

## **A Study of Urban Poverty in Mizoram With Special Reference to Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) Area**

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### ***Abstract***

*Urban poverty is a multidimensional phenomenon. The urban poor live with many deprivations and exceptions that need to be addressed with appropriate policy having a vibrant monitoring system for their effective implementation. We are living in the era of 'urban century' where urban areas now support most of the world's economy and more than half of its population including Mizoram where fifty-two per cent of its population lives in urban area. This article briefly dealt with the recent status of urban poverty in India and Mizoram as a whole and presents the current scenario of poverty levels within Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) area, using a baseline survey of Below Poverty Line (BPL) data 2016, conducted by Mizoram Statistical Development Agency (MSDA), Directorate of Economics and Statistic. The survey revealed that the percentage of urban poverty is steadily declining. To further reduce urban poverty, it is suggested that the competent authority should give more power and responsibility to the city administration, private agencies, NGOs and community organisations without overlooking the role of the state.*

**Keywords:** AMC, BPL, urban poverty, urbanisation, deprivation, multidimensional.

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## **Introduction**

With three million people moving into cities every week (*International Organization for Migration 2015 - Anadolu Agency*), managing urban growth is one of the most important development challenges facing the world today and India is no exception. The urban poor live with many deprivations and the multi-dimensional nature of Urban poverty is usually characterised by Inadequate household income resulting in inadequate consumption of basic necessities, limited asset base for individuals, households or communities, inadequate provision of 'public' infrastructure and services like clean drinking water, electricity, sanitation, drainage, health care, schools, emergency services, etc.

The world's population living in urban areas has tripled since 1950. It is expected that by 2025, about sixty per cent of humanity will live in large cities. By the year 2050, 70 per cent of the world's population will be urban, the majority of which will be contributed by Asia. In an effort to create a global framework to guide sustainable urbanization for the next twenty years, national governments adopted The New Urban Agenda during The United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III), held in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016 (*Urban Perspectives: A New Generation of Ideas 2017*). The world is steadily becoming more urban, as people move to cities and towns in search of employment, educational opportunities and higher standard of living. The World Bank forecasts that 702.1 million people in 2015, down from 1.75 billion in 1990 out of 7 billion people in the world lives below poverty line (*Global Monitoring Report; Development Goals in an Era of Demographic*

Change 2017 –World Bank). Between 1990 and 2015, the percentage of the world's population living in extreme poverty fell from 37.1% to 9.6%, falling below 10% for the first time (The World Bank- Poverty Forecasts 2015) using a poverty line of \$1.25 a day.

Urbanization is one of the important realities of recent decades in India. Its urban system consists of 7,933 cities and towns of different population size, and a population of 377.16 million (Census 2011), the second largest in the world (India Habitat III, National Report 2016). An estimated 180 million rural people live next to India's 70 largest urban centers, a number that will increase to about 210 million by 2030 (McKinsey Global Institute, 2010). Despite an impressive economic growth, Poverty is still rampant in India. An estimated 300 million people are still living below the poverty line. The urban population of India increased from 60 million in 1973 to 64.6 million in 1977, 70.9 million in 1983, 75.2 million in 1987, 76.3 million in 1993, and in 1999 it had risen to 77.2 million and at the turn of the millennium, 305 million Indians lived in nearly 3,700 towns and cities spread across the length and breadth of the country. According to provisional census 2011 more than 377 million are living in urban areas. This comprises 31.16 % of its population in sharp contrast to only 60 million (15%) who lived in urban areas in 1947 when the country became Independent. By 2050 over 50% of the population is expected to be in urban centres. Though declining at an impressive rate, urban poverty has a serious impact on economic growth in developing countries including India. As such, it is a must for the government of every country to enquire these problems and find out ways and means to tackle these problems

as soon as possible so that the economic benefits of cities could be best trickled down to the poorer and backward regions of the country.

### **Poverty Measurement Criteria**

Below Poverty Line is an economic benchmark used by the Government of India to indicate economic disadvantage and identify individuals and households in need of government assistance and aid. It is determined using various parameters which vary from state to state and within states. Urban poverty is usually defined in two ways: (i) as an absolute standard based on a minimum amount of income needed to sustain a healthy and minimally comfortable life, and (ii) as a relative standard that is set based on average standard of living in a nation (McDonald & McMillen, 2008, p.397).

Internationally, an income of less than \$1.90 per day per head of purchasing power parity is defined as Poverty Line. By this estimate, about 21.2% of Indians are extremely poor. As per the 2011 census, of the 17.73 lakh homeless in the country, around 10 lakhs are in urban areas in India. Unreleased data from the first urban Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC), tabulated as per criteria laid down by the erstwhile Planning Commission's expert Hashim committee, shows that roughly 35 per cent of urban Indian households live below poverty line (BPL). This amounts to 22 million households of the total 63 million households surveyed in 4,041 statutory cities and towns across the country.

As per the methodology of the Suresh Tendulkar Committee report, the population below the poverty line in India in 2011-2012 was 269 million (21.9%

of the population) whereas the Rangarajan Committee estimates that the level of poverty in 2011-2012 was 363 million (29.5% of the population). In 2015, around 170 million people, or 12.4%, lived in poverty (defined as \$1.90 (Rs 123.5), a reduction from 29.8% in 2009. The Saxena Committee report, using data from 1972 to 2000, separated calorific intake apart from nominal income in its economic analysis of poverty in India stated that 50% of Indians lived below the poverty line. The Planning Commission of India, in contrast, determined that the poverty rate was 39%. The Suresh Tendulkar Committee that calculates the poverty line based on per capita consumption expenditure per month or day ( Rs 816 per month or Rs 27 per day for rural and Rs 1000 per month or Rs 33 per day for urban areas ) estimates that the population below the poverty line in 2009-2010 was 354 million (29.6% of the population) and that in 2011-2012 was 269 million (21.9% of the population) (Poverty Estimates for 2009-10, Government of India). In its annual report of 2012, the Reserve Bank of India named the state of Goa as having the least poverty of 5.09% while the national average stood at 21.92% (Reserve Bank of India, 2012) .The same report shows that urban poverty in Mizoram is 6.36 % against the national level of 13.7%.

#### **Urbanisation in Mizoram: The emergence of Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) :**

Mizoram is the second most urbanised state in India with 52.11 percent of its population living in urban areas having 53 designated towns and cities according to 2011 census. Out of a total population of 10,97,206, the number of people living in urban areas is 5,71,771 of which 2,86,204 are males and 2,85,567 are females.

Aizawl, the capital of the state has a population of 2,93,416 thereby contributing 51.31 per cent of the total urban population of the state. Urban population in the state has increased by 52.11 per cent in the last 10 years. Sex ratio in urban regions of Mizoram is 998 females per 1000 males. For child (0-6) sex ratio, the figure for urban region stood at 974 girls per 1000 boys. Average literacy rate in Mizoram for urban region is 97.63 per cent in which male literacy is 97.98% while female literacy stood at 97.02%. According to 2011 census, the total literates in urban region of Mizoram is 4,84,841. Urban poverty is estimated to be 13.70% using the World Bank criteria of \$1.25 dollars per day for the year 2012.

Lack of employment opportunities, increase in cost of living, rapid urbanisation coupled with price rise seems to be the main driver pushing more people towards poverty in Mizoram's capital Aizawl during the past years. The statistical handbook of Mizoram 2010 has revealed that the number of families below poverty line in the district capitals has increased during the fiscals 2008-09 to 2010-11. According to the survey, there were 25,389 BPL families in 2008-2009 which rose to 26,571 families in 2009-2010, an increase by 7445 families. In terms of individuals, there were 1,11,863 people below poverty line in 2008-2009 which increased to 1,16,353 people in 2009-2010.

In order to speed up the pace of development and remove poverty from the face of Aizawl area, the Government of Mizoram introduced *The Mizoram Municipalities Act, 2007* on April 20,2007 through which the Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC) was born. The AMC, which starts functioning from July 1, 2008 at its

office at Thuampui Veng, Aizawl, consist of 19 elected members representing 19 Wards of the city of Aizawl (Chhetri, May,2010). One-thirds (i.e.6) of the total membership is reserved for women which are rotated every five years. The tenure of the council is five years. The council office is headed by Chief Executive Officer. After attaining the estimated mark of three lakhs population, AMC has now become Aizawl Municipal Corporation since 15<sup>th</sup> October 2015. CT Zakhuma (INC) was the first chairman of AMC and on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015, PC Lalhmingthanga (MNF) was sworn in as the first Mayor of AMC with Mr. Lalringliana acting as the Deputy Mayor. Currently, there are 82 Local Councils within Aizawl Municipal Area with 1,92,365 voters in it as of November 2015 (Directorate of Information and Public Relation, Government of Mizoram 2015). Mizo National Front (MNF) which scored 11 seats in the last election to the AMC is running the municipality.

### **Slum Pockets in Aizawl: A Hard Reality**

A slum is a highly populated urban residential area consisting mostly of closely-packed, decrepit housing units in a situation of deteriorated or uncompleted infrastructure, inhabited primarily by impoverished persons (UN-Habitat, Kenya, 2007). While slums differ in size and other characteristics, most lack reliable sanitation services, supply of clean water, reliable electricity, law enforcement and other basic services.

In Aizawl city alone, there are over seventy-eight thousand people living in state's version of slum areas. In Mizoram, they are officially called 'slum pockets', a term coined by the state government in the year 2006 to identify them so that special attention can be given to

them (Slum Area in Aizawl,2014). However, these slum pockets are quite different from those in the mainland areas in the sense that they are designated in order to get funding from Central Government Schemes and Asian Development Bank. Presently, there are 73 such designated 'slum pockets' within AMC area covering 52 Local Councils with a combined population of 78,561 (Vanglaini Daily Newspaper, 2014). It is quite surprising to learn that despite being the second most literate district in India, and perhaps the most literate urban centres in India, Aizawl host the largest percentage of slum population among the North Eastern states with a slum household of 15,987 in which population of 78,561 resides. This is around 26.77% of total population of Aizawl city and 7.16% of the total population of the state (Indian Slums -Census2011). There are 13.92 million slum families in India with a population of 65.49 million which is 5.41% of the total population indicating that AMC has a larger percentage of slum dwellers than the national average. A brief highlight of slum population is given in Table.1.

**Table 1: Population and Households of North-East India**

<b>State</b>	<b>Slum Household</b>	<b>Slum Population</b>	<b>Slum Per cent (%)</b>
Assam	42,533	1,97,266	0.63%
Tripura	34,143	1,39,780	3.80%
Nagaland	17,152	82,324	4.16%
Mizoram	15,987	78,561	7.16%
Meghalaya	10,518	57,418	1.94%
Arunachal Pradesh	3,479	15,562	1.12%
India	1,39,20,191	6,54,94,604	5.41%

*Source from : Census of India, 2011*

### **Measuring Below Poverty Line (BPL) in AMC: The Methodology**

Establishing an appropriate poverty line to monitor changes in poverty is very difficult. As such, one of the most challenging tasks facing the government of Mizoram is identifying the urban poor, i.e, the individuals and households who are in need of government assistance and aid. However, depending upon the methods used and criteria applied, the number and percentage of people living under the ambit of poverty line can vary significantly. Poverty line is determined using various parameters which vary from state to state and within states.

In its Tenth Five-Year Plan, BPL for urban areas in India was based on degree of deprivation in respect of seven parameters: roof, floor, water, sanitation, education level, type of employment, and status of children in a house. A total of 1,25,000 upper families were identified as BPL in urban area in 2004. It has been implemented since then. The criterion used in this article is based on a survey conducted in 2016 by Mizoram Statistical Development Agency (MSDA) which is the implementing agency of Indian Statistical Strengthening Project (ISSP), under the Directorate of Economics & Statistics, Government of Mizoram. This survey was conducted in order to have a unified and rationalised BPL list of the state for used by different government agencies against the present practice where different government departments have different BPL list that proves to be a cause of embarrassment on the part of the state government in general and the responsible agency of the government in particular (Mizoram Population-Census 2011).

The MSDA has identified the urban poor through a four -step process, the first three of which is recommended by the Hashim Panel (Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation 2014). In the first stage, households are automatically excluded if they live in a concrete house, have an AC, four-wheeler or computer with internet or possess any three of the four assets such as refrigerator, landline phone, washing machine or two-wheeler. In the second stage, all those families are automatically included as poor if they face vulnerability due to - residential, occupational or social factors such as homelessness, thatched house or a *kaacha* house with single room, house using plastic or polythene as walls: disability or being employed as domestic or sanitation workers, family with no source of income, the family head is an under-aged children etc., among other criteria.

In the third stage, households are ranked on a scoring index of 0 to 12 based on various factors where 12 is the most vulnerable. Families that scores at least one mark in each of the three indices under stage three are eligible for BPL. The Hashim panel has suggested that those households scoring in between 4 to 12 should be added to the automatically included category and these together would comprise the urban BPL group. The fourth stage concerns about measuring poverty based on Monthly Per Capita Expenditure (MPCE) which is set at Rs 2,100 in urban areas and Rs 1,800 in rural areas. It implies that even if an individual or family qualifies in the first three criteria, but if his monthly expenditure is more than Rs 2100 (around Rs 70 per day), then he will be automatically excluded from the BPL list.

## Results and Discussions

Using the above parameters, a survey is conducted in the whole state covering all villages. A total of 3,80,724 households are being thoroughly surveyed out of which as many as 51,391 families are categorised as BPL which is 18.31% of the total families of the state. The survey also shows that there are 2,29,450 families who belong to Above Poverty Line (APL) in the state. District-wise, Mamit district with 35.64% has the highest percentage of BPL in the state; followed by Siaha district and Lunglei district with a BPL per cent of 31.64 and 30.10 respectively.

Aizawl district with 8.76% has the lowest percentage of BPL in the state followed by Champhai district with 9.35%. In terms of absolute number, Serchhip district with 1770 BPL families has the lowest number of BPL households in the state followed by Champhai with 2715 families living below poverty line. Lawngtlai district has the highest number of BPL families with 13,162 followed by Lunglei district with 11,437 families belonging to BPL.

**Table 2 : District Wise Abstract of BPL**

Sl.No	Name of District	Total Household	Number Household	Percentage
1	Mamit	20163	7186	35.64
2	Kolasib	19359	3401	17.5
3	Aizawl	85312	7475	8.76
4	Serchhip	13841	1770	12.79
5	Champhai	29043	2715	9.35
6	Lunglei	37997	11437	30.1
7	Lawngtlai	61593	13162	21.37
8	Siaha	13416	4245	31.64
9	Mizoram	280724	51391	18.31

*Source from: BPL baseline survey 2016 (provisional); Mizoram Statistical Development Agency.*

As mentioned earlier, the total number of households surveyed in Aizawl district is 85,312 and covers 178 villages. Out of these, as many as 7,475 households belong to BPL which is 8.76% of the total households. Within AMC area, there are 82 Local Councils comprising 65,546 households indicating that AMC alone accounts for 76.83% of the entire household in Aizawl district and 23.35 % of the total household in the state. Out of these 65,546 families, 4,232 household belongs to BPL which amounts to 6.46% BPL. Therefore, BPL within AMC stands at 6.46% using the four-stage criteria set out by the Mizoram Statistical Development Agency (MSDA).

Out of 82 Local Councils, Tlangnuam Vengthar local council has the highest percentage of BPL with 168 out of 380 households living below poverty line which is 44.21% of the total households in that locality. The second spot is occupied by Chawlhmun area with 196 BPL out of 692 households (28.32%), followed closely by Lawipu Area with 27.37% BPL. In areas like Kanan, Chanmari West, Armed Veng, Venghnuai, Electric Veng, ITI, Dawrpui Vengthar, Chhinga Veng, etc., the number of BPL family is almost non-existence. Zarkawt and Tuikhuahtlang Local Council does not have any BPL family indicating equitable distribution of wealth in these two Local Council areas. Ten Local Councils has BPL percentage above 20%, six Local Councils have BPL percentage between 10% to 20%, seventeen Local Councils have a BPL percentage between 5% to 10%, the majority areas have a BPL household of less than 5%. It is also worth noting that AMC area has 4,232 BPL households out of 7,475 BPL household within Aizawl district thereby contributing 57% of BPL households in Aizawl district.

**Table, 3 :BPL in Aizawl Municipal Corporation Area**

<b>Sl. No.</b>	<b>Village/Veng</b>	<b>Total Household</b>	<b>BPL</b>	<b>Percentage of BPL Households</b>
1	Aizawl Venglai	551	24	4.36
2	Armed Veng	900	1	0.11
3	Armed Veng South	1028	12	1.17
4	Bawngkawn	2286	32	1.4
5	Bawngkawn South	562	8	1.42
6	Bethlehem	1115	102	9.15
7	Bethlehem Vengthlang	1564	252	16.11
8	Bungkawn	1132	54	4.77
9	Bungkawn Vengthar	618	38	6.15
10	Chaltlang	2222	20	0.9
11	Chaltlang North	713	9	1.26
12	Chanmari West	1350	3	0.22
13	Chawlhmun	692	196	28.32
14	Chawnpui	1067	6	0.56
15	Chhinga Veng	1750	6	0.34
16	Chite	120	9	7.5
17	College Veng	641	62	9.67
18	Dam Veng	271	14	5.17
19	Dawrpui	728	7	0.96
20	Dawrpui Vengthar	920	4	0.43
21	Dinthar	1617	215	13.3
22	Durtlang	876	8	0.91
23	Durtlang North	426	2	0.47
24	Edenthar	991	88	8.88
25	Electric Veng	1247	3	0.24
26	Falkland Veng	437	3	0.69
27	Government Complex	524	52	9.92
28	Himen	652	49	7.52
29	Hunthar	811	10	1.23
30	ITI	1231	4	0.32

31	Kanan	815	1	0.12
32	Khatla	1168	11	0.94
33	Khatla East	361	32	8.86
34	Khatla South	491	20	4.07
35	Kulikawn	1200	160	13.33
36	Laipuitlang	415	5	1.2
37	Lawipu	179	49	27.37
38	Leitan	1064	223	20.96
39	Luangmual	716	3	0.42
40	Maubawk	847	223	26.33
41	Melthum	200	1	0.5
42	Mission Vengthlang	1030	44	4.27
43	Model Veng	347	2	0.58
44	Muanna Veng	251	12	5.16
45	Nursery Veng	613	135	22.02
46	Phunchawng	297	73	24.58
47	Ramhlun North	1343	136	10.13
48	Ramhlun South	1320	8	0.61
49	Ramhlun Sports Complex	246	10	4.06
50	Ramhlun Venglai	770	47	6.1
51	Ramhlun Vengthar	610	6	0.98
52	Ramthar	945	12	1.27
53	Ramthar North	387	5	1.29
54	Rangvamual	350	23	6.57
55	Republic Veng	936	13	1.39
56	Republic Vengthlang	618	3	0.49
57	Saikhama Kawn	366	29	7.92
58	Sakawrtuichhun	325	21	6.46
59	Salem	975	52	5.33
60	Saron Veng	801	7	0.87
61	Selesih	169	3	1.78
62	Tanhrii	593	158	26.64
63	Thakthing	249	15	6.024
64	Thuampui	986	242	24.54

65	Tiangnuam	702	27	3.85
66	Tiangnuam Vengthar	380	168	44.21
67	Tuikhuahtlang	473	0	0
68	Tuikual	0	0	0
69	Tuikual North	1018	5	0.49
70	Tuikual South	1125	168	14.93
71	Tuithiang	533	116	21.76
72	Tuivamit	500	24	4.8
73	Upper Republic	649	6	0.92
74	Vaivakawn	892	110	12.33
75	Venghloi	910	5	0.55
76	Venghnuai	435	1	0.23
77	Zarkawt	500	0	0
78	Zemabawk	2104	94	4.47
79	Zemabawk North	421	36	8.55
80	Zonuam	567	2	0.35
81	Zotlang	646	3	0.46
82	Zuangtui	871	12	1.38
83	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>65546</b>	<b>4232</b>	<b>6.46%</b>

*Source from: BPL baseline survey 2016 (provisional) ; Mizoram Statistical Development Agency.*

An important question regarding this low rate of BPL in AMC could well be addressed if we look into the criteria used in estimating BPL list in the first place. Unlike the mainstream measurement used by different committees and commissions, the Mizoram Statistical Development Agency (MSDA) laid down very strict criteria for identifying a uniform and reliable BPL list which would then be used by various government agencies in providing aids and assistance to the needy people. Depending upon the criteria used, this BPL list could very well vary significantly.

However, it may be wrong to categorise whoever is having television, fridge or washing machine as people living above poverty line in case of Mizoram as Mizo society is a close-knit society and helps each other in times of need. Even the rich and affluent people used to share their wealth to their neighbours and relatives at various places in the form of giving away their old TV, fridge, washing machine or sell them at a very low price. In this case, the recipient will become automatically excluded from the BPL list according to our criteria. But, in reality, their income and financial condition will not improve much due to possession of such items only. Besides, these items may well be purchased with their hard-earned money or through assistance from the government also. Under such circumstances, they will still need to be taken care-of by the government as before.

Here also, poverty is measured in terms of the population falling below income-based or consumption-based poverty lines. The result is that large sections of urban populations which official statistics classify as not being among the 'poor' still face serious deprivations. Relying on income-based poverty line to identify who are poor leads to large underestimates in the scale of urban poverty. One of the key characteristics of cities is that access to virtually everything is highly monetized – access to land, to building materials, to water, to a place to defecate, getting to and from work, child care and, often, even schools and health care. Where there is little public provision for basic infrastructure and services, costs can be particularly high. Underestimates of the scale of urban poverty are particularly high when it is made of an income-based poverty line that makes no allowances for differences in living costs between

countries. As such, the government needs to take utmost care while preparing the criteria and eligible list of people for categorizing the entire population as poor and non-poor.

### **Urban Poverty Alleviating Schemes**

With the introduction of Aizawl Municipal Corporation (AMC), the responsibility of tackling poverty lies heavily on government at the Council and the Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation (UD&PA) department of the state. The State's UD&PA department is one of the best performers in the country which has contributed a lot in addressing the menace of poverty in and around Aizawl city. Urban poverty alleviation schemes and initiatives introduced by the central government are promptly implemented in the state as soon as possible by the competent authority. A brief summary of major Urban poverty alleviation schemes affecting AMC are listed below:-

- a) Urban Reform Incentive Fund (URIF), 2002 that aims to eliminate systematic weakness so as to strengthen municipal finance and functioning.
- b) Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), 2005 that tries to eliminate structural and systematic weakness, create investment climate and improve local governance and finance.
- c) National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy (NUHHP), 2007 for providing affordable housing for all with emphasis on vulnerable sections of society.
- d) Rajiv Awas Yojana (RAY), 2011 that work towards slum-free cities via property tilting and security of tenure.

- e) National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM), 2013 for reducing poverty and vulnerability of urban poor households by providing them with access to employment opportunities.
- f) Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or Clean India Mission introduced on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2014, aims to clean up the streets, roads and infrastructure of India's cities, smaller towns, and rural areas.
- g) National Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY), launched on 21 January 2015 with the aim of bringing together urban planning, economic growth and heritage conservation in an inclusive manner to preserve the heritage character of each Heritage City.
- h) Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), launched on 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2015 for providing affordable housing to the urban poor. The government has identified 305 cities and towns including 8 towns from Mizoram have been identified in 9 states for beginning construction of houses for urban poor. In this aspect 20,000 new houses would be built in AMC area by 2022.
- i) "100 Smart Cities Mission" was launched on June 25, 2015. with an outlay of US\$15 billion for the development of 100 smart cities including Aizawl and rejuvenation of 500 others at the cost of US\$7.5 billion for the Smart Cities mission.
- j) Apart from all these, the exclusive development project pursued by government of Mizoram is it New Land Use Policy (NLUP) under which the Urban Development & Poverty Alleviation department has identified 10 trades including

automobile repairing, beauty parlour, desktop publishing, electronic repair, Video & Photography, etc. are implemented under UD & PA. 3108 beneficiaries have been covered so far. As per assessment of the department, 28% beneficiaries have increased their income 2 to 3 times. 67% of beneficiaries have depended fully on their income for their livelihood. Most of the beneficiaries who earn their livelihood as casual labour are promoted to self- supported family.

### **Conclusion**

Mizoram's evidence points to a substantial decline in poverty levels, especially in Aizawl Municipal Council (AMC) area. Focus should now be given to the few remaining deprived section so as to completely eliminate poverty from our urban centres and set a distinguished example for the rest of the country. It is highly recommended that the competent authority should give more power and responsibility to the city administration, private agencies, NGOs and community organisations, and provides adequate financial assistance to enable municipalities to take up the function effectively. Above all, the need of the hour is a dedicated political will, dynamic policy and their effective implementation along with harmonious cooperation among governments at the Central, State and Municipal bodies.

Depending upon the criteria used, it is possible that many people, who are classified as not being poor, may still face some form of deprivations and underestimation of the scale of poverty. As such, using the right methods that reflects the ground reality is quite important so as to

not waste public money on the wrong individuals and to focus on the rightful poor could be taken out of the clutches of poverty through government assistance. Over the past few years, the urban sector has received a major boost via the launch of new initiatives which aim at enhancing the quality of life and providing a clean environment, creating infrastructure, addressing the housing requirements of the poor and slum households, creating awareness about sanitation, strengthening rural-urban linkages. All these factors help in reducing the levels of poverty in urban areas and despite slow progress witnessed in some part of the country, there is no denial of the fact that urban-led economic growth of recent decades have had a decisive positive impact on the levels of urban poverty.

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