

Street Traders

Definitions

A street trader is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell. Street traders may be stationary or mobile.

Context and Policies

A large share of the global informal workforce operates on city streets, on sidewalks, and in other public spaces. They sell everything from fresh produce to electronic equipment. While not all street vendors work without licences or legal protection, the majority do. It is difficult to estimate the number of people employed as street vendors, due to their high mobility and the marked seasonal variation in their work. Brazil and Mexico are estimated to each have over one million street vendors and India has about 10 million.

Street traders locate themselves spontaneously without any official allocation along main roads and streets, near shopping centres or at corners where they can be seen by pedestrians and motorists, while others walk from one place to the other. While many local authorities view street trader sites as temporary, the street traders view themselves as permanent.

Issues

Many countries in Asia and Africa have declared street vending illegal, usually on the grounds of impeding traffic or posing a threat to public health. Almost all cities have municipal regulations designed to protect public spaces and allow free flow of traffic. As a result, street traders are often forcibly removed because they are viewed as obstructers and encroachers. However, in most cities removing street traders is not a viable solution as a large number of people are dependent on street vending for their livelihood and consumers benefit from their services. The issue is how to resolve the conflicts between street vendors and mobility needs. Some research is beginning to emerge from India and Africa on the numbers, conditions and activities of street traders but little information exists on how to incorporate street trading within urban streets in such a way as to benefit the street traders and allow for the free movement of people and goods.

Actions

Informal Street Trading has become a feature of the urban environment in most developing country cities, and symbolises the changing nature of the city in both spatial and economic terms. Some actions that support street vendors have been successfully implemented in various contexts. For example, India has recently published a National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (see "Documents") that recommends streets within each city be classified as 'restriction-free vending, restricted-vending and no-vending zones'.



Photo credits: Street traders in India

Resources

Documents

- **Draft Informal Trading Policy and Management Framework**, 2004, Municipality of Sol Plaatje (South Africa)
- **National Policy on Urban Street Vendors**, 2009, Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, New Delhi (India)
- **Street Trade in Africa: A Review**, 2008, Caroline Skinner, School of Development Studies, University of Kwazulu-Natal (South Africa)
- **Street Trade in Latin America: Demographic Trends, Legal Issues, and Vending Organizations in Six Cities**, 2006, Sally Roever, Leiden University (Netherlands)
- **Street Vending in African Cities: A Synthesis of Empirical Findings from Kenya, Cote D'Ivoire, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Uganda and South Africa**, 2003, Winnie V. Mitullah, WIEGO Urban Policies Programme Director, University of Nairobi (Kenya)
- **Street vending in Hanoi - Reconciling contradictory concerns**, 2007, Central Institute for Economic Management, Hanoi (Vietnam)
- **Street Vendors : Urban Problem and Economic Potential**, 2008, Harlan Dimas, Padjadjaran University, Bandung (Indonesia)
- **Urban Responses to Street Trading: India**, 2003, Sharit K. Bhowmik, World Bank (USA)

Presentations

- **Struggling for space: street vendors in policy and market arenas in New Delhi, India**, 2006, Dolf te Lintelo, School of Development Studies, University of East Anglia, Norwich (UK)

Recommended Links

- **Inclusive Cities**
- **StreetNet**
- **WBB Trust - Work for a Better Bangladesh**

For further information

Contact Peter Midgley, gTKP Urban Mobility Theme Champion at peter.midgley@gtkp.com