

# **HAWKERS AND THE URBAN INFORMAL SECTOR**

## **A STUDY OF STREET VENDING IN SEVEN CITIES**

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## **Hawkers and the Urban Informal Sector : A Report**

### **Section I : Introduction**

This report is based on a study of hawkers and street vendors conducted in seven cities in India. It was initiated by the National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) and as such it is not merely an academic exercise in understanding the problems of this section of the work force. The purpose of this study is two-fold. Firstly, it tries to objectively understand the problems of street vendors in urban areas. Its scope is not restricted to street vendors alone but it tries to relate the profession in the wider urban context by examining the legal status of hawkers, their contribution to the urban economy, the problems they face, the perceptions of the urban population towards them, and their position in urban society. Secondly, based on the above information this report attempts to examine and understand the problems faced by the street vendors and the possible means of overcoming these.

In most Indian cities the urban poor survive by working in the informal sector. Poverty and lack of gainful employment in the rural areas and in the smaller towns drive large numbers of people to the cities for work and livelihood. These people generally possess low skills and lack the level of education required for the better paid jobs in the organised sector. Besides, permanent protected jobs in the organised sector are shrinking hence even those having the requisite skills are unable to find proper employment. For these people work in the informal sector are the only means for their survival. This has led to a rapid growth of the informal sector in most of the larger cities. For the urban poor, hawking is one of the means of earning a livelihood, as it requires minor financial input and the skills involved are low.

A large section of street vendors in urban areas are those with low skills and who have migrated to the larger cities from rural areas or small towns in search of employment. These people take to street vending when they do not find other means of livelihood. Though the income in this profession is low, the investment too is low and the people do not require special skills or training. Hence for these people, men and women, street vending is the easiest form for earning their livelihood.

There is also another section of the urban population that has taken to street vending, as our studies from the metropolises of Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Calcutta have brought out. These people, or their spouses, were once engaged in better paid jobs in the formal sector. Most of them were employed in the textile mills in Mumbai and Ahmedabad and engineering firms in Calcutta. Formal sector workers in these three metropolises have had to face large-scale unemployment due to the closure of these industries. Many of them, or their wives, have become street vendors in order to eke out a living.

Thus, over the past few decades we can observe that there is substantial increase in the number of hawkers in the major Indian cities. Mumbai has the largest number of hawkers numbering around 200,000. Calcutta has more than 100,000 hawkers. Ahmedabad and Patna have around 80,000 each and Indore, Bangalore and Bhubaneshwar have around 30,000 hawkers.

The total employment provided through hawking becomes larger if we consider the fact that they sustain certain industries by providing markets for their products. A lot of the goods sold by hawkers, such as clothes and hosiery, leather and moulded plastic goods and household goods, are manufactured in small scale or home-based industries. These industries employ a large number of workers. The manufacturers could have hardly marketed their products on their own. In this way they provide a valuable service by helping sustain employment in these industries.

These aspects are, however, ignored by the urban authorities-the municipality and the police-because more often than not hawking is considered an illegal activity and hawkers are treated as criminals.

### **Need for this Study**

A brief background on the evolution of this study will help in understanding its objectives. On 10 December 1998, on the initiative of Ms. Ela Bhat of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a meeting of a core group of sympathisers was organised in Mumbai. The group comprised some of the activists of NASVI such as Ms. Ela Bhat, Ms. Renana Jhabvala, Ms. Manali Shah, Mr. Arvind Singh, Ms. Mirai Chatterji, Mr. Sharad Rao and lawyers such as Ms. Indira Jaisingh and Ms. Rani Advani.

The group discussed the legal and other problems faced by the street vendors. At the end of the meeting it was decided that the conventional forms of trade union action undertaken by street vendors were not enough. Unions organise protest meetings and demonstrations when street vendors are threatened by the municipalities or the police. If this does not get them any redressal, they go to court and obtain stay orders against the action taken by the civic bodies. These are basically stop-gap arrangements and are more like fire-fighting methods. In other words, whenever hawkers feel threatened they resort to actions that enable them to continue their business, though for temporary periods.

These methods are not sufficient, as they are merely reactions to the threats from the authorities. What is needed is a long-term perspective on hawkers at the national level. On the one hand it is important to intensify NASVI's activities of forming a network among hawkers' trade unions and other organisations working among them such as NGOs, Voluntary Organisations etc. At the same time, in order to justify the rights of the hawkers for existence with self-respect it is necessary to study all the problems associated with hawking in urban areas. A mere assertion of the demands of hawkers for the right to work and the right to an existence is not enough to put forth their case at the national level. It is necessary to examine all factors associated with hawking as a profession. Only then could a clear idea on the problem emerge. This in turn can help organising a national campaign on problems of street vendors.

What are the problems relating to hawking? The above mentioned meeting identified four major issues in this connection. These are:

1. In most cities hawking is regarded as an illegal activity. There are municipal and police laws that impose restrictions on the trade. In most cases these laws do not directly prohibit hawking as a profession. They impose restrictions on the use of urban

- space for street vending. Hence there is a need to study the municipal laws in different cities/states.
2. This brings up the next important issue, namely, the urban plans. All urban plans allot space for public use. These include space for parks and gardens, markets, educational institutions, hospitals etc. An assessment of these plans should be made in order to find out if some of this space could be allotted for street vending.
  3. Besides examining the existing laws and the plans, it is also necessary to study the nature of the trade in its totality. A study of the hawkers should be conducted, as this will throw light on the type of problems the hawkers' face. In some cities, such as Mumbai, Calcutta and Ahmedabad there existed surveys on street vendors. In Mumbai, the municipal corporation had commissioned the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and Youth for Unity and Voluntary action (YUVA), an NGO, to undertake a census of hawkers who conduct their business on municipal lands. More recently, in 2000, the SNTD Women's University in Mumbai in collaboration with the International Labour Organisation, conducted a study on street vendors in Mumbai. In Ahmedabad, SEWA had conducted studies on hawkers in the city and in Calcutta, the Hawkers' Sangram Committee had conducted some studies on the trade. The findings of these studies could supplement the reports on street vendors carried out in this study.
  4. Another important aspect of this trade is the views of the consumers. Who are the people who buy from street vendors and why do they patronise them? What, according to them, are the positive and negative aspects of hawking?

The meeting felt that a comprehensive study of this sort could throw up many important issues relating to street vending. It could provide concrete data for furthering the cause of the hawkers and at the same time provide issues which could form the basis of a national movement. The trade unions and other organisations working for the hawkers could use the findings as the basis for fighting for concrete positive proposals at the regional level as well as the national level. In other words, the findings of this study could become the platform for NASVI to further the cause of hawkers.

### **Studies on Street Vending**

The meeting decided that NASVI should sponsor studies in different cities based on the above five aspects. Eight cities were selected for this purpose. They are: Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Indore, Calcutta, Imphal, Patna, Bhubaneswar and Bangalore. Researchers were appointed in each of these cities to conduct the study. The researchers were Nitin More (Mumbai), Prashant Gulati (Ahmedabad), Upendra Mishra (Indore), Biswendu Nando and Kanchan Sarker (Calcutta), Victoria Chandam (Imphal), Preeti Singh (Patna), Chandrakanta Mishra and Bijayalaxmi Rana (Bhubaneswar) and Ruth Anand (Bangalore). The study in Indore could not proceed beyond the initial stage and it has been dropped. Hence this report presents the findings of seven of the cities.

The cities were chosen because of their specific characteristics and their geographic locations. Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Calcutta, Bangalore and Patna have large

populations of street vendors and are situated in different parts of the country namely, Mumbai and Ahmedabad in Western India, Calcutta and Patna in Eastern India and Bangalore in Southern India. Imphal was chosen because it is in North-East India and more specifically because it presents a rare instance where hawkers, who are all women, have gained some legal rights to carry out their trade. Bhubaneshwar was chosen because it is a planned city (after Chandigarh) and hence the position of street vendors needs to be studied in this environment. Indore could have provided an interesting study of a city that has no specific laws for or against street vending. Though the city has a sizeable number of street vendors the civic authorities are yet to realise their existence. Unfortunately we could not get any insight on this interesting phenomenon, as the study could not take off.

The report is divided into six sections each of which contain the summary and analysis of the different aspects of the study. The first section is the introduction, the second section deals with the municipal and police laws relating to street vending. The third section examines the urban plans. The fourth section contains the findings on the socio-economic survey of hawkers in each of the cities. This is followed by the fifth section which discusses the perception of the consumers. The final section puts forth the issues which emerge from the studies.

## Section II: Municipal and Police Laws

The following is a brief account of the municipal and police laws with regard to hawkers in the cities covered, namely, Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Bhubaneswar, Calcutta, Imphal, Mumbai and, Patna.

### Patna

The Patna Municipal Corporation Act of 1951 lays down certain rules relating to street vending. Section 527 of the Act states that the only competent authority for permitting sale through street vending is the Chief Executive Officer (viz. Municipal Commissioner). No stalls can be set up, no goods can be displayed or sold on public streets without prior permission of the CEO. This permission has to be in the form of licenses for a specific period of time (not exceeding one year) and with a specific fee. The vendor cannot construct a permanent structure. In case these rules are flouted (i.e., in the case of unlicensed street vendors or those who construct permanent structures) the CEO may remove the impediments without prior notice and charge rent for the use of the space.

Even when licenses are provided, the vendor has to fill in elaborate details in a form. Section 138 states that the licensed vendor has to state the names of the articles sold, provide a description of the place of sale, time of sale, state the validity of the period of his/her license, describe the booth or stall through which the sale will be conducted, among other details. If these are not done, a magistrate can fine the person for violating the rules of his/her license. Given the low level of literacy among the vendors, one wonders how an average license holding street vendor can complete such minute details.

A highly arbitrary and authoritarian act can be found in the Bihar Police Act. Section 34 states that the police can punish any one causing obstruction, annoyance or inconvenience to the public. Two actions come under the purview of this section, namely, slaughtering of animals in public and *exposing goods for sale*. One wonders how these two acts (one involving slaughter and the other involving sale) can be equated as the same intensity of public disapproval. The section further notes that a person indulging in these activities can be arrested without a warrant and can be convicted or fined. It should be noted that Bihar is perhaps the only state in the country that gives the police the right to arrest street vendors. In all other states municipal authorities are permitted to deal with street vendors, with the assistance of the police, if needed.

### Calcutta

Hawking or street vending in Calcutta is controlled by the Municipal Commissioner under the provisions of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Act of 1980. This act prevents any type of vending on the streets. It was under these provisions that on the night of November 16-17, 1996 that the infamous Operation Sunshine took place. More than a hundred thousand hawkers were forcibly evicted from the streets that night and property worth several crores of rupees were destroyed or confiscated. This action was, by all accounts, the most brutal action taken against the urban poor in any city in the country.

Matters did not end with Operation Sunshine. In 1997, the state government proposed an amendment to the Calcutta Municipal Corporation Act. This was Bill No.

33 of 1997 and was known as The Calcutta Municipal Corporation (Second Amendment) Bill, 1997. This later became an act. Section 371 of the act was amended as this section contains regulations on street vending. The original section prevented the use of any pavement for hawking goods. The amendment expanded this to include, "any basket, receptacle or goods on pavement, street, park or garden for display or sale" (Section 371, sub-section 1). This Section further states (sub-section 1A) that any hawker contravening or abetting in contravening sub-section 1, shall be punished with rigorous imprisonment for a term extending up to three months or fined Rs. 250.

In the Statement of Objects and Reasons, the act states in 2(*ii*) that in order to prevent encroachment in public places, "it has been decided to declare any such encroachment by the hawkers, stall holders and other organisations as cognizable and non-bailable offence." It is ironic that alleged rapists and murderers, in some cases, are granted bail, but a hawkers selling wares on the street is regarded as a more dangerous criminal by the state government. This is perhaps an indication of the attitude of the state government towards the urban poor.

Fortunately for street vendors in the city, the municipal corporation has not been able to enforce the provisions of this amendment, mainly due to the resistance put up by the Hawkers' Sangram Committee. This organisation comprises 26 trade unions of hawkers in the city which represent different political and ideological leanings, including those of some of the partners of the Left Front Government in the state. It was formed soon after Operation Sunshine in order to protect the interests of the street vendors.

## **Bangalore**

Street vending in Bangalore is regulated by certain acts of the Karnataka Government (Bangalore being the capital of the state). The Karnataka Municipalities Act, 1964 states that municipal councils / corporations in the state are obliged to make adequate provisions for constructing, altering and maintaining public streets and markets and provide suitable places for vegetable vending.

The Karnataka Municipalities (Regulating the conditions of which permission may be given for temporary occupation) Bye-laws, 1966 make a special provision that in certain streets or public roads, as specified by the municipal council / corporation sale of goods such as vegetables, fruits etc. may be permitted temporarily and a monthly or daily fee may be charged.

In 2000, as a result of a High Court judgement, the Bangalore Mahanagarपालike (Municipal Corporation) had issued a draft notification stating that hawking can be carried on only in the hawking zones between 8 A.M and 8 P.M. Hawkers are not permitted to sell their goods at busy circle intersections. Besides only one hawking licence per family was to be issued for a fee of Rs.150/- per month payable in advance amounting to Rs.3,600/-. The license may be renewed at the discretion of the commissioner.

## **Bhubaneshwar**

Street vending in Bhubaneshwar is regulated by the Orissa Municipality Act, 1950. Section 295 (2) of this act provides that a municipality has the right to provide places for use as public markets while levying certain fees as deemed necessary for a maximum period of 3 years and subject to certain prescribed conditions. It is

imperative for a person to obtain the permission of the municipality for the sale or exposition of goods, failing which the Executive Officer (municipal commissioner) may expel him / her.

No person can open a new private market unless he / she obtains a licence from the municipality to do so. The municipality also reserves the right to suspend or cancel a licence if the prescribed conditions are not fulfilled. There are also rules regarding granting and renewal of licences. (Orissa Municipality (Amendment) Act 1968)

### **Mumbai and Ahmedabad**

The laws for the two cities are similar as both are regulated by the Bombay Municipal Corporation Act 1950 which was in force when the two states, till 30 April 1960, were one state, namely Bombay. The municipal laws do not provide for the erection of any structure or stall on the streets which will obstruct the passage of the public, or impede the working of a drain or open channel. Such a structure is liable to be removed by the municipal commissioner and the person responsible for the creation of the structure is to incur the expenses of its removal. It is imperative for a person to procure a license from the municipal commissioner to be able to hawk his / her wares in any public place. Failure of compliance will lead to the removal of any product being hawked on the streets, without prior notice.

Similarly hawking of milk or any other milk product without a licence is also prohibited. There is also a provision whereby the commissioner has the authority to inspect any of the goods being hawked. If they are found to be unsound in nature they can be seized and destroyed.

The municipal laws regulate the use of pavements while the police regulates the use of roads. Hawkers are evicted mainly under sections 102 and 107 of the act. These sections stipulate that anyone preventing smooth flow of traffic can be arrested and removed.

### **Imphal**

An interesting feature of the hawkers in Imphal is that an overwhelming majority of them are women. There are male hawkers too but these are from outside the state (Bihar, Assam and West Bengal). The women street vendors are all Manipuri. The Khwairamband Bazar, situated in the city centre is exclusively run by women. The main market sells a variety of goods such as fish, vegetables, garments, bread and confectionery, plastic goods, books, newspapers and magazines, fruits, rice, seeds etc.

This market has existed since the colonial days. In 1989 the state government made a plan to demolish the market and construct a super market in its place. This led to strong protests from the women vendors. Most of these vendors are poor (see section on socio-economic condition of vendors), and even though government was willing to accommodate them in the super market, they knew they could not afford to move into such a place as they did not have the resources. The women staged a unique protest to preserve their market. They refused to leave their stalls till the government assured them that the market would not be demolished. This continued for three years. During this period the women lived inside the market, ate and slept there.

After three years of struggle, in 1992, government finally gave in to their demands. It also allocated some funds to improve the market. The cement platforms on which the vendors displayed their wares were repaired, the lanes inside the market were metalled with curved surface and drains on the sides and the plinths of the stall holders were raised.

Besides Khwairamband Bazar, Imphal has five more markets which are exclusively run by women, These are Purana Bazar, Laxmi Bazar, New Market, Hao Keithel and Yenyonpham. In fact all these markets are collectively called Khwairamband Bazar, but the main one is situated in the city centre.

The municipality charges fees from the vendors for disposal of garbage. This is known as 'obstruction fees'. All licensed vendors in Khwairamband Bazar pay Rs. 7 a month as obstruction fees. In other markets the fee is Rs. 5 per month. .Another significant fact is that the municipality recognises the non-licensed hawkers too. These women have to pay higher obstruction fees, Rs. 31 per month.

Most of the women vendors complained that though obstruction charges were collected from them, the municipal authorities did not employ the requisite number of conservancy staff to remove the garbage. However the important issue is that the municipality grants legal status to all street vendors.

## **Conclusion**

From the above discussion we can see that laws relating to street vending are varied. With the exception of Calcutta, all the above municipalities have provisions for providing licenses for hawking. Calcutta not only considers street vending an illegal activity but its laws provide very stringent punishment for hawkers-hawking is a cognisable and non-bailable offence.

On examining the ground reality in each of the cities we find that in actual practice there are common features in all of them. Municipal authorities, in cities which have provisions for issuing licenses to street vendors, are most reluctant to issue them or the provisions are such that it makes it almost impossible for most vendors to avail of licenses. For example the forms to be filled up for getting a license are so elaborate that it would be difficult for an illiterate or semi-literate vendor to apply for a license. In Mumbai, where there are around 200,000 hawkers, the municipal corporation has granted only 14,000 licenses. Moreover, the municipal corporation has stopped granting new licenses for the past two decades, hence most of these license holders do not ply the trade at the present as they are too old or they have died. The census undertaken by TISS-YUVA (mentioned in the first section) on hawkers in Mumbai found that only 5,653 hawkers, out of a total of 102,401 hawkers covered, had licenses.

Though there are provisions in the law for granting licenses, most street vendors in Bangalore are denied this. In a later section of this report we shall see that most of the female hawkers in the city (who form the poorer section of the street vendors) are subjected to all forms of harassment by the police and the municipal authorities because they do not possess licenses. In Ahmedabad too, most vendors, especially the women, do not possess licenses.

There is hence a need to have some uniformity in the municipal laws in this regard. Hawking must be recognised as a right to livelihood and not a criminal activity. It is only then that the municipal authorities can regulate this economic activity.

Regulation would imply many things. Firstly, hawkers will not be forced to bribe the police or the municipal authorities in order to ply their trade. Secondly, street vendors can be made to maintain the cleanliness of the areas they operate in. Thirdly the municipalities will increase their revenues through the fees collected from the hawkers. Lastly, the hawkers will not be compelled to take protection from local anti-social elements-goons and mafia-for carrying out their activities. This will in fact decrease the hold of such elements on the street vendors.

### **Section III: Urban Policies and Town Planning**

In this section we shall look at the urban plans in the eight cities which were taken for review. It was mentioned in section one that all urban plans allot public space for certain types of activities which are for the benefit of the people. These include space for hospitals, schools parks, markets etc. Does allocation of space for street vendors figure in these plans?

During the course of this study we examined the plans of urban development authorities in the eight cities. These included, the plan and the revised plan of Ahmedabad Urban Development Authority, 1997, the Regional Plan for Bombay (now Mumbai) Metropolitan Region 1996-2011 of the Mumbai Metropolitan Development Authority, the Comprehensive Urban Development Plan of the Bangalore Development Authority, a report prepared by the Calcutta Metropolitan Development Authority which includes land use and development control plan, the Manipur Town Planning and Country Planning Act, 1975, plan of the Bhubaneshwar Development

Authority, the regional plan, master plan and zonal plan of the Patna Regional development Authority, 1978, and the city plan for Indore.

After examining all these documents we found that only two of the cities, namely, Imphal and Bhubaneswar had some provisions for including street vendors in their plans. The plan for Indore has provision for accommodating pavement shops (called *ghumtis*). These shops could be included as immobile street vendors. The plan of the Bangalore Development Authority too includes provisions for immobile street vendors. These shops/kiosks situated near municipal markets can be given licenses for carrying out their trades. The plans of the other cities simply blacked out the existence of street vendors.

Imphal is the only city which has the clearly stated rules for street vending. The Manipur Town Planning and Country Planning Act, 1975 provides that in residential areas (which include private as well as government housing) there should be provisions for 4 to 6 shops and 10 hawkers per 1,000 people.

The Bhubaneswar Development Authority has reserved 3% of the public space as commercial zone. Shops are allotted space in this area through draws of lots. Space is also reserved on the pavements for street vendors, which is a positive aspect of the authority's plan. However the space is not sufficient for the hawkers to ply their trades. In case hawkers operate outside the space allotted the municipal authority can forcibly evict them and their goods can be confiscated.

## **Conclusion**

Though each city has its development plan which may or may not be implemented, it is quite evident from the above review that the term public space has a very restrictive meaning. Hawkers or markets that can take care of hawking are not considered in the discussions on public space.

When urban plans allot space for hospitals, parks, markets, bus and rail terminuses etc. they could take into account that these places usually develop as natural markets for hawkers. For example flower and fruit sellers gather around temples as the devotees find it convenient to buy these offerings while going for worship. Similarly, it is natural to find food vendors, sellers of green coconuts and fruits outside public hospitals. The patients inside these government or municipal run hospitals and the visitors who come there need these services. We can find hawkers outside the railway stations for the suburban trains (in the case of Mumbai and Calcutta) and major bus stands in the cities, selling a wide array of goods and eatables. People embarking from these trains or busses, on their way home, find it convenient to purchase their requirements from these hawkers. Unfortunately, we find that the street vendors operating from these places become victims of the most brutal attacks by the municipal or railway authorities. One forgets that hawkers selling their wares at the areas that become natural markets are in fact providing essential services to the people at low costs. Their removal will not only deprive them of their sources of livelihood but will also inconvenience the public at large as they will have to spend more and travel longer distances to get the same services. Hence if urban development plans are to be effective and people oriented, they must make provisions for the growth of such natural markets.

## Section IV: Socio-Economic Study of Hawkers

The findings in this section are based on surveys on hawkers in the seven cities covered. Socio-economic surveys of hawkers in each of these cities were carried out by the researchers. A sample of 300 hawkers was taken in each city. These hawkers were selected from various parts of the respective cities. While selecting the sample in each of the cities, three points were kept in mind. Firstly, hawkers were covered from different parts of the concerned city. Secondly, they sold a variety of goods and the volume of trade differed. Thirdly, adequate numbers of women were covered.

Before conducting the survey each researcher mapped out the areas in each of the cities where hawkers operated. This information was collected from the municipal authorities and the police, the local trade unions and/or NGOs/VOs and other sources. The idea was to get a rough idea of the total number of hawkers, the type of business done by the different sections and the spread of hawkers in the different areas. After completing this exercise the researcher was able to identify areas where the study could be conducted so that hawkers selected for the study would be representative of the total.

A questionnaire was prepared for this purpose. The points to be covered were discussed at the meeting of the researchers held on 30-31 March 1999 in Mumbai. These included, firstly, personal details of the hawker and his family, namely, her / his name, age, caste, religion, number of members in the family, number of earners, total household income, place of residence. Secondly, details regarding her / his work: type of goods sold, whether mobile or stationary? From where are the goods bought? Who provides the capital? Daily income, number of hours spent on hawking, number of hours spent on collection of goods and travel to and from place of work, does she / he employ others on payment? Do other members of the family help? Thirdly, the hazards faced by hawkers: Have they been evicted? If goods were confiscated were receipts given? Do they pay money to the police and the municipality? Are they aware of the plans for hawking zones?

In addition to administering the questionnaire, the researchers took cases studies and also spoke to other concerned people in order to counter check the facts. We shall summarise the findings of each of the cities and then provide a general summary and analysis in the concluding section.

### Patna

As mentioned earlier, there are around 80,000 hawkers in Patna. Of the number surveyed, we found that 32% of them resided in Patna while the rest resided in the outskirts of the city or in the neighbouring districts.

#### *Social Composition*

We have categorised the hawkers on the basis of their **caste / tribe composition**, namely, General Castes, Other Backward Classes (OBC), Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST). Muslim hawkers have been included in either the General or OBC category as the case may be. The survey showed that 22% belonged to general castes. OBCs constituted 29% while Scheduled Castes constituted 31% of the sample. Scheduled Tribes comprised 18%, the smallest group. The largest group of hawkers belong to the Scheduled Castes while the OBCs constitute the second largest group. The two groups together represent 60% of the street vendors. These castes belong to the poorer sections of the population in the state and street

vending, despite all its hazards (as we shall see in the later section) is the only means of earning a livelihood for them.

The **sex composition** showed that 33% were females and 67% were males. At the same time it should be noted that the survey found that in almost all cases the male hawkers are supported by their wives and one or two children. If we take this into account, female participation in the profession will increase.

It was found that the proportion of **female vendors** was higher in the past but this has been **decreasing since the past decade** or so. The main reason was that they were afraid of the harassment they faced from different quarters, such as the males, the police and the municipal authorities. In fact most of the female vendors were mobile vendors because they felt that this was a safer way to ward off harassment. Moreover they were reluctant to sit in a market place or a fixed spot because most other vendors were males. In fact 96% of the female vendors stated that lack of protection was the main problem they faced in their work. Lack of basic facilities such as toilets and creches for their children was another major problem stated by 82%. A little more than half (52%) felt that lack of institutional credit was also a problem as they had to borrow from moneylenders at high rates of interest.

The **literacy levels** of the hawkers showed that 27% were illiterate while 40% had had primary education. The rest, 33%, had studied up to secondary school.

#### *Income, Working Condition and Employment*

The average **income** was Rs. 50 per day and Rs. 1,500 per month. The monthly turnover was Rs. 15,000 per hawker. Their source of working capital was mainly moneylenders (79%). Only 12% of the hawkers got credit from credit societies. Other sources of funding were from friends and relatives.

The main reason, given by 92% of the sample, for choosing hawking as a profession was because there were no other jobs available which gave them dignity, though 67% of them believed that they did possess skills for other, more permanent activity (peons in government offices or factory workers) but such jobs were not available. Other important reasons for choosing this profession were, entry was easier and investment was low.

At the same time, working conditions of the hawkers were very tough. The survey shows that the hawkers, or their spouses, leave their homes between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m. to collect their goods. After returning home for a short while they start vending at 9 a.m. and, in case their homes are close to their workplaces, they return at 3 p.m. for lunch and rest for a couple of hours. They are back at their workplaces by 5 p.m. and they return home by 9 p.m. or 10 p.m. The distances travelled by hawkers to their workplace may be long. Only 21% of the hawkers sell in areas close to their residences (between 1 km. to 4 km.). Most of the hawkers (53%) travelled for 10 km. to 12 km. daily to their workplaces. They carried their wares in baskets on their heads or on pushcarts. Very few use cycle rickshaws or autorickshaws for transporting their wares as this would increase costs. At an average, a hawker had to work for 10 hours a day to earn their meagre income.

The hawkers in Patna did not employ outsiders to help in their business. Their income was too low to permit them to employ others on wages. Hawkers are supported by their wives and one or two of their children. These people do not do the selling but they help in the other activities. The wives help their husbands in procuring the goods and the children help in sorting out the different goods at home.

Family help becomes necessary because the hawker cannot do all the activities on his / her own. The low income from the trade makes it impossible to employ others for helping out. With the result it is found that some of the children, especially girls, do not go to school so that they can help their parents.

### ***Harassment and Bribes***

Hard work, meagre income and high rates of interest are not the only problems faced by street vendors in Patna. They face constant harassment and have to pay bribes almost everyday. The police, the municipal authorities and local musclemen all contribute to playing havoc with their lives and their earnings. It is common practice for the police to charge Rs. 2 per day from each vendor. A fruit vendor at the Income Tax Roundabout told us that he sells his wares at seven road crossings and he has to pay Rs. 2 to the police at each crossing failing which he will be beaten by the constable. Vendors at Rajendra Nagar over-bridge referred to the police as 'licensed goondas'. These vendors had to not only pay Rs. 2 each day but occasionally a police jeep would pull up and the policemen would pick up fruits and vegetables from them free of cost. If they made any sign of protest they would be beaten.

The municipal authorities are close on the heels of the police in harassing street vendors in the city. Street vending is illegal and the Patna Municipal Corporation levies fines on vendors. Collection of these fine are done by individuals who are given contracts to collect fines. We found that the contractors charge different fines from different hawkers. The hawkers were not aware of what exactly was the amount of the fine. At times vendors paid Rs. 10 as fine. At the same time payment of fines was not a protection against eviction by the municipality. Even after paying fines the hawkers could have their goods confiscated by the 'Halla Gari' (local name for the truck used by the municipality to conduct raids).

It seems that the only way the vendors can escape harassment from the police and the municipality is when their area of work is controlled by local musclemen. This is so in markets like Antaghat. The vendors are forced to pay Rs. 2 per day to these goons as protection money which is popularly known as 'Rangdhari Tax'. These goons too pick up fruits and vegetables from the vendors under their 'protection' without paying for them.

## **Bhubaneshwar**

As mentioned earlier, Bhubaneshwar has around 30,000 street vendors. These people operate from different parts of the city. Understandably most of them operate near the various markets and bus terminuses in the city. The survey on street vendors in Bhubaneshwar covered a much larger number of street vendors than the stipulated figure of 300. The two researchers assigned the job collected information from 2,263 street vendors in different parts of the city. We shall briefly summarise the findings below.

### ***Social Composition***

The **sex composition** of the hawkers in this city too was in favour of males. Females formed only 18.5% of the total population. The main reason for women to keep away from street vending is that they had little time to spare after taking care of the cooking and cleaning at home and looking after their children. Illiteracy among

women is higher and this was also another reason for not venturing into this profession. They preferred working as day labourers or as domestic workers.

The few **female vendors** face several problems in their work places. They complained of the lack of toilet facilities and that there was no place to keep their children while they were at work. Most of the female vendors who had small children took them along to work. They are also discriminated in granting of loans from credit societies and they have to depend on moneylenders for their credit needs. Financial agencies do not extend loans to them mainly because the women are largely illiterate and are poorer sections of the urban poor and these agencies feel that their loans may not be repaid. We shall see in a subsequent section that the earnings of female vendors are lower than that of the males.

Most of the street vendors (81%) are residents of the state. The rest are from West Bengal and Bihar. The **caste composition** of the vendors showed that 44% belonged to General Castes while 25% were from Other Backward Classes. Scheduled Castes formed 19% of the population while Muslims constituted 12%. Hence, as compared to Patna, the General Castes constitutes the largest chunk of street vendors. Though the Orissa has a substantial tribal population we did not come across any vendor from the Scheduled Tribes.

Another feature that we noticed was that vendors in Bhubaneswar were comparatively new to the field, as compared to vendors in other cities who have been plying their trade for several decades. Most of the vendors (78%) started vending since 1986 onwards. In fact 60% of them had started after 1991.

The **educational level** of the vendors was low, though not as low as in Patna. Of the total covered, 29% were illiterate while 24% had primary education. Hence 53% were barely literate or illiterate. Only 22% had attended secondary school and the rest (25%) had studied beyond the seventh grade. This again indicates that vendors take to the profession as they do not have other skills to earn their livelihood and also due to lack of other employment opportunities (in the case of the 25% who had read beyond the seventh grade).

### ***Income, Working Conditions and Employment***

The **income** of the vendors are quite low. Forty five per cent of them earned between Rs. 20 and Rs. 50 per day while 40% earned between Rs. 51 and Rs. 100 per day. Thus 85% of the vendors earned less than Rs. 100 per day. Only 15% earned more than Rs. 100 per day. Taking into account the total population covered we found that the average income per vendor was Rs. 60 per day or Rs. 1,800 per month.

We found that a section of the vendors (21%) invested their own **working capital**. Most of the female vendors come in this category. They are mainly petty vegetable vendors. Around one-fifth (19%) of the vendors have borrowed from moneylenders who charged high rates of interest (110% per annum). These people constitute the larger vendors who have a comparatively higher turnover and they could somehow cope with the payment of the interest. Around 12% took loans from friends and relatives but they too have to pay interest though not as high as those charged by moneylenders. None of the vendors covered could get loans from financial agencies. The other vendors (48%) collect goods from the wholesalers or agents as advance and they make payments daily, after sale.

The **working conditions** of the vendors are tough. They have to put in at least 10 hours of work every day to earn their meagre incomes. Only 1.5% of these vendors live within 2 to 5 kilometres from their work places. A majority of them (52%) travel

10 kilometres or more. Some of them (26%) travel for 30 to 40 kilometres every day. These are mainly vendors who take goods as advance from the wholesale merchants or agents hence they did not have to carry their goods back home after work. These people however have to leave their homes in their villages at around 5 a.m. every day in order to reach the markets on time and start work on the pavements they occupy. They commute by bus from their villages and return home at around 10 p.m. after settling their accounts. The other vendors, who lived within 10 kilometres from their work places commute on foot.

Less than 10% of the hawkers in get help from their family members in their activities. In all cases however, the entire family is dependent of the hawker for their survival.

### ***Harassment and Bribes***

The harassment vendors faced at work are mainly related to their illegal status. Municipal authorities and police raid their places and confiscated their goods. They had to pay fines to release their goods. This causes loss, as they cannot ply their trade during that period. We did not come across rampant extortion by the police or the municipal officials as in the case of the other cities. However the vendors did complain of local groups extorting money from them under different pretexts, such as pujas, festivals etc.

### **Bangalore**

Though Bangalore is a large city street vending is not as widespread as in other similar cities such as Mumbai, Calcutta and Ahmedabad. A reason could be that alternative employment opportunities are available in the city whereas in the three cities mentioned earlier, closure of industries has reduced employment opportunities and also resulted in layoffs of those employed. The city has an estimated number of 30,000 street vendors. Street vending in the city centre is done by vendors who squat near the main markets. In the suburbs there are more mobile vendors who move from place to place with their goods in baskets carried on their heads or on carts.

### ***Social Composition***

The **sex composition** of the vendors show that in some areas in some areas women predominate. In the busy City Market, the main vegetable and fruit market of the city, female vendors constitute 70% of the total. In other areas however, women constitute between 20% to 30% of the vendors.

It was found that most of the women vendors (70%) belong to the scheduled castes and they are poorer than their male counterparts. Some discussions were held with female vendors at Pottery Town and Hebbal areas. Groups of 10 - 11 vendors were invited to participate. All of them belonged to the scheduled castes and had very low educational levels, in fact a majority were illiterate and the rest had studied up to primary school. These women were all mobile vendors who carried their goods in baskets on their heads and went from door to door to sell their wares. They would go to the HAL Market or the City Market to get their goods. Most of them took loans from money lenders and paid a daily interest of Rs. 10. Their average income ranged from Rs. 30 to Rs. 50 per day and they worked every day of the week. They said that if they did not earn any money on a particular day they had to take loans to buy food for the family. These women worked for 12 hours a day. Some of them left their homes as early as 3.30 a.m. to get their goods from the market.

The **literacy levels** of the hawkers are low. We found that 37% are illiterate and 38% had read till the primary level and 21% had attended secondary school. There were two graduates working as street vendors.

### ***Income, Working Conditions and Employment***

The average **income** of the vendors, as in the other cities, is low. Their daily earnings ranged between Rs. 50 and Rs. 100 per day. Their income depended on the type of goods sold. *Female vendors selling vegetables earned the lowest.* Their income ranged between Rs. 35 and Rs. 50 per day. They are mainly petty vegetable vendors. Male vendors selling non-perishable goods such as garments, foot wear household articles etc earn more, between Rs. 65 and Rs. 100 per day. However, we did not come across a single vendor who earned more than Rs. 3,000 per month.

The **working conditions** of the hawkers showed that almost all were involved in the activity for 6 to 7 days in the week. They sold their goods during most of the day or in the mornings and evenings. The activity was at its peak in the evenings as most of the office goers bought goods while returning home. The minimum time spent on street vending (including time spent on procuring the goods) was 9 to 10 hours every day. In some cases (female vendors discussed above) they spent 12 hours or more. Hawkers employing helpers on paid basis is very rare but 10% of the hawkers are assisted by their family members.

Since hawking is not a licensed activity in Bangalore, street vendors face **harassment** from the police and the municipal authorities. Vendors operating in the suburbs or as mobile vendors are less harassed. Those working in the city centre most harassed. This harassment is reflected through continuous eviction by the police and fines paid by the vendors which range from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100. The vendors felt that the municipal authorities are not as corrupt as the police. These vendors have to pay Rs. 2 or 3 every day to the beat constable in order to ply their trade.

We will illustrate the plight of these vendors through case studies of two vendors at City Market. Ms. Tavamani is a vegetable vendor who has been selling her goods for the same place for the past 15 years. Prior to that her mother had occupied that place. She borrows money daily from a moneylender to buy two baskets of vegetables and has to pay interest of Rs. 10 daily. She leaves her house at 5 a.m. and goes to Kalasipalyam where she buys her vegetables and later sits for the whole day from 7 a.m. onwards. She has to pay Rs. 3 twice a day to the beat policeman as bribe. It appears that the police here collect bribes by the shift. If a vendor works for half a day she / he has to pay Rs. 3 as bribe. Since Tavamani sits for the whole day she has to pay twice. In case she does not pay the policeman can beat her up and throw her vegetables on the pavement. This happened to her in the past so now she pays up without protest. Despite regularly bribing the police she lives under constant fear of eviction by the municipality.

Fayaz Ali stays in the Shivajinagar area and sells footwear (mainly slippers) at City Market. He migrated to Bangalore from his village in the state five years ago as his son, one of his three children, was deaf and he needed treatment. Since he could not find any employment he took to street vending. He works during the afternoon and evening as he needs time to attend to his child. He has to pay between Rs. 3 to Rs. 5 daily to the beat policeman in order to ply his trade. However his goods have been confiscated by the municipality thrice in the past and he had to pay Rs. 100 to

release them. He could not understand why, after paying 'tax' to the police he should be harassed.

## **Imphal**

As mentioned earlier, hawkers in Imphal are exclusively women, except for a handful from other states. These women constitute the poorer sections of traders in the city. The positive aspect about vendors in this city is that they have fought for their rights and have won after a long and arduous battle lasting three years. There are around 6,000 female street vendors in the city, most of whom has licenses to ply their trade and they are allotted space in the cities six markets. Most of the vendors goods are contained in baskets. Others spread their goods on the raised platforms provided for them.

Despite the facilities they have got, their **working conditions** are as tough as street vendors in other cities. The busiest hours are from 6.30 to 8.00 in the mornings and 4 to 6.30 in the evening. The women have to start work at 4.30 or 5.00 in the mornings to get their goods. They return to their homes in the afternoons and by 3.30 p.m. they return to their work places. After sunset, when electric lights are lit in the city, Khwairamband market is lit by numerous kerosene lamps. The market has no electricity because the vendors and the municipality differ on the flat rates to be charged for electricity. The women find the rates very steep and they complained that if they have to pay license fees, obstruction fees and electricity at current rates, they will have hardly any money to take home. This may be true as we found that the average earning of a street vendor was Rs. 40 per day. Most of the women had to run their families with this paltry amount. They earn this amount after putting in 12 hours of work daily.

The unlicensed vendors face problems from the police. Imphal municipality provides legality to unlicensed street vendors only if they pay the obstruction fee of Rs. 31. Our study showed that there were 642 unlicensed vendors and half of them did not pay the fee, as they found it steep. These vendors sit at north of Uripok Road, Naga Mapal, Alu Gali Road, Samuma Khong and Sagolband Road. The municipality refuses to grant them licenses as it claims that there is no space in the markets. The vendors who do not pay the obstruction fees are harassed by the police. They told us that they are at times arrested and their goods are taken away. They have to withstand verbal abuse from police constables daily and they live in constant fear of eviction. They told us that their daily earnings were meagre and if they paid the steep charges they would be left with hardly any money to feed their families.

## **Ahmedabad**

There are around 80,000 street vendors in Ahmedabad, 40% of who are women. A significant aspect about the **female hawkers** in the city is that they are unionised and they are able to articulate their interests as a collective. Right since its inception SEWA has been organising female street vendors in the city. These vendors have fought several bitter struggles in the past and have been successful in some of them. The most important landmark in this regard is SEWAs' fight to provide rights to street vendors at Manek Chowk in the central business district of the city. These vendors, most of them women, faced a great deal of harassment from the police and the municipality. They were frequently evicted by the municipality and the local police took bribes as protection money. SEWA then gave the call that all the vendors

were asking for was enough space to keep one basket of goods on the pavement. This was not a tall order, but the municipal authorities thought other wise.

The female vendors at Manek Chowk were petty vendors who carried on their meagre trade by selling a basketful of goods throughout the day. SEWA tried all means to ensure that these women get the right to trade. Its leaders approached the municipal authorities, the police officials and the elected representatives but to no avail. Finally they filed a PIL in the Gujarat High Court and after long hearings the court directed the municipality to ensure that these vendors are given the right to hawk their goods. The municipality was asked to allot space for them either on the pavement or in the municipal market. The Manek Chowk case is regarded as a landmark for street vendors in the city. It opened up possibilities for providing rights to hawkers in the other parts of the city as well. It also made street vendors realise that unionisation was an effective way for securing their right to livelihood. Through its consistent efforts, SEWA has been able to raise the problem of street vendors from the local level to the national and international level. The initiation of NASVI as a network organisation of street vendors in the country, discussions on street vendors at international labour and urban development fora, the setting up of Street Net, a network of street vendors the world over, and, for that matter, the holding of the national dialogue on street vendors organised by the Government of India on 29-30 May 2001 are results of SEWAs' continuous struggles for the rights of street vendors. Despite the significant strides taken by SEWA, the condition of street vendors in the city is bad, though not as bad as in other cities such as Patna and Mumbai. They suffer from the same drawbacks as vendors in other cities, namely, low levels of literacy, low income, long and arduous working hours and, at times, harassment from the police and the municipality. Unionisation has helped overcome some of these problems for members of SEWA but other problems continue. Female vendors who are members of SEWA can avail of credit from the women's bank it has established. These women are more aware of their rights and are hence less prone to extortion by the police and municipal authorities. The other street vendors however face these problems.

### ***Social Composition***

As mentioned earlier, around 40% of the vendors in the city are females. The main reason for the proportion of females being higher than in the other cities is that they feel more secure in their profession. Unionisation of female vendors and their fight for securing space on the pavements is mainly responsible for gaining this confidence. However, as in the other cities, female vendors in Ahmedabad are poor and their income is less than that of the males.

The caste composition of the hawkers show that 80% of them belong to the Backward Classes and Other Backward Classes. The women especially are all from these classes. Half of them (40%) belong to the scheduled castes.

The **literacy rates** show that 26% of the hawkers are illiterate while 24% have studied up to primary school. Those having studied beyond primary school but have not completed secondary school account for 32% of the total. Only 14% have completed secondary school and 2% have studied beyond the secondary level.

### ***Working Conditions and Income***

The working conditions of the street vendors have remained the same over the past several years. Street vendors work for 10 to 12 hours every day and walk long distances to get to their places of work from their residences. The income of female hawkers is lower than that of the males due to various reasons. The women told us

that they could not devote as much time as the males to street vending because they had to take care of their children, cook and clean at home. If they spent as much time on vending as their male counterparts they would have to neglect their families. Thus we can observe the double burden the women have to bear under these circumstances.

The average **income** of a female vendor in Ahmedabad is between Rs. 35 and Rs. 70 per day whereas for men it is between Rs. 50 and Rs. 100 per day. Their income depends on the type of goods they sell. Women are mainly petty vegetable vendors and their income is lower. Moreover, these vendors told us that they could not spend as much time as the males in street vending as they had to take care of their homes as well. Male vegetable vendors sell larger amounts of goods and more time on vending hence their income is higher. Vendors selling garments and foodstuffs have higher income but their investment is also higher. The better off vendors earn around Rs. 3,000 per month. There are few cases where the monthly income is higher, but these constitute a very small minority.

SEWA has recently started a scheme for linking vegetable vendors with the producers. Under this scheme, street vendors buy directly from farmers their products. This has helped both parties. The farmers get better prices as there is no middleman to pay commission to, and the street vendors can get these products cheaply, for the same reason. In this way both sections benefit. This scheme is likely to expand in the future.

A sizeable section of street vendors in the city were once engaged in the formal sector where they were paid better wages. Ahmedabad was once a highly industrialised city well known for its textile industry. During the past 15 years or so there has been a decline in industrial growth and many of the textile mills and large factories have closed down, rendering thousands of workers jobless. Most of these workers had to turn to the informal sector for seeking a livelihood and street vending was once such source. As a result, the number of female vendors have increased because the wives of these formal sector workers have taken to vending to support their families. The number of male vendors have also increased for the same reason. These people constituted 30% of our sample.

### ***Harassment and Bribes***

Harassment and bribery are less prevalent for female hawkers who are members of SEWA. In our study, seventy-five street vendors were members of SEWA and they did not pay bribes mainly because of the stature of the union. The police constables were wary of taking bribes from these vendors. At the same time the remaining two hundred and twenty-five street vendors in our sample who were not unionised complained that they faced regular harassment and had to regularly pay bribes to the municipal authorities and the local police to ward off harassment. The vendors pay around Rs. 10 per day to these people, irrespective of their daily earnings. Hence, at a rough estimate, between 10% to 20% per cent of their income is given as bribes.

## **Mumbai**

This city is the largest metropolis in the country and has the largest number of street vendors. The census conducted by TISS-YAVA of hawkers occupying municipal lands showed that there were 102,401 hawkers in these areas in 1998. The census did not include hawkers operating from privately owned lands, land owned by Bombay Port Trust, Railways and other central government owned land. If we include all these areas then the total number should be 200,000 or more. Street vendors thus constitute a large section of the urban work force, and perhaps the most victimised. In this section we shall use the data from our survey and data from the two studies mentioned earlier (viz. TISS-YUVA and SNTD-ILO) whenever necessary.

### ***Social Composition***

The **sex ratio** from our survey showed that 25% of the street vendors are females. Around half of the street vendors (51%) belong to Other Backward Classes and the number of Scheduled Caste vendors is low. Middle and upper castes constituted 40%. Only 15% of the vendors covered were from other state or from outside Mumbai. The majority was thus residents of Mumbai for a long period of time.

The **literacy levels** of the vendors showed that 25% were illiterate while around 22% have primary education. Around 32% of the hawkers have studied up to the secondary school and the rest have higher educational qualifications. Some of the hawkers were graduates who had taken up this profession as no other work was available. The TISS-YUVA study found that there was a positive link between educational level and income. The better educated sells goods which are more expensive and hence more profitable. In our study too we found that illiterate vendors, especially the females, sold vegetables and flowers in small quantities.

### ***Income, Working Conditions and Employment***

The TISS-YUVA survey found that the average income of hawkers ranged from Rs. 50 to Rs. 80 per day. The SNTD-ILO study does not take into account the income of vendors. Instead it makes a list of the expenditure. According to this study, the average monthly expenditure of a street vendor is Rs. 2088 per month (approximate Rs. 66 per day). In our study we tried to explore how much vendors selling different products earn. Petty vegetable vendors, mainly women, operating from the streets of the working class areas in Central Mumbai (Parel, Lal Bagh etc.) earned Rs. 35 to Rs. 50 per day. The income of male vendors varied from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 per day. There are cases where the income is higher and a few licensed hawkers even pay income tax. These are exceptions rather than the rule.

Most of the hawkers do not employ others on wages. Their meagre earnings do not permit them this facility. Around 40% of the hawkers we studied, were helped by their family members or relatives in their work. In some cases the hawker had relatives people from his village migrating to the city in search of work. These people would assist in selling the products and act as apprentices or helpers. They are not paid wages but they are provided meals and living space. They learn the trade this way and some of them later start their own enterprises on the street.

We, however, found that some hawkers in the more affluent areas of South Mumbai employ helpers on regular wages. The food hawkers in Nariman Point engage one or two helpers whom they pay Rs. 1,000 per month besides providing them with meals. These vendors have higher income as there is high demand for their products.

Nariman Point is a business district of the city where a large number of corporate offices are situated. The area has a few expensive restaurants but there are hardly any cheaper eating places. As a result, hawkers selling cooked food are the only means for the office goers to get a mid-day meal or a snack. Hawkers here sell Chinese food and South Indian food. The turnover for each is fairly high and their income is around Rs. 300 per day. These hawkers employ helpers to serve food, clean the utensils deliver food to nearby offices etc. There are other hawkers in the area who sell tea, cigarettes, cold drinks etc whose daily income varies between Rs. 75 and Rs. 150.

As in Ahmedabad, our study shows that food hawkers in Mumbai too have slightly higher incomes. Besides the ones operating in Nariman Point whose incomes are substantially higher, those operating in other areas in the city and the suburbs earn between Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 3,000 per month. These hawkers sell snacks such as *vada-pav*, *bhel puri*, and cooked food, tea and biscuits, green coconuts etc. The demand for their products is high because a large number of people in the city, especially the poor, depend on them for their meals. *Vada-pav* and other forms of cooked food are popular among the poorer sections because they are cheap and filling.

Another section of street vendors whose incomes are higher are those selling ready made garments. These people operate in certain areas in the central business district such as Churchgate, CST, Colaba and in the suburbs such as Bandra, Santa Cruz etc. We however found that in all the 75 cases that we covered, none of them operated their business on their own. Two or more hawkers pooled in their resources to set up their stall. The investment in ready made garments is heavy and it is difficult for a single hawkers to cope up. The turn over in these enterprises is high, but the income is shared by the co-owners. Hence their individual income ranges from Rs. 2,500 to Rs. 3,500 per month.

Another problem we see regarding hawking is that there are some who are employees of absentee owners or they work on commission basis for these owners. In fact there has been a constant campaign in the media that hawkers in the city are not the really poor and they are controlled by powerful cartels. Our study of Mumbai does show that there are non-hawker owners, but we did not find this widely prevalent. The census conducted by TISS-YUVA too comes to similar conclusions. It seems that a few stray cases are widely publicised by those who are against the urban poor.

The working conditions of the vendors are as tough as in the other cities. Most of them (90%) start leave their homes by 6 a.m. or 7 a.m. and return late at night. Around two-thirds of hawkers (65%) reside 10 kms. or more from their places of work. They use the suburban trains for commuting. Thus we find that the working day of a street vendor, irrespective of her / his income is more than 10 hours. Hawkers operating in the more affluent region of South Mumbai stay in the distant suburbs. They leave their homes at 7 a.m. and return at times at 11 p.m. Those selling non-perishable goods store their unsold stock in local shops for which they pay rent. Those selling food have to carry back the unsold stock in the luggage compartments of the suburban trains.

Hawkers in the working class areas of Central Mumbai reside in one-room tenements (chawls) or in hutments in the vicinity. Even there they start work from early morning when they have to go to the wholesale vegetable and fruit market at Dadar

to buy their goods. They start selling their wares from 8 a.m. and return home in the late afternoon for lunch. They return to work at 4 or 5 p.m. and continue till 10 p.m.

### ***Women Street Vendors***

Mumbai provides contrasts as far as female hawkers are concerned. The women squatting on the pavements in the working class area of Central Mumbai have started hawking after the closure of the textile mills in that area. Their husbands had worked as permanent workers in the textile mills and are now unemployed for the past several years. These women provide for most of the expenses for the household through their meagre incomes, as they are the main earners.

In contrast to these petty hawkers the flower sellers at Siddhi Vinayak temple at Prabhadevi, also in central Mumbai, represent a higher income group. This temple attracts a large number of devotees on all days and more so on Tuesdays. The flower sellers around the temple are exclusively women. These women too are wives of textile workers who are now unemployed. They used to face a lot of harassment by the police and municipal authorities while plying their trade. They then got together and formed an informal association through which they tried to get legitimacy for their work. The municipal authorities finally agreed to allot them space on the pavement where they could construct kiosks. They have now increased their income considerably. Their average monthly income would be around Rs. 3000.

The above case of flower sellers is an exception, because by and large female street vendors have much lower income. We have not come across a single case where a female hawker's total household income is more than Rs. 2,000 per month. In most cases (more than 90%) their household income ranges between Rs. 1,000 and Rs. 1,500 per month. Undoubtedly these women belong to families that are below the urban poverty line.

### ***Transition from Formal Sector Workers to Informal Sector.***

As in Ahmedabad, we came across a number of cases of street vendors who had taken to hawking after their factories closed. We had covered 60 hawkers from the working class areas of Central Mumbai (excluding the flower sellers discussed above), 30 of them were women. Two of these vendors, both males, had taken to street vending because they could not find any employment. One of them was a graduate. The other cases (58 of them) took to street vending because they or their spouses were once workers in the formal sector and they had lost their jobs. Forty-five of the hawkers or their spouses were workers in textile mills and they lost their jobs after their mills closed. The remaining thirteen had worked in other factories but they too were victims of closure.

The women sold vegetables or flowers while the male vendors sold different goods. Five of them were food hawkers, 40 of them sold vegetables, 12 sold garments and one sold incense sticks. We will illustrate their working conditions with two cases.

Mr. B. K. More is 50 years old and he sells coconuts at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Road, Parel. He used to work in a textile mill earlier but he was laid off when the mill closed in 1986. He goes to the wholesale vegetable market at Vashi (Navi Mumbai) early in the morning three times a week to buy coconuts. He starts his work on the pavement at 9 a.m. and continues till 9 p.m. He takes two hours off in the afternoon for his meal and some rest. His daily earnings varies between Rs. 60 and Rs. 70 but he has to part with Rs. 10 everyday to the municipal authorities and the local police as bribe.

Ms. Mohini G. is 45 years old and lives in BDD Chawls, Worli and she sells green chillies, coriander, onions and potatoes on Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Road. Her husband worked in a factory as a permanent worker. In 1989 the factory declared a lock-out and did not re-open. He thus lost his job. He helps her in her work. He goes to either the wholesale market at Vashi or at Dadar (which is closer to her residence) at 5 a.m. to buy the vegetables. Her two sons go to college while her daughter works in a garment factory for Rs. 50 a day, whenever there is work (around 15 days a month). Mohini starts her work at 6.30 a.m. and continues till 9 a.m. She then returns home to cook the family's meals and cleans the house. Her husband takes her place while she is at home. She returns at 4 p.m. and works till 9.30 p.m. Her daily income varies between Rs. 80 and Rs. 100 per day. It is higher than that of most female vendors mainly because her husband helps her in selling her wares. She pays Rs. 5 daily to the municipal workers to ensure that her goods are not confiscated.

### ***Harassment and Bribes***

Street vendors in Mumbai, especially those in the central business district and the affluent residential areas in the city and the suburbs, work under constant threat of eviction. In fact, from June to November 2000, the municipality carried out rigorous raids in the central business district and in the affluent residential areas such as Colaba, Cuffe Parade in south Mumbai, Bandra (West), Santa Cruz (West) and Ville Parle (West) in the suburbs. These raids were carried out mainly under the supervision of a re-instated Deputy Municipal Commissioner who had become famous (infamous for the urban poor) for his demolition drives in the city.

The fall-out of the mass evictions are:

A large number of street vendors have been reduced to penury. For example, the street vendors in the Fort area who were envied for being the most prosperous in the city, have become paupers overnight. Many of them are back on the streets but they are heavily in debt.

The amount paid as bribes to the police and municipal authorities by hawkers in these areas have gone up steeply, sometimes as much as ten times the earlier rates. The street vendors are in panic and they are willing to pay any amount to enable them to carry out their business or to be forewarned about an impending raid. We made a brief survey of these areas after these raids and we found that the vendors pay Rs. 100 to Rs. 125 at a time to the authorities for these 'services'.

The mental and physical health of the street vendors has been affected. The SNTD-ILO study shows that 85% of the street vendors covered suffer from ailments associated with stress. These include hyperacidity, migraine, digestive problems, lack of sleep etc.

Even before these raids took place, our study showed that a majority (76%) of the street vendors covered paid bribes daily to the police and the municipality. All the vendors operating in south and central Mumbai paid *pavti* (cleaning charges) to the municipality before this practice was stopped by a High Court order. The BMC had introduced this system as charges from hawkers for keeping the pavements clean. Male hawkers had to pay Rs. 2 per day while female hawkers paid Rs. 1 per day.

Interestingly, we did not come across any hawker who had paid the actual charges. All of them had paid between Rs. 5 to Rs. 20 per day as *pavti*. We asked why they had paid more than the required charges we were told that the excess amount was in fact a bribe to prevent eviction. In addition to this they paid the local police a separate amount ranging from Rs. 2 to Rs. 10 per day. After the *pavti* system was stopped, these vendors pay lump sums on weekly or monthly basis to the authorities for conducting their business.

In the suburbs we found that street vendors pay daily or weekly bribes to the police and the municipality. These are not camouflaged as *pavti*. Even in areas where they are unionised, vendors have to pay bribes. In general we found that male hawkers usually had to pay bribes and the amount was more as compared to the bribes paid by the female hawkers. One possibility for this is that the income of female hawkers is lower than that of the males. Food vendors tend to pay more bribes to the municipality as they are frequently threatened that their goods will be destroyed, as they are not hygienic.

Mumbai is one of the three cities where there is some presence of unions among the street vendors. The other two cities are Ahmedabad and Calcutta. The TISS-YUVA census found that approximately 14% of the street vendors are unionised. The largest, and most influential, union in Mumbai is the Bombay Hawkers' Union. This union has been instrumental in getting some benefits for street vendors in the city. Its influence is not very strong in the suburbs though. Besides BHU, there are several smaller unions. Many of these represent municipal wards or even streets. In the central business district in south Mumbai we found that some of these unions act as associations for collecting money to be given as bribes to the authorities. We find that in the suburbs, especially Andheri, though most of the hawkers we had interviewed belonged to unions they had to pay bribes to the authorities.

By and large, trade unions have not been very effective in protecting the rights of street vendors. For example, the unions were helpless when the mass eviction drive took place. However one cannot hold unions solely responsible. The bureaucracy in the city has represented the interests of the affluent. The newspapers too have only played up the negative aspects of street vending. The elected representatives, namely, the Municipal Corporators, have little say in running the city. The eviction of hawkers has drawn protests from a section of corporators but these seemed to have been brushed aside by the bureaucrats.

A major threat to hawkers, or for that matter, the urban poor, in the city comes from a section of NGOs. These represent the interests of certain localities in which the affluent reside. The influence of these groups is much stronger than the actual number of people they represent. Any complaint lodged by these groups is taken up very promptly by the municipal authorities and hawkers are evicted swiftly from these areas. It is ironic that these NGOs collectively represent less than 10% of the city's population but their complaints and views on urban planning are taken up with utmost seriousness by the municipal corporation. On the other hand, 67% of the city's population resides in slums, and these people rightly constitute the majority of the city's population, but their views are never sought or considered worth while. No association of hutment dwellers or of *chawls* have ever lodged any protest against hawkers, but this is not taken cognisance of.

## Calcutta

Like Mumbai and Ahmedabad, Calcutta too was an industrialised city. Till the 1970s the city was known for its jute mills and engineering industries which provided employment to a large number of workers. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s Calcutta's industries have declined and several of the larger factories have shut down rendering hundreds of thousands of workers unemployed. As in the cases of Mumbai and Ahmedabad, one of the sources of income for these retrenched workers and their families is street vending. There are other sections of the population, migrant as well as local, who take to street vending as no other employment is available and getting into this trade is easier.

### ***Social Composition***

There are around 100,000 hawkers in the city. The **sex composition** the street vendors is weighed heavily in favour of males. Most of the hawkers are males and women constitute a small section, smaller than in the other cities. Among the stationary hawkers only 5% are women, but they are proportionately higher among mobile vendors. These people hawk their wares in baskets and move from street to street or from door to door. The total percentage of women vendors according to our estimates would be around 15%. Female stationary vendors are found outside the municipal markets selling fruits, vegetables, flowers and incense.

We asked some of the female vendors why their numbers were so few. The reasons are similar to those given by female vendors in Patna. The women said that they would not be allowed to occupy space on the pavement by the males. Stationary vendors earn more than mobile vendors as the former can display more goods for sale. The males therefore elbow out the women from these areas if they try to enter. The women too feel insecure in such a situation. Secondly, mobile vendors face less harassment from the police and the municipality. The women are afraid of the rude behaviour of these people if they ply their trade on the pavements. On the other hand, women play an active role in assisting their husbands in their trade from their homes. Food vendors particularly depend on their womenfolk to prepare the edibles.

A majority of hawkers from the upper and middle castes. The Hawkers' Sangram Committee gave us a list of the stationary hawkers in its areas of influence. We found that around 60% of the hawkers belong to these castes whereas the rest are mainly belonging to OBCs. Scheduled Castes form less than 10% of the population. The literacy levels of the hawkers are generally low. All the women we interviewed were illiterate. Among the males, 27% were illiterate and 23% had studied up to the primary level. Around 40% had studied up to middle school (up to the eighth grade). The others had completed high school and a 10 of them were graduates. The educational levels of hawkers selling more expensive goods such as ready-made garments, electronics, leather goods etc. are higher. Hawkers selling fruits, vegetables, cooked food and other perishable products have lower educational levels. An interesting feature of the street vendors in Calcutta is that a fairly large number (55% of our sample) were earlier working in the formal sector and they had taken to street vending after their factories closed down. In fact we found that all the vendors with post-primary education (with the exception of the graduates) were earlier factory workers. The ten graduates did not have previous work experience and they had taken to vending because they could not find jobs. Five of them sold old books while the others sold garments or leather goods from small kiosks. The high presence of former formal sector workers was perhaps responsible for the high level of unionisation among street vendors in this city.

### ***Income, Working Conditions and Employment***

Like in the other cities, street vendors in Calcutta sell a variety of items. In the central business district, food hawkers predominate. There are also vendors selling ready made garments (mainly shirts) and, books, newspapers and magazines. In other areas, mainly in streets where shops are located (Gariahat, Lake Market, Shyam Bazaar and other parts of north Calcutta) hawkers sell a variety of goods such as ready made garments, household articles, plastic goods, hosiery, cosmetics, accessories etc. In fact shoppers in these areas, mainly women, find it convenient as they have a wide range of goods to choose from-in the large shops as well as the streets. The number of street vendors selling newspapers and magazines and old books are also quite large. Hawkers selling vegetables, fish and other types of uncooked food ply their trade normally outside the municipal markets.

The income of the hawkers vary according the type of goods they sell and the amount sold. Hawkers selling clothes and non-perishable goods earn around Rs. 100 per day while those selling vegetables and fruits earn around Rs. 70 per day.

A special mention must be made of the food hawkers in the city. One rarely finds such a variety of food available on the streets as in Calcutta. One can buy traditional sweets, cut fruit, deep fried foods, Chinese soups and even a full meal comprising rice / chapatti, vegetables and fish / meat on the streets in the central business district. The these hawkers earn more than Rs. 100 per day and they employ one or two assistants to help them. These assistants are paid between Rs. 200 and Rs. 500 per month along with meals. Tea shops in the area employ children to serve tea in the offices or shops. The income of these vendors is around Rs. 75 per day.

Vendors selling cut fruits and traditional Bengali sweets usually commute from villages situated 20 or more kilometres from the city. They travel by rail or by bus. These people start work at 5 a.m. or earlier in their villages. They collect their goods and pack them in baskets. They leave for their destination by 7 a.m. and start selling their wares by 11 a.m. The peak time for sale is during lunch time (between 12.30 p.m. and 2 p.m.). They start packing up their goods after the offices closed (after 6 p.m.) and they return home by 10 p.m. They prefer to delay their departure because trains and busses are very crowded till 8 p.m. These vendors spend almost all the time they are awake at work. A rough estimate shows that they are at work for about 15 hours a day.

The other vendors too work for long hours (though not as long as the vendors commuting from villages). Most food vendors in the business district are engaged in selling from 11 a.m. till 7 p.m. They spend another three to four hours in collecting the various ingredients required and cooking the food. Food vendors in other parts of the city start a little later (in the afternoon) but they work till 9 p.m. or later.

We found that the average vendor in Calcutta spends a minimum of 10 hours every day at work. Some work even longer. Most vendors do not employ others on regular wages (except for the food vendors) but they take the help of relatives. Their wives too help in their work.

As mentioned earlier, unionisation is fairly strong in Calcutta. The oldest trade union, Bengal Hawkers' Association, was started in 1950 and is affiliated to Trade Union Co-ordination Committee of the Forward Block. After 1980 other trade unions, especially

those affiliated to CITU have appeared. The Calcutta Hawkers' Men Union was started in 1971 and is affiliated to AITUC. Its membership is mainly among the food hawkers. At present almost all political parties have their unions among the hawkers. The Hawkers' Sangram Committee was started after Operation Sunshine, in 1996. There are 36 unions, associated with this organisation and it is at present the most prominent body of street vendors in the city. These unions represent all trade union federations except those affiliated to CITU. The leadership of the AITUC union took the initiative in forming Committee.

Unlike in Mumbai, trade unions in Calcutta have to a large extent been able to protect the interests of their members. In this sense the two cities provide contrasts. In Calcutta the Hawkers' Sangram Committee has been able to draw a section of the middle class intelligentsia to support the cause of the street vendors. They have organised public meetings where poets, writers, singers and film personalities have participated. In Mumbai, on the other hand, we find that the middle class is either indifferent or antagonistic to the plight of the urban poor, especially the hawkers. Hence, while Operation Sunshine drew loud protests from a section of the intelligentsia in Calcutta, the evictions in Mumbai were viewed either with indifference or with outright pleasure by the middle and upper middle classes.

### ***Harassment and Bribes***

After Operation Sunshine which saw the strengthening of the Hawkers' Sangram Committee, extortion from the local authorities has decreased. It still continues in areas where the hawkers are not unionised. While conducting our study we found that hawkers in some parts of the city preferred to pay regular bribes to the police rather than join a union. We spoke to some of the vendors selling ceramic articles and other household items on the pavements near a well known market in south Calcutta. They told us that they were supporters of the Mamata Bannerji faction of INTUC till recently but they decided not to continue their membership. Instead they collect money everyday and hand it to the police. The police inform them in advance whenever the municipality plans a raid.

Though harassment by the municipal authorities had declined after Operation Sunshine it has started with renewed vigour since the early part of 2001. The new mayor of Calcutta, belonging to the Trinamool Congress, has taken it on himself to rid the streets of Calcutta of hawkers. It is ironic that the leader of the same party, Ms. Mamata Bannerji, was the most vocal supporter of the hawkers after Operation Sunshine, but her party has taken a different position now. Her sympathy for hawkers may have been because Operation Sunshine was initiated by a CPI(M) mayor.

### **Conclusion**

The discussion in the above section shows some common features in all the six cities covered. The income of street vendors are more or less the same in all the cities. Their incomes range from Rs. 50 to Rs. 100 for males and Rs. 35 to Rs. 40 for females. In all the cities, despite the fact that street vendors provide various types of services, they are persecuted by the municipal authorities and the police. The situation in Patna is perhaps the worst in this respect. Bribery is the only way most street vendors can survive in their trade. The working conditions of the hawkers are very poor and most hawkers lead a very hard life. They work for more than ten hours a day to earn their meagre income.

While discussing the earnings of street vendors it is necessary to keep in mind the concept of need based wages. The 15th. Indian Labour Conference, held in 1957 had laid down certain norms regarding need based wage. In brief, these are firstly a need based wage was to be regarded as a minimum wage and it was not negotiable. Secondly, this wage should take care of the minimum needs of three units of consumption (two adults and two children). Thirdly, the ILC had laid down the minimum consumption required for these three units in terms of intake of calories, proteins, carbohydrates, oils and fats etc. It also stated that 72 yards of cloth per annum would be required for clothing etc. Fourthly, 20% of the wage would cover fuel and rent. Fifthly, the stated minimum needs were in fact the basic needs and there could be no negotiations with the employers about the given terms. Further, the Supreme Court ruled in 1992 that 25% of the minimum wage should be used to cover the costs of rituals and schooling of children. In other words, 55% of the stipulated minimum wage is for covering the basic food and clothing requirements of three units of consumption and 20% was for fuel and rent while 25% is for provisions relating to rituals (births, deaths, marriages) and schooling of children.

After taking into account the costs of the above several organisations such as National Centre for Labour and the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) have calculated the minimum wage as Rs. 125 per day, or a little over Rs. 3,000 a month. Street vendors are not employees, so they cannot ask for a need based minimum wage. However the concept of a need based minimum wage relates to the minimum requirements of a family, hence any one, employed or self-employed, requires this minimum for a decent living. Unfortunately we find that the earnings of street vendors, even those who are comparatively better off, fall well below the stipulated minimum requirements.

Corruption, in the form of bribery and extortion, eats into the earnings of these people and reduces their income further. The main reason for corruption lies in the fact the street vending is illegal in almost all cities. This gives a lever to the municipal authorities and the police to extort money from the vendors. Municipalities should seriously think of alternative solutions. Legalising vending by providing licenses will solve many of the problems. Bribery and corruption will decrease, the municipalities will earn more through license fees and street vending can also be regulated.

## **Section V: Perception of Consumers**

In the previous sections we have seen how street vendors are not regarded as a part of the urban system. Despite this we find that almost all sections of urban society, including the more affluent sections, patronise them. In Mumbai the richer sections buy fruits and vegetables from hawkers and the youth also purchase clothes from them. The garment sellers in Fashion Street and in Colaba Causeway, both in south Mumbai, Linking Road in Bandra in the western suburbs have clients from the upper classes.

The majority of the consumers are however from the middle and lower income groups. It is these people who benefit most from street vendors as they are able to get their daily necessities at cheap prices and at convenient locations. The main beneficiaries of the food hawkers in Mumbai and Calcutta are the middle and lower income office goers and low paid workers in the informal sector. It is estimated that around 30% of Mumbai's work force have at least one meal a day from hawkers. The food they get is cheap and filling. These people would have had to spend more if they ate in restaurants.

In order to assess the views of those who bought goods from hawkers the researchers interviewed 150 consumers in each city. Care was taken to ensure that these people were from different parts of the city and they came from different economic groups. We divided the consumers into three income groups, namely, lower income, middle income and higher income. The lower income group comprises those whose earnings are less than Rs. 5,000 a month. The middle income group are those with earnings between Rs. 5,000 but less than Rs. 10,000 and upper income group are those who earn more than Rs. 10,000 a month. In most of the cities 70 cases were taken from the lower income group, 50 from the middle income group and 30 from the upper income group. The findings are given below

### **How much do they spend?**

In **Mumbai** the average middle income consumer spends around Rs. 1,500 a month in purchases from hawkers for household consumption. If we include items like pan and cigarettes then the expenditure goes up by Rs. 500 a month. The upper income group consumers usually buy clothes and fruits from street vendors. Their average expenditure is around Rs. 3,000 a month. Those from the lower income group spend between Rs. 800 and Rs. 1,200 a month in their purchases. Hence the proportion of the income of the poor spent in purchasing goods from hawkers is much higher than that of the other income groups.

Food hawkers are patronised by all sections. All the persons interviewed had bought food or snacks from street vendors. In fact consumers in the upper income group occasionally ate snacks like bhel puri and pav bhaji from street vendors. Some of them told us that they patronised certain hawkers because of the special taste in their preparations.

The survey in **Calcutta** shows that 82% of the consumers (representing all economic groups) buy vegetables daily or more than three times a week from hawkers. Only 7 persons, all from the upper income group, stated that they did not buy vegetables from hawkers. However all sections buy items like pan and cigarettes, tea and snacks and newspapers and periodicals while at work. It is found that at an average consumer from the middle income group spends Rs 1,700 a month in purchases from hawkers. As in Mumbai, in this city too the poorer sections spend around Rs. 800 or more on purchases from hawkers. The upper income group consumers spend around Rs. 2,000 a month.

Consumers in **Bangalore** purchase mainly vegetables and fruits from hawkers. The upper income group spends around Rs. 1,500 per month on these purchases. The middle income group spends between 2,500 to Rs. 3,000 a month while the lower income group spends around Rs. 800 a month. Besides buying vegetables and flowers (for puja) from street vendors, those from the middle income group buy other consumer durables such as clothes, slippers and house hold items as well.

In **Ahmedabad** consumers belonging to lower income group, purchase goods worth Rs. 550 to Rs. 1,000 a month. Those belonging to the middle income group purchase around Rs. 1,500 a month. The upper income group spends around Rs. 2,000 a month.

The bulk of the amount spent by the middle income group (60%) is on vegetables, fruits and flowers. The remaining amount is spent on occasional purchases of ready made garments, plastic goods, cutlery etc. The lower income group makes a wider array of purchases. They purchase most of their daily requirements from hawkers as these are within their budget.

In **Patna**, as in Bangalore, the middle income group spend more on purchases from hawkers. The upper income group spends Rs. 1,500 on purchases from hawkers. These are mainly on fruits and vegetables. The middle income group spends around Rs. 3,000 while the lower in come group spends less than Rs. 800 a month. In Patna the average income of those in the middle income group is less than Rs. 3,000. These people buy mainly vegetables from the vendors because they are cheap and fresh. The other items, in much smaller quantities, include toys and ready made garments. The middle income group spends mainly on vegetables and fruits, but it also spends more on readymade garments and other non-perishable items.

While comparing the income of the different groups with the purchases from hawkers we find that the proportion of the income spent in making purchases from hawkers is definitely higher as the income levels decrease. In most cases in these cities, besides purchasing the basic necessities from the fair price (ration) shops, the poor buy all their requirements from hawkers.

#### **Why do they prefer hawkers?**

In **Mumbai**, consumers prefer hawkers because they provide services at convenient places. Hence a lot of time is saved in making purchases. They feel that hawkers near their homes and near the railway stations are most convenient for them. In fact consumers from the middle income groups find vendors near railway stations most convenient because they can buy their necessities while returning home from their offices as this saves them time. These people purchased vegetables, fruits and other items for home use while returning home. It should be noted that hawkers plying their trade near the railway stations are the frequent targets of the eviction staff.

The main reasons for patronising hawkers are that their non-perishable goods (fruits and vegetables) are fresh and the prices of all goods are cheap. Those who patronise food hawkers occasionally (mainly from the upper income group) do so mainly because the food is tasty. Consumers from the lower income groups are more regular in visiting food hawkers. They do so mainly because the food is cheap and thus affordable.

In **Patna** 76% of the consumers prefer hawkers because they are convenient and save them time while 44% prefer them because they provide fresh vegetables. The middle income group consumers buy ready made garments for their daily use because they are cheap. They are able to buy more clothes in this way.

In **Bangalore** 83% of the consumers purchase goods from hawkers who visit their homes (mobile hawkers) or at the local market. They feel that mobile hawkers are very convenient for them as they save them the trouble of going to the market and they got fresh and cheap vegetables.

Consumers in **Ahmedabad** too prefer hawkers because they are easily accessible and they sell fresh stock. One-fourth of those interviewed patronised food hawkers because the food they sell is tasty.

The survey on consumers also took their opinions on the **negative aspects** of hawking. Responses from all the cities are more or less the same. These are noted below.

Vegetable vendors tend to cheat on weights. Consumers are not sure whether they get the right quantity.

Most consumers in the upper income group in all the cities covered complained that vendors block the pavements in busy places thus making it difficult for pedestrians to walk on them. They then spill over to the roads causing problems for motorists. A section of the middle income group too had the same complaint, but surprisingly only a very few from the lower income group noted this as a negative feature. They did not mention this in their response.

Vendors contribute to dirtying the pavements. This response was again mainly from the upper income group. The vendors on the other hand claimed that they tried to keep the pavements clean, as dirty pavements would affect their clientele. This was especially true of the food hawkers, as their clients tend to throw the refuse on the pavement. These people kept baskets near their stalls for people to throw the waste. They said that if waste is strewn around the place consumers would not patronise them.

Nuisance caused by mobile vendors. While consumers in Bangalore appreciated the services of mobile vendors, consumers in Ahmedabad and Patna found them annoying. They complained that these vendors disturbed them at odd hours.

A section of consumers in all cities who belonged mainly to the lower income group complained of rude behaviour of the vendors, especially when they tried to bargain with the prices.

## **Section VI: Conclusion and Emerging Issues**

Hawkers have been a part of the urban scenario for long. They have become a part of the life of all cities in the country. However this is not the only reason for their continuance. The increasing proportion of the urban informal sector coupled by the shrinking of the organised sector have added to the number of hawkers in mainly two ways.

### ***Reasons for increase in hawking***

Firstly, as noted in the introduction, for the low skilled migrants seeking employment in the cities, hawking is a means of earning their livelihood. In this way a section of the urban poor are absorbed into gainful employment. Furthermore, the numbers have increased due to large-scale layoffs in organised industry. Many of these

retrenched workers are able to provide for their families by taking to street vending. The study finds that around 20% of the hawkers covered in Mumbai were once permanent employees the organised sector. In Ahmedabad, around 30% of the male hawkers covered were previously working in large factories and in Calcutta half the street vendors covered were permanent workers in the formal sector. In these cities a large number of factories, especially textile mills and engineering industries, have closed down. As a result, the composition of the workforce has changed significantly. Over 65% of Mumbai's workforce is engaged in the informal sector and in Ahmedabad and Calcutta this sector engages more than 75% of the workforce of the two cities. In the three cities the decline in the manufacturing sector has led to a sharp increase in the services sector.

The second reason for the increase in hawkers is due to the increase in the urban poor. These people are able to procure their basic necessities mainly through hawkers, as the goods sold are cheap. The findings of the survey on consumers (Section V) shows that the lower income groups spend a higher proportion of their income in making purchases from hawkers mainly because their goods are cheap and thus affordable. Had there been no hawkers in the cities the plight of the urban poor would be worse than what it is at present. This would have in turn lead to greater social problems and unrest among the poor. In this way one section of the urban poor, namely, hawkers, helps another section to survive. Hence though **hawkers are viewed as a problem for urban governance they are in fact the solution to some of the problems of the urban poor. By providing cheaper commodities hawkers are in effect providing subsidy to the urban poor,** something which the government should have done.

Proliferation of hawkers in urban areas is mainly due to the two factors discussed above. A ban on hawking will only aggravate the problems of the urban poor. It will not only deprive a section of the urban population from gainful employment but will increase the cost of living for the poor. These will in turn lead to increase in crime and public safety will be affected.

***Problems of encroachment: Are hawkers alone responsible?***

Almost all cities have police and municipal laws that help to protect public spaces and allow free flow of traffic on the roads. Hawkers become the main victims of these laws because they are viewed as the main obstructers and encroachers. What the municipal authorities and the police overlook are that there could be many other forms of encroachment, besides hawkers. The rapid increase of vehicles on the roads creates problems not only of traffic congestion but also of parking space. Several shops encroach on the pavements by illegally extending their construction and it is not uncommon to find residents in buildings cordoning off public space in order to create their private gardens. Such encroachments are often tolerated and in most cases regularised by the municipal authorities. Municipalities rarely pull down illegal extension by the shops. They issue them notices and at times fine them.

In order to prevent illegal parking, municipalities create parking lots in public spaces. For example, in the upmarket south Mumbai area wide roads in Fort and Mahtma Phule Market have been cordoned off for parking. In fact the wide pavement right in front of the Municipal Corporation's office has been converted into a car parking area. In several of the city's pavements the government has encouraged hundreds of permanent counters for selling food (known as zunka bhakar stalls), allegedly for the poor. These structures occupy more than half of the pavement and they obstruct pedestrians more severely than hawkers. These stalls no longer sell zunka bhakar at

Rs. 1 as they were expected to do when they were given licenses. Moreover, these are permanent constructions and they cannot be removed while hawkers can be relocated if necessary. Yet the flak for creating congestion on the roads is borne by the hawkers.

At the same time, it cannot be disputed, as our study shows, that hawkers do create problems for pedestrians and commuters. However the solution lies not in banning or curbing hawking but in regulating this profession. This can only be done when the municipal authorities stop treating hawkers as anti-social elements. **Hawking can be regulated only if it is legalised.** There are several issues related to legalising of hawking. We will discuss these in the following part.

### ***Legalising hawkers***

In the above sections we have tried to examine the different aspects of hawking. Despite the fact that hawkers perform an important role in urban life their importance is considerably undermined by the government and the local administration. The main problem lies in the fact that most state legislatures have made this an illegal profession and hence hawkers are under constant threats of eviction and victimisation. At the same time we can see that hawkers cannot be removed not merely because a large number of people are dependent on street vending for their livelihood, but also because the common urban dweller benefits from their services. **Hawkers exist only because the consumers want them to exist.** Conversely, if the urban population did not buy from street vendors, they could not have existed, let alone proliferated as they are doing at present. Section V of this report notes that even those who point out the negative aspect of hawking patronise hawkers.

There are no legal reasons for preventing hawking. In fact in 1989 the Supreme Court gave a major judgement regarding this issue (Sodhan Singh vs. NDMC). It ruled that every individual has the right to earn a livelihood as a fundamental right. Hawking is thus a fundamental right provided it does not infringe on the rights of others. The Court directed all state governments to evolve regulations for hawking through zones. Despite the Court's directions very few state governments have actually directed their municipal authorities to make adequate provisions for hawking. The municipal authorities in Mumbai, Delhi, Calcutta and Bangalore have tried to create hawking zones but in most cases these have led to protests from hawkers as well as residents' associations. For example, in Mumbai, hawkers prefer that these zones be in commercial areas whereas the municipal authorities have located them mainly in residential areas.

### ***Need for a holistic approach***

The unfortunate part of the above efforts is that the problem is being looked at in a piece meal manner. A broad and holistic approach is needed to ease the problem. For example, while formulating urban plans it is necessary to take into account the right of hawkers to public space. In other words, all urban plans demarcate public spaces for specific purposes such as parks and gardens, educational institutions, hospitals etc. Hawking also needs to be included in this. Plans must take into account the idea of **natural markets** in urban areas. These are usually the most convenient spots for consumers. These markets need to be developed and regulated, instead we find that the authorities try to forcibly remove such markets. For example, the survey of consumers in Mumbai showed that most of them bought goods from hawkers near the railway stations as these places were very convenient for those going to work or returning home from work. Instead of developing the areas around

the railway stations as natural markets, the municipal corporation is determined to evict hawkers from these places. The hawkers not only lose their livelihood but the consumers are also be inconvenienced. Similarly, areas around municipal markets, major bus stops, places of worship, hospitals etc. emerge as natural markets and they need to be developed.

Recognition of hawking as a profession would also benefit the municipalities. They would be able to officially enforce levies on hawkers. For example, in Imphal, which is perhaps the only place where hawkers are included in the urban plan, the municipality not only provides space for them but also charges a fee for garbage collection and sweeping, besides collecting license fees. In most cities these fees could amount to several hundred crores of rupees annually. This would provide additional revenue for cash strapped municipalities. Instead the hawkers land up paying more than this amount as bribes to prevent harassment. For the hawkers recognition would mean that they have a right to their profession, which would in turn loosen the stranglehold of corrupt officials, policemen and gangsters over them. They would also be entitled to loans from public institutions thus reducing the hold of moneylenders over them.