

A decorative graphic consisting of a grid of grey dots of varying sizes, with several dots highlighted in red. The dots are arranged in a pattern that roughly outlines the shape of the world map.

Trade Unions in Transformation

Towards a Better Deal for Street Vendors in India: The Case of NASVI

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- The paper documents the gradual development of street vendors into the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), with 952 affiliated organizations and 658.129 members, first through conducting a survey of the working conditions of vendors, then developing a national policy, and finally legislation that protects the interests of street vendors and legitimizes their occupation.
- At the core of the growth of NASVI was the strategic use of associational power through promoting a positive public image of vendors and harnessing societal power through such activities as Street Food Festivals, a fortnightly newsletter and a holistic understanding of the needs of vendors.
- Trade Unions in Transformation is an FES project that identifies unions' power resources and capabilities that contribute to successful trade union action. This study features among two dozen case studies from around the world demonstrating how unions have transformed to get stronger.



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Abstract

Forces of globalisation which necessitated economic reform in India in the 1990s opened a floodgate of opportunities for the few and at the same time made working life more precarious for the many. Under fierce competition from multinational corporations, many domestic industries were forced to shut down, resulting in massive layoffs of the labour force. At the same time, the new opportunities created in cities and the simultaneous erosion of the rural livelihood base pushed people out of villages, leading to an accelerated rate of urbanization. For want of any other alternative, many of the laid-off workers and rural migrants ended up joining informal economy as street vendors. While street vendors have always been there providing goods and services to millions at an affordable rate on their doorsteps, growing informalization and unabated urbanization suddenly increased their numbers in Indian cities. Despite the fact that these workers contribute significantly to the urban economy, they have faced and often continue to experience humiliation, continual harassment, confiscations and sudden evictions. It became imperative to advocate for their rights through formulation of appropriate policies, enactment of relevant laws, and provision of adequate social protection benefits. This paper aims at documenting the journey of the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), which played a pivotal and catalytic role in transforming street vendors from non-entities to a formidable force to reckon with. Using the theoretical framework of power resources and capabilities, the paper reflects on the process of this transformation by discussing each milestone in detail. The paper also briefly discusses the way forward for NASVI.

1. The Context of Street Vendors in India: A Tale of Invisible Visibility¹

In the 1990s, the Indian economy opened up as a consequence of the adoption of policies of liberalization and privatization. Global and globalizing macroeconomic processes, which necessitated these economic reforms, opened a floodgate of opportunities for the few and simultaneously made livelihoods more precarious for the many. Under fierce competition from multinational corporations many domestic industries were forced to shut down resulting in massive layoffs of workers. At the same time, the new opportunities created in cities and the simultaneous erosion of the rural livelihood base pushed people out of villages, leading to an accelerated rate of urbanization (Bhowmik 2001, 2005). While street vendors have always been there providing goods and services to millions at an affordable rate on their doorsteps, growing informalization and unabated urbanization suddenly increased their numbers in Indian cities. For want of any other alternative, most of the laid-off workers and rural migrants ended up joining informal economy as street vendors (Bhowmik 2005, 2010). Close on the heels of these developments came a series

of elitist plans and court judgements to give a so-called »facelift« to the urban landscape and transform Indian cities into »the next Hong Kong or Shanghai«. A number of over-enthusiastic municipal administrators took it upon themselves to clean cities of street vendors, earning nicknames like »Bulldozer Man«.

At the same time, in some areas street vending was being declared a cognizable and non-bailable offense. Due to unrealistic license ceilings in other cities, most vendors became illegal by default which made them more prone to bribery and extortion. Cities which had hitherto giving licence to vendors stopped issuing fresh licenses. Despite the fact that they had contributed significantly to the urban economy, they faced humiliation, continual harassment, confiscations, and sudden evictions on a regular basis. Come any large-scale events such as elections, visits by the Prime Minister or President, or even community festivals, they were first to be displaced without any notice. Despite working for more than 12 hours a day they remain impoverished and thus underfed and malnourished. Furthermore, since they spent most of their working time on open roads, they are vulnerable to different types of diseases. Their vulnerabilities are exacerbated by lack of toilets and sanitary facilities, having a particularly adverse impact on women vendors.

Despite this incessant exploitation, the growing vulnerabilities and deprivation, street vendors were everywhere,

1. We dedicate this work to the fond memory of the late Prof Sharit K Bhowmik, an academic and activist who lived his life for the cause of informal labour, especially for the street vendors, and made an invaluable contribution to ensuring their well-being not only in India but also in various parts of the world.

yet they were nowhere (Jhabvala 2010). They were on the sidewalks, along the streets, across the roads, but not in the statistics, the media or research publications. They were inseparable parts of the city landscape, but not in the consciousness of urban planners. They were inextricably linked with the daily lives of the city dwellers, but were miles away from the hearts and minds of municipal administrators. They were everywhere, yet they were nowhere: omnipresent, yet invisible! In a context where collective bargaining power of workers in organised sector had been dwindling, the precarity was yet more extreme for street vendors who were marginalized and unorganized. Owing to the fact that they were not wage earners, they were incapable of interrupting or restricting the valorisation of capital due to weak structural power. However, they were of great number and together could have harnessed unprecedented associational power. A social actor was urgently needed who could facilitate their unionisation possible and thereby advance advocacy of their rights through formulation of appropriate policies, enactment of relevant laws, and provision of adequate social protection benefits. They needed to organise; to accumulate power resources to influence policies and programmes; and to build the capabilities to develop and deploy these power resources. Things were to change soon. Street vendors were to gain both visibility and a voice; witness a policy drafted and a law enacted in their favour; and be recognized as contributors rather than encroachers. This paper aims at documenting the journey of National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), which played a pivotal and catalytic role in transforming street vendors from non-entities into a formidable force to be reckoned with. Using the theoretical framework of power resources and capabilities (Lévesque & Murray 2010), the paper reflects on the process of this transformation by discussing each milestone of NASVI's historical and dramatic journey. The paper also briefly discusses the way forward for NASVI.

2. Formation Of Nidan: The Incubator

Armed with a High Court order, the State Government of Bihar began a massive anti-encroachment drive in 1995. The administration conducted ruthless evictions of street vendors without taking any steps to rehabilitate those they evicted. This inhuman initiative gained the interest of those who were then part of ADITHI, an NGO headquartered in Patna, the capital of Bihar.

The observant staff at ADITHI, sensitive to the plight of street vendors, decided to galvanize this unorganized section and offer them the opportunity to raise their voice against the state government's indifference and hostility. Around the same time, Ela Bhatt of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was trying to energize civil society institutions to include issues of unorganized street vendors. She shared her concern with Viji Srinivasan of ADITHI who followed this up by organizing a consultation with various like-minded individuals and institutions. The response was electrifying, and participants expressed solidarity with this unorganized section of society. The organization of street vendors then became an explicit project for ADITHI.

Incidentally, ADITHI was undergoing restructuring at the time, and Srinivasan considered this an opportune time to found a separate organization dedicated exclusively to the cause of informal sector. So, what began as a project for ADITHI was then registered as an independent institution: NIDAN, its name deriving from a Hindi word for solution. Well-established organizations like SEWA and ADITHI, who shared common ideological grounds, could serve as useful partners and link the global debates generated through initiatives such as the Bellagio Declaration of Street Vendors 1995 with local developments such as court directions and the violence meted out to vendors on the daily basis. Their efforts proved to be an invaluable learning ground for the young leadership at NIDAN: SEWA provided crucial contacts; ADITHI linked NIDAN with funding agencies and government officials; and stalwarts such as Ela Bhatt and Viji Srinivasan nurtured and offered all their capacity building opportunities to the young staff. They schooled young leaders in tested tools and robust methodologies so as to conduct their activities in a scientific manner.

To begin with, NIDAN conducted a survey in 1996 in the state capital Patna with a sample size of nearly 6000 street vendors. This exercise helped the team understand the situation of street vendors, outline the exploitative regime and forge a relationship with the vendors which would form the foundation for developing associational power in the future. NIDAN also addressed its lack of institutional finance, which strengthened its credentials for future mobilization and served to demonstrate strong collective action to street vendors in developing their own associational power resources. However, realizing the insufficiency of mobilization at the city or state

level for long-term transformation, NIDAN began to feel an urgent need to raising the pitch of advocacy for street vendors to the national level. The opportunity for this upscale was just around the corner.

3. NASVI: Milestones, Struggles, Successes

3.1 Formation of NASVI: An Alliance

SEWA organized a workshop for street vendor organizations in September 1998 at Ahmedabad. All of the participants expressed very serious concerns about increasing attacks on street vendors across the nation. At the same time, they agreed that it was not enough to secure short-term relief from the brutality of the authorities through the usual methods of protest meetings and litigation. The need of the hour was to effect a change of perception regarding street vendors in the minds of administrators, legislators, elected representatives, urban planners and the public at large. This could only happen if a national movement were established with a view to fostering a holistic and comprehensive policy in favour of street vendors. These new framing capabilities were crucial to deliver the discursive power needed to secure a national policy. It was felt that a national network of street vendors should be formed which would work as a core actor, facilitator, aggregator and a catalyst, taking every possible step to develop associational and societal power to secure institutional power in order to ameliorate conditions of street vendors. As a consequence, National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) was formed. Given the mandate and track record of NIDAN, it was decided that this alliance would be hosted at NIDAN's headquarters at Patna and its founder was named the coordinator of the alliance.

3.2 The Alliance at Work

At that time, networking had earned a bad name, primarily because of lack of democratic decision making, financial transparency and the consistency in its efforts. Aware of such pitfalls, NASVI aimed at building a credible organization and ultimately making a national policy for street vendors a reality. Immediately after formation, the biggest task was to identify and associate organizations working with street vendors. Contact was naturally established with NGOs and trade unions, but surprisingly

very few of them worked with street vendors, leading the search to a different category of organizations – membership and community-based street vendor organizations. Some were registered, all but one or two registered under the Trade Union Act falling under the ordinance of the Societies Registration Act. They were not affiliated to any central trade unions, though some had political affiliations. The first task was to bring together these vendor organizations and to make the Alliance truly national in form and character. A series of four regional multi-stakeholder meetings were organized in Mumbai, Bangalore, Delhi and Patna –the four corners of the country. Each meeting was attended by street vendors, vendor leaders, municipal administrators, and elected representatives, as well as civil society organizations and the media. These meetings broke new ground for NASVI. Out of many outcomes, the following warrant special mention:

1. Perhaps for the first time, all the stakeholders shared a common platform and listened to each other's perspective. This intermediating process initiated by NASVI helped the respective parties to articulate their arguments and frame issues to ultimately harness discursive power. Most of the participants who attended these meetings became partners or allies of NASVI and stood by it in all of its future initiatives.
2. During the Mumbai workshop, a vendor talked about the idea of a Natural Market, as a place where buyers *naturally* congregated, such as at a temple or a hospital, as opposed to places where municipal authorities attempted to rehabilitate evicted vendors where buyers did not come automatically. This phrase was instantly picked up by NASVI and it became part of the activist lexicon. Every document which came up afterwards, be it research paper, policy note or the drafted Bill, talked about developing natural markets.
3. In the states in which these meetings were organized, advocacy for vendors' rights accelerated.
4. These meetings were covered extensively in the media and suddenly, the issues of street vendors started to gain a national identity.

This conglomeration of membership organizations enabled NASVI to trigger the process of organizing and at the same time raise the pitch of advocacy with urban local bodies, state governments and national gov-

ernment. NASVI helped the street vendors to register their organizations and strengthen them by investing a great deal of energy in leadership development. At the same time, NASVI realized that in order to advance policy interventions, it is important to engage with administrators and planners, with the professed problem all these stakeholders were full of prejudiced opinions and held to the pattern of *the fewer the facts, the stronger the opinion*. A robust dataset was needed to frame the issues, articulate the arguments and ultimately develop discursive power for an effective dialogue and advocacy. Keeping this in mind, NASVI commissioned a study by Sharit Bhowmik entitled *Hawkers in the Urban Informal Sector: A Study of Street Vending in Seven Cities* (Bhowmik, 2001). This landmark report became the basis for all ensuing dialogue and interventions on street vendors, not only in India but internationally as well.

After the survey was completed, NASVI discussed the findings with the concerned Ministry of the Indian Government and pressed for serious steps to improve the conditions of street vendors. Due to NASVI's persistent efforts, in May 2001 the ministry organised a National Workshop on Street Vendors at Delhi. The Cabinet Minister as well as the Minister of State attended the workshop along with senior bureaucrats. NASVI mobilized members from almost every street vendor organization in the country as well as some NGOs to attend the workshop. The findings of the survey were presented at the workshop and during the two days, representatives of the street vendors deliberated on their problems. In the valedictory session, the Minister announced that his Ministry would establish a National Task Force to draft a National Policy on Street Vending, which in turn was formed in August of the same year. Besides the Minister of State, the members comprised senior officials of the ministry, mayors, municipal commissioners, senior police officials and representatives of trade unions. After meetings held in Delhi and Ahmedabad, the Secretary of the Ministry proposed that a Drafting Committee should be formed to prepare the draft policy document. This seven-member committee was formed in April 2002, and included the author of the NASVI study. Much of the content and approach of the policy can be attributed to the presence of activists and representatives of the vendors' movement in the Drafting Committee. This draft national policy on street vendors was circulated to all States and Union Territories, with concerned ministries and departments of government and other stakehold-

ers soliciting their comments. On the basis of the inputs received, final draft policy was prepared and approved by the Cabinet on January 20, 2004. The State Governments were requested to adopt the policy with or without any change to suit local conditions and also respecting any court decisions which may impinge on the issue. NASVI not only influenced the policy as a part of the drafting committee, but also helped its partner organizations in influencing the documents containing inputs from their respective state governments.

3.3 NASVI: from Alliance to Association

Given the magnitude and complexities of its work, NASVI was finding it difficult to function as a network now, but it was not clear what form should it take in the future. A consultation was organized with all stakeholders towards the end of June 2002. Various options were deliberated upon. The majority felt that if NASVI chose to register as a trade union it would come into competition with existing trade unions. Furthermore, since many trade unions are affiliated to various political parties, it would not have been palatable for them and entire exercise would have been counterproductive if NASVI came in to conflict with them. Hence, it was decided that, in its new avatar, NASVI would be a membership-based organization registered under Societies Registration Act 1860 with membership open to trade unions, community-based organizations, NGOs and individuals working with the street vendors. At the same time, under the Societies Registration Act, members could participate in its general body, be elected to positions, thereby promoting democratic norms and the participation of the members. A twenty-five member Executive Committee with one third women and one third street vendors was envisaged. The Executive Committee was to be elected every third year by the General Body. Rechristened as the National *Association* of Street Vendors of India, the new organization was ready to focus on the work at hand.

3.4 National Policy on Urban Street Vendors, 2004

While the newly registered NASVI was holding its maiden General Body Meeting (GBM), the Indian cabinet met to discuss the draft policy. Soon after the conclusion of the GBM, cabinet decided to adopt the National Poli-

cy on Urban Street Vendors, a moment of great historic significance. For the first time in the history of India, street vendors were officially described as contributors to the urban economy and not as encroachers into public space, a paradigm shift in true sense of term. At the same time, it was a landmark for the informal urban economy in general, because for the first time the government had taken steps to regulate a significant portion of self-employed workers. The Policy aimed to »provide and promote supportive environment for earning livelihoods to the street vendors, as well as ensure absence of congestion and maintenance of hygiene in public spaces and streets« (Government of India, 2004). This goal was expected to be achieved through a series of measures to:

- Create legal status for street vendors, laying the groundwork for the creation and enforcement of a zoning scheme;
- Provide civic facilities for spaces identified as vending zones in accordance with city master plans;
- Use nominal fee-based regulation to control access, basing occupancy limits on previous occupancy and eschewing numerical limits created by discretionary licenses;
- Promote street vendor organizations;
- Create a participatory planning service that incorporates civil society, local authorities and street vendors themselves;
- Encourage street vendors to self-regulate and self-organize, particularly with respect to issues of hygiene and waste disposal; and
- Promote access to skill development programs for street vendors.

This policy was the first comprehensive document which gave pivotal institutional power to the entire movement spearheaded by NASVI. The ideas encapsulated in this document, which largely came from NASVI and its allies, gave a formal framework for future interventions for securing livelihoods of sizeable proportion of the urban poor. Interestingly, adoption of this policy gave a new, more tangible incentive to the street vendors to organize themselves, largely because they could see a road map for securing better conditions for themselves (Sinha and Roever, 2011). They could easily use the policy as a reference point to protest forced evictions and other harassment. Small and locally active street vendors' organizations even sought to federate at state level in

order to put a combined pressure on the respective state governments and municipal bodies for implementation of the policy. A long-term vision and clear road map certainly helped gain unprecedented associational power.

3.5 Implementation of the Policy

For NASVI, one crucial phase of its journey was over, since its prime mandate was to push for a national policy. Immediately after ensuring the institutional power for fighting for the rights of vendors, NASVI's membership base swelled and it felt more strengthened for further action with a changed agenda. The next challenge was to ensure implementation of the policy. Since India is a federal country, policies serve merely as guidelines. For implementation, they need to be adopted by the state and municipal bodies. Invigorated with newly found visibility of vendors' issues, vendors' organizations started mounting pressure on municipal bodies to implement policy in letter and spirit. NASVI provided resources, ideas and encouragement to its partners. While few states made sincere efforts for effective implementation, the process of implementation did throw interesting and innovative ideas (Sinha and Roever, 2011). For example, while Odisha created 52 vending zones in its state capital, Madhya Pradesh identified numerous hawkers' corners across the state, and Delhi came up with a two-tier independent grievance redressal structure headed by district judges. Innovative ideas such as the setting-up of women's markets also came up. One of the major advantages of the policy was that the contract system of collection of municipal taxes by private contractors across India was abolished. This step freed the vendors from organised crime where vendors' organizations were strong and was a concrete discernible success for NASVI members. NASVI could also collect stories of many local victories where policy was used effectively. Small but significant local victories build the credibility and strengthened its position in local politico-administrative environments and paved the way for stronger future actions.

3.6 Towards an Act

When the National Commission on Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector (NCEUS) was set up, it was assigned the task of reviewing the Policy of 2004. The commission consulted street vendors through NASVI and based on

their vital inputs, a chapter on street vendors was added in the first major report by the commission (NCEUS 2007). Later, in 2009, the Policy was revised and accompanied by a model law on street vending which could be adopted by state governments with modifications suited to their geographical and local conditions. The Prime Minister wrote to all the provincial governments to implement this policy. However, since the implementation of policy had not been satisfactory in several states, in 2009 NASVI decided to fight for both policy implementation *and* the enactment of a central law to protect the livelihood and social security of street vendors. Until this point, NASVI had been headquartered in Patna in the eastern part of the country. With Delhi being the centre of administration in India, NASVI moved to New Delhi in order to intensify its efforts for central legislation. This strategic shift helped NASVI tremendously in the ensuing years.

In the meantime, a verdict of Supreme Court of India in October 2010 came as a shot in the arm for NASVI. The verdict said that the vendors had fundamental right to carry on their businesses under Article 19 (1) g of the Indian Constitution and that this right must be protected by a law (Supreme Court of India, 2010). The Court directed the »appropriate« government to enact law for vendors by 30 June, 2011, although the term »appropriate« government engendered conflicting interpretations. Bureaucrats argued that a central law was not possible because urban issues, according to the Constitution of India, were a responsibility of the state governments and only they had the authority to modify or change municipal rules. This view was challenged by NASVI and it argued that street vending should not be seen as an issue of urban policy, but rather, as an issue of livelihoods. This implied that there could be a central law. Earlier, in 2005, the Government of India had taken a similar policy decision by introducing the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which provided for 100 days of employment in rural areas (Bhowmik 2014). This was a central law which was implemented by the local self-governing bodies within the states. This reframing helped gain discursive power which created an enabling environment for the enactment of a law.

Close on the heels of Supreme Court verdict, NASVI started to approach the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MHUPA) to press for a central law. A ten-member delegation met the minister and put forward the demands. To exercise additional pressure, encouraged

by NASVI, more than one hundred thousand postcards were sent to the minister demanding a central law. Using its associational power to its advantage, NASVI, along with its members in different states, organized a series of demonstrations and strategic meetings of street vendors in all its constituents in the states to create pressure from below for a uniform law to protect street vendors. As NASVI affiliates across India lobbied their respective Members of Parliament to exercise pressure within their parties and within Parliament, it organized a RathaYatra Campaign, chariot journeys in the form of processions, to attract the attention of state governments for policy implementation and law making. It yielded significant results. Several states governments formulated policies and enacted state laws in favour of street vendors.

NASVI took up the issue of the central law with the chairperson of National Advisory Council (NAC), a body set up to advise the Prime Minister on policy matters. The NAC deliberated on the issue in its several meetings and in May 2011 it recommended a central law to the Government of India. While the central leadership of NASVI was busy meeting with political parties of all hues, vendor organizations across India posted hundreds of memoranda and petitions in June of 2011 to the Prime Minister demanding early initiation of the process of law-making. NASVI urged all its member organizations to organize protests in their cities on the 14th of July 2011, mounting pressure on the government to initiate the process. The protests were held in at least 30 cities simultaneously. In the next month, thousands of vendors surrounded the parliament to demand a central law, and a seven member NASVI delegation met MHUPA Minister with a ten-point charter of demands. The minister agreed that the problems of vendors could only be solved through a law. In October 2011, Ministry of Law sought the opinion of the Attorney General of India. The Attorney General gave his opinion in favour of central law for street vendors in November 2011. NASVI organized a huge national convention of street vendors on the theme of »Cities for All« on 19 November 2011 in Delhi. The MHUPA Minister inaugurated it and announced that the government would bring in central law for street vendors. The bill was drafted with vital inputs from NASVI. On the 17th August, 2012, the Union Cabinet approved the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill, and on the 6th September the Bill was introduced in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian parliament. The Bill had many key provisions enabling vendors

to access to rights and entitlements, but also had several shortcomings which attracted discontent from the street vendors, who expressed their desire for amendments. Subsequently, the Bill was sent to the Standing Committee of the Parliament. NASVI presented its concerns and points of amendment to the Bill before the Standing Committee. To gain further momentum, on 13th March 2013, when the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Urban Development tabled its report on the floor of the houses, a huge *Rehri Patri Sansad*, or *street vendors' parliament*, took place in Delhi. In May NASVI organized an event »Dialogue of Street Vendors with Political Leaders and Civil Society Representatives to Convert Street Vendors' Bill into Act« in Delhi. This dialogue, which was attended by leaders from different political parties, helped to develop a consensus over the provisions of the Bill. On the same day, the union cabinet approved the amended Street Vendors Bill. In August, the street vendors across states again sent thousands of letters to the president of the ruling party and chairperson of the ruling coalition urging her to ensure the passage of the bill. The Lok Sabha passed the Bill in September 2013. Now, NASVI had to sustain the momentum to ensure its passage in the Rajya Sabha or the upper house of the parliament. It campaigned vigorously. Another round of a huge *Rehri Patri Sansad* was called. A series of meetings were held with speakers of the Lok Sabha and leaders of ruling and opposition parties. Then, thirty vendors drawn from different parts of the country sat on an indefinite hunger strike in Delhi which lasted for four days, and were supported by many thousands more, exerting yet more pressure. Yielding to this pressure, the Rajya Sabha also passed the Street Vendors' Bill on the 19th February 2014. The Bill became Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act 2014 after the formal ascent from the President of India. It was a historic occasion, another key milestone in NASVI's journey. Later described as »a unique innovation in urban governance within the global South« (Amis 2015:40), it was a perfect example of bringing together societal and associational power resources to secure institutional power resource in the form of a legal framework with a set of regulations.

This landmark legislation, perhaps first of its kind in the world, accorded an unprecedented institutional power to the cause of street vendors which was destined to affect more than 10 million individuals. The Act states that no existing street vendor can be displaced until the local authorities conduct a census of street vendors in the

concerned urban centre and prepare a City Vending Plan. All existing vendors have to be provided with permits for conducting their business and a Town Vending Committee (TVC) will supervise the activities of the vendors. This committee, which will be the main policy making body on street vending, comprises municipal authorities, police, the health department and other stakeholders. Representatives of street vendors will constitute 40 per cent of its membership and women will comprise at least 33 percent of the street vendors' representatives.

3.7 NASVI's Work Post-Enactment

Under sections 36 and 38 of the Act, State Governments were expected to frame rules and schemes within one year, but so far only 11 states have done so. NASVI uses the power at its disposal to ensure that rules are framed quickly and justly. It provides relevant input to both the state governments as well as vendor's organization. It also ensures that provisions which are not in favour of vendors are not inserted into the rules. For example, the scheme being formulated by the Delhi state government had a number of provisions which were not vendor-friendly. NASVI had to put up a spirited fight to get the leading authorities to make the desired amendments. Nearly 200 cities have constituted Town Vending Committees so far. As these committees are becoming functional, a number of powerful models and initiatives are being tested which would create more power resources in the future. Vending zones have been set up in many cities across India. It is envisaged in the Act that local urban bodies will conduct training programs to school the street vendors on aspects such as their rights and responsibilities about specific polices or law related to street vendors, on food safety, maintenance of hygiene, waste disposal and similar issues. NASVI is pursuing efforts in this regard as well, namely surveys of vendors and the issuing of identity cards have begun in numerous cities. Identity cards have made a quantum change in the vendors' confidence. Now, they conduct their business without fear.

As the pitch for Street Vending law was being raised continuously by NASVI, the Government of India was also in the process of framing the National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM). NASVI used its intermediation abilities and discursive power to ensure that a chapter on street vendors would be included in the mission document on National Urban Livelihoods Mission (NULM).

Under NULM, five per cent of the funds have been earmarked for street vendors. The funds are to be utilised for surveys; developing city level vending plan; financial inclusion, and capacity building (MHUPA 2013). Thus, the earlier complaint of State Governments and Municipal Authorities citing lack of financial resources as reason for non-implementation of 2004 Policy was done away with. NULM is providing NASVI and its affiliates with another institutional power resource to use in influencing provincial governments to get the Act pushed at the Municipal level.

4. What Worked for NASVI?

People say that NASVI has been successful because it could press the »right buttons at right time« and things worked out for it. Yes, it did press the »right buttons«, but not always and not easily. In some instances there weren't even any »buttons« to press, and NASVI developed those pressure points. In some cases, the points of access were not immediately obvious, and in others NASVI was unaware of how to pursue them to its favour. NASVI achieved what it did because it kept on learning and re-inventing its methods, and could develop capabilities and associated power resources on the go under a dedicated leadership. Few instances would not be out of place.

As pointed out earlier, street vendors are not wage earners, which limit their structural power, though on few occasions all street vendors of a city took a day off from vending to demonstrate their structural power. To be successful, NASVI had to rely primarily on strong associational power, yet it was not easy to bring street vendors together primarily because they were absent from statistics and they were mobile, fragmented and spatially dispersed due to the very nature of their occupation. In most cases they were not organized. In instances where vendors' organizations existed, they were small, temporary and unregistered. NASVI started to help street vendors form and register unions and bring them under the national umbrella, providing all kinds of support to fight on local issues through legal aid, informational input and a capacity-building programme. A series of training programmes were held on negotiations, organisation building, leadership development, accounts management, promotion of co-operatives, and so on. Local victories drew other members to its fold. Of course, adoption of National Policy made NASVI a household

name in this sector and rate of unionisation of street vendors increased. (See the details of its membership profile in Figure 1)

Attracting members was important, but ensuring cohesion between existing members was of greater importance. It was ensured by attending to their calls; supplying them with requisite documents; arranging for material resources; providing them with legal aids whenever needed; and most importantly building their capacities through awareness, skills training and exposure visits. In local struggles, NASVI always remains in the background and pushed the local organization to the centre stage. It not only enhances the stature of that organization but also bolsters their confidence and self-esteem; enhances their image in local media; and most importantly, helps them to become self-reliant. Members are now taking up all the responsibilities of their city and sometimes even pursuing advocacy at the state level.

The promptness with which NASVI acts has also brought vendors closer to it. For example, NASVI does not just concentrate on issues brought by the partner organizations alone. The core team has a tradition of producing a weekly internal »Hotspots« – digest of news from the street vending sector. Picking up these issues for its own cognizance has not only helped NASVI to keep a hand on the pulse of the sector, but also has reduced reaction time and thereby improved efficiency.

Another factor which brought vendors closer to NASVI is its holistic understanding of vendors' needs. NASVI does not only take care of their emergent legal and regulatory concerns, it also looked at their health issues and the provision of microcredit, as well as enhancing their employability through skill training, health insurance and related facilities. The comprehensiveness of its concern has earned tremendous respect for NASVI, strengthening its associational power.

Associational power was further cemented through the publication and distribution of NASVI's fortnightly newsletter *Footpath Ki Awaaz*, Voices from the Sidewalk, which is now also published in electronic edition. It provides information about ongoing local struggles, news related to successes and failures, and examples of good practice, informing, inspiring and educating its readership and developing a sense of camaraderie among them – a bond emanating from a sense of shared

lives and struggles. It also published stories of leaders of vendor organizations which motivated these leaders further. Leadership recognition has been the cornerstone of NASVI's strategy to build associational power.

Any association is only as good as its people. NASVI can safely boast of a team of motivated, professionally qualified and tactful individuals. Due to their sincerity they could attract quality people and partner organizations by acting as bridges over the years. For instance, NASVI has identified a fleet of lawyers who fight for the street vendor issues pro bono; researchers who have done ground breaking research; and sympathetic administrators and policy-makers who have promoted the cause of vendors at every possible platform.

NASVI always looks for innovative ways to instil a positive image of street vendors in the minds of public at large in order to harness both societal as well as discursive power. One unique way to achieve this was through a Street Food Festival, which fostered an appreciation of vendors' lives and legitimate contributions to the city's fabric and gave vendors confidence that when food could be prepared in hygienic way and presented aesthetically, it could command premium price. Vendors could earn more money in the three days of the festival compared to what would have taken months to earn. Now in its eighth edition, the food festivals have enhanced the self-esteem of the vendors exponentially. They have not only realized *power-to* and *power-with*, these festivals have given them a deeper sense of *power-within* as well. Taking it to the next level, the NASVI Street Food Private Ltd has been established with street food vendors as shareholders. Now the street food vendors participate in international street food festivals as well, and there are state chapters. An initiative has been launched in collaboration with Food Safety Departments, the Food Safety and Standard Authority of India and the Skill India Mission to skill and certify all the food vendors of India. These capacity-building measures are likely to bring in more potent associational power.

The media has played a pivotal role in making NASVI what it is today. Every activity conducted by NASVI was given due coverage both in print and electronic media. Rightly being a tool of mass communication, it not just raised awareness and informed the public it has helped build crucial discursive and coalitional power. Social media and NASVI's website have played a similar role, and

the recently launched mobile application »Street Sathi« (Street-buddy), aiming to assist a customer looking for an appropriate street vendor in the vicinity, has given a boost to the vendors' business.

5. Concluding Comments

In the consultation organized for this study, a senior street vendor leader commented: »Earlier we were treated as illegitimate children of India. But NASVI has accorded legitimacy to our occupation in the eyes of the government and public as well.« Using its ability to learn with each respective experience, NASVI has continually developed its power resources. A successful application of coalitional power brought various social actors together which, in turn, developed associational power. A series of studies, media campaign and advocacy activities advanced discursive power with the help of framing and learning capabilities which have helped to positively frame issues related to street vendors in the psyche of public in general and policy makers in particular. Thus, increasing associational and societal power paved the path for establishing institutional power.

Positive positioning steered by a visionary leadership has been key to NASVI gradually gaining ground, first through a policy, then a series of court judgments, and finally an act to safeguard the rights and promote interests of street vendors, each of these developments having added to mutually reinforcing institutional power resources. While its efforts over the years have given voice and visibility to street vendors, NASVI is not going to rest on its laurels. As a way forward, it has three core objectives to work towards: to enlarge its reach by expanding into new areas; to ensure effective implementation of the provisions of Act by maintaining pressure on state governments and municipal authorities; and to strengthen its internal organization. Additionally, it aims at focussing on another hugely important constituency of railway vendor who do not come under the purview of the current Act and thus stand neglected. The team feels that it is important to provide technical support to municipal bodies; develop business models to help vendors benefit from the market; and document and share best practices available in the different parts of the country. With 952 affiliate organizations and 658,129 members, NASVI is poised to synergize existing power resources and find new ones in coming years to secure better deal for the street vendors of India.



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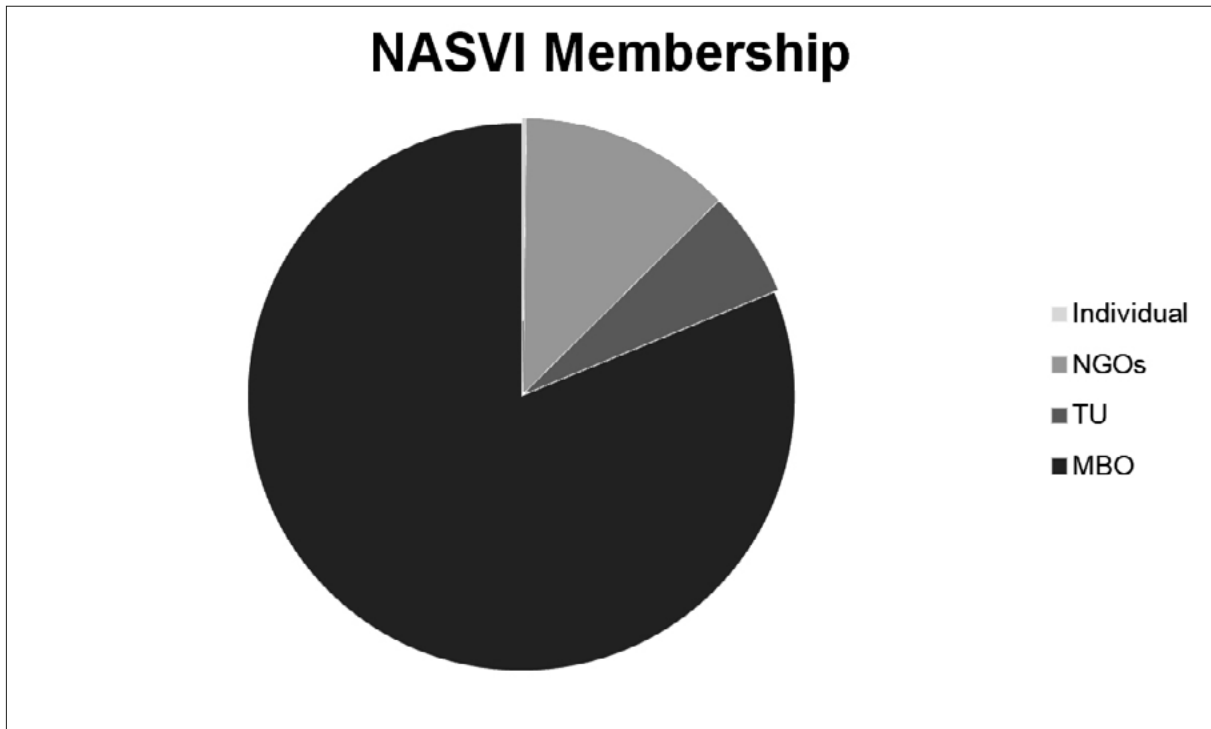
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Annex

Figure 1: Membership

The current membership of NASVI is of 658129 members of 952 organizations in 25 states of India. NASVI constitution provides for membership to Trade Unions, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) and professionals like Lawyers, Teacher, Doctors who have been associated with the cause of street vendors.



Growth of Membership

	2003–2004	2004–2005	2005–2006	2006–2007	2007–2008	2016
Individual	1	13	1	1	1	2
NGOs	43	32	19	12	12	118
MBOs	54	45	23	19	27	59
TU	33	4	8	6	19	773
Total	131	94	51	38	59	952

From 2006 onwards, NASVI was slowly starting a process of decreasing the number of NGOs in its membership and promote more MBOs and Trade Unions in its membership.

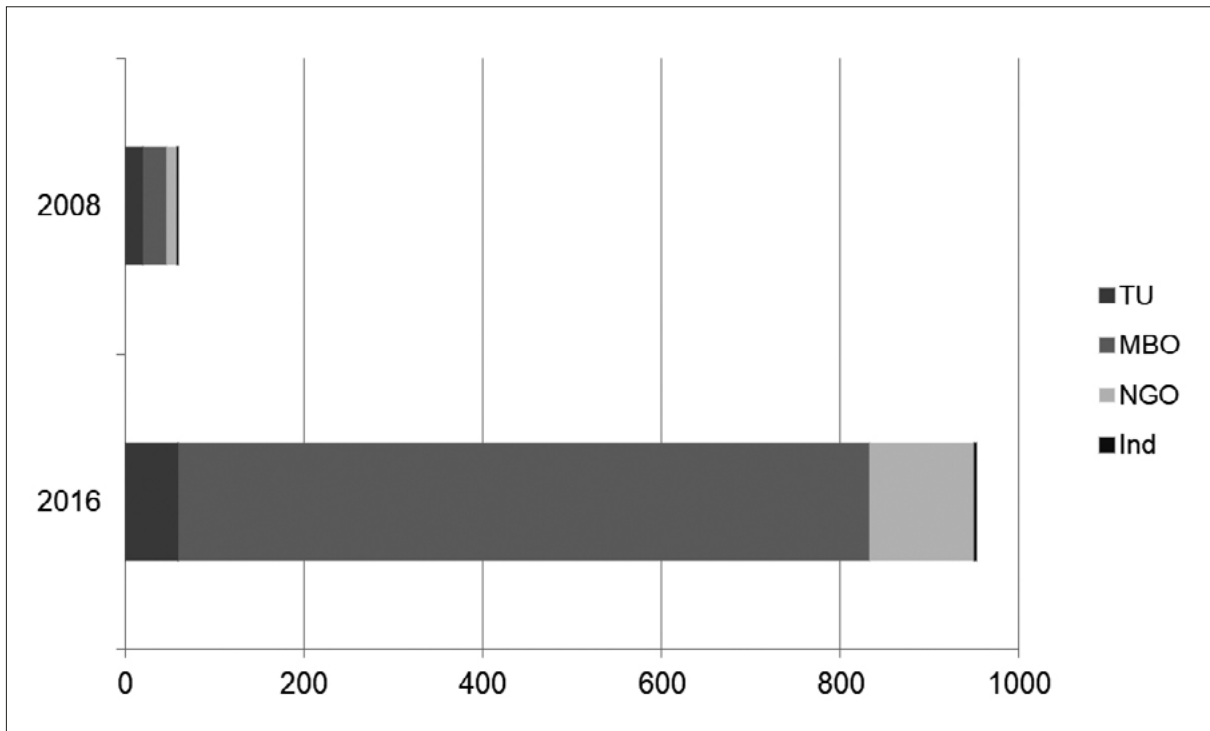
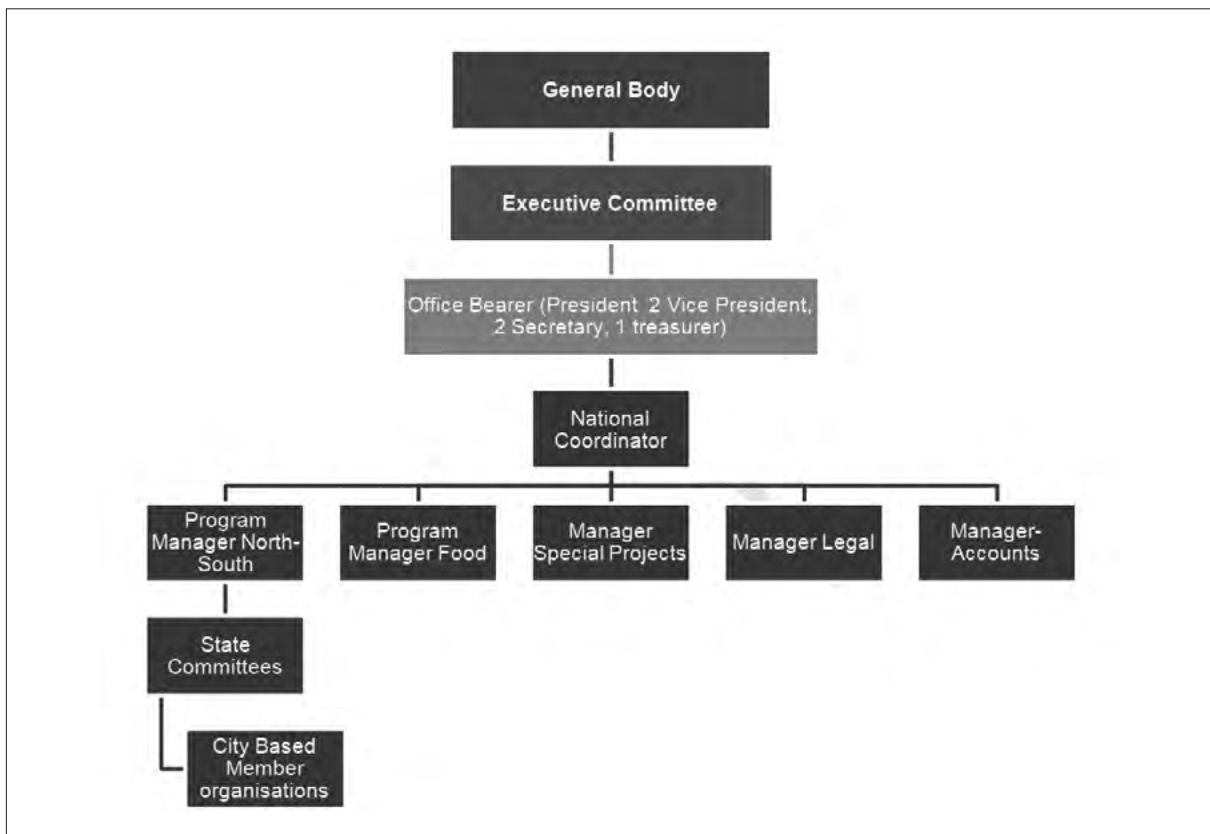


Figure 2: NASVI's Organogram





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With Trade Unions in Transformation, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) aims to direct trade union discourse at successful union work. Using the power resources approach, two dozen case studies analyze how unions were able to secure victories. For us, the Global Trade Union Programme of the FES, and our partners, learning from positive experience opens opportunities to reflect about strategic opportunities for unions in a rapidly changing environment. This project thus aims to analyze and strategize union action, including the needed transformation and mobilization of power resources within and outside the organizations.

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