

Urban Growth and Invisible Workers: The Reality of Informal Labour in Guwahati, Assam

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Abstract

The urban expansion in Guwahati, has been increasingly driven by the growth of commercial areas, infrastructure and service oriented economies. At the core of this apparent urban change lies a substantial informal labour force that is essential for maintaining the functioning and development of the city. Construction workers, street vendors, sanitation workers and other daily wage earners plays an important role in urban economic growth, yet they face persistent challenges. This paper provides a critical analysis of the relationship between urbanisation and informal labour in Guwahati, Assam, focusing on the extent to which urban economic growth relies on inexpensive and adaptable labour. Drawing on qualitative interviews, field observations and secondary sources, the study explored the lived experiences of informal workers and the challenges they face in everyday lives. The paper contends that although informal workers are vital to the development and sustainability of urban economies, they often remain overlooked in prevailing development narratives and highlights how ineffective welfare policies and increasing urban inequalities perpetuate the marginalization of these workers who are essential to the progress of modern urban Assam.

Keywords: Informal labour, marginalization, urban economy, urbanization, welfare policies

Introduction

Urbanization has become one of the most crucial processes influencing modern societies globally. The term refers to the population shift from rural to urban areas and the ways in which each society adapts to the change (Sanyaolu, 2025). Kingsley Davis has explained urbanization as a process of switch from spread-out pattern of human settlements to one of concentration in urban centers (Deshpande, 2023). He mentioned about three stages of urbanisation where the first stage is the initial stage characterized by rural traditional society with predominance in agriculture and dispersed pattern of settlements, while the second stage refers to acceleration stage where basic restructuring of the economy and investments in social overhead capitals including transportation, communication take place and the last stage is known as the terminal stage where urban population exceeds 70% or more. (Deshpande, 2023).

In developing nations like India, swift urban expansion has turned cities into hubs of economic activity, industrial growth, infrastructure enhancement and service oriented economies. According to the 2011 Census of India, India's urban population is 377 million, accounting for 31.2% of the overall population (Punyamurthy and Bheenaveni, 2023). Cities serve as engines of economic development by drawing in investments, creating opportunities and enabling the movement of labour and capital. However, beneath the apparent transformation of urban environment lies a complex social and economic reality primarily

supported by informal labour. The term “informal sector” was introduced into the economics literature by Hart in 1973 in order to distinguish between formal and informal income opportunities, for instance wage-earning and self-employment (Sheikh and Guarav, 2020). The expansion of urban economies is dependent heavily on workers who exist outside formal employment systems and labour protections. These workers play an important role in the growth of cities while facing economic instability, marginalization and job insecurity. The transformation of urban areas has led to an increased demand for low-wage and flexible labour in sectors such as construction, street vending, waste management, sanitation and so on.

Within the state of Assam, the urbanization process was the strongest in Kamrup district and the extraordinary rate of urbanization of Kamrup was fuelled by the explosive growth of its principal city Guwahati, which accounted for 89.18% of the district’s urban population, which indicates that the majority of the rural migrants into the district of Kamrup made for Guwahati (Sharma and Nath, 2021). The city of Guwahati serves as a significant illustration of the evolving urban dynamics in Northeast India. The informal sector of this city has absorbed about 90% of its total workforce (Chakravarty and Barua, 2000). An increase in migration from rural areas and surrounding regions has driven population growth and labor mobility within the city. This rapid urban change led to a heightened demand for informal labour across various sectors, especially in construction, street vending, transportation, domestic services and sanitation.

Despite their major contributions to the functioning of urban economies, these workers in Guwahati continue to remain socially and economically vulnerable. Most of these workers are employed without written documents, social security benefits, fixed wages or legal protection. Their employment is often temporary and uncertain, making them highly susceptible to exploitation, unsafe working conditions and income instability. Many migrants and low-income workers settle in congested areas with inadequate housing, poor sanitation facilities and limited access to essential services. It was found out about the informal workers that only 10% are working less than 8 hours per day, 20% have free medical facility and only 7% of the workers are having sanitation and filtered drinking water facility in Guwahati (Sharma and Nath, 2021). Additionally, most of the workers are found to be neglected and delayed in seeking health-care services in the case of suffering from any kind of diseases due to their poor socio-economic background and lack of organized occupational safety related support and practices which reduced their serenity to occupation health related safety and standards (Sarkar and Kar, 2020). Though in order to provide social security to the workers in the unorganised sector, the Government has enacted The Unorganised Workers Social Security Act, 2008 yet the social and economic security of the informal workers are not at all satisfactory in the city of Guwahati (Sharma and Nath, 2021).

The invisibility of these workers is not merely economic but also social and political, as they remain excluded from decision making processes, welfare measures and secure employment structures. The reality of invisible workers in Guwahati reflects the broader contradictions of urbanization in developing societies. Urban growth cannot be considered truly sustainable or inclusive if the workers who sustain the city continue to face insecurity, exclusion and marginalization. Understanding the experiences of informal labour is essential for developing a more equitable and socially just model of urban development.

Statement of problem

Construction activities rely on substantial workforce who performs physically demanding tasks crucial

for the development of the infrastructure of a particular place. Despite their important role in urban economy, these workers find themselves at the periphery of economic and social advancement. The development has exacerbated existing disparities, leading to a labour market marked by job insecurity, wage volatility, occupational hazards and restricted access to labour rights and social protections. Although cities are often depicted as representations of modernization, the labourers who physically build these urban environments continue to face unstable livelihoods. The advantages of urbanization are unevenly distributed while the workforce that drives urban change remains economically precarious and socially overlooked.

Studies on urban in Guwahati have primarily focused on infrastructure expansion, environmental management, land use changes and economic growth. However, they have relatively overlooked the human aspect of urban growth, especially the experiences of informal labourers. The perspectives from those who build and sustain the city's infrastructure are largely missing from the discussions surrounding urban development. As a result, the relationship between swift urbanization and labor precarity has not been explored within the regional framework. Additionally, there have been numerous welfare legislations and social protection initiatives aimed at enhancing the welfare of informal construction workers but considerable discrepancies persist between the formulation of policies and their execution. A significant number of workers are not registered with welfare boards and are unaware of the benefits available to them or encounter administrative challenges when attempting to access social security schemes. As a result, there is a lack of empirical evidence elucidating the reasons behind the failure of these programmes to effectively reach a large segment of the intended beneficiaries , especially in the informal labour market of Guwahati.

2.0 Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Urban growth in developing societies is often dependent upon large section on workers who remain outside the formal protection. The present study examines informal labour not merely as an employment category but as a structural outcome of unequal urban development.

1. **Dual Market theory:** The dual market theory introduced by Michael Piore, explains that the labour market is categorized into two sectors: the primary sector and the secondary sector. According to the theory, the informal sector workers falls under the secondary sector, which is characterized by low-paying, unstable and unprotected jobs. These workers falls under this category because of poverty, illiteracy and limited job opportunities. In cities like Guwahati, the surge in urban development heightens the demand for cheap labour, consequently fostering the proliferation of informal employment.
2. **Marxist theory of Labour-exploitation:** The Marxist theory of Labour exploitation by Karl Marx, examines that labour serves as the foundation of economic production, emphasizing the reliance of capitalist systems on the imbalanced relationship between employers and employees. It explains that capitalism constantly seeks flexible, cheap and unorganized labour in order to maximize profit and reduce production costs. Urban growth can produce development for some groups while simultaneously deepening inequality and invisibility for informal workers who form the backbone of the urban economy.

Literature Review

Chen and Raveendran (2012) in their study titled “Urban Employment in India: Recent Trends and Patterns” examined the evolving landscape of urban employment in India. Utilizing data from multiple rounds of the National Sample Survey (NSS), the study contend that the swift urbanization in India has not produced adequate formal employment opportunities. Rather, urban expansion has resulted in a rise in informal employment across sectors. The study underscored that a significant number of urban workers exist outside the realm of formal labor protections and social security systems. The study highlighted that the dependence of urban economies on informal labour and emphasized the need for inclusive labour policies, social security measures and better employment opportunities to reduce urban inequality and improve the living conditions of informal workers.

Abu and Junankar (2014) in their study “The Informal Labour Market in India: Transitory or Permanent Employment for Migrants” explored the connection between migration, urbanization and informal employment in India. The study examined how rural migrants who move to urban areas often find themselves integrated into the informal labor market due to factors such as limited education, poverty and a scarcity of job opportunities in the formal sector. The study indicates that for many migrants, informal employment is not a temporary situation but rather evolves into a long-term state marked by economic instability and social exclusion. The study emphasized that migrants engaged in urban informal sectors frequently encounter poor working conditions, inconsistent incomes and a lack of labor rights.

Breman (2013) in his book titled “At Work in the Informal Economy of India” critically analyzed the circumstances faced by informal workers in India, particularly in relation to globalization and urban development. The study contends that the informal sector has established itself as a lasting component of the Indian economy, rather than merely a fleeting phase of economic transition. It underscored the plight of workers involved in construction, casual labor and other endure informal jobs who endure low wages, precarious employment and lack of labor rights. The study revealed extreme vulnerability of informal workers to exploitation, stemming from inadequate state protection and increasing economic disparities. It concluded by highlighting that the informal sector in India is not a temporary phenomenon but a permanent and expanding part of the country’s economic structure.

Bhowmik (2005) in his study titled “Street Vendors in Asia: A Review” analyzed the conditions of street vendors as a major component of the urban informal sector. The study revealed that street vending provides employment opportunities to migrants and low-income populations in urban areas. However, vendors frequently face eviction, harassment, legal insecurity and lack of recognition from urban authorities. The study highlighted that despite contributing to urban economies and providing affordable goods and services, street vendors are often treated as illegal occupants of public space. It concluded by focusing on the need for inclusive urban policies that recognize and protect informal livelihoods.

Sanyal (2007) in his study titled “Rethinking Capitalist Development: Primitive Accumulation, Governmentality and Post Colonial Capitalism” explored the expansion of the informal economy in post-colonial India. the study revealed that capitalist urban development creates a large surplus labour population that cannot be absorbed into the formal economy. As a result, informal employment becomes a survival mechanism for economically marginalized groups. The workers remains excluded from the benefits of economic growth despite contributing significantly to urban economies. The study provided an important theoretical understanding of informal labour and urban inequality in India.

Chetia (2017) in his study titled “Migration and Urban Informal Sector Workers in Assam: A Case Study in Jorhat District” explored the relationship between migration and informal employment in the urban areas of Assam by focusing on the experiences of migrant workers who moved from rural regions in search of livelihood opportunities. The findings revealed that persistent rural poverty, unemployment, agricultural instability and limited access to income sources acted as major push factors encouraging migration towards urban centers. The study also found that migrants frequently lived in overcrowded settlements with inadequate housing, sanitation and access to basic services which further intensified their economic condition. It therefore emphasized that rapid urbanization in Assam has increased dependence on informal labour while failing to ensure social protection and dignified living conditions for workers.

Hira (2025) in her study titled “Trend and Variation in the Supply of the Construction Workers in the Urban Housing Sector of Assam, India” examined the evolving trends in labor supply within the growing urban housing and construction sector in Assam. It emphasized the impact of urbanization, infrastructure development and the rising demand of both residential and commercial construction on the employment of construction workers in Assam’s urban regions. The study uncovered variations in labor supply, as numerous workers migrated seasonally or transitioned between different occupations based on wage availability and job opportunities. Consequently, this led to instability in the construction labor market. Therefore, the study stressed on the urgent need for stronger government intervention through labor welfare schemes , skill training programmes, employment security measures and effective implementation of labour laws.

Kundu (1999) in his study titled “Urban Informal Sector in India: Macro Trends and Policy Perspectives” explored the growth of the informal sector in India within the broader process of urbanization and economic liberalization. The study indicated that economic liberalization enhanced flexibility in the labor market, yet it decreased secure job opportunities. An increasing number of urban workers became reliant on informal jobs due to the inability of formal industries to accommodate the growing labor force. The findings revealed that informal workers played a crucial role in urban economies by engaging in small enterprises, casual work and other activities. However, they continued to be marginalized from welfare programs and labor rights. The study concluded by highlighting that urbanization in India has led to a rise in labour informalization and socio-economic disparities and emphasized the necessity for urban policy to incorporate welfare, housing assistance and job security for informal workers.

Bhuyan (2013) in her study titled “An Urban-Spatial Analysis of the Women in Informal Sectors of Greater Guwahati City of Assam, Assam” examined women’s engagement in informal employment throughout Guwahati from an urban-spatial and feminist viewpoint. It explored the various ways in which women are involved in informal economic activities such as domestic work, food preparation, street vending, construction work and so on. The findings revealed that women working informally were located in central business districts where economic demand was at its peak. Despite facing numerous challenges, women workers made significant contributions to urban economic activities. The study concluded by highlighting that women engaged in informal sector are a vital component of Guwahati’s urban economy and it is necessary for introducing gender-sensitive urban development policies that incorporate informal workers into the city planning framework.

Sharma and Nath (2021) in their study titled “Migrant Workers in the Informal Sector in Guwahati” explored the relationship between rural-urban migration and the development of the informal sector in

Guwahati, Assam. The findings indicated that 90% of the workforce in Guwahati is linked to informal sector. It uncovered that migrant workers faced substandard employment conditions and socio-economic instability. Additionally, the study identified notable gender disparities in wages, with female workers receiving lower pay than male workers. It highlighted that economic growth and urban development in Guwahati occur alongside labor vulnerability, inequality and social exclusion. The study concluded by highlighting the need for improved execution of social security provisions and inclusive urban planning strategies to improve the conditions of the migrant workers in Guwahati.

Research gap

Despite extensive research on informal labour and urban issues in India, a significant gap persists in comprehending how urban growth is sustained by the labor of workers who remain socially, economically and widely overlooked. In Guwahati, existing studies have concentrated on urban development, migration or on informal employment as a general economic category. However, these studies have not critically addressed the paradox that the city's growth and everyday functioning are dependent on workers who are excluded from recognition, planning and protection. Studies rarely explore invisibility not merely as lack of visibility in public spaces but as a structural condition resulting from inadequate labor policies, exclusionary urban planning and unequal development processes. Therefore, the present study aims to bridge the gap by analyzing informal workers as key players in shaping urban economy of Guwahati, while they continue to be marginalized in the context of urban growth and modernization.

3.0 Methodology

Objectives of the study

1. To examine the socio-economic conditions of the informal workers in Guwahati, Assam.
2. To study the impact of urbanisation on the livelihood patterns, migration, living conditions and occupational vulnerabilities of the informal workers.
3. To evaluate the extent of access to government welfare schemes, labour rights and social security benefits among workers in the informal sector.

Research Questions

1. How has urbanisation influenced the livelihood patterns, migration trends, living conditions and occupational vulnerabilities of informal workers in Guwahati?
2. What are the socio-economic conditions of the informal workers in Guwahati?
3. To what extent do informal workers in Guwahati have access to government welfare schemes, labour rights and social security benefits?

Research design

The study adopted descriptive research design as the study focuses on describing and analyzing the socio-economic conditions and everyday experiences of informal workers in Guwahati, Assam. The study attempted to analyse different dimensions of informal labour and examined how rapid urbanisation in Guwahati has increased dependence on Informal labour while simultaneously exposing workers to insecurity, exploitation and social exclusion.

Study Area

The study was conducted in Guwahati, Assam, which is the largest urban centre of Northeast India. The city serves as a significant center for commercial, administrative and transportation hub, drawing in

migrant and low-income workers from various parts of Assam and neighboring regions. Substantial section of the urban workforce in Guwahati are engaged in informal occupations that are characterized by irregular employment, low wages and lack of social protection.

Universe of the Study

The universe of the study consists of informal workers engaged in different occupations within Guwahati. The study includes workers in sectors such as: construction work, street vending, daily wage labour and sanitation and waste collection. These occupational groups were selected because they represent some of the most visible yet economically vulnerable sections of the urban informal workforce in Guwahati.

Sampling Method

The study adopted purposive sampling method as it allowed the researcher to specifically select respondents whose experiences and working conditions reflect the realities of informal labour in Guwahati. Since informal workers are scattered across different urban locations and many are not officially registered, this method allowed the researcher in selecting respondents who could provide detailed and relevant informal regarding their socio-economic conditions and occupational experiences.

Sample Size

The study consists of sample size 50 selected from different categories of informal workers in Guwahati city. The respondents were chosen from occupation such as construction workers, street vendors, daily wage labourers and sanitation and waste workers.

The respondents included both male and female workers belonging to different age groups.

Sources of Data

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data

Primary Data: Primary data was collected from informal workers through field investigation. Information regarding their background and experiences was collected from the respondents. Direct interaction with the workers allowed the researcher to gather first-hand information regarding labour insecurity, exploitation, and urban exclusion and livelihood challenges faced by workers in the informal sector.

Secondary data: Secondary data was collected from various articles, census reports, books, newspapers and policy documents. It provided theoretical and conceptual understanding regarding the growth of the informal sector, migration, urban labour markets and socio-economic inequalities and allowed the researcher in analyzing broader relationship between urban development and informal employment in Assam and India.

Method of Data collection

The study adopted interview method for collecting primary data. A structured interview schedule was prepared to gather information from the respondents and allowed the researcher to establish rapport with respondents and gain deeper understanding of their socio-economic realities. The schedule included both open and close ended questions and enabled comparison among respondents belonging to different categories of informal labour.

Additionally, the study adopted focused-group discussion method to obtain collective perspectives and shared experiences of informal workers. This method allowed the researcher to understand common problems faced by these workers and encouraged the participants to discuss their experiences openly and interact with one another.

4.0 Data Analysis and findings

Table 1. Age Distribution

Age group	Number of Respondents	Percentage
18-25	08	16%
26-35	18	36%
36-45	14	28%
46-55	07	14%
55 and above	03	06%
Total	50	100

Table 1 indicates that the informal sector in Guwahati is primarily dependent on the working-age population, particularly ages between 26-45 years old. Respondents within the age group of 26-35 constitute the largest share at 36%, followed by those between 36-45 years accounting for 28%. This demonstrates that urban informal occupations rely on individuals who engage in physically demanding and insecure forms of labour for livelihood and survival. The smaller portion of the workers suggests that the physically intensive nature of occupations becomes difficult to sustain with increasing age. The findings indicates that urban growth in Guwahati is supported by workers in their productive years who remain employed without social security protections.

Table 2 Occupational Distribution

Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Construction	15	30%
Street vending	14	28%
Daily wage labourers	11	22%
Waste and sanitation	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Table 2 shows that urban economic growth in Guwahati is sustained through diverse forms of informal labour that remains economically essential yet socially vulnerable. Construction workers constitute the largest occupational group with 30% of the respondents, reflecting the rapid expansion of infrastructure, commercial buildings and urban development activities within the city. Street vendors account for 28% of the respondents and play a crucial role in sustaining the everyday urban economy, while daily wage labourers representing 22% who provide flexible labour required for temporary and fluctuating economic activities. Waste and sanitation workers accounting for 20% perform essential functions related to urban cleanliness, waste management and public health.

The findings demonstrate that different dimensions of urban growth depend upon different forms of invisible labour. The occupational structure reflects the broader process of labour informalization in which urban development increasingly relies upon low-paid, insecure and regulated labour.

Table 3 Migration Status

Migration status	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Migrants from rural areas	32	64%

Urban residents	18	36%
Total	50	100%

Table 3 reveals that a majority of the respondents, accounting for 64% are migrants from rural areas, while only 36% are permanent urban residents. The informal economy in the city is highly dependent on these workers and at the same time the high proportion of migrant labourers also reflects the limited employment opportunities and economic challenges in rural areas.

The findings suggest that urbanization in Guwahati is closely connected with uneven regional development, where economic distress in rural areas pushes the workers into urban informal labour markets. These workers therefore becomes central to the city's economic expansion while simultaneously remaining socially and economically marginalized.

Table 4. Reasons for Entering Informal Work

Reasons	Number of respondents	Percentage
Poverty	15	30%
Lack of education and skills	10	20%/
Unemployment in Rural areas	12	24%
Better opportunities	08	16%
Absence of formal job opportunities	05	10%
Total	50	100%

Table 4 shows that poverty is the main reason for entering informal employment, as reported by 30% of the respondents. This is followed by unemployment in rural areas accounting for 24%, which indicates that the lack of stable livelihood opportunities in villages forces many individuals to migrate to urban areas for work. About 20% of the respondents identified lack of education and skills as a major factor limiting their access to formal employment. Meanwhile, 16% joined the informal sector in search of better opportunities and 10% pointed to the absence of formal job opportunities.

The findings suggests that entry into informal labour is largely shaped by structural economic conditions rather than individual choice. Workers are compelled to engage in insecure and low paying jobs due to poverty, unemployment and exclusion from formal labour markets. The expansion reflects the inability of formal urban economies to absorb the growing labour force despite rapid urban growth and commercialization. Informal labour therefore becomes a survival mechanism for economically marginalized populations.

Table 5. Monthly Income of the respondents

Monthly Income	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Below Rs. 8000	11	22%
Rs. 8000-12000	19	38%
Rs.12000-16000	12	24%
Rs 16000 and above	08	16%
Total	50	100%

Table 5 indicates that the majority of respondents, accounting for 38% , earn a monthly income between Rs. 8000-12000, reflecting the low and unstable earning conditions prevalent in the informal sector. About 24% of the respondents earn between Rs. 12000-16000, while 22% earn below Rs. 8000, highlighting the financial vulnerability of a significant section of workers. Only 16% of the respondents reported earning Rs. 16000 and above per month.

The findings reveal that most of the informal workers survive on limited incomes that are often insufficient to meet rising urban living expenses, thereby contributing to economic insecurity and poor living conditions. the economic benefits of urbanization remain unevenly distributed.

Table 6. Housing conditions

Type of House	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Kachha house	18	36%
Pucca house	08	16%
Dormitories	24	48%
Total	50	100%

Table 6 shows that 48% of the respondents live in dormitories, indicating that a large number of informal workers, depend on temporary and shared accommodation facilities in urban areas. About 36% of the respondents reside in Kachha houses, reflecting poor living conditions and limited access to adequate housing infrastructure. Only 16% live in Pucca houses, suggesting that a very small section of workers have stable and secure living conditions.

The findings reveal that despite contributing significantly to the city's development, these workers continue to remain excluded from adequate housing facilities and secure living environments. The urban growth in Guwahati has expanded economic opportunities but while reproducing unequal living conditions and spatial exclusion among informal workers.

Table 7. Occupational problems faced

Occupational problems	Number of respondents	Percentage
Low and Irregular wages	11	22%
Job insecurity	09	18%
Unsafe working conditions	08	16%
Long working hours	07	14%
Lack of proper housing and sanitation	08	16%
Health problems	07	14%
Total	50	100%

Table 7 indicates several occupational challenges associated with informal employment in Guwahati. Low and irregular wages emerged as the most common problem reported by 22% of the respondents, making it difficult for workers to maintain stable livelihoods. Job insecurity was another major issue accounting for 18% because most workers lacked formal employment. Unsafe working conditions and lack of proper housing and sanitation facilities were reported by 16% of the respondents, while long-working hours and health-related problems accounted for 14% each. The occupational challenges

highlight the structural insecurity associated with informal labour. Construction workers face physical risks due to unsafe construction sites and lack of protective equipment, while waste and sanitation workers experience exposure to pollution, hazardous waste and occupational diseases. Street vendors encounter eviction threats and legal insecurity, whereas daily wage labourers remain vulnerable to irregular employment and sudden income loss.

The findings demonstrate that although the forms of vulnerability differ across occupations, all these four categories of workers experience exclusion from secure labour rights and social protection. Urban growth in Guwahati continues to rely upon economically yet highly insecure forms of labour.

Table 8. Access to Social Security benefits

Access to social security benefits	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	14	28%
No	36	72%
Total	100	100

Table 8 reveals that a majority of the respondents, accounting for 72%, do not have access to social security benefits. While only 28% reported receiving such benefits. This indicates the exclusion of most informal workers from welfare measures. The lack of social security coverage increases the vulnerability of workers to financial insecurity, health risks and employment instability.

The findings reveal a major contradiction within the process of urban development in Guwahati, where the city's expansion and growth majorly depends upon informal laborers but at the same time neglecting the welfare and security of the workers sustaining it.

5.0 Conclusion and Suggestions

The process of urbanization in Guwahati has significantly supported by the labor of workers who are economically vital yet socially and institutionally marginalized. On one hand, the city showcases evident signs of development and economic growth, while on the other hand, the workers continue to face exclusion from its advantages. Informal workers frequently live in substandard conditions with restricted access to sanitation, healthcare, housing and social security. Their contributions largely go unnoticed within prevailing narratives of urban advancement, despite their crucial role in the city's development.

A critical understanding from this study is that informal labour should not be viewed as a temporary or peripheral aspect of urbanization, but rather an integral component of the city's economic structure. Sustainable and inclusive urban development cannot be measured by physical infrastructure, commercial growth or economic metrics. True urban advancement necessitates acknowledgment of the human labor that supports the city and the formulation of policies that safeguard the dignity, rights and livelihoods of workers engaged in the informal economy. Consequently, addressing the realities of informal labor is crucial not only for social justice but also for attaining balanced and equitable urban development in Guwahati.

Suggestions

- It is important to incorporate informal workers into municipal decision making processes through labor representation council. Urban planning policies are formulated without engaging the workers who are directly impacted by them. By allowing them to participate in discussions, it would

guarantee that the urban policies are more inclusive, practical and socially equitable, while diminishing the invisibility of informal workers within governance framework.

- The introduction for emergency income protection schemes for informal workers during crisis such as floods or pandemics is important. This form of protection would mitigate economic instability and help prevent workers from falling into poverty during unforeseen emergencies.
- Additionally, it is essential to incorporate affordable housing options for urban informal workers within urban planning initiatives. Urban development strategies should prioritize this to ensure the workers living conditions and foster more resilient urban communities.
- Welfare schemes aimed for informal workers need to be enhanced in effectiveness, comprehensiveness and legal enforceability to ensure they offer genuine protection instead of being confined to mere policy documents. Effective implementation and strict monitoring are crucial to convert welfare programs from symbolic policies into meaningful tools for social and economic justice for informal labourers.

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