



# Street Vendors: Assessing their Significance and Struggles

This editorial is based on [“Implementing the Street Vendors Act”](#) which was published in The Hindu newspaper on 1/05/2024. The article examines multidimensional aspects of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 and numerous challenges in its implementation.

**For Prelims:** [Street Vendors \(Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending\) Act, 2014](#), [PM SVANidhi Scheme](#), [Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission \(DAY-NULM\)](#), [Urban Local Bodies \(ULBs\)](#) Vending Certificates (VCs), [Grievance Redressal Committee](#), [Fundamental Rights](#), [DPSPs](#), Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, [Self-Help Groups \(SHGs\)](#), Town Vending Committees (TVCs), [NULM](#)

**For Mains:** The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, the issues and challenges related to the Act.

It has been a decade since the enactment of **the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act on 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2014**. It was hailed as a forward-looking legislation that aimed to uplift street vendors by legalising their vending rights. However, the legislation has been encountering significant hurdles in its practical execution.

Street vendors constitute a **vital component of the urban economy** due to their substantial presence in major cities, offering essential **day-to-day utility** items. They serve as indispensable nodes in the urban economic ecosystem, providing access to fundamental necessities for residents.

## Who are Street Vendors and What are their Associated Rights?

### ▪ Definition:

- A street vendor is an individual who sells goods to the public **without a permanent built-up** structure for vending.
- They may operate from **stationary positions on pavements** or other public/private spaces, they may be mobile, carrying their merchandise on push carts or in baskets.

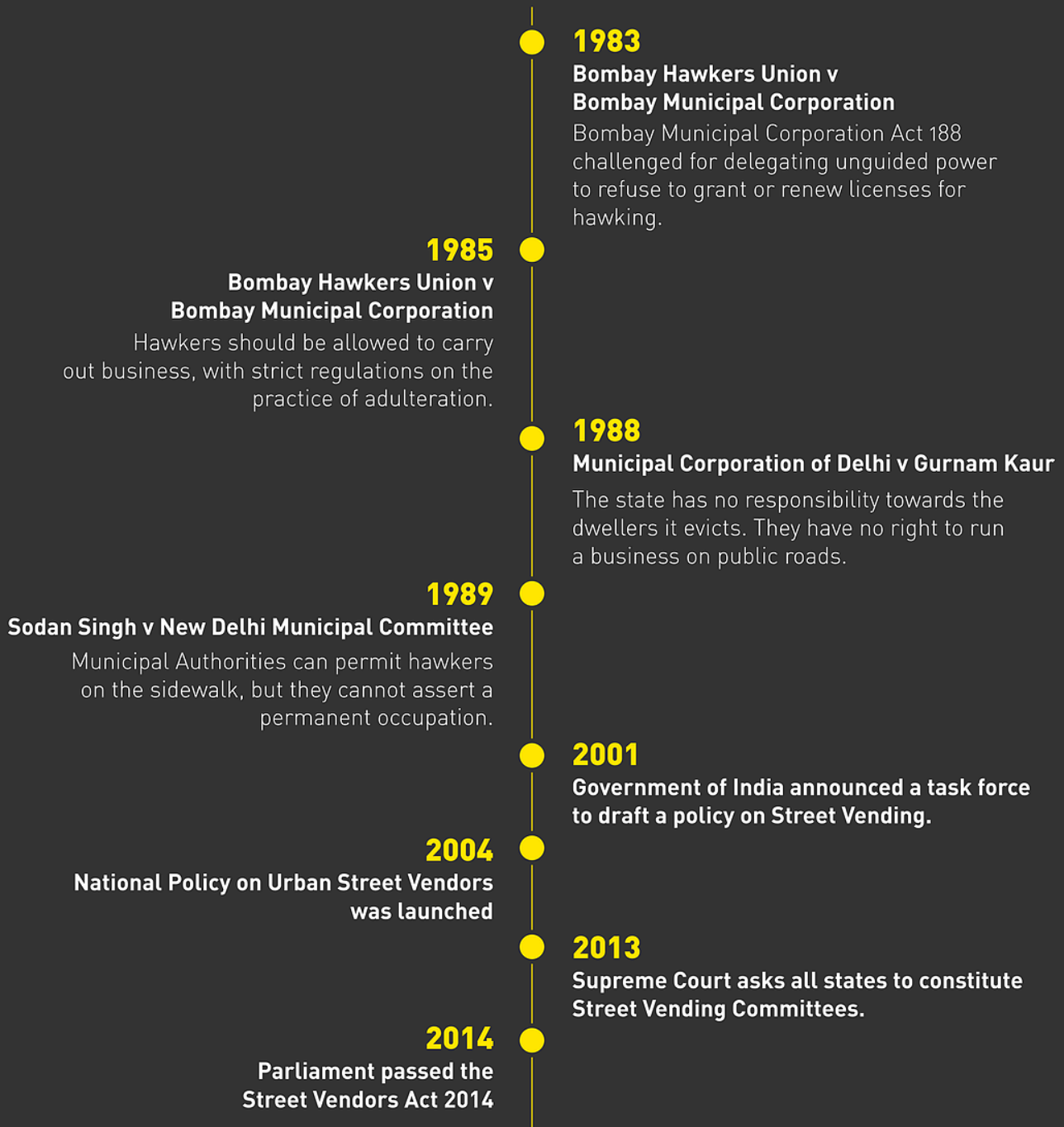
### ▪ Population:

- The number of street vendors has significantly increased in major cities worldwide, particularly in developing regions like Asia, Latin America, and Africa.
- In India, approximately **49.48 lakh street vendors** have been identified, with **Uttar Pradesh** having the **highest count at 8.49 lakh**, followed by Madhya Pradesh at 7.04 lakh. Conversely, Delhi has about 72,457 identified street vendors, while none have been identified in **Sikkim**.

- **Constitutional Provision - Right to Trade:** [Article 19\(1\)\(g\)](#) of the Indian Constitution grants citizens the fundamental right to practise any profession, trade, or business.

# Landmark Judgements and Policies on Street Vending

Source: Progress Report 2020: Implementing the Street Vendors Act, Centre for Civil Society



**What is the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street**

## Vending) Act, 2014?

- **Legalisation:**
  - It was implemented **to legalise the vending rights** of street vendors (**SVs**).
  - Its objective was to safeguard and regulate street vending in urban areas, with **State-level regulations** and programs overseen by **Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)** through the formulation of by-laws, planning, and enforcement.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:**
  - It outlines the **roles and responsibilities** of both vendors and various levels of government.
  - It envisages to accommodate all '**existing**' vendors in designated vending zones and issue **Vending Certificates (VCs)**.
  - It establishes a **participatory governance framework** through the creation of Town Vending Committees (TVCs), where street vendor representatives must constitute **40%** of the members, with a sub-representation of **33%** for women SVs.
    - These committees are responsible for ensuring the inclusion of all existing vendors in vending zones and it includes mechanisms for addressing grievances and disputes, proposing the establishment of a **Grievance Redressal Committee** chaired by a civil judge or judicial magistrate.
- **Conducting Survey:**
  - It mandates that States/ULBs conduct surveys to identify SVs at least once **every five years**.

## What is the Significance of Street Vendors in India?

- **Livelihood Generation:**
  - They serve as a vital source of **income for millions** of people, particularly migrants and the urban poor. It offers them opportunities for **self-employment** and sustenance amidst challenging economic conditions.
  - Beyond the vendors themselves, street vending creates **indirect employment opportunities in supply chains, logistics, and support services**.
- **Accessibility of Goods and Services:**
  - Street vendors play a crucial role in providing **affordable and accessible goods** and services to urban residents.
  - From fresh produce to ready-to-eat snacks, their offerings fulfil daily needs and contribute to food security in cities.
- **Cultural Heritage Preservation:**
  - Street vendors are often custodians of culinary traditions and cultural practices. Their offerings, such as **Mumbai's vada pav** and **Chennai's roadside dosai** embody their significance,
  - Artisanal crafts reflect the diverse cultural heritage of India's regions and communities.

## What are the Government Initiatives for Street Vendors?

- **PM SVANidhi Scheme:**
  - **PM SVANidhi Scheme** launched by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs**, aims to provide affordable working capital loans to street vendors to restart their businesses or expand their existing ones. It also offers incentives for timely repayment.
- **National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM):**
  - **NULM is a centrally sponsored scheme** that aims to reduce poverty and vulnerability of urban poor households by enabling them to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities.
  - It includes provisions for **skill training, capacity building**, and access to credit for street vendors.
- **Urban Street Vendors (USV) Component under DAY-NULM:**
  - This component of the **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)** focuses on street vendors.
  - It provides support for setting up and upgrading vending infrastructure, organising vendors

into [Self-Help Groups \(SHGs\)](#), and facilitating access to credit and social security schemes.

- **Skill Development Initiatives:**
  - Various skill development programs and vocational training initiatives are implemented to enhance the capabilities of street vendors, enabling them to diversify their livelihood options and improve their earning potential.
- **Town Vending Committees (TVCs):**
  - Under the **Street Vendors Act**, **Town Vending Committees** are formed at the municipal level to facilitate the implementation of the Act's provisions.
  - These committees are responsible for identifying vending zones, issuing vending certificates, and addressing grievances of street vendors.
- **State Specific Provisions:**
  - **Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka** and **West Bengal** have framed state-specific provisions for street vendors under the **Street Vendors Act 2014**.

## What are the Challenges Faced by Street Vendors in India?

- **Administrative Challenges:**
  - **Heightened Harassment and Evictions:** Despite the Street Vendors Act which focuses on protection, street vendors endure increased harassment and eviction, often stemming from **outdated bureaucratic attitudes** to treat them as illegal migrants.
  - **Lack of Awareness and Sensitization:** There is a dearth of understanding among state authorities, the public, and vendors regarding the Act's provisions, resulting in gaps in implementation.
  - **Limited Representation in TVCs:** Street vendor representatives in Town Vending Committees (TVCs) often lack influence, and the inclusion of women vendors remains superficial.
- **Governance Challenges:**
  - **Inadequate Urban Governance Mechanisms:** The Act's alignment with urban governance frameworks is deficient, and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) lack the necessary authority and capacity.
  - **Neglect in Urban Development Initiatives:** Programs like the Smart Cities Mission prioritise infrastructure development over the integration of street vendors, undermining the Act's objectives.
  - **Exclusionary Urban Development:** Conventional perceptions of '**world-class cities**' **marginalise** street vendors, impeding their acknowledgement as legitimate contributors to urban life.
- **Societal Challenges:**
  - **Impact of Climate Change and Tech Advancements:** Street vendors confront new challenges from climate change, competition from e-commerce, and declining incomes, necessitating innovative responses.
  - **Stigma on Urban Image:** The societal view of the high-tech urban sphere perpetuates the condition of street vendors, depicting them as hindrances to development instead of recognising their importance as integral members of urban communities.
- **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.

## 28 TOWN VENDING COMMITTEES NOTIFIED BY GOVT

- ▶ Corporations to start identifying hawkers soon
- ▶ Hawkers to be given vending certificates to prevent any harassment against them
- ▶ Government mulling to give them kiosks

- with garbage disposal and solar light system
- ▶ Hawkers displaced in last few years can also apply for space for shops
- ▶ 5% of city's pollution is estimated to be caused by street vendors



### What More can be done to Improve the Condition of Street Vendors?

- **Strengthen Implementation:**
  - This includes identification processes, increasing awareness (through educational workshops, collaboration with NGOs, peer-to-peer community learning, collaboration with local authorities about available benefits), and ensuring accessibility of support programs.
- **Expand Benefits:**
  - Street vendors should be provided with a broader range of benefits, including accident relief, compensation for natural death, educational support for children's higher studies, and pensions during times of crisis.
- **Prevent Harassment:**
  - Ensuring that street vendors are not subjected to arbitrary evictions, **confiscation of goods, or unfair fines is crucial to protecting their right to earn** a livelihood.
- **Enhance Representation:**
  - Street vendors should have meaningful representation in decision-making bodies such as **Town Vending Committees (TVCs) to ensure their voices are heard in matters affecting their livelihoods.**
  - Increasing the representation of street vendors, particularly women vendors, can lead to more inclusive policies and better outcomes for this marginalised group.
- **Promote Financial Inclusion:**
  - Facilitating access to formal financial services such as **credit, savings, and insurance can help street vendors manage their finances** more effectively and invest in their businesses.
  - Microfinance institutions, self-help groups, and digital banking solutions can play a crucial role in promoting financial inclusion among street vendors.

#### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Discuss the challenges faced by street vendors and suggest the policy measures that can be taken for their empowerment.

### **UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)**

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

