



Street Vendors

For Prelims: National Association of Street Vendors of India, SVANidhi, Fundamental Rights, DPSP, The Street Vendors Act

For Mains: Significance of Informal Economy, Challenges faced by Street Vendors, Measures to be taken, Related Government Initiatives

Why in News?

Recently, the Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs addressed the 6th meeting of [National Association of Street Vendors of India \(NASVI\)](#) with the theme as “**From Encroachers to Self-Employed**”.

Who do we need to know about Street Vendors?

▪ About:

- Street Vendor is a person who **offers goods for sale to the public** at large without having a **permanent built-up structure from which to sell**.
- Street vendors **may be stationary** in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or other public/private spaces or, they **may be mobile** in the sense that move from place to place by carrying their wares on push carts or in baskets on their heads.

▪ Population:

- There is a substantial increase in the number of street vendors in the major cities around the world, especially in the developing countries of **Asia, Latin America and Africa**.
- Around 49.48 lakh street vendors have been identified in India.
 - **Uttar Pradesh has the maximum** at 8.49 lakh, followed by **Madhya Pradesh** at 7.04 lakh.
 - Delhi has **only 72,457 street vendors**.
 - **No street vendor** has been identified in **Sikkim**.

▪ Constitutional Provisions:

- **Right to Trade:**
 - [Article 19 \(1\) \(g\)](#) gives the Indian citizen a **fundamental right to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business**.
- **Equality Before Law:**
 - [Article 14](#) of the Constitution states that the **state shall not deny to any person equality before the law or equal protection of the laws** within the territory of India.
- **Social Justice:**
 - [The preamble of the Indian Constitution](#) states that India is a **sovereign, socialist, secular democratic republic** and shall secure to its citizens **justice, social, economic and political** and **equality of status and of opportunity**.
- **Directive Principles:**
 - [Article 38\(1\)](#) directs the state to **promote the welfare of the people** by securing a social order in which justice – social, economic and political, shall inform all institutions of national life.

- **Article 38(2)** directs to **'minimize the inequalities in income status, facilities and opportunities.'**
- **Article 39(a)** directs the state to formulate policy to ensure that citizens, men and women equally, have the **right to an adequate means of livelihood.**
- **Article 41** specifically provides for **'right to work'** within the limits of the economic capacity of the state.

Why is there a rise in Street Vendors?

- Firstly, **lack of gainful employment** coupled with **poverty in rural areas** has pushed people out of their villages in search of a better existence in the cities.
 - These migrants **do not possess the skills or the education** to enable them to find better paid, secure employment in the **formal sector** and they have to **settle for work in the informal sector.**
- Secondly, there is another section of the population in these countries **who are forced to join the informal sector.**
 - These are workers **who were employed in the formal sector.**
 - They **lost their jobs** because of **closures, down-sizing or mergers** in the industries they worked in and they or their family members had to seek low paid work in the informal sector in order to survive.

What are the Challenges faced by Street Vendors?

- **Lack of Space:**
 - Master plans prepared for our cities **do not allocate space** to vendors/hawkers, as planners blindly **imitate the western concept of marketing**, ignoring Indian traditions.
- **Tackle Multiple Authorities:**
 - The vendors have to **deal with multiple authorities** - the municipal corporation, police (thana as well as traffic), regional development authorities, district administration, local panchayats and so on.
 - This leads to **exploitation and extortion.**
 - In many cases the **positive steps taken by one authority are nullified by the actions of others.**
 - Instead of **regulating vendors**, municipal corporations treat them as a **nuisance and an irritant**, their policies and actions are **aimed more at removing and harassing them rather than at regulation.**
- **Frequent Eviction:**
 - **The regular eviction** carried out by the **district or municipal administration.**
 - They fear the **very sight of the eviction team** which is known locally by different names.
- **Extortion Racket:**
 - Cases of **'rangdari tax' and 'hafta' are common.**
 - In many cities vendors have to **part with substantial money in order to ply their trade.**

What are Government's Initiatives for Street Vendors?

- **SVANidhi Scheme:**
 - **SVANidhi Scheme** was launched to benefit over **50 lakh street vendors** who had been **vending in urban areas** including those from **surrounding peri-urban/rural areas.**
 - It also aims to **promote digital transactions** through **cash-back incentives** up to an amount of Rs. 1,200 per annum.
- **National Association of Street Vendors of India:**
 - NASVI is an organization working for the **protection of the livelihood rights of thousands of street vendors across the country.**
 - The main objective was to **bring together the street vendor organizations in India** so as to collectively **struggle for macro-level changes.**
- **The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act,**

2014:

- It was enacted to **regulate street vendors in public areas and protect their rights.**
- The Act defines a **“street vendor”** as a person engaged in vending of articles of everyday use or offering services to the general public, in any public place or private area, from a temporary built-up structure or by moving from place to place.

Way Forward

- Despite multiple schemes running for the street vendors, there are **various gaps** in implementation, identification, awareness and accessibility of various schemes which should be plugged in a timely manner.
- **Benefits** like **maternity allowances, accident relief, natural death compensation, education support** for children for higher studies, **pension during any crisis** should be provided to them.
- States should be asked to ensure that **street vendors are not harassed by the authorities**, as all they are asking is a **right to livelihood.**

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Q. How has globalization led to the reduction of employment in the formal sector of the Indian economy? Is increased informalization detrimental to the development of the country? **(2016)**

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