

Campaign on Street Vendors

Street vending as a profession has been in existence in India since time immemorial. Their number has increased manifold in recent years and due to COVID Pandemic. The street vendors play a crucial role. They provide fresh fruit – vegetables and other utilities to the people at large at reasonable rates and at their door step. They are the self-earners who earn their living without being a burden to the Government.

In India, it is estimated that 2 to 2.5 % of the population of the cities and towns are street vendors. According there are an estimated **50-60 lakh** (5 million to 6 million) street vendors in India, with the largest concentrations in the cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Ahmedabad. Most of them are migrants who typically work for 10–12 hours every day on average.

In India, it is seen that these street vendors congregate in one space according to the principle of demand and they are called as Natural Markets. SEWA was the first to coin the concept of Natural Markets after studying the behaviour of the street vendors members. Many of these Natural Market as Heritage Natural Market. We at SEWA believe that the natural markets have evolved organically according to the principle of demand and supply i.e. near the temples there are vendors selling incense stick, coconuts, flowers and other worship items and in residential areas there are vendors selling fresh fruits and vegetables.

The role played by Street vendors in the economy needs to be given due credit instead they are seen as obstruction, nuisance, and unlawful entities and are subjected to continuous harassment by Police and Civic Authorities. They are not protected by law and in rapidly moving economy street vendors though self-earners are seen as trouble. They are beaten, penalized, their wares and push cart overthrown or confiscated by the police and Local urban bodies. They lose their livelihood and income in process making them poorer and more vulnerable.

Moreover, developmental plans do not include street vendors or their natural markets thus disrupting their natural markets. The breaking of the natural markets causes great loss to the vendors. The street vendors can attract more customers when they vend in cluster and less when they stand individual because more variety and bargaining is available in cluster. It is seen that street vendors have incurred heavy debts when their natural markets were broken down.

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System Gaps:-

- The Police Act and Municipality Act in India have no provisions for Street Vending. According to these Acts any being or structure causing obstruction on the roads/ foot path can be removed.
- SEWA advocated hard and was successful in getting “The Street Vending (Protecting livelihood and Regulating Street Vending) Act 2014. Unfortunately, the Act is not implemented at the State Levels because in many states the State rules are not framed.

- The Town Vending Committee needs to be formed under the Act and State rules to regulate the street Vending but in most of the States Town Vending committee is not formed.
- In some States Provisional Town Vending Committee are formed there are no representatives of the street vendors union like us. Hence the street vendors issues are not heard/taken up effectively.
- There are multiple authorities regulating street vending like – Municipal Corporation (Urban Local Body) and Police. More over there are many departments of the Municipal Corporation involved like Estate Department, Health Department etc which do not act in synchronization. Same police department has two wings traffic and administrative, both evicts and penalize the street vendors making them more vulnerable.
- There is no coordination between police, local bodies regarding the regulation of street vending.
- The Urban Development Planners do not recognize street vendors and most of the development of the cities do not include street vendors or their natural markets.
- The Scheme for the Street vending needs to be prepared by the Town Vending committee. But in most of the cities they are not prepared.
- In few cities where the Schemes of street vending are prepared, the scheme are too general not considering the characteristics of the street vendors or their natural market like the main roads having 30 meters of road or above should be treated as no vending zone, 15 to 30 meters of roads the vendors can vend with prior permission of the municipal authorities and roads having less than 15 meters of width is free vending zone.
- There is a problem with 15 meters of road as they are lanes – children are playing, cars are parked and elderly are moving about and vendors and their push carts would create more chaos. It is not practical.
- In some cities in the schemes, it is proposed that the street vendors and their natural markets should be shifted to the outskirts of the city where there is no residential colonies and hence no demand
- Very recently, the Municipal Corporation has proposed to conduct the survey of the street vendors as per the provision of the Act. But neither the Street vendors have been informed nor their unions are informed. Lot of awareness needs to be created amongst the street vendors if the survey needs to be conducted. The advertisement/article in the newspaper will not suffice as the street vendors are illiterate or semi-illiterate
- Lastly the women street vendors face lots of sexual harassment in the natural markets.

Campaigns

Short Term Campaigns

1. Organising and building up their Collective Strength
 2. Formation of Street Natural Market Committees and develop their capacity to manage their own natural markets- dialogues with stakeholders, cleanliness and arranging street vendors.
 3. Ensuring Vending Licence from Municipal Authorities
 4. Ensuring Vending Spaces in participatory process with Police and Municipal Authorities.
- Making schematic plans of the natural market
 - Shifting Natural markets to the alternative open plot in nearby vicinity
 - Systematic arrangement of the street vendors

Long Term Campaign

- Implementation of “The Street Vending (Protection of Livelihood and Regulating Street Vending) 2014 in the States and Cities.
 1. Enactment of State Rules.
 2. Formation of Town Vending Committee and ensuring the representation of street vendors and their unions
 3. Framing of Schemes for Street Vendors in the cities for regulating their livelihood
 4. Conducting periodic surveys.