

Organising Strategies



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Street Vendors

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Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	v
Chapter 1 Street Vendors and Nidan	1
Chapter 2 Organising Vendors and Hawkers	9
Chapter 3 Situation of Vendors and Hawkers	17
Chapter 4 Nidan's Interventions	25
Chapter 5 Other Experiences of Street Vendors	31
Chapter 6 Future Challenges	41
Annexure	43
List of FES Publications	45

Foreword

The informal sector in India constitutes 93 per cent of the workforce. Vendors and hawkers—both mobile and stationary (Street Vendors)—form an important component of this sector. Street Vendors provide a wide range of essential items of daily consumption in the market places and at the doorstep. Though their contribution to the urban economy is manifold, their physical presence is not recognised by city planners and other local authorities. On the contrary, they are seen as criminals, illegal encroachers, a nuisance and a hindrance to maintaining law and order.

Nidan has been working with Street Vendors in Patna since 1996. The publication in hand relates Nidan's experiences with Street Vendors, the difficulties and achievements in organising the poor in the urban unorganised sector, in their own words. The narration begins with a description of a day in the life of a vendor, Prabhawati Devi. Her main aspiration in life is to have "*a place where I can sell my vegetables peacefully without any disturbances by the police or anybody else*". Although the right to livelihood has been enshrined in the Indian Constitution under Article 39, which states that *the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means of livelihood*, Street Vendors have been denied this right. The present booklet outlines efforts towards a strategy for intervention with Street Vendors to realise this right to livelihood.

In order to facilitate the discussion on crucial issues related to the development process in India, the Gender and Development Project of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung publishes a number of contributions of which this publication is a part. The Gender and Development Project was initiated in 1989 with a focus on self-help organisations (SHGs) of women in the rural and urban informal

C 99 - 02747



sector. Besides supporting direct programme activities of NGO partners, the project aims at developing micro-macro linkages through grassroot learning and at facilitating issue oriented networking of NGOs. Action-based research, workshops and publications on issues such as organisation-building and democratic participation, livelihood and income generation and natural resource management are seen as significant instruments for democratic opinion building.

The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect those of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

December 1998
New Delhi

Luise Rürup

Street Vendors and Nidan

A Day in the Life of a Vendor

Prabhawati Devi

At the busy road crossing near the Secretariat of Bihar Government, Prabhawati Devi sells vegetables. She was the first person to start selling vegetables here. Now at least a hundred vendors sit along with her. This is how she describes her daily routine.

I get up at 5.00 a.m., clean the house and utensils by 7.00 a.m. and then set up my vegetable shop on the roadside. I sell vegetables till 10.00 a.m. and thereafter come home with the unsold vegetables. After brushing my teeth and taking a bath I prepare food and have my first meal—lunch. At 2.00 a.m. I go to the wholesale market to replenish my stocks for the day's sale and try to return by 4.00 p.m. Again I set up my shop and continue to sell till 9.30 or 10.00 p.m. After coming home I prepare dinner and manage to go to bed by 12.00 a.m. If I work hard then I am able to earn Rs 70-80 daily. However, there are many problems. For instance, since November the police is creating so much trouble that I am able to earn only Rs 800-1000 in a month. I spend about Rs 10 on myself, and another Rs 5 on my grand children and if there is any guest I spend another Rs 5-10 Rupees. Some expenses also occur when I visit my daughters. Despite these expenses I manage to save Rs 300 every month. I am not indebted to anyone except Nidan. I have a working capital of Rs 1000 with which my business runs.

Prabhawati Devi came to Patna in the year of 'Nehru's death' (1962). At that time, she was twenty-two years old. She has three daughters and a son. Her husband never supported her and later on died. She married all the 'children' and the son is settled in Orissa. One or the other daughter keeps coming to see her and even in her old age she supports them financially. As she has been selling vegetables for many years, neither the police nor any goon troubles her usually. However, she intervenes if any neighbouring vegetable vendor is being troubled. This happens almost daily. She laments about the bargaining and haggling nature of the customers. Further, carrying the commodities to and fro and setting up the

shop twice in a day is problematic and takes lot of time. In case of rains, it is more troublesome.

On how she got associated with Nidan she says:

One day you were taking photographs of vendors and I asked you what were you up to. When you explained how Nidan is trying to organise vendors and hawkers I invited you to my place. Thereafter we organised ourselves into a small group. Today most of us have availed small loans from Nidan!

When asked about her aspiration in life, she seemed to seriously ponder over it. Then her eyes lit up as she said:

A place where I can sell my vegetables peacefully without any disturbance by the police or anybody else.

About Nidan

Nidan, a non-governmental organisation, was started in 1996. We came across many women like Prabhawati Devi who are trying to eke out a livelihood in the informal sector against many odds. At Nidan, we feel it is important to facilitate a broadbased movement for recognition and implementation of rights of poor people involved in informal sector of the economy. Thus, currently Nidan is engaged in organising vendors and hawkers and home-based workers and has evolved as a small organisation of both women and men. It promotes saving habit among them and by now has mobilised savings worth Rs 1 lakh 90 thousand from members. Specifically, Nidan has taken up the issue of licenses for street vendors and grant of contract for collecting municipal tax to vendors' organisation and not to contractors. It has also taken up the cause of 'Right to Shelter' for the poor and has approached the Patna High Court on behalf of evicted residents of Adalatganj slums. Simultaneously, Nidan is promoting women co-operatives to take care of economic activities and housing needs for the poor. Credit support to women and men has been taken up with the aim of setting up an Urban Cooperative Bank in the future. Bank linkages for existing members is being explored with some success and 122 women have already got loans from the Bank of Baroda.

The education and health of 700 children of six slums of Patna is also addressed with the help of CRY (a national level NGO).

How did we start?

In January 1996, armed with a High Court order, the State Government undertook a massive anti-encroachment drive. Poor vendors were the 'soft target' and the Administration focussed on their eviction without taking any steps to rehabilitate them. They suffered more because of their unorganised nature. This senseless step evinced interest in a group of young men and women who decided to give voice to this important but neglected section of urban India. Fortunately for us we had the full support of ADITHI an established and respected NGO in Bihar, and the guidance of Viji Srinivasan. It is she who initiated us into our work with vendors and hawkers, as we had no clue as to how to translate our concern into action. At this juncture with the support and encouragement of ADITHI and others we took up a socio economic survey of vendors and hawkers. Thereafter, we got involved in various other aspects related to vendors and hawkers at times even without realising the consequences!

One of the first things, which we grappled with, was the commonly noticed 'image-building' exercise of a new administrator in towns, everywhere in India, and particularly in Bihar. The administrator's efficiency is judged on the basis of how effectively she or he displaces, removes and cleans the areas of vendors and hawkers. On being involved with the street vendors we saw how the administration is totally unconcerned about the plight of vendors and hawkers in such a situation. Again, the growing urban sector has led to a proliferation of poor vendors and hawkers making it difficult for them to make two ends meet.

The Nidan team decided to take up a proper study and analysis of this crucial section of the urban informal sector. In the meantime, we received a communication from Ela Bhatt, the Founder of SEWA, highlighting the plight of vendors and steps being taken to ameliorate their condition in other parts of the country.

In March, we felt it was necessary to register ourselves and in July 1996 Nidan got registered as a Society. The objectives of Nidan are given as in Annexure.

Present Area of Work

Nidan is presently, working in Patna district in both urban and rural areas. The urban areas include both market places as well as slums. It is not working in any established market and focuses on vendors who have been carrying on business since many years, but have not received any legal recognition. Similarly, slums adopted by Nidan are the declared slums by the District Administration, but only one can be called permanent, while others are yet to receive a permanent status by the Administration, and residents are still called 'encroachers'. The rural areas covered by Nidan are at Phulwari Block of Patna.

Although initially we faced resistance from some segments of the street vendors and the bureaucracy, at times we got the support of sympathetic individuals in the administration and ultimately an acceptance amongst the street vendors. The following chapters detail this whole process but before that a brief outline of the activities undertaken by us with a lot of support from different quarters is listed below.

Chronologically Tasks Undertaken	
January 1996	Beginning of a socio-economic survey of vendors/hawkers.
April 1996	Publication of Interim Report of the survey. Beginning of the process of registration of Nidan.
July 1996	Nidan was registered, bearing Registration No. 94. Beginning of the process of organising vendors/hawkers in different areas of Patna.
September 1996	Opening of dialogue with District Magistrate of Patna for the rehabilitation of vendors/hawkers and construction of markets for them. Three meetings held with her, but without result.

Chronologically Tasks Undertaken	
November 1996	A delegation met the Administrator of Patna Municipal Corporation. Beginning of the credit support programme. Rs. 30,000 distributed to three self-help groups of women vendors.
December 1996	Media campaign to highlight the plight of vendors/hawkers. Nidan was able to reach out to 2000 vendors/hawkers of Patna. The survey is completed.
March 1997	Release of the survey by Ela Bhatt of SEWA at a function attended by around 2000 vendors/hawkers of Patna. Government officials addressed the vendors. Distribution of loan to 50 women vendors through SIDBI. A delegation led by Ela Bhatt met the Chief Minister of Bihar, who promised help. The same delegation meets the Urban Development Commissioner and decision is taken to issue licenses to the vendors.
April 1997	As a follow up, a meeting was held with the Administrator of Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC). It was decided to issue licenses to 500 vendors/hawkers and give contract of collecting taxes of five areas to vendors' organisations. Leadership training of group leaders is organised.
May 1997	Photographs of 500 vendors/hawkers submitted to PMC.
June 1997	An exposure visit to SEWA, Ahmedabad is organised. The Administrator of PMC is transferred, followed by a series of transfers of Administrators.

Chronologically Tasks Undertaken	
August 1997	Rashtriya Grameen Vikas Nidhi sanctioned a loan of Rs. 3 lakh to Nidan, which was distributed to 300 vendors/hawkers, which included 65 men also. Beginning of a census of all vendors/hawkers of Patna within the municipal limits.
September 1997	47 women vendors were linked to Bank of Baroda, Patna Branch. A local area symposia is held, which is attended by 200 vendors/hawkers.
December 1997	A delegation met the new Urban Development Commissioner. He visited the used garment vendor of 'R' Block and arranged a meeting with his officials.
January 1998	A large meeting of vendors/hawkers was organised. The new Administrator of PMC promised to issue license and give the contract. The census is released.
March 1998	Training in the new Cooperative Act is held.
April 1998	Beginning of a study of home-based workers. Preparatory workshop held with 200 home-based workers.
May 1998	At Adalatganj, 5000 slum-dwellers were evicted. Nidan takes up their cause through Courts and by highlighting their plight.
June 1998	Workshop on the preparation of Appropriate Communication Material on legal issues. Training in savings and credit.
July 1998	Files a writ petition in the High Court on behalf of Adalatganj slum-dwellers.

Chronologically Tasks Undertaken	
September 1998	SEWA facilitates formation of the National Alliance of Street Vendors, India to strive for a comprehensive legislation of street vendors. The Executive Director of Nidan is made coordinator and it is decided that the campaign office be located at Patna.
October/ November 1998	Training on legal issues.

Organising Vendors and Hawkers

The Process

Nidan began organising vendors and hawkers in 1996 in the midst of a massive anti-encroachment drive. Initially, meetings were held in many areas. Calling the vendors to the meetings was very difficult except in areas where already there were reputed informal leaders. In all the meetings one concern kept cropping up, viz., ‘Will eviction ever stop’, or ‘Can the eviction be stopped’. We did not have an answer. If we look back, it seems that times have become harder for the street vendors with regular interventions of the Patna High Court working against them. Separate judgements of two division benches have regularly attacked the District Administration to ensure removal of encroachments. Further, it has also given power to the officer-in-charge of the local area to ensure that no person returns after eviction. This has given another lever to the police—one of the main agencies of exploitation.

To find an answer to the problem of eviction, Nidan met the District Magistrate of Patna to persuade her to construct markets, shops and kiosks and even declare ‘hawking zones’. She did not react. No immediate solution to their problem also meant that two-three groups broke away.

Finding that very few women vendors were in the market areas, being mostly mobile or scattered, we decided to form Self-Help Groups of women vendors at their residence. Thus we entered slums, which opened a whole new chapter in organising street vendors.

In the meantime FES sent us material on SEWA’s experience of organising vendors. This gave us a better insight and instead of going to the District Administration, from November 1996 we began focussing on the Patna Municipal Corporation. Our maiden debut at Patna Municipal Corporation was a disaster as the Administration was not only unconvinced but also seemed agitated with our

activities. Their outlook was that NGOs should only take up development issues and not indulge in taking up rights of the people.

Gradually, on the basis of our interaction with street vendors two types of members emerged. The first are those who received credit support and are knit into small SHGs. The second are those, with whom we interact regularly, call them to our meetings and also advocate for their rights. They can be called semi-organised as their local meeting is held when necessary and they do not have regular savings.

On March 4, 1997 a large meeting attended by over 2000 vendors was organised to release our survey findings. Ela Bhatt from SEWA also participated in this meeting which turned out to be a big success. The vendors realised their strength and felt that they were part of a larger process. They now understood that the small groups built painstakingly were not isolated but could merge or combine together for larger goals.

The leadership training coupled with an exposure visit to SEWA, Ahmedabad was another turning point. The Group leaders now began organising vendors in their own locality on their own. The SEWA Bank too became a role model and its replication became a logical extension of our Savings and Credit programme. The demand for credit increased considerably. The support of Rs 91,000 by Small Industries Development Bank of India was too little. Rashtriya Grameen Vikas Nidhi stepped in with a credit support of Rs 3 lakh. This support gave a major fillip to our organising efforts. We were also able to link 47 women with Bank of Baroda by September 1997. By the end of 1997, 2500 vendors, mostly women, were in Nidan's fold.

Unfortunately, due to quick transfer of Administrators of Patna Municipal Corporation, the issue of licenses to vendors suffered a jolt. Thereafter, we approached the new Urban Development Commissioner who also visited the residence of vendors of 'R' Block. In the meantime we had done a census of all vendors/hawkers of Patna. Ten investigators from the target group itself carried out the work for three months. The census revealed that there are 59,654 vendors/hawkers in Patna of which 21.56 per cent are women. On January 29, 1998, another large meeting attended by 2000 vendors was organised to release the census. The Administrator of Patna Municipal Corporation was the Chief Guest.

He announced that on an experimental basis licenses to 500 street vendors shall be issued and contract of collecting taxes in five areas shall be given to vendors' organisation. The coming of the Administrator to our meeting and making the announcement boosted our movement. Follow-up meetings were held with the Administrator but discussion on modalities took much time.

By this time, promotion of cooperatives became an important strategy for organising vendors. Trainings in the New Cooperative Act were held. Women were encouraged to form Cooperatives not only to take care of their economic activities but also their housing needs.

May 1998 confronted us with a big challenge. The slum-dwellers of Adalatganj were evicted to please the High Court whose judges were very angry with the Patna Municipal Corporation and District Administration for not cleaning the drainage, which led to water-logging. The plea was that the huts built at Adalatganj restricted movement of required vehicles along the drains. The fact is that the huts near the drain were cleared in September 1997 itself, and now the slum-dwellers were away from the drain. Nidan had formed seven SHGs comprising 99 members at the Adalatganj slum. It was a major setback for these groups. Concerned over their 'Right to space' we took up their cause as they had been residing there since the last 50 years.

The Administrator of Patna Municipal Corporation too got intensely involved in getting drains cleaned as the High Court had mounted enough pressure and both the public and media took much interest in it. We had to change our work priorities. The license and contract issue was pushed behind. Our credit programme too faced a set back because of repeated eviction drives.

However, capacity building of vendors continued. We responded by organising training in legal aspects, cooperative management and savings and credit.

A utensil cooperative of used garment vendors started functioning, but they are yet to be registered. Nidan also became a member of the National Alliance of Street vendors, India. Despite setbacks our organising efforts are continuing.

Problems Encountered in Organising

Organising vendors and hawkers has its own paradoxes. To an extent it is true that in the urban context due to a limited geographical area access to them is easier. The difficulties are of a different nature. The “floating nature” of many of them and the pressure from the existing nexus of the contractors, goons and money-lenders is ever present. We found our organising efforts hampered by the situation of street vendors themselves, our own constraints and limitations, and due to an external environment, which is very difficult to change.

Initially, as we began organising the vendors/hawkers many unscrupulous elements amongst them got associated in the hope of getting quick individual benefits. However, they were gradually weeded out, as they felt dissatisfied. Even otherwise, ‘urbanism’ is accompanied by individualism. As such, fostering cohesiveness and collective feeling becomes difficult. However, on core issues consensus builds up rather easily. The ‘dependence syndrome’ too creates problems. People citing examples of ineffectiveness of the government machinery hamper collective action. Again, for the vendors and hawkers maximising profit is of utmost importance due to the nature of their business and the uncertain nature of returns. Giving time for collective activities is not easy in such a situation. Finding a common time suitable for all is also not easy as members have different daily routines to follow. The members are also very skeptical, as time and again they have been cheated by fly-by-night operators who collected their savings and disappeared at the time of repayment. Only overtime these fears can be overcome.

Finding a suitable place for meetings is difficult. It has to be near their selling spots in the market place. At times there is no place to sit and talk. Onlookers not only crowd the place but also interfere. The vendors are distracted, as they need to keep an eye on their shops too. The Nidan team is constrained due to its limited staff, making it difficult to hold regular meetings everywhere and to attend to local issues raised.

On their part, government officials and the middle class in cities consider the vendors to be street smart and the cause of traffic hazards. As a result, a segment of the public and the government officials are not sympathetic to the vendors’

cause. Two public interest litigations reflect this attitude. One was regarding cleaning of drains and the other regarding removal of encroachment. In the first, the High Court ordered for removal of structures from both sides of the drains so as to facilitate movement of vehicles needed for cleaning the drains. Unfortunately, the Administration misused the judgement to clear slums in the adjoining areas too. In the second case, the High Court ordered the removal of encroachment from government land. This was interpreted to remove the slum-dwellers and vendors/hawkers from areas around the houses of affluent citizens. Frequent transfer of officials also translates into repeated efforts at advocacy.

Voices of Vendors and Hawkers

Amin Khan, a ‘second hand’ garment vendor of New Market says, “We want to change our lives, but nobody guided us sincerely. We saw a ray of hope when Nidan approached us. Earlier, people came to us only to extort money. They collected huge amounts in the name of getting shops constructed and fled.”

Lalita Devi, a vegetable vendor says that moneylenders exploited her, as she had to depend on them. Further, the police harassed them. She approached Nidan so as to solve these problems.

Sushila Devi is a seamstress. She met members of Nidan during a survey at Adalatganj. She invited them to form a SHG, as ‘she wanted to do something’ for the mohalla. Many women of Adalatganj joined Nidan so as to improve the condition of their locality as well as their lives.

Promila Devi, a vegetable vendor of Shramik Nagar had her hopes shattered when her husband deserted her. She has two daughters and was staying at her mother’s house, but here too, she felt that she was a burden. She came to know about SHGs of Nidan and became part of a SHG so as to restart her business. Today, she is a confident woman carrying on with her business.

Most of them never had any experience of getting organised. However, all of them suffered brutal exploitation and wanted to get rid of it. Thus, in the initial meetings, besides the common issues there were also specific issues. These specific issues provided different motives for joining Nidan. For example, at the Patliputra

Roundabout, it was struggle for space against the Patliputra Housing Cooperative. At Mussalapur Haat, credit support was the need. At New Market, space was the problem. At Hardinge Park, extortion was the issue.

At most places, they gathered on one or two specific issues. However, as the meetings proceeded, they realised that other issues were crucial to and, in fact, related to the main issue which attracted them to Nidan. For example, the New Market vendors joined Nidan to fight for 'right to space'. However, gradually they realised the need for 'soft credit', the fight against the contractor, the exploitation through renting out electricity and so on.

The area near the railway station that has the highest density of population in Patna had experienced some organising efforts in the past. The agitation launched by the vendors had mostly benefited their leaders. They were able to make money by 'selling' the shops to people other than vendors, who struggled for allotment of shops. Only a few vendors managed to get them. Further, their status rose and few leaders even went on to become Cabinet Minister of Bihar.

At all places, vendors were fed up of their problems, coupled with inactivity on their own part. They wanted to take steps to improve their situation. However, they were skeptical in the beginning about our motives. Our methodology of having meetings at their places itself—small and effective meetings, encouraging participation of all, transparency, openness to criticism, consensus building, solving minute problems, making them interact with government officials and so on and so forth, made them see 'a silver lining in the cloud'.

How Things Changed

Though there wasn't any objective evaluation done by us, but for an overwhelming majority of Nidan members, the word 'moneylender' has been wiped out, forever. Only a minority of them, who were either heavily indebted or did not have the skill and the strong will to get out of the clutches of the moneylender, continue to remain in their clutches.

The working capital need of 450 vendors/hawkers is fully met. The consumption needs are also met. The savings of the members have also gradually increased to

Rs 1 lakh 90 thousand. Sahida Kahatoon's group at 'R' Block had just Rs 4000 saving. However, they revolved the money so quickly that Noora was able to buy a rickshaw worth Rs 2500. Sahida was able to borrow Rs 2000 for her daughter's marriage and Umeda too, could take Rs 500 for her son's treatment. Inter-group loan had also helped. For example, Nasima of the above-mentioned group needed Rs 2000 which she borrowed from the nearby residing group.

The *churivendors* of Mussalapur, similarly, have become self-reliant. This group of 10 women has more than Rs 12,000 as saving and whenever there is a delay in loan disbursement, they manage with their own savings and do not borrow from moneylenders.

The awareness level has increased considerably. The vendors were able to analyse the genesis and location of their problems and the steps needed to solve them. The need for a strong organisation is felt and expressed by them. The need for collective action has been driven home, too. This is in sharp contrast to the initial phase of organising, when they felt 'Nidan' would solve their problems. Now, they knew that it is only they and their strong organisation, which will end their woes.

They take steps on their own initiative, too. For example, when the vendors of Punai Chak were evicted recently, they drafted an application, went to the District Magistrate and a few politicians, talked to vendors of different other places and took out a procession demanding proper rehabilitation.

Strong organisation has given them a confidence they never felt earlier. It has also evoked fear in the anti-social elements. As a result, the extortion has decreased in some places for the fear of backlash. Many a time, protests have taken place, which has deterred the extortionist elements.

At New Market, each vendor had to pay Rs 5 daily for access to electricity for lighting one bulb. Now they have got their own electricity meter installed. This saved them not only money, but also the humility of almost begging a nearby shopkeeper for allowing them to take a connection.

Organisation, awareness generation, savings and credit, advocacy, promotion of cooperatives, etc. have all begun a process of restoring self-respect and fostering a

belief that they can also achieve many things. This is altogether different from the feelings of fatality and leaving everything to destiny.

The attitude towards life is changing. Their aspirations have been raised. 'Small family is better'; 'Indebtedness shouldn't be a way of life'; 'Self-reliance is better'; 'Children should be educated'; 'Prevention is better than cure'. Such things can be heard from them now.

Situation of Vendors and Hawkers

The informal sector provides livelihood to 93 per cent of the working population in India, of which more than half are women. Rapid urbanisation has led to a massive expansion of the urban informal sector. The vendors and hawkers constitute an important and large segment of this urban informal sector with a crucial role in the commodity distribution system of towns and cities. One of the major fallouts of rapid urbanisation has been an increase not only in their numbers but also in the problems they face. Nidan undertook an extensive and in depth study of this segment of society. The study was conducted using an interview schedule, which was responded to by 5690 vendors, selected randomly, from chosen localities of the city. In every locality focal group discussions were also held.

Study Findings

Findings

Seventy-five per cent of the vendors surveyed were static, the rest being mobile. Of the static ones, 93 per cent sold their goods on the roadside; 54 per cent had their names in voters' list while 1787 (31 per cent) had ration cards in their names. Eighty-three per cent belonged to other backward castes and 11 per cent to Scheduled Castes while the upper caste share was a meager 3 per cent.

Economic Aspects

The average daily earning of vendors covered in the study was Rs 44. Out of the total respondents, 82 per cent found their earnings to be insufficient to lead a satisfactory life. Most vendors do their business with little or no capital to start with. Only 1980 (35 per cent) of the respondents made cash purchases, while 3347 (59 per cent) had to depend on credit purchases. The wholesalers prefer to give goods on credit so as to create a pool of loyal permanent customers. It

Number of Years in Vending		
Years	Number	Per cent (%)
0-5	1,508	26.50
5-10	1,020	17.93
10-15	1,047	18.40
15-20	520	9.14
20-25	630	11.07
25-30	306	5.38
30-35	307	5.40
35 and above	244	4.29
Info. N.A.	108	1.90
Total	5,690	100.00

Age-wise Distribution of Vendors		
Age Group	Number	Per cent
0-15	189	3.32
15-30	1,954	34.34
30-45	2,251	39.50
45-60	843	14.82
60 and above	379	6.66
Info. N.A.	74	1.30
Total	5,690	100.00

enables the wholesalers to determine prices on their own terms and gives them a chance to cheat while weighing goods to be given to the vendors as the latter are bound to buy from them only.

The business of vendors is exposed to general fluctuations in the commodities market. Price and demand fluctuation, particularly for those who deal in perishable goods, often leads to default in payment to the wholesalers. This forces the vendors to borrow from moneylenders, which then opens a whole new chapter of exploitation—once borrowed, indebted forever.

Distribution by Working Capital Investment		
Investment (in Rs)	Number	Per cent (%)
Below 1000	3,318	58.31
1000 - 3000	1,320	23.20
3000 - 6000	370	6.50
6000 - 9000	100	1.76
9000 - 12000	85	1.49
12000 and above	80	1.41
Business stopped due to Lack of capital	9	0.16
Info. N.A.	408	7.17
Total	5,690	100.00

Source of Credit		
Source	Number	Per cent (%)
Money lender	2,667	46.87
Bank	44	0.77
Relative	97	1.70
Wholesaler	33	0.58
Info. N.A.	2,849	50.07
Total	5,690	100.00

The moneylender is the most important source of credit for the vendor community—94 per cent depended on this informal source. Only 44 vendors (1.5 per cent) had ever borrowed from any formal source. The moneylenders have established a near formal system in Patna. They operate through permanent henchmen, who even issue passbooks to the borrowers. The rate of interest on reducing balance basis works out to be an unbelievable 482 per cent per annum. Mobile vendors using pushcarts normally pay between Rs 150 and Rs 200 as the monthly rent for hiring these carts from the owners who are the same moneylenders.

Interest Paid on Loans Per Annum		
Interest paid (in %)	Number	Per cent (%)
Below 25	67	2.36
25 - 50	95	3.34
50 - 75	956	33.65
75 - 100	47	1.65
100 - 125	1,429	50.30
125 - 150	49	1.72
150 - 175	8	0.28
175 - 200	10	0.35
200 and above	27	0.95
Not paying interest	153	5.39
Total	2,841	100.00

Basic Amenities

Shelter

The vendors covered by the study provide alarming data on the housing situation in our urban areas. As is evident from the following data a majority of them live in huts on encroached private land or on land belonging to the government. And here also most are staying in rented hut.

Type of Shelter	Number of Vendors	Percentage
Private land	3,227	57
Own hut	1,021	18
Rented hut	2,023	36
In factory premises	36	
In wholesaler's shop	147	3
Government land	2,329	41
Own hut	1,446	25
Rented hut	611	11
In own shop	66	1
On streets	206	4
Information not available	134	2

Sanitation, Water and Education

Sanitation facilities at place of residence are available only to a few. The situation is still worse at their place of work. Though Sulabh International has constructed toilets in many places, the vendors feel that the fee they have to pay is prohibitive for them to use it on a regular basis. A similar situation exists with reference to drinking water, electricity, health and education facility. For example, only about 18 per cent of the children in the school-going age go to school.

The Extortion Rackets and Harassment

Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC)

Contractors mediate the relationship between PMC and vendors. The practice of 'sub-infeudation' exists, whereby the PMC grants contracts to various individuals to collect Municipal tax. It is well known that the auction process at the PMC is stage-managed to benefit the right people. Once the contract is granted, the tax collected depends on the force and muscle power of the contractors. Vendors in different localities selling the same goods, end up paying different rates of tax. Mobile vendors due to the very nature of their business end up paying tax at more than one place on the same day. The average tax paid is thus Rs 7 daily. In places where the vendors are more organised, the tax rates are low.

Police

The vendors describe the police as 'gorillas in uniform' and 'licensed goondas'. The police play a major role in eviction exercises which forces the vendors to dance to the tune of the police, be it by paying bribes in cash and/or as goods. Eighty-three per cent of the respondents paid extortion money regularly. Mobile vendors face the wrath of traffic police at most road crossings. The worst time for any vendor is when the police 'gypsy' comes and halts in front of his or her shop.

Local Goondas

The 'dadas' are more interested in the goods, rather than cash. This also drains the earning of vendors. Cases of 'rangdari tax' are common. At Hardinge Park, daily payments add up to Rs 22 to all the extortionists—contractors, police and *dadas*.

Evictions

The most frightening experience for the vendors is the eviction exercises conducted regularly by the District or Municipal administration. They fear the sight of the 'halla gadi', the vehicles in which the eviction party arrives. Eighty-seven per cent of the vendors covered in the study mentioned that they had been evicted, at least once.

Role of Vendors Associations

At the time of the study, only three of the 50 locations covered had any kind of Association of Vendors. These three were trade unions organised by political parties. In many places, some leaders attempted unionisation, collected money and fled. These leaders collected money from the vendors on promises of obtaining land and shops.

Women Vendors

Women vendors face the same kind of problems like others but in different degrees. Being women, working in a chauvinistic environment makes them more vulnerable. Adding to their problem is the lack of basic amenities. Even access to informal credit is limited to them. Most women are mobile vendors with very little capital. During the course of our group discussions it became evident that a lot of old women, who were no longer supported by their families, were forced to take up vending for a livelihood.

The rate of interest is according to what the vendors perceived that they were paying.

Patna Census of Street Vendors

Nidan undertook a survey of street vendors in Patna in August 1997. This was an outcome of our contacts with SEWA, Ahmedabad, which was trying to coordinate an all-India effort to know the status of street vendors in various cities. The situation in Patna can be seen from the following findings.

Census Results

Category	Men		Women	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Footpath	13,467	73.79	4,783	26.21
Government land	21,464	85.80	3,552	14.20
Private land	2,089	85.40	357	14.60
Push cart (static)	5,154	97.97	107	2.03
Push cart (mobile)	1,334	99.18	11	0.82
Completely mobile	3,287	44.80	4,049	55.20
Total	46,795	78.44	12,859	21.56
	46,795	78.44	12,859	21.56
Total number of vendors	59,654			

Marginalised as they are the Street Vendors carry on their livelihood by selling various types of commodities in Patna. Except 4.10 per cent who have small shops on private land and 12.30 per cent who are completely mobile, the rest are dependent or forced to depend on government land for carrying on their business. This includes 30.59 per cent who utilise the footpath and can be seen in almost all parts of the city. Thus, wherever they find a potential market place they sell their goods, either in a basket or by putting goods on a plastic sheet or by using a cot, etc. These vendors spring up in new areas and are credited with providing goods near the customers' houses.

The census included a category called government land. By this we meant and counted people at established or informally recognised market places. Twenty-five thousand and sixteen vendors were seen to carry on their business at these market places, that is, Mithapur, New Market, Punai Chawk, Anta Ghat, Hardinge Park, etc. The finding that shows only 14.20 per cent women in contrast to 85.20 per cent men at these market places has corroborated our belief that women are discriminated against and are dominated by men.

There has been a preponderance of pushcart vendors in Patna owing to regular eviction exercises. When the police removes huts on the roadside the normal

process for them is to put commodities on the push cart, though it entails additional expense of Rs 180 per month if the push cart is taken on rent. Further it is easier for pushcart vendors to save their commodities when the police van (*halla gaddi*) for evicting them arrives. Thus 5261 vendors who carry on their business on push carts (8.82 per cent) are in established markets, but they prefer this mode because it is easy to run away and save their commodities and roam 8-10 kilometres daily going quite inside the residential areas so as to fetch higher price and consequently higher income. It must be mentioned that being mobile exposes them to exploitative forces of more areas in contrast to static vendors that have at least to contend with exploitative forces of only one area.

12.30 per cent of the vendors are completely mobile, providing service at the doorstep of the customers. Among the 7336 mobile vendors 55.19 per cent are women. Thus, this is the only category where women outnumber men. This could be due to three factors:

- (i) Access to the houses are easier for women as men are viewed with suspicion.
- (ii) Lower working capital is required as they carry goods in a basket. Women find difficulty in mustering capital and settle for this mode requiring lower capital.

Where markets are dominated by men, women face difficulties in finding a place to sell their wares.

Of the 59,654 vendors and hawkers covered by the census, men constitute 78.44 per cent while women are 21.56 per cent. The family mode of production persists: Indian social institutions have an uncanny history of adjusting and adapting to changing societal conditions. The Indian peasantry has been categorised as family mode of production where the entire family is involved in various stages of agricultural production, that is, ploughing, sowing, harvesting, etc. The system has found its way into urban areas where it is not uncommon to find the entire family involved in the small enterprise they have set up. Thus on a roadside restaurant the husband looks after customers while the wife cooks and children wash the utensils. Even in vegetable shops or *paan gumti* the family is involved as for example in *paan*—the men sell while women make *bidis*. We must admit that in such cases the investigators had a tendency to count such enterprises as owned and run by the men.

Nidan's Interventions

Credit

As we started interacting with street vendors, initially through the socio-economic survey and various meetings, a process of organising started. It was obviously a learning experience for us too. Soon the members themselves expressed the need for some activities. From our interactions we were already aware of the need for promoting savings and credit. Thus, along with organising, Nidan began promoting savings habit amongst the members. However, we were cautious in the beginning, as we were aware of the members' experience with non-bank financial institutions that had cheated them through fraud. Right from the beginning we emphasised the need for transparency. In the weekly meetings the members were told about their total group savings. Gradually bank accounts were also opened.

Credit Programme at a Glance

Year	Source	Amount disbursed	Number of Vendors			Amount paid back
			Men	Women	Total	
1996	Rashtriya Mahila Kosh	30,000		30	30	31,800
1997	Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI)	91,000		73	73	Repayment Schedule yet to start. Only interest is being paid
1997	Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi	3,00,000	68	280	348	1,10,000
1997	Bank of Baroda	47,000		47	47	47,000
1998	ADITHI	50,000		14	14	Revolving Fund
1998	Bank of Baroda	1,50,000		75	75	7,500
1998	SIDBI	2,00,000		Not yet received by Nidan		
	Friends of Women World Bank			Proposed		

Unfortunately, the immediate opening of bank accounts of the SHGs created many problems. SHGs here take time to stabilise and in some cases the signatories left after opening a bank account. Thus, now we do not get the bank account open until the group stabilises. The saving is kept in bank account of SHGs. However, if a group has not yet opened an account, it is kept in Nidan. Saving is used for a variety of purposes like marriage, treatment of disease, delivery of child, purchase of productive assets and so on and so forth.

The repayment schedule is decided by the group with the condition that it has to be within a maximum period of one year from the date of disbursement. Thus, we have daily, weekly as well as monthly repayment schedules.

The SHGs meet regularly. They also maintain minutes book and cash registers. Loan is distributed only after at least three months of group formation and is either four times or five times of the saving. A membership fee of Rs 25 is charged from members every year.

The SHGs take up a wide gamut of issues affecting their lives. They are our unit of mobilisation for facilitating collective action. Every year we have a large meeting where all the members come. Senior government officials are invited and members articulate their problems before the officials.

Formation of Cooperatives

Promotion of cooperatives is a main strategy of Nidan to take care of economic needs of the vendors. To begin with a used garment vendors cooperative called Swarnajyanti Mahila is being promoted. There are 14 founder members and were fortunate to get a grant of Rs 50,000 as a Revolving Fund from ADITHI to begin their activities. They purchase utensils at the wholesale rate, add 10 per cent margin and distribute among themselves. Every Friday they have a meeting where they return the cost of the utensil to the cooperative. If they wish to return any utensil a 5 per cent deduction from the cost is done. On Saturday, two women go to purchase utensils. On seeing the successful functioning of the cooperative it has been decided to get it registered.

Similarly, a vegetable vendors cooperative is also in the process of being promoted. One of the objectives of our micro-credit programme is to form an Urban Cooperative Bank and we are moving gradually in that direction. We have also been trying to promote a housing cooperative but have not achieved any breakthrough. This might be due to a 'dependence syndrome' and an expectation that government will construct houses for the poor.

Home based Workers: A Study

As we began organising the women vendors/hawkers at their residence invariably in every SHG one or two home-based workers became a member. Since they were neighbours and the vendors themselves were willing we could not object. While interacting with these few home based workers we realised that they too faced severe problems, though these were not as visible as the problems of vendors/hawkers.

In 1998 we decided to do a study of these home-based workers with a view to have an in-depth understanding of their problems. The study covered 820 women respondents of twenty trades. The findings are very disheartening. They earn very low wages compared to their hard work involved. They are dependent on the traders for the work. Further, the work is also irregular. Rainy season particularly affects their work. The traders also cut wages in case of wastage of raw material or wrong preparation. Due to long working hours and bad working conditions they suffer from many diseases like tuberculosis, headache, eye problems, back-ache and so on.

Since they work in an isolated manner sitting in their own houses they are unorganised. During discussions with them, it emerged that promotion of cooperatives and linkage with social security measures of government was the best possible way to ameliorate their condition.

Adalatganj Eviction

On May 11 between 2 to 6 p.m. under direct operations of the District Magistrate of Patna, around 200 houses were demolished at Adalatganj. More than 100

policemen were put to service. There were also two bulldozers, a fire service and arrangements for tear gas. People were beaten up mercilessly; everybody had to hurriedly evict for the threat of fire was always there. On May 12, the rest of the houses were demolished and over two hundred houses were set on fire. All the 865 houses in the locality were thus either demolished or set on fire.

Such a drastic step has been taken by the District Administration as an aftermath of the hearing of the Shyama Prasad Public Interest Litigation being taken up by the High Court. The District Administration and PMC were thoroughly grilled and given an ultimatum of 48 hours for something substantial to be done with regard to improving the drainage situation in the city.

The slum-dwellers of Adalatganj were evicted to please the High Court whose judges were very angry with Patna Municipal Corporation and District Administration for not cleaning the drainage, which led to water logging. The plea was that the huts built at Adalatganj restricted the movement of required vehicles along the drains. The fact is that the huts near the drain were cleared in September 1997 itself, and now the slum-dwellers were away from the drain. The residents were not given advance written notice. In cases like this the evicted have to be given a notice. Moreover, the dwellers in Adalatganj have been there for more than 50 years. The total members exceeded 5000. The households have ration cards, separate electricity meters, listing in the voters' list and every other indication of permanent habitation. This entitles them to an alternative site too.

Nidan has been working very closely with the inhabitants of Adalatganj. This has been in the areas of health, education, credit and income-generating programmes. Nidan decided to take up their cause and became an intervenor in the ongoing PIL. However, the judges declined to hear our lawyer's arguments nor did they dismiss the petition.

We rushed to Delhi but were advised to approach the High Court through a separate writ petition. Nidan filed a separate writ petition. The division bench consisting of Chief Justice B.M. Lal and Justice S.K. Singh gave the following judgement:

The petition as framed and filed for allotment of land or house to the slum-dwellers, indeed, cannot be investigated and no direction can be issued in writ jurisdiction, in the absence of any statutory provisions of law.

However, in the interest of justice, it is made clear that if the petitioners point out some appropriate provisions in the relevant local laws or even in the executive instructions issued by the government of Bihar, and, indeed, if an appropriate application is made to the concerning authorities, the same shall be considered on its own merit.

With this direction this petition is finally disposed of.

As a follow up of this direction, local law is being studied and application to the District Magistrate and Vice-Chairman of Patna Regional Development Authority shall be given.

However, the residents of Adalatganj are a harassed lot. Some have dared to stay back by putting up plastic sheets but are continually harassed by the officials. Rents are not only high but also the landlords want to keep only small families as tenants. Some have adjusted in houses of relatives but the question is - how long? Their business has also been disrupted leading to more hardship. The education of children too has been halted.

Other Experiences of Street Vendors

National Alliance

Nidan's effort of working with Street vendors is very short and has been possible with the collaboration and cooperation of other like minded people and organisations. Foremost amongst these is SEWA Ahmedabad.

SEWA has been trying to bring all the organisations working with vendors together. In this pursuit, SEWA organised a two-day workshop on 'legal status of street-vendors in India'. Vendors, NGOs, Labour Unions and Resource Centres from all over the country participated in the workshop. At the end of the workshop it was decided to form a National Alliance of Street Vendors which will strive for a comprehensive legislation for street vendors which shall also include social security measures. Subsequently, the National Alliance took shape and has now been formed. The campaign office of the National Alliance is based in Patna and the Executive Director of Nidan has been made the Coordinator for the National Alliance. In order to take forward the work of the Alliance a National Campaign is to be launched and this is to be built through:

- Documentation of live stories
- Documentation of struggles and gains by organisations
- Census estimates
- Newsletter
- Legal assistance, legal research.
- Meetings of street vendors in different cities
- Media campaign.

After being associated with the National Alliance, Nidan has been drawn to similar work taking place in other parts of the country. Given below in brief is the situation and experience of street vendors in some Indian cities.

Ahmedabad

Once hailed as Manchester of India for its vibrant textile industries, Ahmedabad has now 65,000 laid off workers struggling to survive. Most of these have taken up self-employment and are street vendors. A census conducted in 1996 by SEWA revealed that there are 65,000 street vendors spread out in 101 areas. With ever increasing traffic, vendors are considered a nuisance and traffic obstructors. The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation often removes street vendors even from the allotted vending sites, which is against the order of the High Court. As a result there have been several clashes between the vendors and police authorities. Police beat up the women street vendors and confiscate their belongings.

The AMC sources say that they have acted only on the basis of complaints made from the nearby residents to evict vendors. As a result, the vendors feel constant threat from the Municipal Corporation. In Ahmedabad, the situation is worse because the Municipal Corporation and Police openly flout even the Court orders.

A chronological order of the vendors' struggles in Ahmedabad from 1982 to 1996 reveals how much effort is required to achieve small gains.

Highlights of Vendors' Campaign in Ahmedabad 1982-1996	
1982	A Case in the Supreme Court was filed on the problem of space for 327 vendors of Manekchowk area in Ahmedabad
1982	Got a stay order from the Supreme Court for this 327 vendors.
1982	A survey of space and total number of vendors in Manekchowk.
1983	Evidence of five previous years was collected for Manekchowk case.
1983	Formation of a Trade Committee.
1984	SEWA won the Manekchowk case in the Supreme Court and 327 vendors got licenses to vend from the AMC.

Highlights of Vendors' Campaign in Ahmedabad 1982-1996

	A presentation by SEWA before the police and the Municipal Commissioner through the video cassette on the vendors of Manekchowk.
	A survey was also conducted on the passing vehicles to get Manekchowk declared as pedestrian zone.
	Harassment of the vendors by the Corporation encroachment teams stopped when the Deputy Municipal Commissioner himself was taken and shown the condition of the vendors.
	Identity cards and badges issued to these vendors by SEWA.
1985	As per the order of the Apex Court, these 327 vendors were allotted 4' x 4' space for selling by marking out the space.
1986	With reference to the Court's case, a deposit of Rs 200 per person was deposited in the AMC to build a market for these 327 vendors, and the corporation gave them the licenses.
1989	Forms of 1500 vendors were submitted in AMC for the pitch license. The Supreme Court, in its landmark judgement, considers the right to sell as a constitutional right.
1995	A 20 day sit-in strike ensued as the Municipal Commissioner disallowed 327 licensed vendor women to sit and vend.
	After negotiations with the Commissioner, he came to Manekchowk and held a meeting with the vendors and reinstated them.
1996	A census-survey of the street vendors conducted by SEWA in Ahmedabad.
	100 fish vendor women allotted space in Chamanpura area.
	600 women get space in Jamalpur flower market for vending purposes.

Bangalore

MAYA, an organisation, works for the upliftment of street vendors of Bangalore. The increase in traffic in recent years in Bangalore has resulted in a campaign on the lines of "Operation Sunshine" of Calcutta which was initiated by the Municipal Corporation of Bangalore in December. Municipal authority, with the help of the local people, resorted to forcible removal of street vendors without making any provision of alternative space to vend. The authorities acted brutally and even resorted to lathi-charge to remove what they termed "encroachment". On the other hand, street vendors were unable to defend themselves in the absence of strong and organised unions to represent their interest. Street vendors pay a membership fee to some unions in the hope that the unions would defend them against the excesses of municipal and police authorities. But there are several unions and they too are divided on different issues. This results in poor representation of the rights of the street vendors against the city authorities. The City Mayor at times assured that proper license and space would be provided to vend but nothing has materialised so far. The Honourable Supreme Court has held that hawking on footpath is a fundamental right, but such hawking need to be regulated by developing a proper scheme.

In 1990, the Karnataka High Court directed the government and the Bangalore Municipal Corporation to demarcate hawking and non-hawking zones in the city and publish it for the citizen's information. The civic body came up with a draft notification in 1992. It imposed a number of condition on the vendors to carry on the trade in their respective zones. It stipulated that the vendors should wear badges along with their photographs, after getting the permission from the corporation. It also prescribed a nominal monthly rental fee to be paid by them to the civic body. It prohibited putting up any permanent or temporary structure in the places allotted to them. But this draft notification has remained mainly on paper and without follow-up action. Presently, only some of vendors are provided space of 2'x2' and even that is insufficient to sell different items.

Bhavnagar

The estimated population of Bhavnagar is around 5 lakh, out of which there are 25,000 street vendors. These street vendors are perceived as illegal encroachers

and nuisance by the city authorities. Regular eviction drives take place as they are considered obstacle in the traffic management of the city. All this is done without any notice or without any negotiations with the vendors association. They are fined Rs 100 each time during the encroachment drive and their goods are confiscated by the municipal authorities. The street vendors cannot claim their belongings easily from the authorities as no *panchanama* is done after such drives.

The Self Employed Workers Organisation (SEWO) has a lot of experience in working for the street vendors. At the same time it is in close contact with the local authorities. This helps to a great extent in representing the issues of the vendors. The SEWO trains the members regarding the municipal corporation procedure, issue of licenses, space requirements, etc. it also takes care of the vendors families' needs and issues. In 1982, SEWO filed a petition in the High Court against the arbitrary action of the Municipal Corporation and space requirement of the local street vendors. In 1984 a consensus was reached between the Lari-Galla Association, SEWO and the Municipal Corporation to provide four by six feet space to the street vendors of the city.

In this agreement, the road which had traffic problems were left out. Instead, the corporation was to provide viable alternative space to the vendors. But this agreement suffered every time a new Commissioner was appointed in the city. The SEWO has evolved a self-regulatory mechanism among its member street vendors. They act in a responsible manner while dealing with authorities and customers. The mode of self-governance adopted by SEWO includes not to sell goods of inferior quality, no manipulation in weighing goods to be sold and to understand their responsibility towards society. This also includes the boycott of the anti-social elements by facing them unitedly and refusing to pay any extortion money to them. The SEWO has earmarked 48 acres in consultation with the Municipal Corporation, which fall outside the main traffic zones.

Calcutta

'Operation Sunshine' was launched on the midnight of November 26-27, 1996 to evict all street vendors operating on the streets of Calcutta. This operation was carried out by the government as part of the city's cleanliness and beautification drive. This was done to promote Calcutta as a destination to attract foreign

investment for industrialisation and development. Vending sites were bulldozed by the Calcutta Municipal Corporation (CMC) with the help of the Rapid Action Force and the local police. As a result, one lakh vendors were directly affected economically along with their four lakh dependents. All this happened while the negotiation between the government and street vendors was on.

Even after two years, the majority of evicted street vendors have not been rehabilitated or given any alternative place to earn their livelihood. 1500-2000 vendors have been forced to accept the vending sites, situated far away from the main markets with no basic facilities. This has adversely affected the living standards of vendors. Coupled with all these, the dailies and the magazines in Calcutta hailed the State Government's drive and created an atmosphere against the poor street vendors.

Today the street vendors movement against eviction and harassment continues. As the street vendors are firm in their resolve and determination to return to the very pavements they were evicted from, confrontation with the CMC and police occurs.

Chennai

According to a rough estimate there are 15,000 street vendors in Chennai, most of them have to sell their goods at very dirty places which adversely affect their health. Moreover, they are very badly treated by Municipal authorities. Most vendors sit near a lake which is far from the main bazar and has filthy surroundings. Result is, direct effect on flow of the customers. Despite all this, vendors have peacefully demanded proper maintenance of vending sites near the lake but the Municipal Corporation has so far failed to provide even the basic amenities like clean drinking water and sanitation facilities at the vending sites. Even for disposal of the garbage there is no arrangement from the municipal side. Street vendors are grossly dissatisfied with the Municipal Corporation's attitude and feel that poor people like have not received any benefits from the freedom our country gained after years of struggle.

Indore

SEWA, Indore has been organising women street vendors in order to fight against their exploitation by the local authorities. Since the last few years there has been tremendous increase in the number of workers in the informal sector mainly due to the closure of textile mills in Indore. In order to meet both ends, many men have started pulling rickshaws and women have started vending on streets to support their families. SEWA, Indore has taken up the cause of these women vendors' rights. Today more than 20,000 women street vendors are members of SEWA. After repeated demands for proper space, only 150-200 women vendors have been provided space and that too, far away from the main market. Customers do not visit such far-off places, and this directly affect the income of these vendors. These women vendors have been peacefully demanding proper maintenance of vending sites, basic amenities like clean drinking water, sanitation facilities which the Indore Municipal Corporation till date has failed to provide.

Madurai

In Madurai vendors are subjected to constant mental torture by the local authorities and are harassed in different ways which at times have led to a riotous situation. The municipal authorities perceive street vendors as a hindrance in the town planning process whereas the city police find them a traffic hindrance. But at the same time they accept bribe and let them continue. In fact street vendors are serving the society by catering to the basic needs of local people. Street vendors of Madurai do not have a strong and effective union to fight for their rights. The existing unions are divided and align themselves with different political parties instead of protecting and fighting for the rights of these street vendors.

Very often in the name of encroachments, these street vendors are beaten up and removed as part of the clean city drive. Support services like savings, credit, child care, legal aid, capacity building, etc. are not available to the street vendors of the city. They don't have easy access to the savings and credit facilities offered by the formal banking system. The result is that they have to approach moneylenders who charge very heavy rate of interest from the poor vendors.

New Delhi

The Adarsh Nagar Subzi Mandi is the biggest Asian market of street selling fruits and vegetable. During the census-survey carried out in 1996-97, there were almost 8000 vendors in this part of the city. Majority of these vendors have migrated at the time of partition of the country in 1947 and some have come from the adjoining districts of Uttar Pradesh. Fruit growers from Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh through the capital's Azadpur Mandi to sell their product. They complain about the lack of facilities in the market causing many hardships to them. Authorities have not provided proper sheds for unloading of the fruits consignments which remain in open for several days and thus vendors are exposed to all kinds of infection in the absence of clean drinking water and sanitation. There are more women street vendors than the male vendors. There are complaints that police officials snatch away the earnings of the male vendors at the end of the day. Hence more women sell than men. The women street vendors do not vend during late evening because of fear of the police. Women vendors in the capital have organized their unions to secure their rights.

Mumbai

Majority of the street vendors in Mumbai live in the slums like Babrekar Nagar, Dharavi and Kandiveli west as well as Nagpada and Madanpura. As independent India celebrated 50 years of freedom, Mumbai witnessed the most vicious demolition drive against these slum-dwellers the city has ever seen and this in the height of the monsoon resulting in the death of several children. The ward officers were given demolition quotas. Under the name of slum redevelopment scheme, developers are booking slum plots and evicting the old residents by force after paying them a measly compensation. To force the slum-dwellers to accept the slum redevelopment (SRD) scheme the government has stopped sanctioning various improvement and upgradation scheme for the slums.

The vendors' organizations pressurised the Municipal Corporation to allow vending in certain areas by charging certain sum of money on a daily basis. Some NGOs rushed to the High Court on the plea of obstruction to traffic if the system is implemented.

The Bellagio International Declaration of Street Vendors

At the initiative of SEWA, 27 representatives from 11 cities on five continents, met to discuss and deliberate on the global issues concerning street vendors and hawkers.

The conference participants stated that although streets all over the world are filled with vendors and hawkers, very few countries have adopted national or local policies recognising the rights of vendors and hawkers. Vendors and hawkers provide major distributive services and create self-employment and are not recognised and respected by the authorities and urban planners.

Based on the experiences and struggles of the participants, the conference adopted a Declaration claiming the rights to livelihood, space, resources and legitimate recognition.

The Bellagio International Declaration of Street Vendors

Having regard to the fact:

- that in the fast growing urban sector there is a proliferation of poor hawkers and vendors, including those who are children;
- that because of poverty, unemployment and forced migration and immigration, despite the useful service they render to society, they are looked upon as a hindrance to the planned development of cities both by the elite urbanites and the town planners alike;
- that hawkers and vendors are subjected to constant mental and physical torture by the local officials and are harassed in many other ways which at times leads to riotous situations, loss of property rights, or monetary loss;
- that there is hardly any public policy consistent with the needs of street vendors throughout the world.



We urge upon governments to form a National Policy for hawkers and vendors by making them a part of the broad structural policies aimed at improving their standards of living, by having regard to the following:

- give vendors legal status by issuing licenses, enacting laws and providing appropriate hawking zones in urban plans
- provide legal access to the use of appropriate and available space in urban areas
- protect and expand vendors' existing livelihood
- make street vendors a special component of the plans for urban development by treating them as an integral part of the urban distribution system
- issue guidelines for supportive services at local levels
- enforce regulations and promote self-governance
- set-up appropriate, participative, non-formal mechanisms with representation by street vendors and hawkers, NGOs, local authorities, the police and others
- provide street vendors with meaningful access to credit and financial services
- provide street vendors with relief measures in situation of disasters and natural calamities
- take measures for promoting a better future for child vendors and persons with disabilities.

Adopted on November 23, 1995.

Future Challenges

In retrospect it would be only fair to acknowledge that when we started Nidan we had no idea about the complexities of the situation concerning the informal sector and Street Vendors in particular. Till now we have to some extent been overwhelmed by particular situations and responded in a fire-fighting mode. Sharing our experience through this booklet has led us to introspect too. One overriding feeling that comes through is that the task of providing 'Right to urban space for the poor' is not easy. This right needs to be advocated vigorously at different forum for any substantial result at the grassroots level. Thus, in all modesty we identify the following future challenges.

More people with commitment need to be brought into the fold so as to strengthen the movement. The strengthening of the movement is also necessary to take on the mighty nexus of contractors, police, politicians and local *dadas*.

The National Alliance of Street Vendors has to get going for real benefits to percolate to the vendors/hawkers.

The experience of cooperatives has not been satisfactory in Bihar. The functioning of Cooperatives need much attention.

The legal front, we feel, is very weak. Good lawyers need to be associated on a continuous basis and capacity of members of Nidan on legal matters has to be strengthened. Right from day to day matters like confiscation of goods, assets, extortion by local 'dadas' to understanding of local laws need legal insight and capacity to tackle them.

The capacity building of members and their leaders has to be focussed upon.

The credit programme needs massive expansion if the dream of forming an Urban Cooperative Bank has to be translated into a reality. Besides micro-credit, support services are also needed. In particular, health and education need attention.

Linkage with government programmes is not easy to establish. Efforts are required to build such links. Skills and more staff are needed.

Annexure

Objectives of Nidan

To formulate and implement programmes for the social development of the poor, particularly belonging to the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Castes and the landless and underprivileged families.

To encourage poor women and men to develop the livelihood, income and employment generating opportunities and activities by taking up and strengthening various income generating schemes.

To develop Revolving Funds and other means by which the above mentioned focus group can gain access to credit for their livelihood, income, employment generation and economic activities.

To organise programmes for eradicating social evils, superstition, orthodoxy, dowry, violence against women, exploitation of women and child labour.

To generate awareness in the society and educate and train children so as to end child labour and the discrimination against girl children.

To provide information on legal matters to the backward and the oppressed, if necessary provide legal protection to them and take initiatives for benefiting common people from law.

To make people aware about family planning, blindness, leprosy, disability, AIDS and other contagious diseases.

To establish education centres for children and adults.

To establish and run health centres with a focus on mother and child health and undertake the necessary health-related programmes.

To promote development of low-cost housing for the benefit of the poor and down-trodden.

To work for the protection of the environment and take up soil conservation measures and tree plantation.

To encourage alternative and cheap system of medicine, production of herbs, setting up charitable medicine centres and methods of population control.

To work for access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities for the poor.

To educate about and train in alternative system of agriculture and non-conventional source of energy.

To undertake relief programmes during natural and man-made calamities and take up rehabilitation measures, if necessary.

To strive for restoring respect for the aged people and make arrangements for their safety and stay.

To undertake study, research, situational analysis and case studies on social issues and bring out newsletters, magazines, documents and publications for information dissemination.

To undertake training and production activities for developing traditional handicraft and cottage industries.

List of FES Publications

(Gender and Development Project)

1. Venkateswaran, Sandhya, 1992, "Living on the Edge", New Concept.
2. Friends of Women's World Banking, 1993, "Organising Savings and Credit Groups for Poor Women", Ahmedabad.
3. Association of Women Entrepreneurs of Karnataka (AWAKE), 1993, "Policy-Practice Gap with reference to Collateral Security", Bangalore.
4. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 1993, "Women and the New Economic Policy", New Concept.
5. Gupta, R.C., 1993, "Guidelines for Field Workers on Management of Self-Help Savings and Credit Groups", New Concept.
6. Kaushik, Susheela, 1993, "Women and Panchayati Raj", Har-Anand Publications.
7. Gupta, R.C., 1994, "Management of Savings and Credit Programmes by NGOs", Har-Anand Publications.
8. Venkateswaran, Sandhya, 1994, "The Wealth if Waste", New Concept.
9. Kumari, Ranjana and Anju Dubey, 1994, "Women Parliamentarians", Har Anand Publications.
10. Prasad, Nandini, 1994, "A Vision Unveiled", Har Anand Publications.
11. SSAI, 1994, "Social Security for Women", New Delhi.
12. Gupta R.C., 1994, "NGO Experiences in Social Security", New Concept.
13. Kumari, Abhilasha and Sabina Kidwai, 1994, "Illusion of Power: The Women's vote", New Concept.
14. Youth for Action, 1995, "Emerging Issues on NGO Credit", Hyderabad.
15. Youth for Action, 1994, "The Community and Natural Resources Management", Hyderabad.
16. Ramaswamy, Uma, 1995, "Organising with a Gender Perspective", New Concept.

17. Kaushik, Susheela, 1995, "Panchayati Raj in Action: Challenges to Women's role", New Concept.
18. Sen, Ilina, 1995, "Sukhvasin, The Migrant Women of Chhattisgarh", New Concept.
19. Gupta, R.C. 1995, "Seeking Institutional Finance, Guidelines for NGOs", New Concept.
20. Kaushik, Susheela, 1996, "Panchayati Raj in Action: Challenges to Women's role", revised edition, New Concept.
21. Venkateswaran, Sandhya, 1996, "AYUDARE, Towards Women's Empowerment in the Santhal Parganas", Tulika Publishers.
22. Rao, Nitya, Luise Rürup, R. Sudarshan (eds.), 1996, "Sites of Change: The Structural Context for Empowering Women in India", Tulika Publishers.
23. ISST resource books in Hindi, 1996:
 - (a) *Haryana mein panchayati raj;*
 - (b) *Saath-saath aage badhein;*
 - (c) *Buniyaad majboot banana hai;*
 - (d) *Andhere se ujale ki ore;*
 - (e) *Natak se jeevan ki bhumika tak.*
24. Gupta, R.C., 1996, "Guidelines for Field Workers: On Management of Self-Help Savings and credit Groups", New Concept.
25. Kumari, Abhilasha and Sabina Kidwai, 1996, "Crossing the Sacred Line: Women's Search for Political Power", New Concept.
26. Rao, Nitya and Luise Rürup, 1997, "A Just Right: Women's Ownership of Natural Resources and Livelihood Security", New Concept.
27. Murthy, Ranjana K. and Nitya Rao, 1997, "Addressing Poverty: Indian NGOs and their Capacity Enhancement in the 1990s", New Concept.
28. Pandey, Balaji, 1998, "Displaced Development: Impact of Open Cast Mining on Women", New Concept.