Urban informality is a process that governs urban transformation within a city and connects different economies and spaces to one another. This is a common scenario in most of the Indian cities. The fast paced growth of the Indian economy has produced cities that lack adequate infrastructure, have unplanned growth, weak management systems and a sharp social division within communities and spaces.

Informal and formal systems exist simultaneously in urban areas, especially in developing countries like India. It is the role of a planner to bring in right mix of economic policies and strategies, in order to co-exist informal and formal systems in harmony. The role of a planner in dealing with urban informality can be understood under 3 aspects. First, how do planning practices contribute to producing informality or a state of exception from the formal order of urbanization? Second, understanding the manner in which planners can strategically deal with informality, particularly to reduce some of the vulnerabilities of urban poor. Lastly, recognising the “right to city” while dealing with informality, that is being more considerate to access to resources rather than ownership of property and resources.

The city of Mirzapur has been selected as the case study to study ‘Informal aspects in a city’. The scope of the exercise includes understanding of the informal components of the city, their key characteristics, causative factors, their implications, and their interface with the formal components of the city. This had led to the identification of issues and therefore, the policy and strategy interventions. To give a brief overview of the report on ‘Informal Sector in Urban Development: Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh’, the report has been structured into nine chapters.

The study on ‘Informal Sector in Urban Development, Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh’ has been undertaken for two major reasons. First relates to the importance of informal sector in percentage share of total employment and their lack of recognition in economic contribution to state and national economy. Second, the city of Mirzapur has been selected due to its small size in terms of population which allows to conduct an in-depth study of informal sector in urban development for a city that has historically been associated with small scale industries employing large number of informal workers and child labour (For every one formal worker the city employs two informal workers).

The scope of study focuses on six aspects of a city, including informal shelter, informal economy, informal transport, informal social infrastructure, informal waste management and informal spaces. For informal shelter, the focus is given to slums and squatters and their environmental and living conditions. For informal economy, scope of work focuses on aspects of informal trade and commerce, informal workers engaged in the two sectors, child labour and their contribution to economy. For informal transport, focus is intermediate transport system, their coverage, capacities, accessibility and utility. As far as informal social infrastructure is concerned, education sector, health sector, safety and security, distributive services and other socio-cultural facilities. Similarly, the sector of waste management will focus on the working conditions of informal workers, the unorganized labour force and their operating conditions. Lastly the aspect of informal spaces focuses on derelict areas within the city, including disused areas, urban voids and community spaces, with particular emphasis on ghats of the city.