interlocked. What is even more disturbing is that a very large number of respondents consider corruption to be widespread in even the poverty alleviation programmes which are resource deficient, to begin with. Ignorance about programmes among those who are expected to benefit from them is an equally disturbing feature of this survey. On the other hand, the survey shows that the programmes, as well as their objectives and content are seen to represent the needs and priorities of the poor. The government has launched, in recent years, programmes in sectors which impinge most on the needs of the poor - shelter and shelter-related, basic services, and expansion of employment and income opportunities. The survey underlines that the priorities are not misplaced.

## ON THE CAUSES OF POVERTY

The question as to what causes poverty, and why it persists and coexists with affluence and overall economic progress has long been debated in the literature of this genre. The notable feature about the debate is that apart from the absence of any agreement on the causes of, or the factors responsible for the existence of poverty, the question has got entangled with the ideological dispositions of the countries concerned, and, within the countries, among the different sections of the urban communities. Many schools which are aligned with the thought-processes of the "structuralists", the "incrementalists", and of course, the "supply side economists" have put forward their own positions and explanations for the existence of poverty. Thus, there are schools which see it entirely as a by-product of the capitalistic system of production where, according to them, exploitation by a few results in the marginalisation of large sections of the population. Then there are those who have explained the phenomenon of poverty in terms of what is widely known as the low-income trap or the vicious circle of poverty which characterises many of the developing countries. Market imperfections and failures which impede the trickle down of the benefits of growth, inadequate growth of the economic "pie", and colonial legacies have been offered by several others as the main causes of poverty. What is interesting is that all these explanations fall within the realm of theoretical propositions, with virtually no empirical data to substantiate them.

One purpose of this survey was to seek the views of the different population groups on the causes of poverty, and to ascertain whether those views were as divided ideologically as the contemporary

literature on the subject. Two sets of questions were put to obtain their views:

- i. What, in your opinion, are the principal reasons for poverty in urban areas?
- ii. Is poverty inevitable? Has it come to stay? Or is it a short-term phenomenon?

The responses to these questions are contained in Tables 12-15. One point that needs to be mentioned at the very outset is that there is considerable ambiguity in the responses with regard to the difference between the causes of poverty and the symptoms of poverty. The line of distinction between the two is rather thin. This should come as no surprise, since wherever reasonings are circular, as indeed is the case here, the distinctions between the causes and symptoms become blurred.

The universe of responses given in Table 12 is, expectedly, mundane, simple, and large but, interestingly enough, encompasses all the causes that one normally thinks about - high population growth rates, excessive migration from the rural to urban areas, the imbalance between incomes and expenditure in low income households, inaccessibility to health and educational facilities, the tardy growth of the urban labour market, and social barriers.

Table - 12  
Causes and Symptoms of Poverty  
(Multiple responses)

Causes and symptoms	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
<u>Relating to population growth</u>					
- High population growth rate	30	14	12	4	-
- Large-sized families	27	13	9	1	4
<u>Relating to migration</u>					
- High rural-urban migration	87	45	32	9	1
<u>Relating to incomes/ expenditure</u>					
- Low incomes and wages	187	37	22	7	121
- Irregularity in incomes	5	-	-	-	5
- Indebtedness and no savings	16	-	-	-	16
- Poor planning of expenditure	17	9	4	2	2
- Inflation	18	4	4	-	10
<u>Relating to employment</u>					
- Lack of adequate employment opportunities	57	18	18	4	17
- Irregularity in jobs	29	6	1	5	17
- Unemployment	41	18	10	3	10
- Lack of finances for starting own enterprises	6	2	-	-	4
<u>Relating to education</u>					
- No education/training	91	21	14	6	50
- Poorly endowed with skills	23	7	2	2	12
<u>Relating to health</u>					
- Poor/ill health	7	-	-	1	6
<u>Relating to traditions and culture</u>					
- Caste ridden	6	-	-	-	6
<u>Others</u>					
- Exploitation	4	3	1	-	-
- Lack of will and determination	6	5	1	-	-
- Socially undesirable habits	10	6	4	-	-
- Inherited	11	3	4	-	4
Number of respondents	470	121	86	23	240

An examination of the table shows that for 39.8 per cent of the respondents (187 out of 470), low incomes and wages constitute the principal cause of poverty. This cause is central to all groups of respondents: officials (30.6%), non-officials and professionals (25.6%), non-governmental organisations (30.4%), and the poor themselves (50.4%). As stated earlier, it is not entirely clear whether in the opinion of the respondents, low incomes and wages are a cause, a symptom, or a part of the vicious circle.

Migration from rural to urban areas has been mentioned by a significant proportion of respondents as a major cause of poverty. Of the respondents in the category of the officials 37.2 per cent, an equal percentage of the non-officials, and 39.1 of NGOs see migration of the poor from rural areas as one of the major causes of urban poverty. To them, it is just a geographical shift of poverty from rural to urban areas. It is important to point out that this perception matches with one of the several prevailing notions, according to which, a majority of the urban poor happen to be the "migrants". This view, however, has been contested in international literature on poverty.<sup>17</sup> Only one respondent in the category of the poor has stated this to be the cause of poverty.

Absence of adequate employment opportunities and an inelastic urban labour market constitute yet another cause of urban poverty: 12.1 per cent of the total respondents have cited these in their responses. Related causes are irregularity in the job markets, unemployment, and lack of credit for the creation of job

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17. Linn., *ibid.*

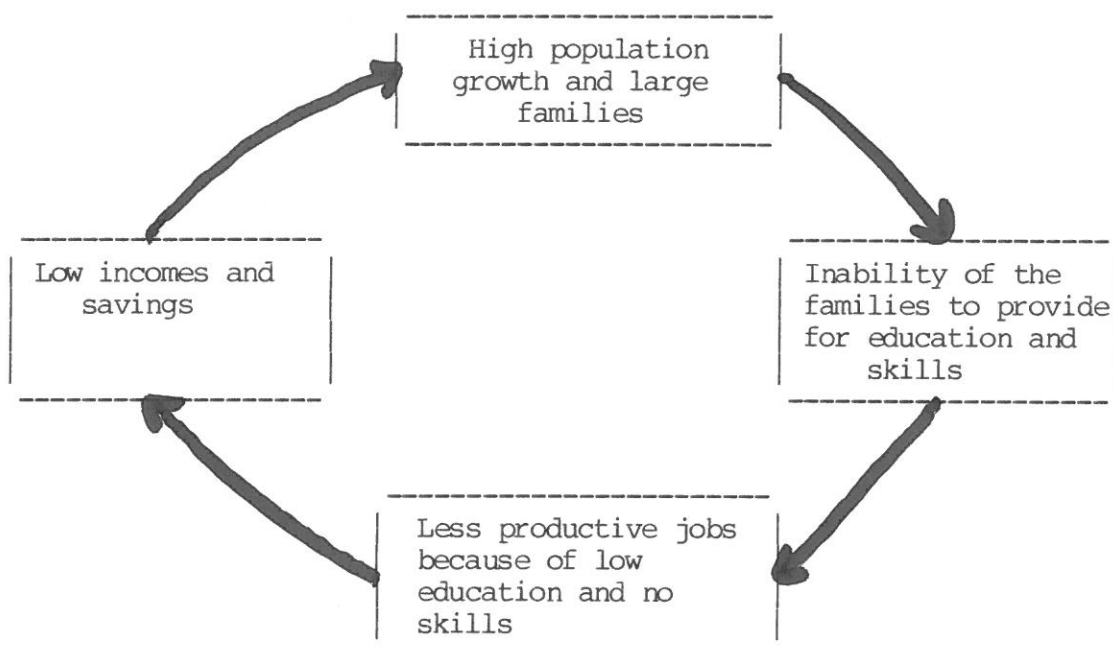
opportunities. However, only 7.1 per cent of the poor list this as a cause.

One positive feature of the survey is that 37.9 per cent of the total respondents think that lack of education and training is the main reason of poverty. Many have supplemented this cause by saying that the poor are inadequately endowed with skills, and therefore, they can not compete effectively in the highly competitive and restricted employment market. Other reasons that have been cited include exploitation of the poor as well as lack of will and determination among the poor to extricate themselves from the clutches of poverty.

When one looks more deeply into these causes (or manifestations), one becomes blatantly aware of those factors which constitute the vicious circle of poverty; as well as those which affect the poor from "outside" the vicious circle. For instance, the responses suggest quite clearly that poverty is not a single factor phenomenon. It is the result of a multiplicity of several interactive forces and factors. High population growth and large-sized families make it difficult for the poor to take full advantage of the educational facilities. Because of the low level of education, they get jobs which are low paid. Low-paid and low-income jobs, in turn, force them to have larger families in the expectation that they would be able to meet their basic requirements. This, in turn, depresses their incomes, and they get into the spin of this vicious circle.

Figure 1

Vicious Circle of Poverty



On the other hand, there are factors that are extraneous, and on which the poor have no control, whatsoever. Inflation is one such factor. It has been mentioned by 7.5 per cent of the respondents as one of the causes of poverty. It is an external factor that escalates the incidence of poverty. Migration from rural areas is another such external factor.

The ranking of the factors varies by different population groups. For instance, 45 out of the 121 officials think that the root cause of poverty is the migration from rural to urban areas. This view is also shared by respondents in the categories of the non-officials and professionals, and the NGOs. The poor do not consider it to be important at all. Similarly, unemployment has been identified as a cause of poverty by officials (14.9%), non-officials and professionals



(11.6%) and the NGOs (13.0%), but not by the poor. Only 4.2 per cent of the poor have mentioned this as a reason. The perceptions thus differ from one strata to another strata of population.

Are there regional differences in the causes of poverty? Data in this respect are given in Table 13.

As the table shows, the perceptions on the causes of poverty are not the same in the different sampled urban centres. In Kanpur, for instance, the main cause of poverty is stated to be "low income and wages"; all other causes have little or no significance in the opinion of the respondents. A somewhat similar response seems to have emerged in Moradabad and Nandgaon. In other urban centres, however, the respondents have not only identified other causes but also ranked them differently in order of importance. In Vishakhapatnam, lack of education and training as a cause of poverty is almost as important as low incomes and wages. Respondents of Mangalore and Mandvi too have stated the lack of education as the principal cause of poverty.

High rural to urban migration, and high rate of population growth have been emphasised in urban centres such as Nagpur, Vishakhapatnam, Mangalore, Rewa and Shimla. In Kottayam, the causes that have been mentioned by the respondents are related to either unemployment and lack of adequate employment opportunities or absence of education. Kottayam falls into the high unemployment zone of the country, and is one of the stagnating towns.

Table - 13  
Causes and Symptoms of Poverty: Urban Centres

Causes and symptoms	Urban centres									
	Kanpur	Nagpur	Vishakhapatnam	Mangalore	Moradabad	Rewa	Shimla	Kottayam	Mandvi	Nandgaon
<u>Relating to population growth</u>										
- High population growth rate	-	9	-	-	5	-	5	-	-	-
- Large-sized families	-	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Relating to migration</u>										
- High rural-urban migration	-	11	-	7	-	9	6	-	-	-
<u>Relating to incomes/expenditure</u>										
- Low incomes and wages	22	19	11	-	16	9	10	-	7	12
- Poor planning of expenditure	-	-	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	-
- Out-remittances	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<u>Relating to employment</u>										
- Lack of adequate employment opportunities	9	-	-	-	5	4	-	6	7	3
- Unemployment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	-	5
<u>Relating to education</u>										
- No education/training	-	-	10	16	-	-	-	6	11	-
Number of respondents	40	40	30	28	20	20	20	20	20	20

A critical question in the investigation was whether poverty, in the opinion of the respondents, has come to stay or will it disappear in the future? This question was designed to probe the minds of the people as to how they see the future - whether there is the much-talked about fatalism in the responses; whether there is any hope, optimism and expectancy. Two questions were put in this regard:

- i. In your opinion, will poverty persist in the future?
- ii. If yes, why do you think so?

Table 14 provides the responses to these questions.

Table - 14  
Will Poverty Persist? (%)

Response	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-offi- cial and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Yes	61.7	43.8	58.1	69.6	71.2
No	23.6	40.5	32.6	21.7	12.1
No response	14.7	15.7	9.3	8.7	16.7
Number of respondents	470	121	86	23	240

That poverty will persist - this is the response of 61.7 per cent of the total number of respondents. Only 23.6 per cent of the respondents seem to think that poverty is not inevitable and that it will disappear in the near future. The rest preferred to stay non-committal.

It is important to note that 71.2 per cent of the poor think that poverty has come to stay with them. A significant proportion of the NGOs (69.6%) who are involved with the poor in different capacities also think that there is little possibility of poverty being eliminated.<sup>18</sup> A large proportion of the respondents in the category of the officials (43.8%) also seem to think the same way. This kind of a response from all categories of respondents constitutes yet another disconcerting feature of the perceptions survey.

The reasons why, in the opinion of the respondents, poverty will persist, however, are less than clear from the survey, except that they do not think the employment market will expand fast enough to be able to provide jobs to all those who are below the poverty line, or that the incomes will not rise adequately to take care of their basic needs. Among the few reasons, three are quite perceptive.

- i. The respondents think that migration from rural to urban areas will continue, and since the majority of the migrants are poor, (in their view) the incidence of poverty in the urban areas will continue and proliferate.
- ii. The respondents think that it is the scourge of inflation that will keep the poor in a state of perpetual poverty.
- iii. They think that the magnitude of the problem is too large to be tackled in the foreseeable future.

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18. Reference here is to absolute poverty and not to relative poverty.

Table - 15

Reasons Why Poverty Will Persist in the Future					
Reasons	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Incomes will not rise fast enough to eradicate poverty	81	2	1	1	77
Expansion of the employment market at adequate rates unlikely	73	16	13	5	39
Low possibility on the part of the poor acquiring basic education and training	66	8	3	6	49
Indifference to the poverty alleviation programmes likely to continue	18	7	7	-	4
Magnitude of the problem too big to be tackled in the near future	14	8	5	1	-
Migration to urban areas will continue	16	10	4	1	1
Inflation will cause poverty to persist	30	3	2	1	24
Other reasons such as large families, corruption, exploitation of the poor, social evils, etc. unlikely to change	46	10	19	3	14
Number of respondents	290	53	50	16	171

The reasons given in Table 15 are essentially an extension of the causes of poverty given in an earlier table, and it would seem that the respondents expect the same conditions to continue in the future too. A break-away from the existing conditions does not appear possible, in their view.

## ON WHO THE URBAN POOR ARE

Who, in the opinion of the different population groups studied, are the urban poor? What characteristics are generally associated with them? How do people identify them? This somewhat wider question of who the urban poor are has received little systematic attention in the otherwise burgeoning literature on poverty. Studies on this question are few in number, and can, in fact, be counted.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, the studies that have appeared have presented evidence which is contrary to some of the traditional views about the poor and their characteristics. For instance, Linn's study on Cities in the Developing World has shown that the urban poor are not necessarily migrants or slum dwellers. He has also stated that the rate of unemployment among the poor is not high and that the occupations in which they are engaged are far more varied than usually imagined.<sup>20</sup>

In this survey, we have elicited the perceptions of different sections of the population on this question. Apart from the need to understand the poor and their characteristics, there were other reasons for including this question. For one thing, it was to learn whether the perceptions of the various population groups reflected the current and changing profiles of the poor (e.g. what Linn and Kanherth have found out); or whether these continued to be aligned with the older traditional views. The key element here was the extent to which the perceptions kept pace with the field-level changes. Yet another reason was to get a better grip on how to define and identify the

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19. See among the better known studies, Rakesh Mohan and Nancy Hartline, *ibid.*

20. Linn., *ibid.*

urban poor; particularly in view of the inadequacy of the present definition. This definition is, at best, unidimensional, and more important, cannot be operationalised into any specific programme.

This direct question on who the urban poor are was put to all respondents except the poor themselves. While we recognised the value of asking the poor what they thought about themselves and how they would 'identify' themselves, we were less confident about asking this question in a manner that would elicit responses that could be meaningfully categorised.

The results of the survey, (Tables 16-18) show that while the profiles of the poor have changed, the perceptions have not. The responses to this question can be grouped into six categories : income, caste, employment, occupation, housing and others. Table 16 gives the main responses.

Almost 40 per cent of the respondents have stated that the poor are those who have insufficient incomes, that is those who can barely sustain themselves. A congruence in this response can be observed here with 37 per cent officials, 60 per cent non-officials and professionals and 52 per cent NGOs stating this.

Nearly one-third of the respondents in almost all categories associate the poor with scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and backward classes. This indicates that despite all that has been done to uplift the scheduled castes and tribes economically, people

Table - 16  
Who the Urban Poor Are (%)  
(Multiple responses)

Response	Category of respondents			
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professional	NGOs
People with low incomes	41.3	37.2	44.2	52.2
SCs, STs, and backward classes	31.7	30.6	32.5	34.8
Daily wage earners	12.6	14.0	11.6	8.7
Unemployed	9.6	11.6	8.1	4.3
Rickshaw pullers	5.2	4.9	4.6	8.7
Construction workers	3.0	1.6	5.8	-
Houseless	13.0	12.4	13.9	13.0
Slum dwellers	7.4	8.3	7.0	4.3
Pavement dwellers	5.2	4.1	7.0	4.3
People without basic amenities	5.6	1.6	9.3	13.0
Illiterates	20.0	19.8	22.1	13.0
Unskilled workers	6.5	5.8	8.1	4.3
Migrants	10.9	12.4	10.5	4.3
Number of respondents	230	121	86	23



continue to think that the poor belong to the lower castes and classes.

In Gorakhpur, Moradabad and Rewa almost all the respondents have stated that the poor are the scheduled castes. In Kottayam, Sivakasi and Mandvi more than two-thirds of the respondents associate the poor with scheduled castes, tribes and backward classes. (See Table 17.)

Table - 17

Who The Urban Poor Are: Urban Centres and Caste

Response	Urban centres						
	Visakha- patnam	Gorakh- pur	Morada- bad	Rewa	Siva- kasi	Kotta- yam	Mandvi
SCs, STs, and and backward classes	8	9	9	9	7	7	7
Number of respondents	15	9	9	10	8	10	10

About one-fifth of the respondents in all the categories have identified the poor by their employment status. According to them the poor are the unemployed and the daily wagers. Nearly 13 per cent of the total respondents have stated that the poor are the daily wagers. This includes 14 per cent of the officials and 11.6 per cent of the non-officials, but only 8.7 per cent of the NGOs. Nearly 10 per cent of the respondents have stated that the poor are the unemployed. Again, while 11.6 per cent of the officials and 8.1 per cent of the non-officials stated this, only 4.3 per cent of the NGOs thought that the poor were the unemployed.

Often the poor are associated with certain occupations which happen to be mostly in the informal sector. This is also borne out by this survey. About one third of the total respondents in almost all the categories have identified the poor by their occupations (Table 18). They have observed that the poor are the rickshaw pullers, domestic servants, construction workers, agricultural labourers, vendors, brick makers, bidi workers and people in similar occupations. The occupations by which the poor are identified vary among the sample urban centres. For instance, in Bhagalpur and Sambalpur more than half of the respondents have pointed out that the poor are the bidi workers, handloom weavers, construction workers and rickshaw pullers. In Nagpur, a third of the officials and in Imphal nearly half of the officials identified them by their occupations.

Table - 18

Who the Urban Poor Are: Urban Centres and Occupations

Response	Urban centres			
	Nagpur	Sambalpur	Imphal	Bhagalpur
Rickshaw pullers	2	2	4	2
Domestic servants	2	1	-	-
Construction workers	4	3	-	-
Bidi workers	-	-	-	2
Handloom weavers	-	-	1	2
Number of respondents	20	10	10	10

The poor have also been identified as shelterless, pavement dwellers, those who live in slums and those without access to basic amenities. About 13 per cent of the respondents in the different categories have stated that the poor are the houseless. Only 7.4 per cent of all respondents have identified them as slum dwellers; about 5 per cent have associated them with pavement dwellers, and another 5 per cent have stated that the poor are those who have no access to basic amenities. It is interesting to note here the difference between the perceptions of the officials on the one hand, and the NGOs on the other. Only 1.6 per cent of the officials associate the poor with those who are deprived of the basic facilities, while 13 per cent of the NGOs think in these terms.

One of the commonly held notions about the urban poor is that they are migrants from rural areas. About one-tenth of the respondents have echoed this view, of which more than half the respondents are officials. In relative terms 12.4 per cent of the officials, 10.5 per cent of the non-officials and professionals and 4.3 per cent of the NGOs feel that they are the migrants. Again, what is noteworthy is that since migration of the rural poor to the urban areas is more acutely felt in the larger cities, it is only in these cities that the poor are identified as migrants. For instance, 21 per cent of the respondents in Kanpur and more than 85 per cent of the respondents in Surat think that the poor are migrants.

Nearly one-fifth of the respondents believe that the poor are illiterate, and 6.5 per cent of the respondents feel that the poor are unskilled workers. These perceptions substantiate the argument that the poor need to be provided with education and skills to raise them

above the poverty line. Of those who stated that the poor are illiterate 19.8 per cent are officials, 22.1 per cent are non-officials and professionals, and 13.0 per cent are NGOs. The poor are described as unskilled workers by less than 8 per cent of all categories of respondents.

In conclusion, it can be said that while the evidence in the third world countries shows that the urban poor are a complex group and hence not easily identifiable, the perceptions seem to put the urban poor in specific categories. What is most striking is the fact that the caste factor still dominates the perceptions of people. They still associate the poor with the lower castes. But the survey reveals that the caste factor plays a much smaller role in metropolitan cities; while in secondary cities and towns the poor continue to be identified with certain castes. This also indicates that while urbanisation is rapidly changing the character of the urban areas, its impact on people's perceptions has been negligible, as they still continue to hold the traditional view of the poor.

Another point worthy of note is the hiatus between the responses of officials and of the NGOs. The differences are very sharp in some cases as can be seen from Table 16.

The question of "who the urban poor are", was supplemented by another critical question on what the main problems of the poor are, that is, whether in the opinion of the respondents, the problems they faced were economic, social or physical. The National Institute of Urban Affairs placed a high priority on this question; since without finding out what people perceived to be the main problems of the poor,

it was difficult to come to grips with who they thought the poor were. For instance, it is often said that the main problem of the poor is shelter; though, in recent years, many have begun to argue that it is not their main problem as the poor somehow manage to find their own shelter. Similarly, there are some who think that lack of income constitutes their main problem; only to be disputed by others, who think that their collective or family incomes are high enough for them to stay above the poverty line, but their problem is how to strike a correct balance between income and expenditure.

This survey has probed into this question systematically. Two questions were administered in this regard:

- i. What are the main problems of the poor?
- ii. Do the priorities of the poor correspond with their problems?

Responses to these questions are contained in Tables 19 and 20.

Contrary to the more recent thinking a majority of the respondents perceive lack of shelter or inadequate shelter as the most critical problem of the poor. The majority consists of 68.7 per cent of the total number of respondents. What is important about this response is that there is a convergence of views among the different population groups about shelter being the most important problem, with 69.4 per cent of the official, 79.1 per cent of the non-officials and professionals, 73.9 per cent of the NGOs and 64.2 per cent of the poor saying so.

Table - 19

Problems of the Poor (%)  
(Multiple responses)

Problems	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Lack of, or inadequate shelter	68.7	69.4	79.1	73.9	64.2
Absence or lack of basic services					
- Water Supply	39.1	27.3	33.7	3.5	47.5
- Sanitation and Drainage	52.8	48.8	55.8	39.1	55.0
- Roads	1.9	1.6	1.2	-	2.5
- Electricity	7.7	1.6	1.2	-	13.8
Absence or lack of social services					
- Education	13.0	17.4	17.4	30.4	7.5
- Health	9.1	7.4	13.9	30.4	6.3
- Nutrition	3.8	7.4	8.1	4.3	0.4
Lack of adequate incomes and/or irregular income	31.7	27.3	22.1	30.4	37.5
Lack of employment opportunities and/ or irregular employment	39.4	52.1	43.0	56.5	30.0
Number of respondents	470	121	86	23	240

The degree of convergence of views, however, peters out when one moves on to other problems, and divergence begins. The NGOs, as the table shows, perceive the absence of educational, health and sanitation services to be among the main problems of the poor. The poor rank the absence of these services rather low in importance except for sanitation. For the poor, lack of adequate incomes and stable or regular incomes appear to be important; while the officials, the NGOs, and the non-officials and professionals perceive the absence of employment opportunities to be the central problem.

Regionally, the differences in the perceptions on this question are minor, with most responses converging around shelter, water supply and sanitation, unemployment, and lack of adequate incomes. There are of course, respondents who have highlighted localised problems, such as water logging and drainage in Mangalore, Sambalpur and Imphal, and nutrition in Mednipur, but generally, the differences are not significant.

Priorities of the poor as perceived by different categories of respondents run along the lines of the problems, and the deviations between the two are not appreciable. Two deviations, however, are important to note. According to 42.5 per cent of the respondents in the category of the poor, loans for starting small scale economic ventures constitute an extremely important priority. No other category of respondents has identified this as a priority. A second deviation is the listing of free health services for the poor by the NGOs. Though this has been mentioned by others, it does not find a place among the five most important items of priority.

Table - 20

Priorities of the Poor  
(Multiple responses)

Priorities	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Shelter	62.3	59.5	62.8	60.9	63.8
Employment	34.2	48.8	37.2	52.2	24.2
Sanitation	34.5	28.9	31.4	30.4	38.7
Water supply	32.3	17.4	27.9	26.1	42.1
Education	13.2	28.1	11.6	34.8	-
Loans for economic activities	-	-	-	-	42.5
Number of respondents	470	121	86	23	240

(Note: These are the six most important items of priority).

How is the presence of the poor in the urban areas viewed? Are the poor considered a boon or a bane to the cities? Does the society at large accept them as a part and parcel of the cities or do the city dwellers look upon the poor with contempt? This issue has been rather controversial and the opinions stand divided. Those who believe in concept of the the "city beautiful" feel that the poor negatively affect the aesthetics of the city, while those who fight for the poor feel that it is due to the lack of cooperation from the authorities and the residents that the poor live under such inhuman conditions. For them, it is not the fault of the poor that the cities look filthy.

Three questions were put to the respondents to ascertain their views on how they perceived the contribution of the poor to the urban areas. These were:

- i. Do the poor contribute in any way to the growth and development of cities?
- ii. Are the poor a burden on cities?



iii. If yes, why so?

Table - 21

Do the Poor Contribute to the Cities? (%)

Responses	Category of respondents			
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs
Yes	90.9	90.1	90.7	95.7
No	7.8	8.3	8.1	4.3
No response	1.3	1.6	1.2	-
Number of respondents	230	121	86	23

This kind of a response (Table 21) constitutes one of the positive aspects of this survey. The view that the poor only play a negative role in the cities has drastically changed to a point where most people now accept them as well as their contribution. Perceptions have changed from the stage where the poor were viewed as people creating problems for the cities to one where the poor have been accepted as an indispensable part of the city system.

While more than 90 per cent of all respondents have stated that the poor have a positive contribution to make, the high percentage of NGOs saying so (96 per cent) clearly indicates their established position in this regard. Only about 8 per cent of the respondents did not feel that the poor made any worthwhile contribution to the urban areas. The relative percentages of those who replied in the negative are 8.3 per cent of the officials, 8.1 per cent of the non-officials and professionals, and 4.3 per cent of the NGOs.

As a supplement to the previous question the respondents were asked specifically if they viewed the poor as a burden on cities. The reason for pressing on this question was to know whether despite accepting the positive contribution of the poor, the respondents felt that there was a negative aspect to their presence in cities and that they created problems for the city administration. This question was not asked from the poor.

Table - 22

Are the Poor a Burden on Cities? (%)

Responses	Category of respondents			
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs
Yes	41.3	47.9	34.9	30.4
No	57.8	52.1	63.9	65.3
No response	0.9	-	1.2	4.3
Number of respondents	230	121	86	23

The response to this question may seem somewhat contradictory to the response in the previous table. This contradiction exists because this question was put to all respondents regardless of their answer to the previous question. This is yet another evidence of the lack of consistency of the response in the survey. Nevertheless nearly 58 per cent of the respondents have clearly stated that they do not feel that the poor are a burden on the cities (Table 22). About 41 per cent of the respondents have stated that although the poor could not be called a burden on cities yet they did create different kinds of problems for the city administrators and residents.

Table - 23

Why are they a Burden? (%)

Reasons	Category of respondents			
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs
Pressure on infrastructure	23.1	25.9	23.3	
Create social problems	22.1	17.2	33.3	14.3
Burden on municipality	16.8	22.4	10.0	
Encroach on public and private land	26.3	24.1	30.0	28.6
Evade paying taxes	2.1	3.4	-	-
Anti-social elements	22.1	22.4	20.0	28.6
Create law and order problems	9.5	10.3	6.7	14.3
Create social problems (drinking etc.)	7.4	8.6	3.3	14.3
Number of respondents	95	58	30	7

Of those who said that the poor created problems 23 per cent (of which two-thirds were officials) thought that the poor put pressure on the infrastructure of the cities. (Table 23) The relative percentage of those who stated this was 26 per cent for the officials, and 23 per cent for the non-officials and professionals. Nearly 17 per cent of the respondents have stated that the poor are a burden on the municipality and administration; of these four-fifths of the respondents happen to be officials. A small number of officials have

also stated that the poor evade paying taxes and hence are a burden on the cities.

According to a little over one-fourth of the respondents, the poor encroach upon public and private lands which create immense problems for the authorities. Encroachment, they have observed, caused congestion and also traffic problems. This has been stated by 24 per cent of the officials, 30 per cent of the non-officials and professionals and about 24 per cent of the NGOs.

A minority (about one-fifth) of the respondents in all categories have said that the poor are the anti-social elements, creating law and order problems and social problems (e.g. drinking). About the same proportion of the total respondents feel that the poor create environmental problems due to their bad habits and unhygienic ways of living.

The most noteworthy point in these responses is that none of the NGOs think that the poor are a burden on the municipality or that they put pressure on the infrastructure. It is only the officials, non-officials and professionals who think so. The NGOs have pointed out consistently that the poor do not create problems for the cities but that poverty often forces them to live and do things in a certain way.

## THE PERCEPTIONS SURVEY: MAIN FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Perhaps it is useful to recall the main findings of this perceptions survey at the very outset of this last section of the report. The first and foremost finding that emerges is the high level of ignorance among the poor about the poverty alleviation programmes. Over 30 per cent of the respondents say that they do not know of the existence of any poverty alleviation programme. Even though the percentage of those who express ignorance about the programmes may not appear to be frightening, the fact that almost one third of the potential beneficiaries do not know about any of them cannot be dismissed as inconsequential. This constitutes one of the most important and disconcerting features of this survey.

A second, equally disconcerting finding of this survey is that a significant proportion of the respondents do not think that the various programmes have reached the poor, and benefitted them in any substantial manner. What is significant here is that in the opinion of the respondents, the programmes do not benefit them because of two main reasons: absence of administrative commitment and corruption. There are other reasons too but these are the overwhelming ones. While corruption has often been cited as one of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of the various development programmes, the perception of the respondents that there is absence of administrative commitment is a worrisome feature, and requires a major corrective effort.

Third: that poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon is the view of an overwhelming percentage of the respondents of this survey. People do not think that it can be explained by one or two factors.

It is a syndrome of "collective poverty", if we use John Friedmann's phrase. This feature makes the redressal of poverty far more complex than envisioned ordinarily. Most of the poverty alleviation programmes are sectoral; raising the question of whether such programmes can address the broad, multi-dimensional poverty issues in an effective manner.

A fourth aspect worth highlighting are the gaps in perceptions of different population groups on who the urban poor are. On the one hand, they are seen as those who are unemployed, those who are migrants from the rural areas, and those who have no will or determination to extricate themselves from the clutches of poverty. On the other hand, the perceptions of the poor on who the poor are, as inferred from Tables 12 and 19, is different. They are neither the unemployed, nor the recent migrants from rural areas. They are those who have low productive jobs. They do not earn enough to be able to stay above the poverty line.

Fifth: there are areas of convergence among the views of the various categories of respondents. The poor, in the opinion of an appreciable number, are low caste people; they are those who have occupations such as shoe making, rickshaw pulling, rag picking, construction work, and so forth. It is yet another disconcerting feature of the survey that despite years of efforts to improve the economic conditions of the scheduled castes and tribes, people still associate them with the poor.

A sixth aspect of the survey is that the poor think that poverty has come to stay with them and that it is unlikely to disappear in the

near future. This aspect of the survey was gone into more deeply in the survey by asking the respondents how issues of growing urban poverty could be approached, and what orientation could be given to the existing programmes in order make them effective. Two specific questions were asked in this connection:

- i. What can be done to make the existing programmes effective?
- ii. What should be the thrust of the new programmes, if new programmes are necessary?

The responses to these questions are contained in Table 24-27.

Table - 24

Is Redesigning of Existing Programmes Required? (%)

Response	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Yes	39.1	41.3	46.5	65.2	32.9
No	35.3	47.1	40.7	26.1	28.3
No response	25.5	11.6	12.8	8.7	38.8
Number of respondents	470	121	86	23	240

Almost two-fifths of the respondents think that the existing programmes have little relevance and require restructuring and reorientation. This response includes 41.3 per cent of the officials, 46.5 per cent of the non-officials and professionals, and 65.2 per cent of the NGOs. At the same time, 47.1 per cent of the respondents in the category of officials think that the existing programmes are

basically sound, and require no changes. Interestingly, a greater percentage of the poor have expressed no views on the subject.

When pressed further on the type of changes required, the respondents have offered a wide array of specific proposals, which include improving publicity of the programmes; involvement of the NGOs and people in the implementation of poverty alleviation programmes; making the programmes more flexible and local need based; better identification of beneficiaries and target groups; and eradication of corrupt practices. Two of these responses are particularly important to highlight. One is the responsibility for implementation of these programmes. Many respondents have suggested that this should be entrusted to a single agency, preferably the local body. A second suggestion made by a few respondents is that assistance for the poor should be in kind and not in cash. According to them, this will ensure better utilisation of assistance and also assist in checking corruption. The universe of responses is given in Table 25.

For the poor, the most important suggestion is to check corruption and improve publicity of the poverty alleviation programmes. The officials have, however, preferred flexibility and local orientation in the programmes.

The second question in this regard was about the new thrust required to address the urban poverty issues. As Table 26 shows, at least 30 per cent of the total respondents think that the poor need a new deal; this includes 30.6 per cent of the officials; 23.3 per cent of the non-officials and professionals; and 30 per cent of the poor.



Table - 25  
 Actions Necessary to Improve the Effectiveness  
 of Existing Programmes  
 (Multiple responses)

Types of redesigning	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
- Improve publicity	29	4	4	3	18
- Involve NGOs, and People	37	9	16	8	4
- Programmes should be local need based and flexible	28	15	9	4	-
- Remove corruption	23	-	1	2	20
- Improve identification of beneficiaries and target groups	17	2	2	1	12
- Increase loan and subsidy component	21	6	5	3	7
- Place responsibility of poverty programmes with a single agency	11	6	2	1	2
- Improve implementa- tion by simplification of procedures, better coordination between agencies	38	6	8	2	22
- Involve the private sector	5	4	1	-	-
- Others including penalty for non- repayment of loans, improvement in loan recoveries, elimi- nation of political interference and enlargement of the scope of the existing programmes	25	6	8	3	8
Number of respondents	184	50	40	15	79

Table - 26

Is a New Thrust Required to Address Urban Poverty Issues? (%)

Response	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
Yes	30.4	30.6	45.3	26.1	25.4
No	45.3	55.4	31.4	52.2	44.6
No response	24.2	14.0	23.3	21.7	30.0
Number of respondents	470	121	86	23	240

The new thrust areas as indicated by the respondents cover a host of suggestions which include focus on employment generation, education and skill development, and provision of basic services, as well as several new ideas. These comprise :

- i. formation of special cooperatives of the poor
- ii. unemployment allowances
- iii. works programmes on the lines of the Food for Work Programme
- iv. schemes for providing skills in local crafts, and business know-how.

Table 27 gives the universe of responses.

Table - 27

New Thrust Areas  
(Multiple responses)

New thrust areas	Category of respondents				
	Total	Officials	Non-officials and Professionals	NGOs	Poor
<u>Sectors:</u>					
Employment/Income generation	74	25	30	8	11
Education	47	12	10	9	16
Skill development	23	7	5	3	8
Health schemes	17	2	2	1	12
Basic services	16	3	3	-	10
<u>Others:</u>					
Focus on casuses of poverty	9	6	2	1	-
Focus on population control	2	1	-	1	-
Focus on environmental improvement	2	-	-	-	2
Form cooperatives of the poor	4	1	2	-	1
Financial assistance scheme for children's education	4	-	1	-	3
Open a new bank for urban poor	2	-	-	-	2
Scheme for unemployment allowances	1	-	1	-	-
Scheme for loans for personal use	1	-	-	-	1
Drive against social evils (drinking and drug addiction)	2	1	-	1	-
Programmes for development of local crafts and providing technical assistance	3	-	2	-	1
Number of respondents	143	37	39	6	61

Thus, as may be seen, a host of new ideas have been generated in this survey. Many of them such as the formation of the cooperatives and a works programme represent a new deal, and a new approach for them. So does the suggestion of substituting the cash subsidy components in the poverty alleviation programmes by subsidies in kind. According to the respondents these will reduce leakages and corruption. Also, as the table shows, there is a sharper focus in the responses on other thrust areas, with many stressing the need for education and skill development, health services for women and children, as well as recreational facilities to wean the poor away from social evils. Even though the number of people who have offered these responses is not large, they constitute extremely significant observations.

The new thrust areas together with the findings of the survey as outlined in this report have given to the National Institute of Urban Affairs a different perspective on the poverty questions. The survey itself has helped to build confidence in the methodology of perception surveys. It has paved the way for putting into action a social process of mobilising information for individual and collective use.

## Annexure

A SURVEY OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF PEOPLE ON URBAN POVERTY  
(NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF URBAN AFFAIRS)  
11, NYAYA MARG, NEW DELHI 110021

### I

1. Are you aware of the various poverty alleviation programmes currently being implemented in your town? If yes, which ones?
2. How well are you acquainted with these programmes, that is, with their aims and objectives, the main components and for which categories of the urban poor are they meant for?
3. Which of the programmes, in your opinion, are the closest to the needs of the urban poor and which are remotest to their needs?
4. Do you think that these programmes reflect the government's commitment to eradicate or at least minimize the incidence of urban poverty? Or, do you think there is a hiatus between the government's commitment and what these programmes expect to achieve?
5. Do you think that these programmes reflect the needs and priorities of the urban poor? Or, are these programmes misplaced in relation to the problems and requirements of the urban poor?
6. Have these programmes benefitted the urban poor, or those sections of the urban poor for whom the programmes were meant? If yes, in what way and to what extent?

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This is a set of reference questions for the survey of the perceptions of people on urban poverty.

7. If these programmes have not reached the urban poor, then what in your view, are the possible reasons? What factors are of foremost importance in your view?
  8. Do you think that there is a lack of administrative commitment to these programmes, and whether this could be a prime reason for the inadequate impact of these programmes on urban poverty?
  9. Do you think that the funds meant for these programmes leak out? If yes, would you have any estimate on the proportion of funds that are not spent on the urban poor?
  10. Do you think that these programmes can be redesigned in order to be more effective? If yes, in what way?
  11. In case you think that the existing programmes are unlikely to reduce the incidence of urban poverty, what new programmes would you suggest? What thrust would you provide, and what new components, would you add?
  12. Do you agree with the view that urban poor (like their counterparts) have got used to the various types of subsidies etc? If you agree, then do you think that these subsidies need to be withdrawn? Do you think that the poor have the capacity to pay for services for which subsidies are available?
- II
13. What in your opinion are the main problems of the urban poor? What aspects of urban poverty do you feel most concerned with? What type of deprivations do they suffer from?

14. What in your opinion are the short term and long term needs of the urban poor? How would you rank their needs? What do you think are the most serious problems of the urban poor?

III

15. What in your opinion are the reasons for the existence of poverty in the urban areas? Why is there poverty in the cities?
16. Do you think that urban poverty has come to stay and will persist? What are the reasons for the perpetuation of urban poverty?
17. Do you think that the incidence of poverty will decline in future? If yes, then what is the basis of your optimism?

IV

18. Who in your opinion are the poorest of the poor? Why would you call them poor? What attributes characterize them?
19. In what way do you think the poor contribute to the city's economy? It is said that the poor perform important functions in urban areas, which kinds of services they are engaged in are the most visible and beneficial to the urban areas? Do you think that their existence in the urban areas is something positive? If yes, why do you think so?
20. Do you think that the poor are a burden on the urban areas, and have a negative effect on the cities? If so - why do you think so? Can you enumerate the problems the cities face because of the poor?

## NIUA'S PUBLICATIONS OF RELATED INTEREST

Approach to Urban Poverty  
A Position Note

This position paper presents the existing approach to alleviation of urban poverty in India. It discusses in specific terms how the five year plans have looked at urban poverty questions, and analyses the principal policy responses as well as the contents of the various poverty alleviation programmes.

Dimensions of Urban Poverty  
A Situational Analysis

This study brings together the national-level NSS data and the data from the microlevel studies on urban poverty and attempts to develop a situational profile of the urban poor. It deals with the concept of poverty, the migratory and employment characteristics of the urban poor, their quality of life and also their spatial concentration and distribution.

The Media on Urban Poverty  
A Content Analysis

This paper analyses the scope and coverage given to urban poverty by the media. Eight major English language dailies have been surveyed for this purpose and information culled out from them. The report provides an illuminating reflection of the kind of interest that urban poverty evokes in the media.

Who the Poor are, What  
They Do and Where They Live

Undertaken at the instance of the Ministry of Urban Development, this study on the urban poor provides answers to questions such as who the poor are, what they do, where they live, and what is the nature and extent of the deprivation they suffer from. This study is based on primary surveys conducted in 1987 in 20 sample towns spread over the country.