

WORKING LIFE OF STREET VENDORS IN MUMBAI

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Street vendors in Mumbai are among the most deprived sections of the self-employed workers. This paper tries to portray the 'working life' of street vendors in Mumbai. The working life of vendors is explained in terms of their financial conditions and the extent of indebtedness, the amount of bribes they have to pay in order to sustain themselves in the market, their working hours, the issues of public space utilisation, and the legal aspect of their activity. It has been seen from the study that their entire existence and nature of activities are extremely informal and are trust-based. The study is exploratory in nature and their situations have been explained with the help of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms. The study shows that the street vendors borrow from moneylenders not merely for their economic activity but also for social security purposes at an exorbitant rate of interest, which, in turn, leads them to fall into a debt-trap situation. It has been further found that they have extremely long working hours, which have been continuously increasing over the years. Further, they enjoy neither safety nor security at the work place as they face constant harassment from the local authorities. Hence, the current working hours of the vendors and the safety and security conditions in their workplace, together with extensive rent-seeking by local authorities, contribute to a deteriorating working environment as well as economic deprivation for street vendors.

I. INTRODUCTION

Street vendors are identified as self-employed workers in the informal sector who offer their labour to sell goods and services on the street without having any permanent built-up structure (National Policy on Urban Street Vendors [NPUSV], 2006, p. 11). Various studies have already confirmed the fact that street vendors comprise one of the most marginalised sections of the urban poor. Notwithstanding the fact that they play a very dynamic role in the urban economy, providing necessary items, which are largely both durable and cost-effective, to average income-earning households at cheap and affordable rates. In addition, they help many small-scale industries to flourish by marketing the products that they manufacture (Bhowmik, 2001; Tiwari, 2000). Thus, they help to sustain the urban economy to a great extent in terms of generation of employment and income, and provision of services to others. It has been estimated that around 30 per cent of the Mumbai workforce buys at least

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one meal a day from vendors (Bhowmik, 2001). Therefore, street vendors can be said to signify a viable solution to some of the problems of the poverty-stricken urban dwellers. It is computed from the Mumbai Human Development Report (MHDR) in 2009 that the total employment in Mumbai is 5.3 million (MHDR, 2009). It is also calculated that the total employment in the informal sector is 4.3 million (ibid.). The self-employed workers engaged in Mumbai number about 2 million, which accounts for 37 per cent of the total employment (ibid.). According to the Government of India, there are around 10 million vendors in India, of whom around 250,000 are in Mumbai (NPUSV, 2006). Thus, 12.5 per cent of the total self-employed population in the city is dependent for livelihood on street vending.

The important goals for the urban poor in the Eleventh Five Year Plan in India are to provide them with affordable shelter and “decent living and working conditions”; to make adequate provision of land for the poor; to help in developing “self-employment enterprises” and creating jobs for wage earners; and to protect the economic interests and safety of women and other vulnerable sections of our society (Planning Commission, 2008, p. 406). Hence, this study attempts to reveal the working life of both men and women street vendors on the road. In addition, it would also be an interesting exercise to assess the changes that have taken place in the profession of street vending as a whole in Mumbai after the study conducted on them by Bhowmik in 2001. During the ten years since the conduction of that study, the phenomena of globalisation, liberalisation, and privatisation have definitely led to an enormous change in street vending. It is thus important to explore the current working life of street vendors in terms of their income levels, access to finance, working hours, safety at the workplace, the bribes they are compelled to pay, and leisure time and other important aspects. In view of these discussions, the objectives of the present study are as follows:

1. To understand the working life of the street vendors (men and women) in terms of level of income, accessibility of finance and working hours;
2. To explore the issues concerning their working conditions and their rights at work; and
3. To understand the role of collective bargaining in formulating and realising their demands for basic rights at the workplace.

The present paper is organised as follows. The background of the study and the research objectives have been discussed in this introductory section. The methodology of the study is explained in Section II. This study is mainly based on a primary survey, and therefore, the socio-demographic and economic profiles of 400 individual street vendors are discussed. Their financial accessibility is also explored. The indebtedness of the street vendors is then analysed, and their working conditions in terms of safety and security at the workplace are discussed. Social network has an important role to play in street vending, which has been explained thereafter. The summary and concluding remarks are discussed in the last section.

II. METHODOLOGY

The unit of analysis of the present study is the individual street vendor in Mumbai. Static vendors, who have a specific space for their activity (though the space is not officially

recognised by the government) are participants in the present research. The city of Mumbai was selected because of its diversity in terms of ethnicity and economic activities. A survey for the study was conducted from May 2008 to February 2010. Mixed methods (Creswell, 2009) were used to draw a sample from the population and to analyse the data. In addition to a large-scale survey, some of the individual cases were developed on the basis of in-depth interviews and observations by using a qualitative paradigm.

A semi-structured questionnaire, based on the objectives of the study, was used (Bryman, 2009). Both closed and open-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. Since the study was exploratory in nature, open-ended questions were used to assist in exploring the current situation (ibid.). Personal interviews with 400 individual street vendors and group interviews were also conducted (ibid.). One group session was conducted with five to seven vendors in each study area. These sessions helped in achieving an understanding of the common issues. In-depth interviews were conducted with ten individual street vendors in order to understand and explore their current situation. Detailed interviews were also organised with five key respondents, who were involved in membership-based organisations, and they provided information on the role of these organisations with regard to collective action by street vendors in Mumbai. Such organisations are also in a position to make decisions for street vendors and represent them before higher authorities.

1. Sampling

For the purposes of the present study, four places (clusters), namely, Chembur, Dadar, Kandivali, and Vile Parle were chosen in Mumbai on the basis of the volume of street vendors from the records of the various trade unions. Since the total population of the each of the clusters was unknown, a 'quota' was fixed in order to draw a sample. During this stage, the quota of size had been fixed in each cluster (area) based upon the volume of trade in each area. There was a fixed sample of 125 respondents in Dadar. The areas of Chembur and Vile Parle had 100 sample respondents each, whereas 75 sample respondents were allocated in Kandivali. The number of street vendors in Dadar is larger, as compared to the other two selected places, due to a significantly larger population size in Dadar. Therefore, 400 sample respondents were drawn purposively from the aforementioned four areas. The study only dealt with seven types of vendors, including those selling cooked food, vegetables, garments, electronics goods, household utensils and leather made items. These seven types were chosen because they are the most visible in this retail market and account for a large share of the total vending process.

2. Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to analyse the primary data obtained from the 400 individual samples. Eight individual cases based on responses from individual vendors were developed in order to explore the current situation. In addition, three individual cases developed from five key respondents were also sourced from membership-based organisations in order to gain an understanding of the role of membership-based organisations with regard to the

street vendors in the study. These eleven cases were developed on the basis of in-depth interviews and field observations.

III. SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC AND ECONOMIC PROFILE OF THE STREET VENDORS

The following sections show the possible outcomes of the present study and the corresponding percentages for these outcomes, which are represented by values within parentheses. In the present section, the socio-demographic and economic profiles of the vendors based on primary data are explained.

1. Demographic and Social Profile

This study shows that street vending is a male-dominated occupation, but the proportion of the women vendors has been significantly increasing over the years (Bhowmik, 2001; Saha, 2010). The present study demonstrates that around 59 per cent of the vendors are men, while 41 per cent are women. In terms of religion, about 75 per cent of the total vendors are Hindus, 23 per cent are Muslims, and around 1 per cent are Christians (Table 1). In terms of caste composition, in this present study, about 61 per cent of the total vendors belong to the general castes, 30 per cent belong to the Scheduled Caste (SC) category, and around 1 per cent and 8 per cent belong to the categories of Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Other Backward Castes (OBCs), respectively (Table 1).

2. Educational Profile

The educational level among street vendors is generally low, as indicated in Table 1. Out of the total, around 20 per cent of vendors are illiterate, approximately 25 per cent can only sign their names, and about 22 per cent have acquired only primary level education. Of the total number of vendors, about 1 per cent comprise those who are graduates and above. They had come to Mumbai from rural areas in search of better-paid jobs in the formal sector, but opted for street vending because it is not only one of the easiest means of earning a living but also requires only a small financial input. Hence, these graduates have become street vendors.

It has been observed that a greater number of women vendors are illiterate and less educated than their male counterparts (see Table 1). They are also older than the male vendors, with around 31 per cent of the female vendors having being widowed. These women vendors carry out this occupation in order to support their families, and some of them are the sole income earners of their respective families. Table 1 shows that 37 per cent of the women vendors are aged above 59 years whereas 32 per cent of the male vendors are above 59 years. One of the women vendors stated that she has no option other than vending, as it requires less education and relatively marginal capital as compared to other occupations. This study also demonstrates that around 66 per cent of the vendors are migrants from different parts of India. Women vendors mainly migrate after their marriages and then try to help their husbands who are pursuing this profession. One of the women vendors candidly expressed the main reasons for the women joining their husbands in this profession, when she pointed

Table 1
Socio-demographic Profile

<i>Indicators</i>		<i>Gender</i>		
		<i>Female (%)</i>	<i>Male (%)</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>
Religion	Hindu	139 (84.76)	163 (69.07)	302 (75.50)
	Muslim	22 (13.41)	71 (30.08)	93 (23.25)
	Christian	3 (1.83)	2 (0.85)	5 (1.25)
	Total	164 (100)	236 (100)	400 (100)
Age Distribution (in years)	15-35	27 (16)	63 (27)	90 (23)
	35-59	77 (47)	105 (44)	182 (45)
	59-70	54 (33)	66 (28)	120 (30)
	70-80dd	6 (4)	2 (4)	8 (2)
	Total	164 (100)	236 (100)	400 (100)
Marital Status	Unmarried	11 (6.70)	28 (11.90)	39 (9.80)
	Married	103 (62.8)	203 (86.0)	306 (76.7)
	Widowed	50 (30.5)	5 (2.10)	55 (13.8)
	Total	164 (100)	236 (100)	400 (100)
Education Level	Illiterate	46 (28.05)	35 (14.83)	81 (20.25)
	Can Sign Only	42 (25.61)	56 (23.73)	98 (24.50)
	Primary	40 (24.39)	47 (19.92)	87 (21.75)
	Upper Primary	24 (14.63)	60 (25.42)	84 (21.00)
	Secondary	10 (6.10)	28 (11.86)	38 (9.50)
	Higher Secondary	2 (1.22)	8 (3.39)	10 (2.50)
	Graduate	0 (0)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.2)
	Above Graduate	0 (0)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.2)
	Total	164 (100)	236 (100)	400 (100)
	Caste Composition	General	96 (58.54)	148 (62.71)
SCs		48 (29.27)	73 (30.93)	121 (30.25)
STs		1 (0.6)	2 (0.85)	3 (0.75)
OBCs		19 (11.59)	13 (5.51)	32 (8.00)
Migration	Total	164 (100)	236 (100)	400 (100)
	Not Migrated	73 (44.51)	65 (27.54)	138 (34.50)
	Migrated	91 (55.49)	171 (72.46)	262 (65.50)
N=400	Total	164 (100)	236 (100)	400 (100)

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

out, “Sometimes we are forced to do vending. It is very difficult to sustain with the single earner because Mumbai is very expensive city.”

3. Income Level

The data on the daily income status of the respondents reveals some very essential details regarding their standard of living and the amount and daily expenditures that they can possibly make. Only 37 individuals (accounting for around 9.25 per cent of the respondents) had a meagre daily income ranging from Rs. 60 to Rs. 125. The daily income of a considerable portion of the sample respondents (43.50 per cent) was found to be Rs. 125-250. The total number of respondents in the next income trajectory (Rs. 250-500) amounted to 37 per cent. Only 9 per cent of the respondents had an income ranging between Rs. 500 and Rs. 1000.

Only 2 per cent of the respondents had the highest daily income, viz. Rs. 1000-1600. A comparison of the male–female share of the income status showed that out of a total number of 164 females, 30 (that is, 18 per cent of the total sample) fell within the income range of Rs. 60-125. Similarly, it can be seen that the number of females in the aforementioned income categories of Rs. 125-250, Rs. 250-500, and Rs. 500-1000 stood at 79 (48 per cent), 46 (28 per cent), and 9 (5 per cent), respectively. It is clearly evident that a majority of the female vendors belong to the category with an income range of Rs. 125 to Rs. 250, followed by those whose income is in the Rs. 250-500 range. There were, however, no female respondents in the highest income group (Rs. 1000-1600).

An examination of the share of the male respondents indicates that out of 236 males, only around 3 per cent fell in the lowest income group of Rs. 60-125. Around 40 per cent had an income ranging between Rs. 125 and Rs. 250. The highest number of males (44 per cent) had an income ranging between Rs. 250 and Rs. 500. Eleven per cent of the respondents fell in the income category of Rs. 500-1000. Only 2 per cent had an income in the range of Rs. 1000-1600.0

Table 2
Daily Income Gender-wise

Daily Income (in Rs.)	Gender		
	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
60-125	30 (18.29)	7 (2.97)	37 (9.25)
125-250	79 (48.17)	95 (40.25)	174 (43.50)
250-500	46 (28.05)	105 (44.49)	151 (37.75)
500-1000	9 (5.49)	27 (11.44)	36 (9.0)
1000-1600	0 (0)	2 (0.85)	2 (2.0)
Total	164 (41.00)	236 (59.00)	400 (100)

N=400

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

Table 3
Product- and Gender-wise Distribution

Products	Gender		
	Female (%)	Male (%)	Total (%)
Cooked Food	31 (18.9)	29 (12.0)	60 (15.0)
Vegetables and Flowers	55 (33.54)	35 (15.0)	90 (23.0)
Fruits	20 (12.20)	35 (15.0)	55 (14.0)
Electronics	0 (0)	31 (13.0)	31 (8.0)
Household Utensils	33 (20.00)	43 (18.0)	76 (19.0)
Garments	25 (15.0)	32 (14.0)	57 (14.0)
Leather items	0 (0)	31 (13.0)	31 (8.0)
Total	164 (100)	236 (100)	400

N=400

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

A comparison of the male–female share of incomes reveals that a smaller percentage of male vendors belong to the lowest income category when compared to that of female vendors. Also a higher number of males have an income of Rs. 250-500, an indication that male vendors have a slight advantage with regard to income status.

The income of street vendors depends on the products they sell, and it varies from product to product, from location to location, and also in terms of the volume and terms of trade. The daily income of the street vendors is given in Table 2 in rupees. Table 2 shows that a few vendors earn quite a high income, reflecting the type of business, the age of the business, the location, and the products they sell. Interestingly, the data shows that the incomes of vendors selling garments, fruits, and electronics items differ from those of vegetable vendors and small enterprises. Most of the women vendors are vegetable vendors because this occupation requires very low investment as compared to other activities. It is also calculated (not shown) that the profit margin from vegetables, fruits, and cooked food is high compared to that from other products, not taking into account the implicit labour costs (Table 3). On the other hand, the working conditions in terms of work hours and work pressure are miserable for those who sell vegetables, fruits and cooked food. Not even a single woman vendor sells electronic or leather items as these occupations require more capital. Only a few women vendors (about 15 per cent) sell garments, and their investment is significantly less than that of the male garment vendors. Raw material vendors earn a profit of about 50 to 60 per cent on their daily sales. Despite the hard and useful work that the vendors do, street vending is an illegal activity, and vendors are seen with disdain. As a result, they face constant harassment from the local police and municipal authorities at their workplace. They are forced to pay bribes. It is calculated that each street vendor pays 15 to 20 per cent of his/her daily income in bribes to the local police and the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC).

Table 2 shows that 211 street vendors (comprising about 53 per cent of the total number of respondents) earn Rs. 60 to Rs. 250 per day. It seems that this amount is adequate for the survival of an individual vendor, but considering the number of family members dependent on each vendor, the amount is abysmally low for supporting the vendor's family. It is estimated from the primary data, while taking into account the number of dependents of each vendor, that the per day per capita income of these households is less than Rs. 20 (less than half a dollar a day). The poverty line as given by the World Bank for developing countries, including India, is one US dollar per day per person. Hence, 53 per cent of the total sample population in this study can be classified as 'extremely poor', which is a matter of serious concern.

IV. ACCESS TO FINANCE

The access to finance for street vendors depends on the volume of trade and types of the product they sell. Street vending, as a profession, is heterogeneous in nature. The street vendors' access to finance depends on the volume of their trade and the types of products they sell. All vendors access capital since vending is based on daily turnover. In the present study, out of the total sample (N=400), we see that 236 vendors (comprising 59 per cent

of total vendors) borrow money from different sources for different purposes, namely, for their economic activity, for house building, for paying house rent, and for social security purposes.

1. Financial Sources of the Vendors

The source of the capital plays an important role with regard to the financial accessibility enjoyed by the street vendors. It depends on the types of suppliers and the volumes of their trade. Access to capital is an economic linkage that ties street trade to the economy which affects the vendors' economic activities, profits, and potential business growth. Capital is needed for initiating the business and, later, for running and expanding it. Six types of capital sources have been identified for vendors, including: (i) relatives, (ii) friends, (iii) local vendors or traders, (iv) moneylenders, (v) wholesalers, and (vi) banks or co-operatives. The first two sources are primarily used for getting a business started, while the all the rest are used for keeping it running or for expanding the business activity. Since street vending is considered as an illegal profession, the street vendors do not have access to institutional credit, but an interesting observation is that around 61 per cent of the vendors reported that they started their business with their personal savings and they save in different reputed banks, namely, Corporation Bank, IDBI, State Bank of India, Bank of Maharashtra, Punjab National Bank, Bank of Baroda, Union Bank of India, United Bank of India, and so on.

In order to run their daily business, vendors mainly depend on moneylenders and wholesalers, as compared to other sources of capital. Table 4 shows that about 57 per cent and 26 per cent of the vendors depend upon moneylenders and wholesalers, respectively, for sourcing funds. From Table 4, it can be seen that women vendors depend on moneylenders and wholesalers more than men vendors. About 64 per cent of the women vendors and 53 per cent of the male vendors depend on moneylenders, while about 29 per cent of the women vendors and around 25 per cent of the male vendors depend on wholesalers.

There is a short-term loan system in the market, which is completely informal and unrecognised. This is maintained by the primate and local moneylender, and this has been

Table 4
Gender-wise Sources of Capital

<i>Sources of Capital</i>	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total (%)</i>
	<i>Female (%)</i>	<i>Male (%)</i>	
Relatives	1 (1.11)	5 (3.42)	6 (2.54)
Friends	0 (0)	10 (6.85)	10 (4.34)
Local Vendors	0 (0)	1 (0.68)	1 (0.42)
Moneylenders	58 (64.44)	77 (52.74)	135 (57.20)
Wholesalers	26 (28.89)	36 (24.66)	62 (26.27)
Co-operatives/Banks	5 (5.56)	17 (11.64)	22 (9.32)
Total	90 (100)	146 (100)	236 (100)

N=236.

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

detected in all the study areas. The amount of this short-term loan depends on the street vendors and their respective capacities. It has also been noticed that this system is very active and more popular among female vendors in the area as compared to the male vendors. This is because moneylenders trust female vendors more than their male counterparts as women repay the amount on time. There are many moneylending schemes for street vendors, with most of them being based on the duration of the loans. Among these, the '33-day Loan Scheme' is illustrated here in order to portray one of the situations of accessing credit. It concerns the case of a 55-year old woman engaged in selling vegetables in Chembur. She borrows Rs. 10,000 for 33 days. She gets an amount of Rs. 9500 on the first day and the moneylender cuts Rs. 500 for the processing charges and formalities. The period of the loan is 33 days. If the loanable amount is Rs. 10,000, the individual has to take the 'Rs. 300 per day' scheme. Thus, she needs to pay Rs. 9900 (Rs. 300 x 33 days), and at the end, she has to pay an extra amount of Rs. 100. According to the short-term loan scheme, the loan amount is Rs. 10,000 and she has to pay back the same, but she gets an amount of Rs. 9500 as the actual loan. Hence, in such cases, the rate of interest lies between 5 per cent and 10 per cent per month. However, if the loan amount is less, an individual vendor needs to pay more in terms of interest.

V. INDEBTEDNESS OF STREET VENDORS

Street vendors are often seen to fall into a debt trap due to the high level of their indebtedness. They need to obtain credit for their economic activities, but since they are part of the informal sector, they have no access to credit from formal financial institutions (Bhowmik, 2001, 2007; Jhabvala, 2000). In order to survive, they borrow money from various other sources. Around 54.24 per cent of the vendors (128 out of 236) borrow money for social protection purposes to meet the costs entailed for healthcare, medications, maternity expenses, accidents, children's education, and so on, whereas about 34.32 per cent of them borrow money for their economic activities. About 11.44 per cent of the vendors borrow money to pay a deposit on house rent (see Table 5).

It was found during the course of the present study that the social security purposes served by borrowing of funds for the healthcare and medications for the family, maternity expenses, children's education, daughter's marriage, accidents, and purchase of insurance. In terms of education purposes, most of the vendors borrow money for school fees and to purchase computers for their children, because they prefer to send their children to English-medium schools. They encourage their children to continue with their education. One of the vendors stated:

"I don't want my children to become street vendors. This job has no dignity, no respect, and it is full of uncertainty. I started because I had no option, to survive. If my children want to continue with higher education, I would support them; I would even borrow money for them."

The sources of borrowing are relatives, friends, moneylenders and wholesalers. Relatives and friends are preferred because they basically do not charge any interest, and even if they

do, the rate of interest is very marginal if they charge. Others mainly borrow either from moneylenders or from wholesalers. Some of the street vendors are very happy to borrow from the wholesalers since they do not charge regular monthly regular interest rate. But it has been calculated in the present study that the vendors unknowingly pay around 25-35 per cent more than the cost of their products of Rs. 100 to the wholesalers. From Table 5, it can be observed that both the vendors (men and women) borrow small amounts for their economic activities and large amounts for social security purposes. For instance, around 22 per cent of the women vendors borrow between Rs. 1,00,000 and Rs. 5,00,000 for their social security purposes while only 7 per cent of the women vendors borrow the same amount for their economic activities. On the other hand, around 20 per cent of the men vendors borrow money for social security purposes and about 11 per cent of the men vendors borrow for the business activity. This explanation also shows that women borrow larger amounts for social security purposes than men. Women mainly borrow money for their children's education and for medication purposes for their husbands and children.

Table 6 illustrates the total interest paid as a multiple of the principal amount of the borrowing and gender-wise cross tabulation. On the basis of Table 6, it can be said that

Table 5
Amount and Purposes of Borrowing Gender-wise

Gender	Amount of the Borrowing (in Rs.)	Purposes of Borrowing			Total (%)
		Business (%)	Housing and Deposit (%)	Social Security (%)	
Female	1000-15,000	3 (10.71)	3 (27.27)	2 (3.92)	8 (8.89)
	15,000-30,000	12 (42.86)	5 (45.45)	12 (23.53)	29 (32.22)
	30,000-45,000	4 (14.28)	3 (27.27)	10 (19.61)	17 (18.89)
	45,000-60,000	6 (21.43)	0 (0)	8 (15.69)	14 (15.56)
	60,000-75,000	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (1.96)	1 (1.11)
	75,000-1,00,000	1 (3.57)	0 (0)	7 (13.73)	8 (8.89)
	1,00,000-2,50,000	1 (3.57)	0 (0)	6 (11.76)	7 (7.78)
	2,50,000-5,00,000	1 (3.57)	0 (0)	5 (9.80)	6 (6.67)
	Total	28 (100)	11 (100)	51 (100)	90 (100)
Male	1000-15000	15 (28.30)	5 (31.25)	15 (19.48)	35 (23.97)
	15,000-30,000	12 (22.64)	2 (12.50)	15 (19.48)	29 (19.86)
	30,000-45,000	4 (7.55)	4 (25.00)	9 (11.69)	17 (11.64)
	45,000-60,000	14 (26.41)	1 (6.25)	12 (15.58)	27 (18.49)
	60,000-75,000	0 (0)	1 (6.25)	3 (3.90)	4 (2.74)
	75,000-1,00,000	3 (5.66)	0 (0)	8 (10.39)	11 (7.53)
	1,00,000-2,50,000	3 (5.66)	1 (6.25)	7 (9.09)	11 (7.53)
	2,50,000-5,00,000	2 (3.77)	2 (12.50)	8 (10.39)	12 (8.22)
	Total	53 (100)	16 (100)	77 (100)	146 (100)

N=236.

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

Table 6
Total Interest Paid Gender-wise

<i>Multiple of the Principal</i>	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total (%)</i>
	<i>Female (%)</i>	<i>Male (%)</i>	
No interest paid	17 (18.89)	47 (32.19)	64 (27.1)
1-time	48 (53.33)	79 (54.11)	127 (53.8)
2-times	16 (17.78)	14 (9.60)	30 (12.7)
3-times	4 (4.44)	2 (1.37)	6 (2.5)
4-times	1 (1.11)	1 (0.68)	2 (0.8)
5-times	4 (4.44)	3 (2.05)	5 (2.1)
6-times	1 (1.11)	1 (0.68)	2 (0.8)
Total	90 (100)	146 (100)	236 (100)

N=236.

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

around 81 per cent of the women vendors and about 68 per cent of the men vendors have already paid interest for what they have borrowed. Table 6 shows that around 54 per cent of the vendors have already paid interest for the amount they borrowed. Others have paid interest worth two, three, or more times of the amount they borrowed. In this context, women vendors have paid more than men vendors in terms of interest on their total borrowing.

For instance, one of the men vendors in the study borrowed Rs. 10,000 for buying medicine ten years ago, and he has been paying interest at the rate of 5 per cent ever since. Thus, it is estimated that he has paid interest worth around six times of the total amount that he had borrowed. In this way, both the men and women vendors fall into the vicious circle of a debt trap due to the high interest rates and in some of the cases, this trap is chronic. One of the vendors revealed, "My father had taken money for this (vending) activity. After his death, I am still paying the rate of interest."

VI. ACCESS TO PUBLIC SPACE AND THE ISSUES OF LEGALITY

The discussion and debate on illegality of the street vendors and their existence in the city is over urban space utilisation. We need to understand the meaning and the role of urban space for the street vendors. Brown (2006, p. 10) has used the phrase 'urban public space', which means all the physical space and social relations that determine the use of the space within the non-private realm of the cities. Thus, urban public space refers to the areas that are used for public activities, which include pavements, parks, beaches, sport grounds, and so on. In developing countries like India, urban public space is a valuable resource for the urban working poor for their livelihood as well as their living (Bhowmik, 2010, p. 8). Hence, the urban public space is an essential element of the *physical capital* used by the urban poor to extract their livelihood (Brown, 2006, p. 179).

Street vendors who form an integral part of the self-employed workers of the urban workforce face a peculiar market for the products, popularly known as natural markets. They have no permanent shops and no identified market area. Rather, they exist in areas

that are otherwise popular congregations of the general public. The examples include parks, sea-beaches, bus terminuses, railway stations, areas outside schools and colleges, hospitals, and the alike (Bhowmik 2010). Interestingly, in a number of cases, they work as alternative shopping destinations where there are no permanent and notified marketplaces. Street vendors have the natural propensity to assemble at these places because the customers find it convenient to purchase from them and here they find a 'natural market' for their commodities.

The main problem in such cases is that more often than not, the local authorities, namely, the police and municipal authorities, try to prevent street vendors from using such places for their trade. Their market is often perceived in terms of 'encroachments upon public space' leading to overcrowding, traffic jams and road accidents. The entire concept of public space utilisation depends on the identification of natural markets. Street vendors occupy the urban space for their livelihood and the eviction and nuisance start because they are considered as illegal encroachers upon public space. Bhowmik (2010, p. 9) stated an interesting point that control over public space by "the State and/or the civic authorities is seen as control over the people, especially the working poor". The vending takes place in popular public locations such as parks and beaches besides schools and colleges, where a natural market exists for them. Hence, if these places are allotted to the vendors along with proper regulations in the form of space demarcations and so forth, the vending will not become a much problem.

Bhowmik (2010) has given an example of housing societies of the middle and upper-middle classes that encroach on public space around their residences. In addition, shops and restaurants also encroach upon public space by extending to the pavements. In the present study, it is also seen that shopkeepers use the adjacent space for advertisement purposes (especially in Dadar and Chembur). Some of the small restaurants keep chairs for public/customers to be used as a waiting space. It was observed during the survey that in such cases, they are not evicted. Here, the public space is being encroached upon by private individuals. It is, however, the poor vendors who are evicted, though vending is the source of their livelihood. However, street vendors are thriving successfully in the city and their numbers are also growing rapidly, as their services are widely demanded by the public.

There are many cases wherein vendors are evicted in the name of beautification of the city. One such case can be highlighted which was encountered during the fieldwork in Kandivali (East) wherein eviction took place in the name of building a shopping mall. The place was predominantly occupied by around 60-70 street vendors. The previous landowner sold off the entire land. However, some of the street vendors kept coming there to pursue their daily business as they had no other alternative. The present occupants (the builders) often used high-handedness to evict them mercilessly. In this case, the police intervened, arrested the vendors and charged an amount of Rs. 1250 per vendor for using public space illegally. According to a vendor of that area, incidences of these kinds occur almost every month.

VII. WORKING CONDITIONS

1. Gender Discrimination at Work

Female vendors are found to sell smaller quantities of goods than those sold by men and are found to earn less than them (Bhowmik, 2010). The reason for their low sales and low incomes is typically low investment. The smaller quantity of goods sold by them is reflected in the smaller amounts of the sales they achieve and the daily incomes they earn. All these facts are confirmed in our study as well. In the sample of the present study, it has been found that the number of females achieving daily sales of above Rs. 1000 is less than that of men. It has already been seen earlier that the investment of female vendors is typically less than that of males and the daily income pattern also shows that the female vendors earn typically less than their male counterparts. As regards the type of products sold by males and females, the females typically sell those items which require a low capital investment, rather only the working capital. The study also showed the prevalence of some gender bias toward goods like leather items and electronic products, which generally require a substantial investment that can be made only by men.

Vendors who sell raw material, namely vegetable vendors, fruit vendors, and food vendors have good profit margins. At the same time, the working conditions of these vendors, especially vegetable vendors, are miserable. It shows that most of the vegetable vendors are women, as this item requires a very low level of investment in comparison to the other types. The activity for such vendors begins as early as 4.30 am and ends as late as midnight, and they work every day in the year. A recent survey of 400 street vendors in Mumbai indicates that traders work on an average for 8 to 11 hours a day, while in certain areas like Dadar, the hours are even longer.

As women are the home-makers and have to fulfil the customary duty of feeding their families, their day starts early in the morning with household work and is then followed by their struggle to earn a livelihood, and this challenge is magnified by the fact that they belong to a socially subjugated gender and have to deal with a male-dominated world at the workplace. It has been noticed that the attitude of police officials is slightly softer towards women vendors than towards their male counterparts, especially towards women who are not able to sell much and live in penury, from whom the police officials even refrain from taking a bribe. However, the women vendors still have to fight for their rights at every place, and are often treated with disdain even by BMC officials, who accord more respect to the male vendors. Besides, in trying to fulfil their responsibility of being caretakers for their children, the women vendors also usually bring the latter along to the vending place, as a result of which their attention is diverted and sales are adversely affected, which, in turn, translates into less income. They thus continue to be trapped in a morass of low income, poverty and denial of opportunities to improve their lot in life.

2. Competitiveness of the Market

With the number of street vendors rising, competition among them has also risen proportionately. The vendors have been forced to evolve better and newer methods to face

this competitiveness in the market, which forces market traders to seek economies of scale in order to maximise profits. In an effort to optimise profits, some vendors are motivated to join hands with each other along ethnic or local lines to form joint enterprises. The existence of large-scale enterprises in the market has also prompted these vendors to unite their enterprises in order to lower the average cost and consequently increase their profit margins. The economy of scale is thus achieved through the integration of two or more vendors, whose owners share the same ethnic or local identity. Albeit, a relatively old and experienced market trader, who is self-employed often takes the initiative to expand the scale of his/her operation individually. However, in most cases, the vendors put together their working capital, establish a marketing network and increase their number of spaces. Some of the vendors even provide their products to the local marginal vendors.

3. Payment of Bribes: An Alternative Way to Sustain the Business in the Market

Street vendors somehow manage to conduct their businesses by negotiating with the police and the BMC. This understanding is, however, solely based upon the payment of bribes or a certain portion of their daily incomes as ‘rents’ to the authorities. This has, in fact, become the norm for these vendors, without which the police would evict them summarily from their marketplaces. Studies have revealed that those who do not pay rents are disturbed and harassed regularly. This interferes with their ‘right to work with dignity’. They are treated as criminals instead of hard-working self-employed people.

In the course of the present study, it was found that vendors are required to pay bribes to two main groups of civic authorities, the police, and the BMC. The bribe paid to the BMC is greater than that paid to the police. While most vendors were found to be paying Rs.100-300 as bribes to the police per month, bribes paid to the BMC amount to around Rs.300-500 per month. The available data shows that in the case of most vendors, nearly 5-10 per cent of their daily incomes are usurped by the police and BMC. Section 34 of the Police Act empowers the police to remove any obstruction on the streets, and the street vendors have to pay them bribes mainly to avoid eviction under this section. While the bribes to the police are paid on a daily basis, bribes are paid to the BMC officials when the eviction of the vendors starts and their goods are confiscated.

(i) Nature of Bribes Paid

Bribes to the police, BMC and the total daily amount of bribes: The monthly amount of bribes paid to BMC officials and the corresponding percentage of vendors paying them are shown in Table 7. Nearly 34 per cent of the total respondents, however, claim that they do not pay any bribes. They either run away on spotting the police and BMC officials or as in the case of some of the old age vendors, they just stand their ground and refuse to pay.

The highest proportion of vendors (about 43 per cent) pay bribes in the range of Rs.100-300 daily. This amount is paid by 40 per cent of the female and 45 per cent of the male vendors. Nearly 10 per cent of the total vendors pay bribes to the police in the range of Rs. 300-400. The bribes paid to BMC officials are higher than those paid to the police (see Tables

Table 7
Monthly Bribes to the BMC

<i>Bribes to BMC (in Rs.)</i>	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total</i>
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>	
No Bribes	82 (50.0)	53 (22.5)	135 (33.8)
60-100	1 (0.6)	1 (0.4)	2 (0.5)
100-300	17 (10.4)	32 (13.6)	49 (12.3)
300-500	48 (29.3)	86 (36.4)	134 (33.5)
500-1000	10 (6.1)	41 (17.4)	51 (12.8)
1000-1500	4 (2.4)	15 (6.4)	19 (4.8)
1500-3000	2 (1.2)	6 (2.5)	8 (2.0)
3000-6300	0 (0)	2 (0.8)	2 (0.5)
Total	164 (100)	236 (100)	400 (100)

N= 400

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

Table 8
Monthly Bribes to the Police

<i>Bribes to Police (in Rs.)</i>	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total (%)</i>
	<i>Female (%)</i>	<i>Male (%)</i>	
No Bribes	76 (46.3)	63 (26.7)	139 (34.8)
20-100	1 (0.6)	3 (1.3)	4 (1.0)
100-300	66 (40.2)	107 (45.3)	173 (43.3)
300-500	12 (7.3)	31 (13.1)	43 (10.8)
500-1000	7 (4.3)	27 (11.4)	34 (8.5)
1000-1500	2 (1.2)	1 (0.4)	3 (0.8)
1500-2050	0 (0)	4 (1.7)	4 (1.0)
Total	164 (100)	236 (100)	400 (100)

N= 400

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

Table 9
Daily Bribes in Total

<i>Daily Bribes</i>	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total (%)</i>
	<i>Female (%)</i>	<i>Male (%)</i>	
6.50-10.00	9 (5.5)	14 (5.9)	23 (5.8)
10.00-20.00	34 (20.7)	43 (18.2)	77 (19.3)
20.00-50.00	49 (29.9)	116 (49.2)	165 (41.3)
50.00-70.00	3 (1.8)	13 (5.5)	16 (4.0)
70.00- 100.00	3 (1.8)	6 (2.5)	9 (2.3)
100.00-276.00	0 (0)	3 (1.3)	3 (0.8)
Total	98 (100)	195 (100)	293 (100)

N= 293.

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

7 and 8). On an average, bribes are paid to the BMC officials 4-5 times a year. The highest percentage of vendors (33 per cent) pay bribes in the range of Rs. 300-500 per month. This amount is paid by 29 per cent of the female and 36 per cent of the male vendors. Around 12 per cent of the total vendors pay Rs.500-1000 monthly as bribes to BMC officials. Nearly 41 per cent of the vendors pay total daily bribes (including bribes to the BMC and the Police) in the range of Rs. 20-50. These daily bribes are paid by 29 per cent of the female and 49 per cent of the male respondents among the vendors. The second highest percentage of vendors pay Rs.10-20 daily as bribes. Almost 26 per cent of the vendors, however, do not pay any bribe whatsoever (see Table 9).

(ii) *Proportion of Bribes Paid to the Total Daily Income*

The proportion of daily bribes to the daily incomes of the vendors has been delineated in Table 10. It has been found that nearly 39 per cent of the vendors pay 5-10 per cent of their monthly incomes as bribes. Around 21 per cent of the total vendors pay 10-25 per cent of their incomes as bribes. Among the vendors who pay 5-10 per cent of their incomes on bribes, 34 per cent are females and 41 per cent are males. The street vendors are thus found to be paying as high as 30-45 of their incomes on bribes every day.

Table 10
Proportion of Daily Bribes to the Daily Income

Percentage of Daily Bribes to Total Daily Income	Gender		Total (%)
	Female (%)	Male (%)	
0.50-1.00	0 (0)	3 (1.3)	3 (0.8)
1.00-2.00	0 (0)	4 (1.7)	4 (1.0)
2.00-3.00	1 (0.6)	2 (0.8)	3 (0.8)
3.00-5.00	12 (7.3)	26 (11.0)	38 (9.5)
5.00-10.00	57 (34.8)	99 (41.9)	156 (39.0)
10.00-25.00	27 (16.5)	59 (25.0)	86 (21.5)
25.00-30.00	0 (0)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.3)
30.00-45.00	1 (0.6)	1 (0.4)	2 (0.5)
Total	98 (100)	195 (100)	293 (100)

N= 293.

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

4. Hours of Work

The average number of hours of work per day for the vendors varies from eight to twelve hours. Nearly 54 per cent of the vendors, including 58 per cent of the female and 51 per cent of the male vendors work for such prolonged durations. The next most significant proportion of vendors (nearly 23 per cent), including 18 per cent of the female and 25 per cent of the male vendors have been found to be putting in 12-15 hours of work per day. A significantly smaller percentage of vendors (14 per cent) spend 5-8 hours in vending their products. Thus, the vendors have mostly been found to be working for prolonged durations

Table 11
Working Hours per Day

<i>No. of Working Hours per Day</i>	<i>Gender</i>		<i>Total (%)</i>
	<i>Female (%)</i>	<i>Male (%)</i>	
2-5	4 (2.4)	3 (1.3)	7 (1.8)
5-8	28 (17.1)	29 (12.3)	57 (14.3)
8-12	96 (58.5)	122 (51.7)	218 (54.5)
12-15	31 (18.9)	61 (25.8)	92 (23.0)
15-18	5 (3.0)	20 (8.5)	25 (6.3)
18-20	0 (0)	1 (0.4)	1 (0.3)
Total	164 (100)	236 (100)	400 (100)

N= 400

Source: Based on Primary Survey.

in hostile surroundings which adversely affect their health. Working conditions are reflected through many things and one of the most important indicators is the hour of work. It is seen that vendors mostly work for more than 8-12 hours per day (see table 11) but compared to that, their daily income level is extremely low Rs. 250-500 on an average.

The present working conditions of the vendors are characterised by the daily struggle they invariably face in their lives, the massive overcrowding in their profession due to the incapacity of the formal sector to provide jobs, the exorbitant bribes that they are forced to pay, and the harassments that they face at their workplaces, among other things. These working conditions can clearly be illustrated with the help of the following case study and excerpts from one of the women vendors' interviews:

“... in an expensive city like Mumbai, it becomes mandatory for me, being the sole earning member of my family, to work very hard for long hours to sustain myself and my family...the recent hike in the prices of essential items including food and medicines have led to a massive increase in my household expenditure, whereas my income has not risen proportionately. I suffer a lot due to the uncertainties of the profession in terms of low and erratic income, obligations towards the family and the society, etc.”

A majority of the urban informal sector workers live in poor areas, lack access to basic healthcare and welfare services, and social protection, and work in unhealthy and unsafe working environments. This study also shows that they stay in the slums in Mumbai and do not have adequate space for living. Their undesirable working conditions also cause vulnerability to diseases and poor health, besides compelling them to put in excessively long hours of work. It has been discussed in the previous sections that vendors who sell raw material, namely, vegetable, fruit, and food vendors earn good profit margins. At the same time, however, the working conditions in which they operate are quite dismal. Most of the vegetable vendors are women, since vending of vegetables requires a very low level of investment as compared to other products. The life of a street vendor is thus fraught with hardships. As mentioned earlier, a street vendor's day often begins as early as 4.30 am and ends as late as midnight, and on an average, s/he works for 8 to 11 hours a day, every day

of the year, which is well beyond the Government's regulation pertaining to the maximum number of working hours per day. The following description by a woman vendor of her working day exemplifies the conditions under which street vendors have to work:

"I wake up around 4 o'clock in the morning and then I go to the wholesale market to collect the vegetables. I clean the vegetables for two to three hours and I keep the vegetables in the market where I sit. I come back home and cook for my children and then I go again to the market and start the activity. When I come back home, it is already midnight. I work for the whole year. If I don't work for one day, my children will sleep without meals, since I am the only breadwinner in my family."

5. Safety and Security at Work

The existence of street vendors is not only about a section of poor people trying to earn a livelihood in the informal sector, but also about the provision of valuable services to the urban population. Thus, it is the duty of the State to protect the right of this segment of the population to earn their livelihood since Article 39 (a) of the Indian Constitution states that "any citizens, men and women, have equal right to an adequate means of livelihood" (NPUSV, 2006, p. 10). However, the ground reality is that they are largely considered as unlawful entities and eyesores, and are consequently subject to constant harassment by the local police as well as the municipal authorities. This is usually seen to result in a concomitant financial burden of bribes to smoothen the path of their daily vending beat. The absence of legalisation is the main problem of this occupation and this study finds that all the vendors are operating without licences. Hence, their job becomes uncertain and insecure.

In addition to work and income security, the street vendors face other forms of vulnerability at workplaces. Anjaria (2006) mentions that vending is full of insecurity and uncertainty, since vendors work at the roadside and accidents may occur at any time. Even in this study, it was found that the street vendors work for very long hours (averaging 8-10 hours daily) under extremes of climate, amidst high levels of air and noise pollution, which result in several forms of ailments like hypertension, hyperacidity, or even diseases related to the heart and kidney. Often, many of these diseases are related to stress due to uncertainty of income (Bhowmik, 2010). Female vendors are often observed to be the worst sufferers. In the survey, it was found that the workplaces of these vendors being public spaces, there is often no provisioning of toilet facilities, which result in several form of diseases. Hence, it is seen that this vending activity lacks any security and safety conditions that result in increased vulnerability among the vendors.

VIII. SOCIAL NETWORK: A KEY FACTOR IN THE STREET VENDORS' OVERALL ACTIVITIES

Informal relationships among the vendors are identified as among the most basic components of their social activity in Mumbai. The other aspects of their social network include trust among particular sub-groups, habitual exchanges of favours, and mutual support among the vendors and their friends.

In the theoretical frame, we can consider the concept of ‘structural economic sociology’ developed by Granovetter and Swedberg in 2001. It is based on the following three common principles: (i) economic action is a form of social action; (ii) economic action is socially embedded; and (iii) economic institutions are social constructions. Granovetter (1985) specified that economic sociology emphasises the search for approval, status, sociability and power, which cannot be separated from economic actions. Economic action is ‘embedded’ in the ongoing networks of personal relationships rather than being carried out by atomised actors. He avers that a network is a set of contacts or social connections among individuals or groups, since individuals are never isolated from the society (Granovetter, 1985). Moreover, Granovetter explained in the context of ‘a social embeddedness approach’ that economic transactions become embedded in social relations that affect the allocation and valuation of resources and financial markets differentially. Therefore, social embeddedness is defined as the degree to which commercial transactions take place through social relations and networks of relations that use exchange protocols associated with social, non-commercial attachments to manage business dealings (Granovetter, 1985; Uzzi, 1997).

1. Trust at the Workplace

Trust plays a key role in the vendors’ day-to-day business. The exchange of favours is a widespread mechanism used by vendors in their day-to-day life and helps them flourish despite intense competition and lack of general trust over money. This mutual trust and exchange of favours among the vendors and within their social network rests on the expectation of trustworthy behaviour from each other and reciprocal favours. This study shows that mutual trust also helps the vendors procure money from informal sources. Thus, access to finance for the vendors completely depends on the level of trust and relationships between the borrowers and lenders. In this backdrop, women are seen to form more circumscribed informal relationships than men. For instance, it has been observed that lenders trust women more than men as women are more likely to repay money on time even if they have to go hungry themselves. The following statement by a vendor proves the importance of trust in mutual relationships in this profession:

“Trust plays a key role in our day-to-day business. It is not easy to make good rapport with the moneylenders. It takes time even if we borrow money at high rates of interest. Sometimes, the commonality of our language and community promotes the building up of good relationships with lenders. A highly informal relationship with the lenders makes the availability of loans much easier for purposes other than those which are directly or indirectly related to our business activities.”

2. Informal Relationships at the Marketplace

The first important and necessary condition for establishing informal relationships in the market is that of making friends. Making friends in the new marketplace is a priority for newcomers, a fact that was affirmed by an overwhelming majority of the latter. They also highlighted the strong need for social contact, which is the principal reason for vendors

seeking friendship with others from their community. Soon after their arrival into the city, most respondents deliberately set out to enlarge their circle of friends among other vendors, for a range of motives, which are clearly understood and expressed. Vendors also claimed that they were in search of friendships in the marketplace primarily as a source of moral support and consolation, and also because forging strong relationships helps them to better understand the basic rules, regulations and obligations at play in the marketplace.

IX. ROLE OF MEMBERSHIP-BASED ORGANISATIONS

Membership-based organisations can be defined as “those in which the members elect their leaders and which operate on democratic principles that hold the elected officers accountable to the general membership” (Chen, *et al.*, 2007, p. 4). Trade unions, cooperatives, workers’ committees, savings and credit groups such as self-help groups (SHGs), producer groups, and so on, are categorised as membership-based organisations (Chen, *et al.*, 2007). This section of the article is based on in-depth interviews with five individuals who are actively involved in membership-based organisations and in a position to make decisions for the vendors. Although they are doing administrative work in their organisations, they have also been vendors. The key respondents, who were initially working as small vendors, have become small enterprise owners over a period of time and have appointed a number of wage workers for administrative work and other responsibilities in their respective organisations. According to them, it is very easy to work for the vendors as insiders. One of the key respondents stated, “Our friends [the vendors] rely on and trust us because they think that we can understand the situation and represent their voice properly.”

Due to harassment by the municipal authorities, some street vendors in Mumbai have organised themselves into unions or local associations that enable them to pursue their economic activities. These unions are mainly localised bodies and are membership-based. However, there are as yet very few such organisations in existence, whether in Mumbai or elsewhere in India. The organisations act as intermediaries between individual street traders and local authorities. Since the street vendors have no legal basis for their existence, the main role of the organisations is to negotiate with local authorities such as municipal corporation employees and local police forces for the right to occupy public space so that the vendors can carry on their trade. The organisations face many problems when they start negotiating with the authorities about public space. One of the key respondents noted, “We are struggling for the rights for them [the vendors] and for their space on the road. We protest [against the authorities’] continuous harassment. Many times, we have gone to jail with the vendors to protest [against non-fulfilment of their demands].”

The organisations have also helped in setting up a welfare board with the help of the Labour Commission to enhance the vendors’ social security, besides forming cooperatives to provide them access to credit for their economic activities as well as personal and educational loans.

1. Organising Social Security

Active membership-based organisations press for social security schemes that provide multiple benefits for those who are unionised. For instance, the social security scheme called 'Janashree Bima Yojana', provided by the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), is a very successful scheme. The scheme includes insurance coverage for health issues, house and property, accidental and natural death, and permanent and partial disability. It is a group insurance scheme for a minimum of 25 members. The members pay an annual premium. The annual premium for an individual vendor is Rs. 50, which is very affordable, even for the poorest vendor. Under this scheme, each vendor can receive Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 75,000 in the case of an accident, and the vendor's family would receive Rs. 75,000 in the event of his/her death. Moreover, this scheme also covers scholarships for the education of the vendor's children. A maximum of two children of the vendor can benefit, and each child would be entitled to receive Rs. 1200 per year as a scholarship.

2. Towards Credit Access

A cooperative credit society has been registered under the state government to provide the vendors loans such as personal loans, educational loans, and loans for economic activity. The cooperative receives the money from the state government and gives loans to the membership-based organisations. A cooperative cannot provide a direct loan for an individual vendor. Hence, membership-based organisations act as intermediaries between the street vendors and the cooperative. Vendors must be members of an organisation to benefit from the cooperative. According to the rules and norms, a vendor can acquire a maximum of Rs. 30,000 from the cooperative in times of need. Each vendor in the organisation gives money to the organisation according to the vendor's volume of trade (at a minimum of Rs. 10 per day) and the organisation thus accumulates money that is used as 'working capital'. Thereafter, the vendor can take a loan from the 'working capital' in the organisation at a nominal rate of interest. According to the five key respondents from membership-based organisations, this cooperative has proved to be very successful.

However, the main problem is that overall very few street vendors are unionised in Mumbai. Only around 2,500 vendors are involved in cooperatives and social security schemes in Mumbai, whereas as per the records of most unions, Mumbai has a total of 2,50,000 street vendors. According to each of the key respondents, all the street vendors try to evade the necessary rules and regulations. They do not want to pay even the nominal minimum membership fees. Therefore, very few of the street vendors are registered members of the unions. One of the key respondents stated, "Most of the vendors try to avoid all the rules and norms and hence they prefer [to borrow from] private moneylenders who charge a high rate of interest".

X. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The term 'street vendors' has become an indispensable organ of urban culture, and is synonymous with the psyche represented by this culture. A lot of work has hitherto been done to analyse and define the informal sector. However, we are still a long way away from

really understanding this phenomenon, which is of such major economic, political, and social importance in all countries, both developed as well as underdeveloped.

The basic problem faced by street vendors is that of their right to exist in the urban informal sector, because their occupation is illegal. Hence, they cannot enjoy either the dignity or the right to work. The government should thus provide the vendors with legal space for their activities besides also simplifying the rules and regulations that prevent them from carrying on their occupation with dignity and freedom. The key respondents clearly stated that most of the vendors try to avoid following formal rules and regulations, which is difficult for those with little education, and it has already been noted that most of the vendors have very low literacy levels.

The present study shows that street vendors can play a very important role in the urban informal economy by generating employment and by supporting both the urban poor as well as the rich. It was found during the course of this study that the per capita income of 53 per cent of the street vendors in Mumbai is Rs. 20 per day. The NCEUS report (2007) categorises people with this daily income as “poor and vulnerable.” Bhowmik’s study of 2001 showed that the daily income of male vendors was Rs. 70 and that of the women vendors was Rs. 40. In the present study, it was found that over 62 per cent of the population has a per capita income of Rs. 20 to 35. Therefore, the income levels of the vendors have not improved over the last ten years. One of the factors responsible for the vendors’ low income is their compulsion to pay regular bribes. A vendor points out that “harassment, eviction, and the collection of bribes have been increasing in the last three to four years”.

Another important finding of the study is that street vendors depend on moneylenders and wholesalers for access to credit for their business as well as for social security purposes. The study also shows that vendors are often forced to pay exorbitant rates of interest for the money borrowed by them. The main reasons for this borrowing are social security and for investment in business activity, as a result of which they often fall into a debt trap, which is a matter of grave concern. This study also reveals that all vendors, irrespective of their income status, need some means of ensuring social security. They thus survive on their savings or through borrowing at high interest rates. The government should thus step in to mitigate the financial problems of street vendors by fulfilling its duty of paying them social security. Group insurance could prove to be a viable solution to the financial problems of the vendors, as it entails fewer formalities. The respondents also expressed their interest in taking insurance as a means of ensuring social security. Therefore, the government or any other stakeholder, especially trade unions, should come forward to facilitate this.

The study further reveals poor working conditions of the vendors in terms of excessively long working hours in a day, in addition to unhealthy and unsafe conditions in the workplace. The occupation of street vending is spreading dramatically. In order to combat this rapidly rising competition and to survive in the local market, vendors have to increase the number of hours of their work. It was found during the course of this study that the number of working hours have increased by four to five hours a day since the study was carried out in

2001. Long-time street vendors have also admitted that their working hours have increased. A 72-year-old vendor stated:

“I have been pursuing this activity since I was a 12-year-old boy. I have spent 60 years in this area. We were only 10 on this road and now we are more than 1,000. Our total space is the same. Only our personal space has been reduced. I have noticed that the profit margin has decreased as compared to earlier. Competition has increased over the period. I used to spend 5 hours in a day earlier but now I spend 9-10 hours to be able to survive.”

The Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation laid down national policy goals and made many recommendations in 2006 (NPUSV, 2006). The main objective of the policy is to “provide and promote a supportive environment for earning livelihoods to the vast mass of urban street vendors while ensuring that such activity does not lead to overcrowding and unsanitary conditions in public spaces and streets” (NPUSV, 2006, p. 11). The specific objectives of the national policy are: to provide legal status by formulating appropriate laws and providing legitimate hawking zones in urban development; to provide facilities for the appropriate use of identified space, including the creation of hawking zones in the urban development plans; to do away with numerical limits on access to public spaces of discretionary licences and instead move to nominal fee-based regulation of access; to ensure that street vendors are made a special component of the urban development plan by treating them as an integral and legitimate part of the urban distribution system; to promote facilitative organisations for street vendors such as unions, cooperatives or associations and other forms of organisation to facilitate their empowerment; to provide comprehensive social security to buffer ruinous health expenditure for general ailments, reproductive and child health and geriatric ailments; to promote access to such services as credit, housing and upgradation of their skills through the promotion of Self-help Groups (SHGs), co-operatives, and micro-finance institutions (NPUSV, 2006).

The national policy on urban street vendors was revised again by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Government of India, in 2009 (NPUSV, 2009), though the new policy is much the same as the old one. As regards the provisions for the two years, 2006 and 2009, the Government has already highlighted the important problems and provided very specific recommendations for street vendors, but the problem is that these recommendations still remain on paper only and have not been implemented in Mumbai so far. Therefore, it is incumbent on the state governments to take the initiative to fully implement the national policy, especially in Maharashtra, since the number of street vendors has been growing significantly in Mumbai.

According to the local authorities, street vendors occupy public space illegally. The national policy (2006) suggested that Town Vending Committees (TVCs) should be made responsible for the allocation of space to street vendors. The functions of the TVCs recommended by the national policy are as follows: registering the street vendor and ensuring the issuance of an identity card to the vendor after it has been prepared by the municipal authority; monitoring the facilities to be provided to the street vendors by the municipal authority; identifying areas for vending with no restriction, areas with restrictions with regard to dates, days, and times,

and areas that would be marked as no-vending zones; setting the terms and conditions for hawking; taking corrective action against defaulters; and collecting revenue. However, the fees charged by the TVCs should be nominal or at least affordable for all street vendors. The committees may decide the amount that the street vendors will be charged, considering the local conditions. Considering the functions of the TVCs recommended by the national policy, it can be said that TVCs would constitute a better solution in terms of organising the vendors at the local level. Street vendors would prefer to pay the fees legally to the government instead of paying bribes to the local police and the municipal corporation. One of the vendors, in fact, pointed out, “We would like to pay the amount as taxes instead of bribes for our . . . space. We would even love to pay double the amount that we are paying now.”

The findings of the present study also indicate that vendors are forced to borrow money at exorbitant rates of interest (amounting to 5-10 per cent per month), which, in turn, pushes them into a debt-trap situation. The study shows that the excessively long working hours of the vendors, poor safety and security conditions at their workplaces, together with the illegal compensations they have to pay the local authorities, are contributing towards a deterioration in their working environment as well as acute deprivation among these workers. This shows the existence of a ‘shadow economy’, as the street vendors are being exploited by those very persons from whom they seek and obtain credit as well as other forms of financial support. This entire process is self-perpetuating because of the lack of formal recognition of the economic activities of the vendors. They thus need to be imparted certain proper rights: to utilise the public space; to access the institutional credit; and to participate actively in union activities, all of which would help them achieve decent work and enjoy an adequate means of livelihood.

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