

# Right to Road and Struggle for Social Security: A Case Study on Barasat Municipal Area

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## ARTICLE DETAILS

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## ABSTRACT

Urban areas are engines of socio-economic growth and development. One of the burning socio-economic challenges facing in urban area is emigration from rural areas as well as to tackle the issues of unemployment. In the urban area Street Vending is considered as one of the common source of income for the poor segment who face continuous harassment by civic authorities (Sen and Gupta, 2017). The urban spaces are not designed to provide informal activities (street vending) or empower people. Street vendors play vital role on urban economy. Lower and middle class income group prefer them. But they have no proper socio economic security as street vending is treated as illegal. This paper highlighted on the socio economic security of street vending.

## 1. Introduction

Cities around the world increasingly offer their residents better opportunities for employment and income. As a result, we have witnessed a long-term trend of migration and immigration to urban centers, with the result now being that the majority of people live in cities for the first time in human history (UN-Habitat, 2010). This spatial demographic shift means that the number of people and the varieties of uses vying for urban spaces have multiplied; competition for urban space is more intense than ever before (Bostic, Kim, and Valenzuela 2016). Street Vendors occupy one of the largest and most visible occupational groups in the informal economy which is found in the public space 'street' (Sharma & Konwar, 2014). Street vending in many ways epitomizes the challenges of contemporary urban governance and its evolving policy considerations. In many cities, existing formal businesses call on government to curb street vending because they view vendors as unfair competitors who are not paying the same (Bostic, Kim, and Valenzuela 2016). Street Vendors are Commercial Encroachers who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built up structure from which to sell (Sen and Gupta, 2018). But in the urban area Street Vending is considered as one of the common source of income for the poor segment who faces continuous harassment by civic authorities (Sen and Gupta, 2017). Street vendors have too many dimensions: 1) Socio-Economic Dimension: Private benefit derived from street vending is costless sale by the hawkers and public benefit is to save money of middle and lower income group by buying from street vendors. Private costs incurred rent to police and local political leader by hawker

and Social costs incurred congestions, accidents, delay and free space gone without any rent. 2. Political Dimension: The political view of street vending is very interesting. Political benefit is to gain votes of the street vendors by the street vendors in the name of humanitarian acts. Street vendors may withdraw votes from the ruling political party due to inconvenience. 3) Spatial Dimension: Lot of marginal urban public space is lost due to encroachment by street vendors. To remove encroachment for widening roads or construct bridges, flyover etc private capital may be involved. 4) Environmental Dimension: Different infectious disease may be spread due to environmental degradation by the waste generated by street vendors.

## 2. Study Area

There is substantial increase in the number of street vendors in Barasat Municipal area (Latitude : 88°48" E, Longitude : 22°50" N), the headquarter of North 24 Parganas district. The population of Barasat were 283,443 according to 2011 census. As an urban setup in the vicinity of the Kolkata, the town is within the area of Greater Kolkata (under KMDA). Several significant roads like Krishnanagar Road (NH-34) leading towards North Bengal, Jessore Road (NH-35) leading to Bangladesh via Bongaon, Taki road (SH) leading to Taki via Basirhat, Barrackpur Road etc. cross through the town. There are three rail stations in this municipal area: Hridaypur rail station, Barasat Junction and Kazipara rail station. The town is an important railway and roadway junction. Too many street vendors are traced along the National and state Highways as well as feeder roads connected to the rail stations.

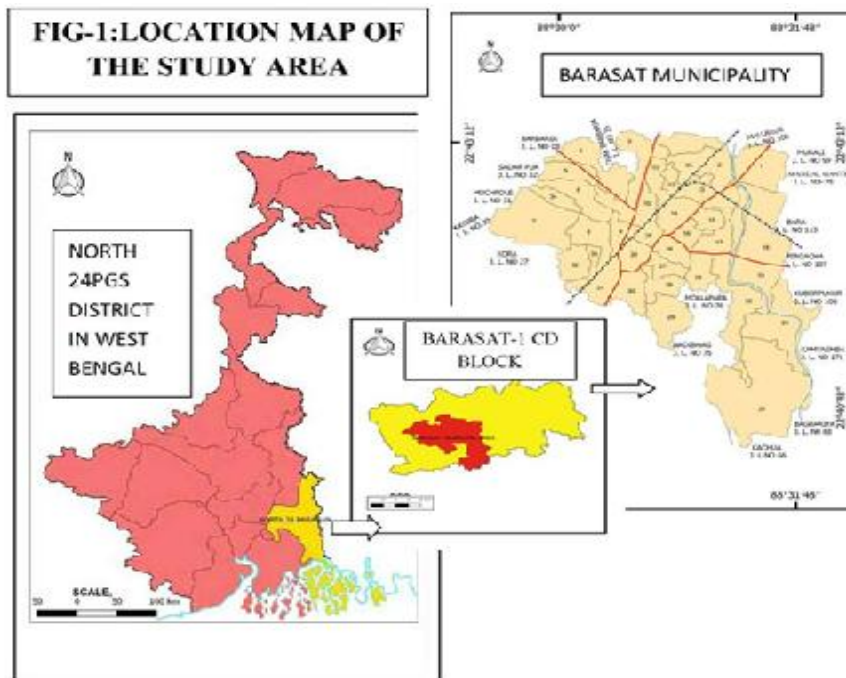


Fig:1:Study area

### 3. Review of Literature

**Hassan (2003)** traces accommodation of the street vendors as well as changing characteristics of the street hawkers in Kuala Lumpur. In course of tracing the transitions, he enhances the understanding of the issues related to strategies adopted for managing their lives and economic prospects which should ideally follow Dimas' paper. **Dimas (2008)** highlighted on many trials faced by city managers in developing countries. Hassan is a specific case study – Kuala Lumpur. **Pang (2008)** and **Singh (2009)** are specific issues – food safety, electricity etc. **Pang (2008)** explored the demographic factors affecting food safety strategies of hawkers in an urban setting of Malaysia. **Singh (2009)** highlighted on

Informal markets for electricity. **Roy & Dasgupta (2016)** explored the process motivated the rural people to come to the cities for finding job. **Sen and Gupta (2017)** studied on the major socio-economic challenges faced by women street vendors. **Sen and Gupta (2018)** explored the cost benefit of roadside encroachment by street vendors.

### 4. Objectives

The general objective of the study is to investigate the importance of street vendors on urban economy and identify constraints and risk in operation. The specific objectives are:

1. To examine the reasons make people to become street vendors.
2. To investigate and measure the Socio-Economic obstacles and Constraints faced by Street Vendors in the study area.

### 5. Methodology

The research design of this study was started with the translation of the objectives of this paper into research questions which would be brought to the fieldwork. Barasat Municipal area was chosen as the place to conduct the fieldwork for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is district headquarter and the centre of economic activities of North 24

Parganas District. Secondly, the growing number of people who had become involved in the informal sector. The survey-interview questionnaire in this study was designed to extract quantitative and qualitative data from the street vendors. This questionnaire was designed based on the issues related to the theories in literature and previous similar studies. The socio-economic profiles of 1575 samples of street vendors are being collected. The respondents themselves could not set a fixed time for interviews because their time depended on the presence of their customers. Due to time constraints it was difficult to survey a wide range of people. It was not possible to study all street vendors in Barasat Municipality. So, some selected sites were chosen like Colony more, Champadali more, Station market, Chhotobazar etc. In order to determine prospective respondents a combination of both the random sampling method and the purposive sampling method are chosen. The random sampling, known as probability sampling used to generalize the results of the study. Purposive sampling method is used in determining different sites because all the street vendors in every site in Barasat municipality could not be studied. The analysis has been made on the basis of simple econometrics and simple statistical method include chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) test & hypothesis testing, correlation co-efficient and simple cartographic tools.

### 6. Data Analysis

In spite of being one of the important informal service sectors in India, Street vending have a negative public image, being associated with traffic jam, environmental degradation etc. On 9th September 2013, Supreme Court of India has given an order to all Union Territories and States Chief Secretaries to follow National Street Vendors Policy 2009 and formulate Town Vending Committee in every district of the states. On 6 September 2014 Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 was passed. This act recognized street vending as a legal occupation. But the Street Vendors Act, 2014 has not been implemented by the

Government of West Bengal. In the year 2010, a state policy was prepared by the government which was not passed in the assembly. Town vending committee has not been formed yet in West Bengal (Sen and Gupta, 2017). The working conditions of street vendors are precarious, as they endure harsh physical environments, limited or no infrastructure, no shelter against the elements, or access to water, sanitation and storage facilities (Lund, 1998). Urban Poverty and socio-economic Insecurity of informal sectors are growing with uneven and unplanned urbanization in the study area. There are four major socio-economic challenges that forced the unemployed people to street vending. i.e. 1) Demand of labour market depend on the special skill of labour, 2) There is no other secure and formal job. 3) Supply of labours is surplus than demand

4) Cycle of poverty. The major socio-economic challenges faced by street vendors are: 1) Harassed by political leaders and civic authorities. 2) They have no proper health care facility 3) They have no proper life insurance facility 4) They have no job security 5) They have no savings security. This article describes the method to compute Social Security Index (S.S.I.), introduced by the authors. Human Development Index (H.D.I.), Economic Security Index (E.S.I.), Social Development Index (S.D.I.) etc. could not satisfy the proper assessment and completely ignored welfare of the informal sectors. The Social Security Index (S.S.I.) is not a ultimate index but a better measurement to assess the social status as well as struggle for social space and social security in any informal sectors

Table-1: Design Considerations:

Dimension	Economic		Social			
Indicator	Single Earner of the family	No Banking facility	No L.I.C. policy	No Health insurance policy	No trade license	Harassed by political leaders and civic authorities.
Dimension Index	Lone Earner Index (L.E.I.):	Savings Facility index (S.F.I.)	Family Security index (F.S.I)	Treatment Facility index (T.F.I.)	Job Security index (J.S.I.)	Harassment Index (H.I.)
<b>Social Security Index (S.S.I.)</b>						

Computing the Social Security Index (S.S.I.) involve the following steps:

**Step-1:**

Parameters:

The following formulas are used to determine different indices of S.S.I.

$$= (\sum x - X_i) \times \frac{1}{\sum x}$$

Where,  $\sum x$  = the total no. of sample of the particular area,  $X_i$  = no of sample of i parameter. Each individual index

have been normalized and  $\frac{1}{\sum x}$  is assigned as the weights, which will reduce the number of indicators (dimensionality) but will remain most of the original variability amongst the data. So that the value lie between 0 to 1.

1. Lone Earner Index (L.E.I.): (Total Vendor - Total vendor who have no other earning members in family) / Total Vendor

2. Savings Facility index (S.F.I.): (Total Vendor - Total vendor who have no Banking Facilities) / Total Vendor
3. Family Security index (F.S.I.): (Total Vendor - Total vendor who have no L.I.C .policy) / Total Women Vendor
4. Treatment Facility index (T.F.I.): (Total Vendor - Total vendor who have no health insurance) / Total Vendor
5. Job Security index (J.S.I.): (Total Vendor - Total vendor who have no trade license) / Total Vendor
6. Harassment Index (H.I.): (Total Vendor - Total vendor who faced harassment) / Total Vendor

**Step-2:**

Procedure to compute the Social Security Index (S.S.I.) : Finally the following formulas are used to determine the Social Security Index (S.S.I.):

$$^6 \sqrt{(L.E.I. \times S.I.I \times F.S.I. \times T.F.I. \times J.S.I. \times H.I.)}$$

So, S.S.I. is the geometric mean of the previous six normalized indices and higher value of index implies higher security.

Table-2: Statement of S.S.I.

Social Security Index (S.S.I.) Value	Statement
0.000-0.250	Very Low Security
0.250-0.500	Low Security
0.500-0.750	Moderate Security
0.750-1.000	Apparently Secure

Source: Determined by Authors



Fig-2: Scale by Social Security Index (S.S.I.) Value

Table-3: Computation of S.S.I Value of the study area:

L.E.I.	S.F.I.	F.S.I.	T.F.I.	J.S.I.	H.I.	S.S.I	Remarks
0.414	0.391	0.232	0.021	0.005	0.119	0.088	Very Low Security

Source: Computed by Authors based on Primary Data

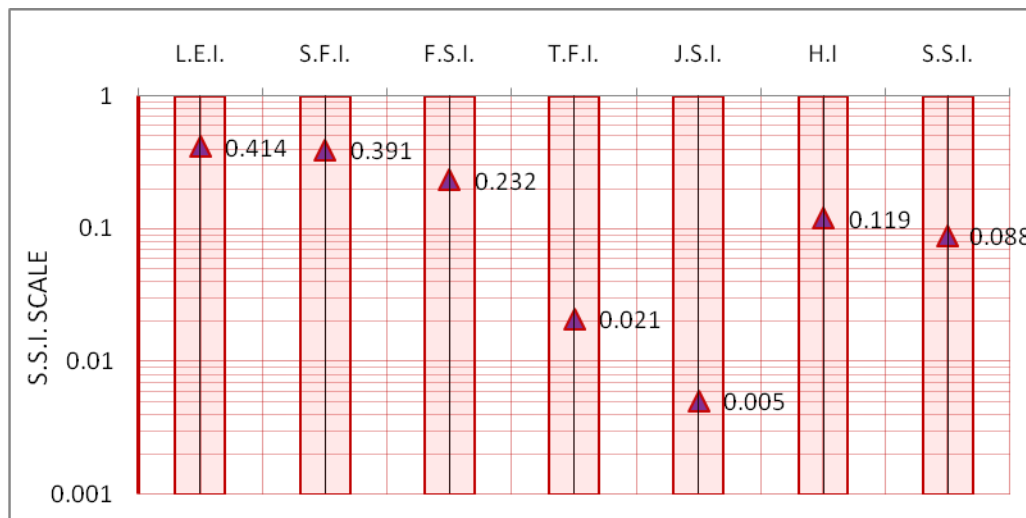


Fig-3: Scenario of social security of the study area (Plotted on log scale)

From the above computation, it can be said that socio economic security of street vendors of the study area is totally insecure. Street Vendors are considered as the most vulnerable groups in the urban economy. The causes of vulnerability are insecure job as they have no trade license (J.S.I.=0.005), lack of control over earnings, maximum street vendor have no other earning member of their

family(L.E.I.=0.414),due to complex banking system they have no interest on banking system (S.F.I. = 0.391). Moreover a large number of street vendors lost their savings during Sarada, Rose Valley, Ramell etc scam. There is no denying the fact that banking facilities and saving security are interrelated .The following computation proved this:

Table-4: Relationship Between Banking Facility and Lost Capital During Sarada , Rose Valley , Ramell etc scam at Barasat

BARASAT		Banking Facility		a+b = m
		No(x=1)	Yes(x=0)	
		a	b	
Lost Capital During Sarada,Rose Valley,Ramell etc scam	Yes(y=1)	821	213	1034
	No(y=0)	c	d	c+d = n
a+c = r		914		
b+d = s		-	586	

Source: Computed by Authors based on Primary Data

Following the formula we can have the value of the within Region Correlation Co-efficient (For Barasat Municipal Area) expressed as :

$$r_{xy} = \frac{(a.d-b.c)}{\sqrt{(m.n.r.s)}} \\ = 0.563811944$$

Thus for each pair ( $X_{ij}$   $Y_{ij}$ ) we find that, a = No of street vendor in study area who lost their capital during Sarada, Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam and have no banking facilities .b= No of street vendor in the study area who lost their capital during Sarada ,Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam but they have banking facilities ,c= No of street vendor in the study area who did not lost their capital during Sarada , Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam but have no banking facilities, d= No of street vendor in study area who did not lost their capital during Sarada, Rose Valley , Ramell etc scam and have banking facilities. So there is no denying the fact that complex banking system is not popular to poor and illiterate people. In the study area only 32 vendors out of 1500 have health insurance. Out of 32 policy holder 32 have 'Sastha Sathi' sponsored by state govt. They have no other govt. or private health scheme due to high premium. Maximum street vendors (66.33%) have no concept about health insurance. Although 98.67% street vendors have concept of L.I.C. but 76.80% street vendors have no L.I.C. policy as some of them have no Aadhar card, Epic or other important documents and L.I.C. premium is headache to lower income group. Barasat Municipality do not provide any license to the street vendors. But the municipality has a plan to rehabilitate street vendors to 'Karmatirtha' near Bidhan Park and under flyover. The street vendors have to pay bribe to the market committee and local political leaders.

## 7. Conclusion

Major findings of this study are- Most of the spaces occupied by the street vendors considered as illegal since the spaces have not been set aside for trade. In cases where they are allowed to operate, the spaces are considered temporary and eviction occurs at the will of urban authorities and police. Despite many challenges faced by street vendors, they were optimist in some circumstances. The study investigate that Maximum poor street vendor lost their savings by chit fund due to strict and complex Banking System .Overall they don't get have any security from the society. So the following recommendations have been provided to develop their socio economic condition:

1. Street vending committee should be formed following Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014.
2. Combat violence against poor street vendors.
3. The municipality should take steps to provide space for separate permanent and mobile street vending zone must be created for rehabilitation of street vendors by reviewing which are appropriate to street vending without creating traffic congestion and the free movement of the people . Street vending time period must be selected.
4. License should be provided for the street vendors of the street vending zone.
5. 5.Improve access to basic economic services, such as easy banking system, and co-operative system to provide economic security for street vendors.
6. To create anti harassment cell to provide social security for street vendors specially women vendor.

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