



## A STUDY OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION OF VEGETABLE STREET VENDORS IN RANCHI

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*The study focuses on the socio-economic condition of vegetable vendors in Ranchi. Special emphasis has been given on reasons of entering women vegetable vendors into vending job and their problems. For this purpose, a survey was conducted in 2011-12 to know the socio-economic condition of vegetable street vendors in Ranchi. This survey covered 124 vendors in those streets and various markets and hatias (local weekly vegetable markets) of Ranchi, where, there is a large concentration of vegetable street vendors. Based on this survey, the study has found that the socio-economic condition of both male and female is very poor but, if a comparison is made between them, we see that the condition of women vendors is more vulnerable than male vendors.*

*The study reveals that the income of women vendors is lower than that of male vendors as because most of the women vendors belong to poor ST families. They have a very less capital to invest in their business. Women vendors in Ranchi, choose this trade because of poverty and also because the male members in the family do not have jobs and even if they earn money, they spend those money mostly on liquor. Their low income, double burden of having to work on the streets and look after the home and low level of unionization make them the invisible section of street vendors. Less or no Public toilet in the streets of Ranchi has an adverse effect on women vendor's health and many suffer from various infection. The mobile women street vendors also face security issues.*

*Key words: vegetable street vendors, their socio-economic condition, in Ranchi, Jharkhand*

### **Introduction**

Poverty is multidimensional in nature having originated from a diverse range of conditions. The poor exist both in rural and urban areas of developing economies. Rural poverty is in fact directly related to land ownership and control over land. The urban poor consist largely of overflow of the rural who migrate to towns in search of job. There is a very little space for the poor pushed out from villages by poverty and social degradation. Most of them live in unhygienic condition in unending security as they can be displaced any time by local authority or other powerful groups. Poor people are always unorganized and often remain invisible. A major section of the self-employed work as street vendors. For the urban poor, street vending is one way of earning a livelihood, as it requires a very little capital and minimum skills though the income is too low. There is also gender dimension to poverty, since the poor woman has to shoulder the double burden of being disadvantaged by being female and doubly disadvantaged by being poor. Most of the vendors are males as female vendors constitute a small section of the profession where, they are hardly unionized. Only in Ahmedabad, female vendors constitute a sizeable section (40%) and they are also unionized mainly due to the efforts of Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). It helps them to start self-help groups for micro credit to solve the immediate problems of capital. In India, since in Ahmedabad female vendors are unionized, so rent seeking is much lower.

The Government of India has used the term 'urban vendor' as inclusive of traders and service providers, stationary as well as mobile, and in local/region, specific terms are used to describe them. Street vendors or hawkers is stationary in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or other public/private spaces or they may be mobile in the sense they move from one place to another place by carrying their goods on push carts or in baskets or in cycles or even on their heads or shoulders and sell goods in moving buses or trains or door to door. etc. Mostly, they are independent sellers, but, some are found to be extensions (subsidiaries) of regular stores. Street vendors are mainly those who are unable to get regular jobs and have tried to solve their problems through their own little resources to live their life with dignity and self-respect through hard work, not engaged in begging or stealing.

Jharkhand, 28th state, separated from Bihar on November 15th 2000, though rich in natural and mineral resources, ranks one among the poorer states of the country. Ranchi, the capital of Jharkhand (known for Heavy Engineering Corporation, HEC in sixties) has the tremendous potential in achieving high economic growth in the state as there is the ample opportunity for setting up small, medium and large scale industries and has the highest market size. Even then, a large portion of people depend on informal sector in this state and the number of street vendors is increasing in the state as because of rise of population, lack of job opportunities coupled with poverty in rural areas has attracted the people to come out of their villages in search of a better existence in this city. A major cause for rural-urban migration is surplus labor in the rural agriculture sector and poor economic condition. Land does not expand, while population keeps on growing. They have no place to go but to the cities, hoping to improve their lots. With low skills and in most cases, no education, no ability to find better paid and secured employment in the formal sector, they have to work in the informal sector. Moreover, due to closure of many small and medium factories and no new opportunity for employment and closure of ancillary industries in Ranchi, many workers are out of job and have to depend on vending in order to survive. Migration from other states is causing the extra burden to the population of this city.

There is no clear picture of the number of men and women vendors in Ranchi. The male vendors are more visible than women vendors as the male vendors sell greater varieties of goods. The women vendors are seen to sell only fruits and vegetables and if we compare among fruit and vegetable vendors, we see that vegetable vendors are more in number.

## **Literature Review**

In African countries street vending is not considered as a model occupation for male rather it is more appropriate for women. In the west, a high degree of specialization is needed in street commerce and men's involvement is more. Within street trade, gender specialization and hierarchy are also present. Women are found in greater numbers in Vietnam and Cambodia where they form the majority.

Among other informal workers in urban areas, the street vendor in general is the poorest

and economically vulnerable (Çargoklu and Eder2006).

Brata, (2006) finds that other aspects of vendors' vulnerability besides insufficient institutional arrangements for vendors are such as having to provide and care for dependants, working long hours and coping with the debilitating consequences of their material poverty, or in their relation with their suppliers or creditors.

Chinchilla, et al, 1993; Lund, 1998, 1997; suggests that women, constituting a prominent disadvantaged social group, tend to be particularly attracted to street vending because a significant portion of the women belonging to the weaker and deprived section of the population who look for employment in the informal sector as because of lack of skill, maximum flexibility in terms of combining work and child care.

Contemporary writing on informal sector has neglected street vending. It was the efforts of Ela bhatt, the founder of self employed women's association (SEWA) that attracted Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and researchers to the cause of street vendors. SEWA was also instrumental in getting the Bellagio declaration 09framed and in the formation of national association of street vendors of India (NASVI).

Bhowmik (2001) conducted a study for NASVI in seven big cities, namely, Mumbai, Kolkata, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Patna, Ahmedabad and Imphal, highlighting four major issues; the legal status of vendors, the nature of trade and their socio-economic condition, the allotment of space for vendors in urban plans and the perception of customers towards vendors.

According to Bhowmik (2002), women street vendors in India prefer to be fully dynamic, never stop or rest too long at any one place, to avoid thugs and/or harassments.

The Dabir-Alai's work (2004) has measured the vulnerability of street vendors preparing a composite index of vulnerability of selected vendors in Delhi and found that bullying is the most vulnerability element of vendors, it counts for about 73 percent of respondents. Meanwhile only one percents of vendors has relation with suppliers or creditors, which also indicate that most of street vendors use self financing method for their business.

Jhabvala (2000) has highlighted the issue of exploitation of women vendors.

Bhowmik (2005) has attempted to compare the plight of vendors in different Asian nations by identifying their major problems.

Another work by Bhowmik (2010) has highlighted some very important issues relating to vendors such as impact of urbanization and globalization.

Raman Rakesh (2010-11) has conducted a study on women food and vegetable vendors in northern India and found that women vendors, most of whom come from the socially backward and economically deprived sections of the society.

Thus, we see that though street vending is expanding rapidly, there is a very few research on this issue, specially in Jharkhand. So, there is an urgent need to encourage more research on this important segment of the urban vendors and special focus must be on women vendors.

## **Objectives**

Objectives of the study are as follows:

- To know the demographic, socio-economic and geographic conditions of male and female vegetable street vendors of Ranchi.
- To make a comparison between demographic, socio-economic and geographic conditions of male and female vegetable vendors.
- To know the reasons of entering women into vegetable vending.
- To explore the specific problems which women face in the vegetable vending.
- To provide some suggestions to remove their problems.

## **Methodology and Survey Design**

Data has been collected from both secondary and primary sources. Secondary data has been collected from Jharkhand Urban Development Department, Municipal Authority, different Government Bodies, books, journals, different websites, the local newspaper reports on the activities of street vendors and the attitude of the government, police and urban local bodies (ULBs). The study has resorted to the use of mixed methods with the quantitative method being dominant one for drawing samples from the population and for analyzing the data. In the first stage, the city, Ranchi in Jharkhand, in India has been selected as a large scale migration has been taken place and the city is the best indicator of urbanization and in the second stage, those vegetable markets, Hatias and street markets of different localities of Ranchi, (HEC hatia in Tuesday, Friday only), Doranda market and its nearby streets in all days in a week, Lalpur street market all days in a week, daily market (main) and adjacent streets, all days in a week, have been chosen, as there is a large number of street vendors selling vegetables. Some semi urban areas were also tapped like Namkum, Itki, Kathalmor and Kankey weekly market etc. Total 124 respondents (76 male vegetable vendors and 48 women vegetable vendors) from those streets and markets of the city, have been selected by a random draw. Information has been gathered from respondents through personal interviews, based on a set of well structured and predetermined questions regarding age, education, marital status, caste, income and distance travelled, since most of the vendors are illiterate. To collect more and more information, informal interview has also been taken.

Data has been analyzed with the help of excel method. Appropriate statistical tools like percentage, average, standard deviation and coefficient of variation have been used to measure the demographic, socio-economic and geographic conditions of male and female vegetable street vendors of Ranchi.

## **Survey Result**

Following result has been obtained about the socio-economic, demographic and geographic condition of male and female vegetable vendors from the survey conducted in 2011-12. The table 1 provides a picture of the male and female % in vegetable street vending and their demographic, socio-economic and geographic characteristics.

**Table 1 : Genderwise Distribution of Vegetable Vendors and their Demographics & Socio Economic & Socio Economic Characteristics**

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage	Average	Standard Deviation (S.D )	Co-efficient of variation C.V
Gender	Male (M) Female (F) Total	76 48 124	M-61.29 F-38.71			_____
Age	20-30 years 30-40 40-50 50&above	M-24, F-06 M-26, F-10 M-15, F-25 M-11, F-07	M-31.57, F-12.5 M-34.21, F-20.8 M-19.73, F-52 M-14.47, F-14.6	M- 36.71 F- 41.87	M-10.3 F-8.69	M-28.08 F-20.75
Marital status	Married Unmarried	M-72, F-46 M-04, F-02	M-94.7, F-95.83 M-5.3, F-4.16			
Education	Illiterate Primary Matriculate and above.	M-56, F-46 M-60, F-02 M-04, F-00	M-73.68, F-95.83 M-21.05, F-4.16 M-5.26, F-00			
Caste	Upper Caste OBC SC ST	M-02, F-00 M-28, F-15 M-12, F-02 M-34, F-31	M-2.63, F-00 M-36.84, F-48.38 M-15.78, F-4.16 M-44.73, F-64.58			
Family size	1-3 member 3-6 member 6 & above	M-06, F-04 M-58, F-32 M-12, F-12	M-7.89, F-8.33 M-76.3, F-66.66 M-15.78, F-25	M-4.77 F-5.04	M-1.3 F-1.1	M-27.25 F-22.2
I n c o m e (Monthly)	Below :- 2000/- 2000/- TO 4000/- 4000/- TO 6000/ 6000/- TO 8000/ 8000 / - ABOVE	M-05, F-07 M-24, F-28 M-26, F-07 M-12, F-04 M-09, F-02	M-6.57, F-14.58 M-31.5, F-58.33 M-34.21, F-14.58 M-15.78, F-8.33 M-11.84, F-4.16	M-5026/- F-3583/-	1850.89 5802.70	36.82 161.93
D i s t a n c e Travelled to local market from their house..	1-2 Km 2-3 Km 3-4 Km 4-5 Km More than 5 Km	M-05, F-12 M-09, F-15 M-23, F-11 M-21, F-05 M-18, F-05	M-6.5, F-25 M-11.8, F-31.25 M-30.26, F-22.9 M-27.63, F-10.4 M-23.68, F-10.4	M-4KM F-3KM	M-1.35 F-1.03	M-33.8 F-34.3

Source: Author's calculation based on primary data.

The study reveals that the % of women vegetable vendors is only 38.71, whereas the % of male vegetable vendors is 61.29, since vending profession is looked down upon by the society. People do not prefer the female members of the family to sit on the roadside, selling vegetables. They join into this profession only when they have no choice. Highest

% of the women and male vegetable vendors are from ST category but the percentage is more in case of ST female vendors as because of the tribal males are very lazy and alcoholic by nature.

The average monthly male vendors' income is Rs 5026 and average daily income is 167 Rs per day. Women's average monthly income is Rs. 3583 and daily average income is Rs. 119. Thus we see that the income of male and female vendors both is very low but if we compare between them it is seen that women vendor's income is much less than male vendors as the women vendors are not able to arrange loans, to invest capital and devote much time as they have to look after small children and perform all household jobs. Information gathered from them, shows that most of the women vendors sale vegetables, coming from nearby villages either in the 1st half of the day in the 2nd half only because of their engagement in their houses.

In case of male and female vegetable vendors, standard deviation (SD) and co-efficient of variation (CV) both are high, showing that the average income figures are not reliable and. in case of women vendors the SD and CV both are higher than male which shows that the condition of women vendors is more critical than male.

We see that in case of female, the percentage of married vendors is more and so far as age is concerned, again we see that the mean age of female is greater than mean age of male because the women choose this profession under economic compulsion only when they see that husband's income is insufficient to meet their daily needs and thus it is quite natural that women enter in to vending profession quite late. Moreover, they could not spend much time on their work because they always have the double burden as they have to manage their home as well as outside. The primary survey has found a very high level of illiteracy among both male and female vendors. They even do not know to write their names. We see from the table that the percentage of illiterate women is greater than the male, but women are very eager to continue their children's education, instead of so many compulsions. They (both male and female) have a high mean size of family as they very little bother about family planning. Mean distance travelled to the market in case of man is 4 KM and in case of female it is 3 KM, though less, but, many have complained that it is very stressful for them.

From the information gathered from field survey, the reasons for women's involvement can be drawn. Table 2: gives the reasons of joining women in vegetable vending. From the table above, it can be inferred that due to poverty, highest % of women (31.25%) has been entered into this profession. Secondly, 25% of women have said that as because the male members in the family do not have jobs and even if, they earn money, they spend mostly on liquor. 12.5% is of opinion that as they have no education, so they have to opt this vending job, whereas 10.4% have to choose it due to lack of skill. 8.33% of women have chosen the vending job as their husbands' low income or their husbands are jobless, as the study shows that some of the women street vendors belong to families in which the male members were once employed in better paid, secure jobs in the formal sector. They were unemployed when their enterprises were closed. The same % of women have entered due to traditional profession. 4.16% is bound to adopt this vending as their husband is dead

and there is no grown up male members to support their families.

**Table 2 : Reasons of Joining Women in Vegetable Vending**

Reasons	Frequency	Women's %
Poverty	15	31.25
Husband is drunkard & no support from him.	12	25
Husband is job-less or insufficient income	04	8.33
Husband is dead or no grown up male members to support her.	02	4.16
Traditional Profession	04	8.33
Lack of skill to adopt other job	05	10.4
Illiteracy	06	12.5

*Source: Author's calculation based on primary data*

The women vendors face various problems as they are women and as well as they are vendors. Most of them have no education, no capital for further investment, no skill and no support from family or other male vendors or society. Table3: depicts the problems faced by women vegetable vendors.

**Table 3 : The Problems Faced By Women Vegetable Vendors.**

Problems	Frequency	% of women facing problem
Time Consuming	04	8.33
Physical and mental strain	06	12.5
Lack of basic civic amenities	05	10.4
Double Burden	03	06.25
No social support	05	10.4
Lack of capital	07	14.58
No union and protection	02	4.16
Harassment from municipal authorities, police and local bodies or dalals.	09	18.75
Exploitation	07	14.58

*Source: Author's calculation based on primary data*

Thus, we see that women vendors face the above problems. 14.58% of women are of opinion that lack of capital and exploitation are major problems, they face. Whereas, 18.75% ( highest% ) of women think that harassment from municipal authorities, police and local bodies are great and most critical problem. All vendors have to pay a fixed daily sum to the police or dalals every day, yet, they are often abused verbally or even

physically. Women vendors are harassed by the male vendors also and are not allowed mostly to sit on the pavements or in the daily make shift markets. Physical and mental strain are major problems and 12.5% of women find this problem. 8.33% has said that the vending job is very time consuming and 6.25% women find that double burden is a responsible reason. 10.4% women feel that due to lack of basic civic amenities, they suffer from health problems. Public toilet has an adverse effect on women's health and many suffer from various infection and the same % of women think that as they have no social support, they suffer a lot. 4.16% feels that due to absence of union, they are always harassed, and dislocated by the municipal authorities and the police, local authorities or dalals and mafias.

### **Conclusion**

Vegetable vendors make an important contribution to the urban economy. Unfortunately, instead of protecting this sector, the Government is indifferent to their existence. So there must be a shift of perspectives and focus must be given on their economic potentials. Important aspects of street vendors are unfortunately ignored by the Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

More often, street vending is considered an illegal activity and street vendors are treated as criminals. Study reveals that it is true that on main roads and specially in the heart of the city Ranchi, it is true that the street vendors create road block every day. The Grameen Banks and the nationalized Banks should provide loans to urban planners to design public spaces accessible for them, so that they are not forced to encroach on pedestrian walks and roadways. It is also time for public administrators to respect those plans. The people will make understand that it is not a problem rather a solution. People need to revise their perception of the street vending, not by sweeping them off the streets rather they deserve support.

In fact from various studies and reports, it has been seen that in almost all the Asian countries, street vendors have no legal status (except a few) to conduct their business and they are constantly harassed by the various authorities. They face various problems like obtaining license, insecurity of earnings, insecurity of place of hawking, gratifying officers and musclemen, constant eviction threat, fines and harassment by traffic police. Street vendors have poor social protection and their working conditions on the streets expose them to a variety of safety and health issue. Due to lack of awareness about their rights, without doing anything concrete to improve their insecurity, no support to protect their rights, they have to continue their profession in the city. The different political parties use them for their own purposes and gains. They face the problem of capital and depend mainly on loans from friends, family or money lenders to run their business. Even those who are licensed, rarely approach banks because of the huge paper work involved in getting loans. The improvement in the condition of vendors and a special focus on women vendors requires to give them a legal status, fixation of the number, organization themselves into trade unions and associations.

NGOs and social activists should come forward to provide some informal education to the vendors, so that they can understand their rights and duties. Special efforts should be made by the Government to provide them vocational education and to attract the children of vendors to schools. The recognized trade unions should help them in communicating their

problems and the level of unionization will help in reducing their exploitation.

Self help groups must be started for health schemes and micro credit to solve the immediate problems of capital, otherwise, they have to borrow from moneylenders at high rates of interest. Micro financing is hugely popular and proven tool since Prof. Mohammad Yunus.

In post liberalization and globalization era, historically marginalized sectors of Indian society have been experiencing a process of further marginalization and downward social and economic mobility. In India affirmative action policy is confined only to the state and public sector. Unorganized sector is totally excluded, where more than 90% of low cast, untouchables and tribal still earn their livelihood. In this sector there is no protection. There is a close relationship between poverty and illiteracy. The number of poor and the number of illiterate are not very different even after 66 years of our independence.

The street vendors deserve support, not only because they are part of the poor and the weak, but, they serve an economic purpose as such they are productive and an urban asset. In the new economic perspectives, informal sector is viewed positively, as an outlet for human creativity, as a courageous manifestation of an economy in a survival mode. Workers participation in this sector are now seen as heroes, surviving against all odds.

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