



Status of Women's Representation and Participation in Town Vending Committees (TVCs)



Background of the Study

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 in India was the result of a long and arduous political struggle aimed at recognizing the rights and livelihoods of street vendors. This struggle involved various stakeholders, including street vendor associations, activists, civil society organizations, and lawmakers, and it spanned several years.

The inclusion of women in TVCs is an essential component of this legislation, recognizing the importance of their participation and representation in decision-making processes. It not only ensures a more comprehensive approach to street vending regulation but also promotes gender equity and the empowerment of women in the informal sector, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and thriving urban economy.

In the specific context of Nagaland, where a majority of street vendors are women engaged in selling a variety of products such as local food, fruits, vegetables, flowers, clothing, etc. their visibility does not translate into due recognition. They grapple with numerous challenges, including livelihood insecurity, harassment, lack of social security, and exclusion from decision-making processes in both private and public spheres. The provision for one-third representation of women in TVCs provides them with a platform to assert their influence in the decision-making processes related to street vending. Therefore, promoting their active participation in these committees is of utmost importance.

Act Summary

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 is a comprehensive policy framework aimed at protecting the livelihoods of street vendors ensuring the regulation and orderly operation of their businesses. It seeks to strike a balance between the interests of street vendors, consumers, and the overall urban environment.

In 2019, the Government of Nagaland passed the "Nagaland Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Rules, 2019" to establish a set of guidelines and rules for the implementation of the Act.

The objectives of the Act are as follows:

- To safeguard livelihoods through legal recognition
- To protect street vendors from arbitrary evictions
- To promote economic sustainability for street vendors

It mandates a constitution of Town Vending Committees (TVCs) in Municipalities and Town Councils, with 5 and 4 street vendor representatives as members, out of which 1/3 are women. The TVCs are important to:

- Facilitate effective participation and representation of street vendors in decision making
- Bridge the gap between street vendors and local authorities by creating a common platform to communicate and come to solutions

To regulate street vending a set of guidelines are issued in the Nagaland Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Rules, 2019:

- To designate specific vending zones with discussion in the TVC meetings
- Ensure orderly operation of businesses by addressing

concerns in the TVC meetings.

A Grievance Redressal Mechanism is also mandated to be set up to address concerns and grievances of the street vendors and create fair and transparent conflict resolution systems.

Findings of the Study

To delve deeper into the issue, a study was conducted by North East Network (NEN), with Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Nagaland on the 'Implementation of Street Vendors' Policy in Nagaland, with special reference to street vending women's representation and participation in Town Vending Committees' in 5 districts, i.e Kohima, Dimapur, Chumukedima, Phek, and Shamator.

The findings of this study shed light on the local dynamics and the effectiveness of the legislation in practice. While women street vendors were formally represented in the TVC lists across these districts, the study uncovered a significant disparity in the actual participation and engagement of women in these committees. In particular, it was observed that TVC meetings were absent in most of these districts, with Kohima being a noteworthy exception. These findings underscore the critical need to bridge the gap between representation on paper and meaningful participation, particularly in districts where TVC meetings were not taking place.

Problems Identified

The problems identified on the basis of the study conducted in 5 districts, i.e Kohima, Dimapur, Chumukedima, Phek, and Shamator are as follows:

1. Inactive Town Vending Committees (TVCs)

The TVCs are not actively meeting to discuss vending zones and other pressing issues of the street vendors. This is due to:

- a) **Lack of proper information** among street vendor representatives as well as the official members about the roles, responsibilities and functions of TVCs. This leads to a lack of proper plan of action for the implementation of the same.
- b) The TVCs require substantial involvement and time from the street vendors. With **no remuneration** to do so, there is a lack of motivation to attend meetings, if called for.
- c) **Lack of knowledge** about the importance and need for a Street Vendor's Act among women street vendors. This leads to a lack of motivation to participate in TVCs if elected to represent them.

2. Lack of skills among street vendor representatives in TVCs

While the women street vendors are a part of the TVC, they often feel under confident to present their issues in the meetings. The need is not only for capacity building of these women street vendors who become representatives but also to create a safe space within the TVC meetings for them to be able to share their grievances.

3. TVC lacks engagement with street vendors outside

The other street vendors who are not a part of the TVC and even the ones who are, are not entirely sure of how TVCs can benefit them.

4. Language Barriers

The official proceedings of the TVC takes place in English. This does not allow women street vendors to understand and raise their issues during the period of the meeting. They are often passive members of the meetings and are briefed on the proceedings later on.

5. An overall emphasis on PMSVANidhi than on the Nagaland Street Vendors Rules, 2019

A stronger emphasis is currently placed on the PMSVANidhi scheme in comparison to the Nagaland Street Vendors Rules, 2019. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that these rules serve as the foundation for empowering street vendors with their right to livelihood and offer a framework for the orderly regulation of street vending, with a strong focus on their well-being. Therefore, it is essential to ensure the effective implementation of these rules before diverting our attention to other schemes.

Recommendations:

1. **Encourage the development of strong women leaders** through capacity building programs to better represent the street vendors
2. **Clarify roles and responsibilities of both official and non-official TVC members** to prevent any confusion and potential misuse.
3. **Enhance recognition of TVC committees and members** by issuing official appointment letters or ID cards. TVCs should interact with the markets in the district and make their presence and role visible.
4. **Offer compensation for the participation of street vendors in TVC meetings**, either through official funds or by establishing a self-sustaining fund sourced from the street vendors themselves. Additionally, consider providing remuneration for their engagement in other official responsibilities as well.

Conclusion:

The Nagaland Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Rules, 2019 form the backbone of a system aimed at safeguarding and regulating street vending activities in Nagaland. Town Vending Committees are pivotal in the enforcement and oversight of street vending regulations at the local level, ensuring the protection of street vendors' rights. To achieve an inclusive, resilient, and thriving local economy, it is imperative to emphasize the inclusion and active participation of women vendors in the TVCs while also creating a sense of ownership and community among them.

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