Chapter 2

Street Vendors in the Urban World: A Global Perspective

2.1. Introduction

Street and roadside trade is an important economic activity that sustains a significant percentage of rural and urban dwellers, especially in the developing countries. The number of street vendors has been growing extensively not only in India but throughout the world, but especially in cities in the developing countries of Asia, Latin America and Africa. Studies on the street vendors have been discussed in this chapter. The discussion on street vendors has been distributed along four sections. The first section begins with a discussion on studies conducted in Latin America, followed by those in Africa. Studies on Asian street vending have been reviewed in the third section, whereas the fourth section deals completely with the situation of street vending in India. The intention is to bring to light the reasons leading to growth of the activity, the vendors’ living and working conditions and the attitude of the authorities in respective countries in order to highlight the decent work conditions in the cities across the world. After the discussion, the focus has been shifted on India. The main aim is to assess the situation of vendors in the context of decent work paradigm. Research gaps in the existing literature have been discussed thereafter.

2.2. Latin America

2.2.1. Emergence of the Activity

The number of street vendors in Latin America has grown substantially over the past two decades, particularly in the urban areas. Street trading is one of the largest growing and visible segments of the informal economy in Latin America. Rural migrants have family members in the urban areas that facilitate their entry into the sector. The available literature on street vending has been reviewed with a focus on six major Latin American cities, namely, Bogota, Colombia; Caracas, Venezuela; Lima, Peru; Mexico City, Mexico, Santiago, Chile; and Sao Paulo, Brazil (Roever 2006). Around 53 per cent to 55 per cent of labour force depends on the informal sector (ibid). The growth of this sector has occurred mostly due to the regional economic crisis of the 1980s and the neoliberal reforms in the 1990s that downsised or eliminated state owned enterprises and
increased employers’ powers with regard to hiring and firing of workers (ibid). Slow economic growth has failed to generate sufficient demand for low-skilled workers. It also points out that some street traders who occupied the same space over a long period of time, established regular customers and informal rights at their workplace, have better working conditions. They have established profitable enterprises that generate a reasonably stable income (ibid).

Street vendors’ occupation of public space in crowded commercial areas has attracted the attention of local government authorities charged with maintaining order throughout the region. Street vendors that permanently occupy stands, posts and space for business, have relatively stable incomes than those of the mobile vendors. They have the capacity for specialisation in the goods and services that they offer, and some ability to generate savings (ibid). But it is also noted in other studies that their levels of income have been declining after 1990, especially in Bogota (Donovan 2002: 89 and Roever 2006).

2.2.2. Government Interferences

The Constitution (1991, Article 82) in Colombia elevates protection of public space to a constitutionally guaranteed right enforced by mayors (Donovan 2002). According to Fondo de Ventas Populares (FVP 2001b), governing street vendors in the capital city of Bogota protects the individual right to work, it explicitly grants privileges to collective rights over individual rights, and in doing so promotes the preservation of public space and the individual’s right to work with minimum guarantees of hygiene and security (Roever 2006). However, licensing was the primary mechanism for governing street commerce in Latin America. Street vendors who held licenses to vend in public space were more likely to obtain credit and less likely to face police harassment than those of the unlicensed vendors and this is true for almost every city in Latin America (Donovan 2002 and Roever 2006). However, according to Donovan (2002: 29), the process by which licenses were obtained, especially in Bogota was less transparent. Vendors needed intermediaries with influence or political connections in order to obtain them, and many found such intermediaries in street vendors’ unions.
2.2.3. Working Conditions

In most Latin American countries, working conditions of street vendors are assessable. Working conditions in Santiago’s street markets are relatively better in terms of public space utilisation and security of the workplace for vending which is officially sanctioned (Roever 2006). Moreover, the important problem for vendors in all Latin American countries is that public authorities have the ultimate say in whether a street market may continue to operate or not (ibid). Across all Latin American countries, vendors who are subject to a clearer and more stable legal framework, like Chile and Colombia, tend to have better working conditions than those in countries where their legal standing is messed up by conflicting policies, like those in Peru and Venezuela (ibid).

2.2.4. Nature of Collective Bargaining

It is noted that within the informal workforce, street vendors appear to have a higher rate of unionisation to develop themselves in public space than other types of informal workers (Donovan 2002 and Roever 2006). For instance, a survey conducted by Donovan (2002: 72) in Bogota showed that 22.4 per cent among all the vendors belong to unions, associations, or cooperatives. According to Donovan (2002), street vending unions in Bogota were relatively powerful in the pre-1988 era when licensing was the primary mechanism for governing street commerce and vending unions acted as intermediaries between individual street traders and city councilors. Zanoni (2005) noted in his study in Venezuela, organisations also serve as informational networks through which innovations are diffused, both in terms of products offered and in terms of strategies to secure space in the streets (Roever 2006). The intersection between formal labour unions and street vending associations has become stronger in recent years in Venezuela (ibid). Street vendors in Lima have formed many organisations since the 1960s. Organisation is most common among static vendors with fixed space, while mobile vendors are less likely to belong to organisations (ibid).

Roever (2006) also pointed out that street vending in Mexico City is regulated by local governments. The organisations perform two central functions. The first is that of the role of an intermediary where vending organisations negotiate with the authorities on behalf of individual vendors for joining an organisation to get help overcoming the complex bureaucratic procedures. Secondly, they play a managerial role too. Moreover,
vending organisations manage conflicts among members and promote their access to informal markets. Finally, in terms of the extent of organisation, street traders have formed many associations in the region to facilitate their work and defend their interests in the political arena. The creation of such associations indicate existence of low barriers to collective action and a good potential for establishment of a strong political voice at the grassroots level. However, these organisations tend to remain relatively small and politically weak, so that the interests of street vendors rarely get channelled into national political agenda (ibid).

Nonetheless, based on the above discussion, it could be said that the informal sector workers, including street vendors, have not made substantial gains as a result of the lack of formal recognition. They are more or less victims of harassment, bribes, and manipulation, both by the state and by their own local leaders in every Latin American country.

2.3. Africa

2.3.1. Emergence of the Activity

In Africa, street trade is undertaken by both men and women in enclosed premises or covered workspace which include street pavements, street corners, sidewalks, neighbourhood sidewalks and even in main transport nodes such as railway stations, bus stops, and construction sites and around sports complexes (Mitullah 2004). Urbanisation, migration and economic development trends as well as liberalisation in Africa have been identified as important factors leading to growth of street vendors (Brown 2006, Pratt 2006 and Skinner and Dobson 2007). Overall urbanisation in Africa is lower than that of Asia and Latin America. However, Northern and Southern Africa are highly urbanised in contrast to Eastern Africa (Skinner and Dobson 2007). Lindell (2004) has pointed out that international migration in Africa is yet another factor responsible for the growth of street vendors. Foreign migrants and cross border traders are involved in street trading as there are no barriers to entry and have low set up cost (ibid).

Lindell (2004) and Skinner and Dobson (2007) have discussed a critical factor in the increase in the numbers of street traders in Africa is the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) that had taken place in the 1980s and 1990s. Furthermore, Lindell (2004) states that privatisation, restructuring of the public sector and opening up of
African economies to foreign goods, led to a dramatic shrinking of the formal economy in Africa. Hence, it could be said that privatisation and liberalisation efforts on the continent continue to exercise a huge impact on the size, nature and dynamics of the informal economy in general and street trading in particular, mainly due to international migration. Liberalisation of African economies has led to an increase in the import of trading goods, particularly from China (Skinner and Dobson 2007). The combination of urbanisation, migration and economic development trends have led to a rapid increase in the number of street traders operating on the streets of African cities (ibid). Others (Brown 2006 and Pratt 2006) have identified various forms of assets, namely, financial, human, natural, physical and social assets which have affected the growth of street vending there. In addition, access to public space as a key physical asset is considered among the livelihood strategies of the urban poor in Africa. Most street vendors cannot afford the cost of transport, and therefore live within walking distance of their sites of operation. Mobile vendors sell their wares doing the rounds near their residential areas.

Adiko and Anoh (2003) in their study observe that women dominate both street and market trade, although they share their allotted trading spaces with male traders. Agadjanian (2001) observes that street vending attracts the disadvantaged segments of society who have limited skills and capital; in particular women who have low education, skill and greater association with childcare. Although the number of men engaged in street vending is considerable in Maputo, most people including women do not consider street vending an appropriate occupation for men. However, from the literature, it is observed that street trade in Africa is an activity for women, men and children alike, even though women dominate the trade. Some children assist their parents and relatives, whereas in some cases they are entrepreneurs in their own right (ibid). In Ghana, child labour is estimated at 28 per cent. Accra and other urban centres where street trade is active, account for 12 per cent of child labour (Opoku 1998).

Abidjan’s study notes that majority of street traders are illiterate or semi literate, while studies from Ghana, Uganda and Kenya note that the majority of street vendors have formal primary education (Adiko and Anoh 2003). The South African case points out that most street vendors can read in their mother tongue, while more male traders can communicate in English which enable them to do better in business. The level of education of people engaged in informal economic activities has been improving over the
years (Mitullah 1991, 2004). Research conducted in Kenya in 1998 (Graham et al. 1998) on street trade showed a great improvement compared to the study which was conducted by Mitullah in 1991. Most of these traders are self-employed with few working as assistants. The study further observes that street trade has created jobs in transport, security, and stall assistance. In Kenya, the new breed of street vendors that sell expensive electrical equipment and leather products have often attracted attention.

Charmes (2000) argues that street vendors might not be as independent as they appear. They may purchase or hire the goods they sell from the same suppliers; or may be given goods by the suppliers who pay a sum which is more or less the equivalent of salary (ibid). However, all street vendors are informal workers and are exposed to similar problems. Most of them were driven to the streets due to landlessness, retrenchment and/or poverty. Across Africa, street vendors have indicated several reasons that have driven them into the streets: lack of space in the markets, inability to pay the school fees resulting in the discontinuance of formal education, search for economic opportunity and income, strategic nature of street vending, family influence in form of support from a family member, entrepreneurship, lack of finance for larger business, evasion of taxes, orphanhood, widowhood, low levels of education and poverty (Mitullah 2004). In another study conducted by Skinner and Dobson (2007) street trading was estimated to account for the largest share of these jobs after home-working in Africa. For instance, in Africa the informal sector as a whole is estimated to account for 60 per cent of all urban jobs and over 90 per cent of all the new urban jobs (ibid).

2.3.2. Working Conditions

Mitullah (2004) has shown that the working hours begin as early as 4.30 am and continue till late at night depending on the city and country. A recent survey (ibid) of 7500 informal traders in Johannesburg indicates that street traders work on an average between 8 to 11 hours a day, but in certain areas like Alexandra township, the hours are much longer. A study of street vending in Ghana points out that trading begins between 4.30 am and 9 am with majority of street vendors arriving by 7 am and working up to 5.30 and 6 pm. This is because they ply their trade in the day when there is sunlight. At night, vending site is less secure, especially for women (ibid). In Kenya, street vendors begin work as early as 5.30 am and trade till 9 pm. Those trading late are found in areas with concentration of people such as transport nodes, bus parks/stops, clubs and other night
spots (ibid). In Ghana, where street food has become popular because women need to save time in food preparation, street vendors operate from all strategic locations at all hours of day and night. They serve food and beverages at reasonable and affordable prices (ibid).

The study conducted in Ghana notes that majority of street traders operate in the space provided by the Kumasi Metropolitan Council, while a few others use the sites left by other traders shift when they shift to other sites or quit street trade. Street traders use different methods and structures for displaying their commodities. The methods include piling up of commodities, such as fruits, vegetables; and use of measuring equipment such as tins, spoons, and baskets etc. The structures used for displaying commodities include tables, racks, wheel barrows, handcarts, and bicycle seats. Other traders display their goods on the ground, over mats or gunny bags, while some others simply carry their commodities in their hands and on shoulders. There are also those that hang their goods such as clothes on walls, trees, fences and an advanced group that construct temporary shades with stands for displaying their commodities (Mitullah 2003). Commodities of trade are many and vary across countries and cities. Street traders operate in sites that lack infrastructure and amenities such as shelter, roads, toilets, water and sewerage, and garbage collection. Thus it can fairly be said that they suffer from poor working conditions.

2.3.3. Nature of Collective Bargaining

Street vendors’ associations in Africa have several functions that include: establishing and defending legal rights of vendors; setting up of effective channels for representing members; raising the profile of street traders and protecting their interest in policy processes; building leadership through empowerment of the members and providing concrete benefits for them (Lund and Skinner 1999). The associations provide insurance to vendors and promote conducive business environment as well as secure provision of business requirements. In spite of the important roles they play in modern days, street vendors associations are characterised by instability. They form, soon become dormant, are often disbanded and in isolated cases amalgamated. These dynamics make associations lose the synergy, with potential members opting to stay away from any association. In Kenya, majority of street traders do not belong to any street vending association. Street vendors work in isolation, with majority having no knowledge of
associations that address street vending issues (Alila and Mitullah 2000). Lund (1998) notes that vendors interest group associations can assist informal economy workers in many ways. Unlike market traders, street traders in most African cities are not organised (Aboagye 1996). They do not belong to trade unions and are generally unorganised (Armacost 1996). In South Africa, for example, by 1998 only 15 per cent of the traders belonged to an association (Lund 1998) while in Kenya, a baseline survey of women street traders during the same years showed that 60.5 per cent belonged to some association (Graham et al. 1998).

South African street vendors are at the forefront in organisational efforts, while other countries such as Kenya, Uganda and Ghana have begun their organisational process. South Africans have a strong culture of worker organisation that owes its origin to the past regime (Skinner and Dobson 1999). But this is not true of the informal sector. Additionally, informal sector organisations get little support from the formal economy trade unions. It has been argued that organising street traders is difficult. This is partly because most street traders earn just enough to feed their families, and are thus reluctant to take time off of work to attend meetings. Other reasons include unstable sites of operation, differences between organisations and conflicts within and among the organisations, lack of awareness about existing vendors associations and inability to raise membership fees (Skinner 1999 and Lund 1998).

Lund (1998) further notes that, women are more likely than men to know of the existence of associations. This study indicates the different ways of becoming associated or organised. Lack of organisation reduces the vendors’ powers of negotiation. They lack a collective voice in city planning, and their concerns are rarely brought forward for consideration by municipal authorities. The lack of organisation and professional solidarity has contributed to the street vendors’ ignorance of their legal rights (Armacost 1996). Skinner (1999) has observed that the lack of organisation made negotiations in Johannesburg and Cape Town extremely difficult. Formation of umbrella organisations, similar to the Informal Trade Management Forum in Durban, and the Queenstown Hawkers Association in Queenstown were viewed as positive moves. Such organisations provide services to their members in various ways, for example bulk purchase, marketing goods, training, and management of trading sites, advocacy and representation. A study conducted in Kenya in 1998 concluded that there was need to provide support to street vendors.
vendors. The support should include advocacy, negotiation with authorities, facilitating street vendors to form and strengthen their own organisations (Graham et al. 1998). This study found that some of the vendors’ representatives were self styled leaders who were not recognised by those they claimed to represent. This reduced their capacity to mobilise street vendors and engage in negotiation, advocacy and influence policy.

The major role of street traders associations is to address problems of street vending, to protect vendors from harassment, to fight for the rights of the vendors—particularly the right to space—and seek recognition and integration of street vendors in urban development. The study observes that these associations do not contribute to policy formulation and advocacy. Further, their constitution lacks focus, especially on deliverable goals. They do not have clear focus on issues of common interest such as markets, finance, negotiation and advocacy for better working conditions. However, they have managed to get the street vendors to observe regulations and their own code of conduct without any compulsion.

Nnkya (2006: 84) identifies a factor in his study in Dar es Salaam in 1997. About 240 self-help groups representing 16000 members had been formed. Lund’s (1998: 33-34) re-analysis of data in South Africa found that in the two large surveys of street traders that had been conducted, 15 per cent belonged to an association in Johannesburg, while in Durban 12 per cent of the men and 16 per cent of the women traders were members of associations. The research, conducted in Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia, shows that the majority of organisations were established in specific markets or trading areas and dealt with urgent issues arising in these locations, such as harassment from the police and solving disputes and conflicts among vendors (Skinner and Dobson 2007).

King (2006) observes that trader organisations in Kumasi are well established and widely respected in Ghana. Market Traders Association, an umbrella group of various product associations, has a representative on the Kumasi Municipal Authority’s General Assembly. This association launched a successful struggle in the court when the local authority threatened to increase market fees by 300 per cent (King 2006: 108-9). There is an increasing focus in urban studies on the notion of urban governance in which local government is understood to be more than just an administrative function and instead one part of a relational interaction with other organised constituencies and interest groups.
acting in the city (Skinner and Dobson 2007). This draws attention to collective action among street traders. The Self Employed Women’s Union (a sister to the much larger Self Employed Women’s Association in India), was also very active in the area (Devenish and Skinner 2006). Alila and Mitullah (2000) interviewed over 300 street traders operating in four different Kenyan cities for their study. It indicated that 67 per cent had no knowledge of associations that addressed street vending issues (2000:18). Kamunyori (2007:14-15) mentioned that the Nairobi Informal Sector Confederation (NISCOF) registered in 2005, had, 23 member associations representing approximately 15000 individual street vendors as of 2007. The role of trade unions therefore appears to be increasingly important.

2.4. Asia

2.4.1. Emergence of the Activity and Response of Civic Authorities

Street trading or retailing sector is a controversial component of the ‘informal sector’ not only in India but all over developing countries in Asia, namely, Cambodia, Mongolia, Thailand, Bangladesh and many other developing countries. Studies have shown that local authorities and business elites often harass these traders or street vendors (Bhowmik 2005; Brown 2006; Kusakabe 2006, 2010). In Sri Lanka (Colombo) and Thailand (Bangkok), the street vending occupation is not completely illegal (Bhowmik 2006: 2258). The vendors in Sri Lanka and Thailand can occupy the place and continue with their business by paying a ‘daily tax’ to the municipal council (ibid). Around 70 to 85 per cent in all Asian developing countries have less than six years of education (Bhowmik 2005, Kusakabe 2006, 2010 and Nirathron 2006). However, there are many factors responsible for growth of street vendors in Asia that have been identified by different authors (ibid) in different studies. A few among them are noted here. There are possibilities of quick cash turnover in the vending occupation which draws in a large number of people in this trade; moreover this business requires less education and skill and the formal sector jobs are unavailable for a large section of the uneducated and

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1 The author tried to explore vendors’ situation in Asia based on the existing studies, by attending many seminars, and by contacting the trade unions and NGOs working for street vendors.

2 This study is based on four studies on street vendors in Thailand, Mongolia, and Cambodia commissioned by ILO in 2006 those are based on interview method, case study methods and focused group discussion with respondent.

3 Author studied mobile and fixed vendors at Klongtoey and Dindaeng districts, as well as buyers of street food. In all, 236 mobile vendors, 508 static vendors and 385 buyers were interviewed.
unskilled population. Occurrences of natural disasters have forced many persons to lose their home and livelihood in some areas. Some people have taken up vending after retirement as they have no other option.

2.4.2. The Economic Crisis of late 90s and Street Vending

According to HomeNet 2002, the 1997 Asian financial crisis resulted in mass joblessness. Many of these jobless workers then took to street vending occupation (Nirathron 2006). This report further clarifies that Labour Force Survey (LFS) of 2000 in Thailand showed that there were 390,600 workers under the category of ‘hawkers, peddlers and newsboys’ as compared to 310,500 workers in this sector in 1997 (Nirathron 2006). In the case of Bangkok (Thailand), street vending grew both under conditions of two economic recessions, especially after Asian Economic Crisis in 1997, as well as economic growth (Bhowmik 2006 and Nirathron 2006). The factors responsible for growth in numbers of street vendors in Bangkok are rural-urban migration in search better opportunities, the flexibility of the work schedule enabling women street vendors to take care also of family responsibilities; low investment requirements (Nirathron 2006). The economic and social contribution of street-food vending was underestimated due to its marginal character and link to poverty. It is an image of marginality which provided some ‘protection’ because poverty was always cited as the reason for leniency towards street vendors in Bangkok. Street vendors were occasionally exempted from paying fines for violating city ordinances on cleanliness and orderliness.

Nirathron (2006) has highlighted that street food trading in Bangkok has four dimensions, namely, economic, social, cultural, legal and policy dimensions which are responsible for it to become a prime occupation in Thai economy. Trade liberalisation is one of the most important economic factors, which has impacted the Thai economic system. Due to global competition, self-employment has become one of the prime business activities and thus the number of street vendors has also subsequently increased. On the other hand, the Asian financial crisis also impacted the Thai employment structure resulting in major job losses; as the easiest alternative choice of occupation for survival in the urban economy was street trading. Nirathron (2006) borrows Geertz’s (1978) concept of ‘clientalisation’, which refers to the informal relationship that benefits both the vendors and the consumers. Another study by Murray (1992) shows that transaction between street vendors and their customers emerged out of a relationship of trust, one
which assures quality of food and its affordability (Murray 1992), as vendors maintain quality products and variety. This relationship is considered a ‘warm and powerful’ instrument to sustain in the market (Nirathron 2006: 18).

Murray (1992) found that gender relations influenced the decisions related to expansion of trade. He found that female street-food vendors in Indonesia preferred to save money for a pilgrimage to Mecca rather than to expand trade. Once the business started to expand, they preferred to hand over the business to their husbands. Nirathon’s study (2006) also explores another important indicator, namely, the cultural factor. In Bangkok, supply and demand factors play a very important role in sustaining and expanding street vending business. The survey reveals that street food vendors sell fresh and good quality food in Bangkok and customers therefore prefer to buy food from them. In addition, buying food and other necessary things from the vendors is a part of Thai culture.

In order to explain the political and legal dimension of the street food vending, Nirathron (2006) argued that there is a dual attitude towards street vendors in Bangkok. For instance, during economic recession, street food vending was regarded as a ‘solution’ to unemployment and high cost of living. In contrast, during times of economic progress, street food vending is viewed as a ‘threat’ to orderliness. This dual attitude towards street vendors is reflected in policies at the national and local levels (Nirathron 2006).

The historical background of street vending in Bangkok indicates that migration has been taking place in Bangkok for a very long time. Most Chinese workers who came to Thailand took to street vending, and now they are capitalists. From the literature (Skinner 1957, Sevikul 1992, Virachon 2001 and Yasmeen 2001) quoted in Nirathron (2006), it can be said that Chinese immigrants started with wage work where they would earn money to sustain their families back in China, then accumulated enough capital, started street-food vending, thereby accumulating more capital to expand into large scale businesses. For many Chinese migrants, street food vending offered a vehicle to move to higher income levels in Thai society (Nirathron 2006: 13-14). Some owners of large Thai business entrepreneurs have started out in vending because of the profit of this business (Nirathron 2006).
Three other factors that pushed Thais into choosing street vending in Bangkok have been identified by Nirathron (2006) from different literature (Skinner 1957, Sevikul 1992 and Virachon 2001). These factors are economic mobility of Chinese vendors; Thai government’s encouragement to its people to engage themselves in trade and industry during economic recession; difficulties experienced by Thai farmers due to the significant decrease in the prices of rice in the world market and the economic depression after World War-I when farmers gave up their lands and migrated to Bangkok.

Kusakabe’s (2001) study on Cambodia showed that there were three peak periods when the number of the street vendors had increased dramatically, which include periods of high economic growth as well as recession. In 1979 and 1980, the falling of the Khmer Rouge regime was the first peak (Kusakabe et al. 2001). The second was in 1993, when the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) was organised in Cambodia for the first general election. These peaks were marked by high economic growth. The third peak was around 1998, during which Cambodia faced economic recession, political crisis and natural disasters. The country’s economy showed negative growth during this period due to the Asian economic crisis in 1997, droughts and floods. This resulted in an increase in the number of immigrants into Phnom Penh, and consequently, an increase in the number of street vendors. Hence, Kusakabe (2001) also showed that the increase in street vendors was directly related to the increase in migrants into Phnom Penh. Pou (2005) pointed out that the number of street vendors had increased during periods of economic recovery reflecting brisk sales in 2001-2002. Therefore, it can be said from the discussions that the number of street vendors has increased during both boom and bust periods in Cambodia, where employment options are limited.

Studies show that almost all the street vendors in Phnom Penh are women and higher numbers of women headed households are found among street vendors (Kusakabe 2001 and Pou 2005). Interestingly, authors (Banwell 2001, Agnello and Moller 2004) estimated from the study that street vendors will fall below the poverty line. Kusakabe (2006) expressed that street vendors are identified as ‘poorest of the urban poor’. In this very limited business condition, with low capital and relatively high costs of operation, vendors rely on public relations tactics to keep their sales up. One of the strategies is to encourage customer loyalty. It is important to note that with limited space and limited
capital, they rely on their personal skills to keep their businesses afloat. Moreover, street vendors also exercise the trial and error method to look for better business opportunities.

2.4.3. Working Conditions

In terms of the working conditions of Cambodia, Banwell (2001) pointed to some of the major problems faced by street vendors. These include foul odour in the market place, air pollution and dust hazards, lack of access to institutional credit, absence of social security, lack of clean water sanitation facilities at workplace, lack of food preservation equipments, lack of child care facilities, lack of security of goods, and unavailability of clean water. Agnello and Moller (2004) showed that harassment from police and market insecurity are the most serious problems they face frequently. Dangers that come with working in the market for an extended period of time also imply that they leave behind security considerations of their homes. Agnello and Moller (2004) noted that street vendors also fear for personal safety while going to the wholesale markets in the early mornings when it is still very dark. They are afraid that their goods may be stolen. Interestingly, Agnello and Moller (2004) point out that the street vendors are also worried that their work might have a negative impact on their family, particularly on children and their schooling. Some of their quotes clearly indicate this concern as they have no time for their families, or for taking care of their children. However, along with their business activities, they also perform household chores such as cooking meals. Thus, if one were to include the domestic/household work, street vendors are found to work almost 18-20 hours a day.

2.4.4. Nature of Collective Bargaining

Soon after the formation of vendors’ associations, street vendors were informed of the tax rates. Tax collection itself is relatively transparent. Tax collection has not been a major problem since then (Agnello and Moller 2004) although street vendors complained of ‘other fees’ collected as security and rentals; and harassment from security and police personnel. Moreover, street vendors also face heavy fee-collection by police. There is no written regulation that allows police to collect fees or state the amount to be collected.

Pou’s (2005) study showed that most government officials and police acknowledge that street vending is an important occupation, especially for the poor, but illegal. Middle-rank officers of the government said that street vending provides
convenience for consumers, because they can buy things without going to public market located far away from their houses (Pou 2005). Vendors’ Associations have been established in some of the major public markets with the help of an NGO, Urban Sector Group, since 1998. The Association provides microcredit, support for access to health services, child care services, as well as training on legality and rights. Members of the association negotiate with market authorities collectively. Forming an association improved some members’ confidence and their sense of being recognised in the society (Kusakabe 2006).

From the above discussion, we can derive some common observations. The increasing number of street vendors has been the result of the Asian Crisis of 1997 in almost all Asian countries, mainly Thailand (Bangkok) and Cambodia. Secondly, the number of the street vendors has increased during economic growth in all the countries. International and interstate migration is a third factor for increase in street trading. Street vendors do not have social security in developing countries of Asia. In Thailand, social security does not include the self-employed workers and does not have components such as public health, career training and providing safety at workplace. There is frequent harassment by local authorities and police. In the context of their working conditions in all Asian countries, there are problems like an unclean workplace and lack of sanitation facilities, child care facilities, and personal security (Kusakabe 2006). But Cambodian vendors are trying to create their own social security schemes by organising themselves. Saving options, credit accessibility and child care have been organised for the members of association in Mongolia (Kusakabe 2006). Another problem faced by street vendors in Asia is the lack of access to credit. Kusakabe (2006) stated that vendors with low capital operate as disguised wage workers in Thailand. In Bangladesh, the single most positive feature is a fair level of unionisation among street vendors (Bhowmik 2005) in comparison to the other countries in Asia. Bhowmik’s study also points out that the trade union federation has been negotiating with the government for the policy on street vendors since the Bangladesh Hawkers’ Federation (BHF) is directly linked to the trade union federation of the ruling Bangladesh National Party (ibid). Trade union power is not very strong for street vendors and there is no strong trade union even for other informal sector workers.
2.5. India

2.5.1. Emergence and Growth

Studies on street vendors in India have been discussed in this section. In the past few years, the number of street vendors in India has significantly increased. According to GoI (2004), around 10 million people depend on street vending for their livelihood (NCEUS 2006). Kolkata has more than 150,000 street vendors, Ahmedabad and Patna have around 80,000 each, Indore, Bengaluru and Bhubaneswar have around 30,000 street vendors. In Mumbai about 250,000 vendors get their livelihood from this profession (ibid). A host factors have been identified for this increase (Bhowmik 2001 and Tiwari 2000). One of the important factors is the closure of factories and shrinkage of employment in the formal sector (Bhowmik and More 2001). After the closure of textile mills in Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Kolkata (Bhowmik 2001), formal sector workers faced large-scale unemployment. Around 30 per cent of formal sector workers in Ahmedabad and Mumbai, and 50 per cent in Kolkata, have chosen street vending as a profession in order to eke out a living (Bhowmik 2001).

Bhowmik (2001) noted that most of the urban poor survive by working in the informal sector. Majority of the street vendors are migrants from rural areas where poverty as well as lack of opportunities for gainful employment has pushed them to look for better opportunities in the cities. Thus, for the rural poor, street vending is the most important and easiest means of earning a livelihood, because it requires low financial input and relatively low skills as compared to other occupations.

2.5.2. General Profile across Major Indian Cities

In major Indian cities, like Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru, Patna, and Bhubaneswar, street-vending is mainly a male dominated profession (around 60 per cent to 85 per cent). However, in Imphal, it is mainly a women’s activity as 93 per cent of the street vendors are female (ibid). Around 25-35 per cent street vendors are illiterate in most major cities while around 20-40 per cent street vendors have primary education (ibid). Daily average income of men is around Rs. 70 in almost all major cities except Patna where around Rs. 50. Women earn considerably less, at anything between Rs. 40-50 but in Patna, it is around Rs.30 (ibid).
2.5.3. Social Security and Credit Availability

Some studies have also pointed out (Bhowmik 2007a and Jhabvala 2000) that credit is the basic requirement for street vendors to sustain their existing business and to scale it up. Due to unavailability of institutional credit, vendors depend on money lenders to run their small business enterprises, who charge high rates of interest on these loans. For instance, in Bhubaneswar, credit is obtained from the wholesaler, to be paid back at the end of the day at the rate of up to 110 per cent (Bhowmik 2001). This rate can sometimes range from 100-125 per cent per day (Jhabvala 2000).

Lack of social security is a major problem of all workers engaged in the informal sector (NCEUS). The work of street vendors as part of the larger informal sector, is full of insecurity and uncertainty at workplace. However, they do not have any social security from the State (Bhowmik 2001, 2006, 2007 and Anjaria 2006).

2.5.4. Role of Member Based Organisations

There are few successful membership based organisations that are actively organising street vendors, namely Self-Employment Women’s Association⁴ (SEWA) and National Alliance of Street Vendors in India (NASVI), NIDAN and Manushi.

(a) SEWA

SEWA, formed in 1972, is a trade union of women who earn their livelihoods by running small businesses. It is the first and the largest trade union of informal sector in India, with a strong membership base of 959,698 workers (as of 2006).

SEWA started some group insurance schemes and health care schemes for members and their children as well through NGOs and cooperatives. The cooperative regulatory conducts various programmes regarding health, nutrition and childcare (Bhowmik 2006). Thus, SEWA’s objectives are not only to promote self-reliance among street vendors but also improving their economic condition and providing social security to its members.

Addressing the need for capital as the major constraint of its members’ business, SEWA Bank was set up in 1974. It was started with an initial share capital of Rs. 60000 collected from 5000 women; most of whom were street vendors. Now, it runs deposits

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⁴The information on SEWA has been illustrated from http://www.sewa.org/aboutus/structure.asp, accessed on 12 May 2010.
from 200,000 depositors and a working capital of Rs. 850 million. SEWA helps to promote self help groups (SHGs) for micro-credit. Their micro-credit programmes have been highly successful. Street vendors have used the standard loan from SEWA Bank as investment capital to upgrade their mode of selling but recently, SEWA Bank has introduced a special working capital loan for street vendors, which is called a ‘Daily Loan’, where vendors can borrow and then repay back at the end of the day. SEWA has promoted NGOs and cooperatives run exclusively by women and catering only to women through which street vendors get an access to institutional credit (Chen et al. 2005: 14).

(b) NASVI

On the other hand, NASVI\(^5\), an independent federation, a founding member of the international alliance of street vendor organisations called StreetNet, was set up 1998. NASVI is a federation of street vendors’ unions in the country. The main aim of NASVI is to bring together trade unions and cooperatives that represent street vendors to carry out their trade or occupations without hindrance.

NASVI has devised social security schemes for its members. As an organisation, NASVI pressurises the State to implement the national policy for urban street vendors. In 2005, NASVI adopted a scheme that provides multiple benefits to its members. The scheme includes insurance coverage for health, house and property, accidental and natural death, and permanent and partial disability. Members are required to give an annual premium towards this scheme, which is in the range of Rs 70-100, thereby making it affordable even for poorer street vendors (Bhowmik 2006).

NASVI attempts to provide credit accessibility for street vendors through promotion of SHGs, cooperatives, trusts, federations and different microfinance institutions etc. NASVI has started building direct links of street vendors with organisations providing financial assistance. As is the case in almost all major cities, the daily income of female vendors is much lower than that of their male counterparts (Bhowmik 2001). But in case of credit accessibility, the case is reverse. Women have various options available compared to men because different organisations such as NGOs, cooperatives and the SHG movement rely more on women than men.

\(^5\)To describe the function and the role of NASVI, the information has been illustrated from http://www.nasvinet.org/about.htm and it is accessed on 12 May 2010.
(c) NIDAN

Another large membership based organisation is NIDAN in Patna, which is formed by NASVI. It is a highly successful hawkers’ organisation which is spread across several towns of Bihar. Its group insurance scheme is the hallmark of its many achievements. This scheme is designed to cover health care services for street vendors such as hospitalisation costs and life insurance. Initially, NIDAN organised several programmes for street vendors to familiarise them with the different insurance schemes available from Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) and General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC). Thereafter, it helped its members get enrolled in several insurance groups among street vendors in Patna and other towns (Bhowmik 2006).

(d) Manushi

Manushi\(^6\) was founded in 1978 and it is run by a non-profit organisation called Manushi trust (1980). Manushi Sangathan, as an offshoot of Manushi Trust, was registered under the Societies Registration Act of 1994. The Sangathan involves itself with research, education and advocacy work for democratic reforms to promote greater social justice and human rights. The organisation is involved in campaigning for a vast majority of the most deprived section of the population, the working poor. It aims to provide a platform for intellectual quests, investigations and debates as well as activist interventions. Manushi is involved in various policy reform works for the street vendors. It has been continuously involved in organising protests and Lok Sunwayi of hawkers in different cities.

2.5.5. National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (NPUSV)

The National Policy on Urban Street Vendors made some recommendations for the urban street vendors in 2006 (NCEUS 2006). The objectives of the policy are:

1. To give street vendors a legal status by formulating appropriate laws and providing legitimate hawking zones in urban development/ zoning plans and ensuring their implementation;

2. To provide facilities for appropriate use of identified space including the creation of hawking zones in the urban development/ zoning plans;

\(^6\)The information on Manushi has been collected and described in this section from http://www.manushi.in/articleList.php?page=2&catId=119&type=1, accessed on 8 January 2012
3. To avoid imposing numerical limits on access to public spaces by discretionary licenses and instead moving to nominal fee-based regulation of access, where previous occupancy of the space by the street vendor for vending purposes, determines the allocation of space;

4. To make street vendors a special component of the urban development/zoning plans by treating them as an integral and legitimate part of the urban distribution system;

5. To promote self-regulation in matters relating to hygiene, including disposal of waste amongst street vendors both in the individually allotted areas as well as in areas occupied by the street vendors as a whole;

6. To promote, if necessary, organisations of street vendors for example Unions/Co-operatives/Associations and other forms of organisation to facilitate their empowerment;

7. To set up participatory mechanisms with representation by urban vendors’ organisations, (Unions/Co-operatives/Associations), voluntary organisations, municipal authorities, the police, residents welfare association (RWAs) and others for orderly conduct of urban vending activities;

8. To prevent vending by children and seek their rehabilitation where ever such practice exists, in conformity with the Child Labour (Prohibition & Regulation) Act, 1986;

9. To provide protective social security to take care of contingencies such as sickness, maternity and old age; and

10. To promote access to such services as credit, housing and upgradation of skills. For such promotion, the services of self help groups (SHGs)/co-operatives/federations/micro finance institutions (MFIs) etc should be encouraged.

2.5.5.1. Towards Social Security

Welfare Board for promoting livelihood conditions, social protection and job security is highly successful in Kerala for different sections of workers in the informal sector (Subrahmanya 2000 and Joshipura 2002). According to the recommendations of
the national commission, the welfare boards for street vendors can be created on the line of boards for the construction workers or domestic workers. According to the National Policy in 2006, a welfare board for street vendors would be created by way of which, banks could be instructed to collect money from the vendors or vendors could directly deposit their contribution to banks on a monthly basis. At the end of the month, banks could transfer the money to the welfare board. Alternatively, a fixed amount could be deposited for different kinds of social security benefits including healthcare, medicare, family pension, etc.

2.5.5.2. Access to Credit

Since street vendors depend on private money lenders that charge high rates of interest (Bhowmik 2001 and Jhabvala 2000), the national policy has initiated some credit schemes to motivate the street vendors. The policy also suggests that banks should be encouraged to extend credit to SHGs of street vendors. Vendors’ Associations should be assisted by NGOs for organising SHGs to create financial intermediaries between street vendors and formal sector financial institutions for accessing credit not only for income generation but also for housing purposes (NCEUS 2006). This policy has also recommended that Credit Guarantee Fund Scheme for Small Industries (CGTSI) scheme may be extended to the street vendors.

The National Policy in 2006 has initiated and recommended many issues. However, the problem is not with policy recognition because this policy already has highlighted the important problems and provided very specific recommendations. Thus, the problem is that after three years of policy notification, these recommendations have remained on paper and have not been implemented so far. Given the importance of this policy for the urban informal sector, various NGOs, SHGs, cooperatives through SEWA and NASVI are coming forward by providing social security and many other basic requirements but the numbers are very few.

2.6. Decent Working Conditions among Street Vendors in India

The concepts of the decent work introduced by ILO have been considered here. The working conditions or working life of the informal sector workers is characterised by a ‘decent work deficit’ as far as the developing countries are concerned. The problems and constraints to the achievement of decent work, as faced by workers and enterprises, are
not limited to the informal economy only; they are similar for the formal economy as specially the workers in the informal economy who are working without any security of job. The four main elements of the decent work are employment and income opportunities, rights at work, social protection and social dialogue (ILO 1999). Looking at the conditions of the workers in the informal sector, it can be said there is a lack of all these entitlements for the workers in the informal sector. There is no employment or job security, social security and other types of formal security for workers in this sector. Moreover, they have poor working conditions including long working hours. They have very limited forum to raise their voices and concerns and low or no collective bargaining power.

2.7. Research Gaps in the Existing Literature

The gaps in the existing literature need to be identified and addressed by researchers and therefore have been considered in this study for the further discussion. The literature available also outlines many factors that are responsible for increasing growth of street vendors in all countries including India. Rapid urbanisation, rural-to-urban migration, developmental projects, economic crisis, and neo-liberalisation are only a few to mention. Interestingly, natural disaster has been identified as one of the important factors for increasing the number of street vendors in Thailand. The studies of Thailand and India point to the fact that demand and supply side factors are responsible for the existence of street vendors in urban economy. Nevertheless, if we see the available literature, we can perhaps say that the condition of street vendors is slightly better in Latin America and they are more organised than the others considered in this study. In addition, street vendors are more unionised than other countries in the world in Latin America. Roever (2006) stated that if adequate studies emphasising street commerce were conducted methodologically, the analysis could have been done in a better manner.

There is a dearth of literature exploring the living and working conditions of street vendors in Asia. The studies have revealed the vulnerability of the job environment of vendors. Studies conducted in Africa and Asia have shown that there are many issues of conflict among street vendors. One such issue is the competition among them. Studies suggest that unions or associations have a greater role in reducing this competition among street vendors.
In India, the national policy on urban street vendors has made recommendations to different stakeholders for enhancing the lives of street vendors at various levels. Different cooperatives, NGOs, SHGs through organisations such as SEWA and NASVI have been coming forward in India to work for ensuring social protection and also facilitating their access to credit.

Another important issue associated with street vendors is credit accessibility from the institutional sources for their business activities. Literature shows that the street vendors have scarce financial resources for their business and need to obtain credit. Interestingly, the core issue is not that of access to credit for business purposes alone, but also for purposes that are in no way related directly or indirectly to income. This important issue still remains underexplored in the existing literature.

In addition, access to social security for the street vendors is another major issue in India that need to be taken up. The absence of state assisted social protection measures for the vendors make it even more necessary to extend the scope of the study to explore the conditions at workplace. This could provide a comfortable base for the policymakers to delve into the problems involved in their documentation and implementation.

The role of unions or any other membership based organisations in organising the street traders is very important which need to be studied in detail. It is seen from literature that the trade unions or other membership based organisations are strong in Latin America and South Africa. Moreover, there are few studies that have explored the ways in which trade unions or other membership based organisations could help street vendors to achieve ‘decent work’.

In theoretical debates on the informal sector, we have found that migration is one of the key factors which has impacted the emergence of informal sector in most of the developing countries. The lack of jobs in the countryside has forced people to leave and join the urban workforce. Due to inadequacy of jobs in the formal sector, most of them are forced to join the informal sector. This view has been promoted by the supporters of the dualist approach. It could be extended to include the situation of street vendors as well. However, migration is not the only factor responsible for growth in this segment of the urban informal economy. Besides migration, there are many other factors responsible for the growth in the number of the street vendors. Considering the definition of street
vendors and all the schools of thought explained in this chapter, the legalist approach seems more appropriate for defining street vending. Easy methods of evading taxes and absence of rules and regulations which are required for registration of business activities in the formal sector are missing in this particular category of informal activity. However, there is lack of a strong theoretical understanding of the phenomena resulting in the growth of the street vending activity. Whatever scant literature is available does not suffice in providing a strong theoretical grounding for why and how street vending has assumed such importance in the modern society. An attempt has been made in the present study to revisit and rationalise for obtaining an appropriate theoretical stand for street vending after the data analysis.

2.8. Statement of the Problem

In the last few years, there has been a phenomenal increase in the number of street vendors leading to an increase in the number of workers in the informal sector in India; in particular Mumbai is witnessing the highest growth rate of street vendors among all the major cities in India. The basic problem of street vendors is the absence of their right to exist because this profession is considered as an illegal activity and vendors are thus unlawful entities despite the fact that around 2.5 per cent of the total urban poor draw their livelihood from this occupation in India (Bhowmik 2001). They are thus vulnerable to constant harassment by local Police and Municipal Authorities at the work place. Hence, an attempt needs to be made to legalise their existence and activities which can solve their problems to a great extent.

Access to finance is one of the major problems for the informal sector workers. It has been identified as one of the important factors that have the capacity to solve many problems related to their trade and daily transaction in the market. Interestingly, this vending process works on a daily turnover basis and they are found to be surviving quite successfully in the market. Street vendors have scarce financial resources and the absence of formalised institutional support in this regard, forces them to depend on private moneylenders and the like for credit support, notwithstanding the fact that they are subject to constant harassment and exorbitant interest rate charged by these unscrupulous men. For instance, in Bhubaneswar, the credit is obtained from wholesaler to be paid back at the end of the day at high rate of interest, up to 110 per cent (Bhowmik 2001) and sometimes it exceeds to 100 to 125 per cent per day (Jhabvala 2000).
Social security is the major problem of all workers that are engaged in the informal sector. From the literature, it is seen that street vending is full of insecurity and uncertainty since vendors occupy the roadside and accidents may occur at any time (Anjaria 2006). Street vendors, being a part of the informal sector, are not eligible for getting this benefit though they work around 365 days in a year. Interestingly, it is observed from the survey that most of the street vendors are not even aware of the implications surrounding the term ‘social security’.

Unions or other member based organisations have positive impact on vendors’ income and working condition by empowering them through strong social dialogue. These unions are mainly localised bodies. Vendors organise themselves into unions or local associations that enable them to continue their economic activities. The main role of these organisations is to negotiate with local authorities such as municipal corporation’s officials and police when the vendors are threatened by them. Study (Bhowmik 2001) on street vendors in Ahmedabad, Bengaluru, Delhi, Imphal, Kolkata, Mumbai and Patna shows that less than 20 per cent street vendors are unionised in almost major cities but interestingly it is noted that in Ahmedabad 40 per cent street vendors are unionised under SEWA. Competition among street vendors has appeared in India due to inadequate number of unions/associations for street vendors or inactive performances of unions or associations (Bhowmik 2006). The harassment that the vendors face in plying their trade, due to interferences of the local authorities and policemen result in a great number of problems for the vendors. One of the studies (Bhowmik 2001) pointed out that street vendors pay 10 per cent to 20 per cent of their earnings as bribes to local authorities. This is one of the reasons for further impoverishment of the street vendors. In the current study, an attempt has been made to address all these problems of street vendors in Mumbai.

2.9. Rationale for the Study

The main objectives of the Master Plan for the urban poor as outlined in the Eleventh Plan are to provide affordable shelter and ‘decent living and working conditions’; to make an adequate provision of the land for the urban poor; to help in developing ‘self-employment enterprises’, create jobs for the wage employment earners, protect the economic interest and safety of women, and other vulnerable sections of the society (Eleventh Plan 2008: 406).
Article 39 (a) of constitution stated that ‘any citizens, men and women, have equal right to an adequate means of livelihood’. Street vendors are not only trying to earn a livelihood but also provide valuable services to the urban population. Thus, it is the duty of the State to protect the right of this segment of population to earn their livelihood. ‘Decent work’ is therefore a fundamental right of any worker. But the ground reality is completely different.

Sodhan Singh, a garment vendor at Janpath in New Delhi had filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) against New Delhi Municipal Corporation (NDMC) to the Supreme Court for frequently evicting him from the pavements of Janpath in New Delhi. He claimed that the act violated his fundamental rights, more specifically his right to carry out business as a part of their livelihood stated in the article 19 (1) (g) of the Indian Constitution. One of the important points of the judgement which is given below:

If properly regulated according to the exigency of the circumstances, the small traders on the sidewalks can considerably add to the comfort and convenience of the general public, by making available ordinary articles of everyday use for a comparatively lesser price. An ordinary person, not very affluent while hurrying towards his home after a day’s work can pick up these articles without going out of his way to find a regular market. The right to carry on trade or business mentioned in Article 19 (1) (g) of the Constitution, on street pavements, if properly regulated cannot be denied on the ground that the streets are meant exclusively for passing or re-passing and no other use (NCEUS 2006: 3-4).

The above quote has several important favourable aspects of street vending and the public space utilisation. First, the judgement has considered the general public’s comfort and convenience. Therefore, the judgement was not against the concept of street vending. Second, the judgement notes if street vending is regulated, it cannot be denied. Interestingly, the most important aspect is that street vendors have the constitutional right to carry out their business. Hence, it should be regulated in proper way by the authorities.

As the literature review shows, there is a studies exploring the aspect of ‘decent work’ conditions particularly in relation to the street vendors are scarce. Moreover, there has been no study attempting to look at the working conditions of street vendors after a study done by Bhowmik in 2001. In a span of ten years, exigencies arising from globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation have definitely hit the street vendors in
gigantic proportions changing the scenario of street vending activity. This study attempts to look into their living and working conditions in terms of income levels, working hours, safety at work place, amount of bribe payment, leisure time and other conditions at work in these circumstances.

As access to finance is one of the major constraints for being a part of the informal sector, the present study has considered this aspect for this group of workers. Street vendors have scarce resources for their trade and need to obtain credit (Bhowmik 2007a). Therefore, the present study attempts to explore current pattern of credit access of the street vendors.

Access to social security for the street vendors is another major problem that has been stated in the national policy (NCEUS 2006 and Bhowmik 2007a). However, there is no particular study on social security for street vendors in Mumbai. Thus, this study is an attempt to explore the situation of social security that is available for them and the scope for further provisioning.

Moreover, NCEUS in 2006 suggests that associations should come forward to organise them. In order to evolve NPUSV, the commission should have interactions with different stakeholders such as NASVI, SEWA, Manushi and many others. It is obvious that the NASVI and SEWA are both successful organisations for initial policy dialogues at national and local levels. Along with NASVI and SEWA, other organisations should come forward to organise them in Mumbai. Bhowmik (2007: 98) stated that ‘...more research are required regarding the issues related to unionisation of street vendors’. Therefore, this study attempts to explore the role of associations, trade unions and other member based organisations in overall business activities of this group of workers in Mumbai.

The National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector sets up national policy goals and made many recommendations in 2006 (NCEUS 2006). NPUSV in 2006 has identified major problem regarding their livelihood, working conditions, access to credit, social protection and others and recommended policies on these problems (ibid). The problem is therefore not with policy recognition or with the recommendations because this policy already has highlighted the important problems and provided specific recommendations. The policy was revised again by the Ministry of
Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA), Government of India (GOI), in 2009 (MoHUPA 2009), though the new policy is much the same as the old. The problem is that these recommendations still remain on the paper only and have not been implemented in Mumbai so far. Mr. Arbind Singh, national coordinator of NASVI, commented on the revised policy as follows:

We want the government to stay with the earlier policy and work for its quick implementation rather than come up with another one. It is eventually the States and local bodies which have to implement the policy. Even after five years since the first policy was adopted, only five States and about 15 cities have made attempts to implement it. The new policy would only provide further excuse for the States to delay the implementation and the vendors would suffer meanwhile (Srivasthan 2009).

As mentioned in the quote, even after five years of the first policy notification, there is no concrete result on implementation, especially in Mumbai. Hence, this study has also considered the aspect of assessment of the national policy in Mumbai.

Productive work, adequate wage and other major pillars of decent work are more appropriate to the workers who are employed. Nevertheless, ILO is concerned with all the workers including self-employed workers and few studies have attempted to explore this concept among self-employed workers in the informal sector. If we see the decent work aspect, there is not much attempt exploring the country specific study of decent work and informal sector together. Most studies have discussed and debated the definition of decent work and its indicators given by ILO and their theoretical judgment. Critically, there is a dearth of studies exploring the applicability of the decent work in the formal as well as the informal sector workers, especially, on street vendors and decent work together.

2.10. Conclusion

In Latin America, the number of vendors has been growing substantially over the last few decades and it is the result of the regional economic crisis of 1980s and the neo-liberal reforms of 1990s. However many countries of Latin America have adopted policies to preserve public spaces for street vendors and have done much in the area of issuing licenses. However vendors are not fully recognised and therefore are frequent victims of rent-seeking and other kinds of harassment. Trade unions have been active in organising
the vendors. In Africa, urbanisation, migration, and liberalisation are important factors leading to rise in the number of vendors. In Asian countries, the Asian crisis which affected many countries is one of the factors leading to a rise in the number of street vendors in Asia. Vendors in all Asian countries face similar problems arising out of lack of government sponsored social security measures, informal credit and extensive rent-seeking by civic authorities. In India, the estimated 10 million street vendors also face similar problems arising out of informal nature of activity. From various incidents in the past (Sodhan Singh v/s Delhi Municipal Corporation), it is understood that the Indian government does not disfavour this occupation, it however insists on “regulating” it. The NPUSV has constantly reiterated the need for regulating the activities of the vendors and bringing them under the legal ambit.

Theoretical background of the emergence and sustenance of the informal sector have been widely documented. Nevertheless, a similar theoretical debate on street vending as an important segment of the urban informal sector is missing. An attempt has been made to provide a theoretical stand on the emergence of this street vending occupation. The existing research gaps in the literature have been pointed out and the statement of the problem and the rationale for the present study have expounded. The objectives of the study and the research questions have been addressed in the next chapter. Detailed discussion on the appropriate methodology adopted in the present study would be explored in the third chapter. An introduction and philosophical stance of the methodology involved in the study have been elaborately discussed.