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Street vendors of Urban Bihar: A case study of Patna Municipal Corporation Area, Bihar

• Dolly Kumari • Anu Singh • Mamta Kumari
• Debjani Sarkar (Ghose)

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Corresponding Author : Debjani Sarkar (Ghose)

Abstract : *Liberalization of Indian economy has opened up a whole world of Corporate Sector and easy access to wide variety of consumer goods for people at large. Even then, opportunities in formal sector are limited and a large number of unemployed youths in urban areas are totally dependent on informal economic activities. Among them, self employed and micro entrepreneurs in the city like street vendors and hawkers are very common and constitute a large section of the informal economy. Approximately, 2.5% of India's total population's sole source of existence is through street*

vending. They are mainly those who are unable to get regular jobs or are retrenched from existing jobs and try to solve their problems by their own meager resources. With increasing urbanization, the number of street vendors of Patna have increased manifold too. According to a study done by Nidan, there are around 80,000 vendors and hawkers in Patna. The present study is based on the primary survey of 50 street vendors and 50 customers of three areas of Patna M.C. to throw light on socio-economic conditions of street vendors of Patna, their utilities and nuisance created by them. From the study, it was found that with low educational attainment, meager income and poor living conditions their quality of life is not at all satisfactory. Apart from serving the urban residents with cheap and fresh vegetables and other commodities they save money, time and physical harassment of customers by providing accessibility in every nook and corner of the city. Despite their utility, they are often regarded as public nuisance as they deprive pedestrians of their space causing traffic jams and having links with the anti-social activities. Further unfriendly regulation and controls that govern their livelihoods make them vulnerable to extortions and harassment, Poor social protection and working conditions on the streets expose them to a variety of safety and health issues. Lots of work must be done to break the vicious cycle of poverty and improve their quality of life.

Dolly Kumari

B.A. III year, Geography (Hons.), Session: 2009-2012,
Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna,
Bihar, India

Anu Singh

B.A. III year, Geography (Hons.), Session: 2009-2012,
Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna,
Bihar, India

Mamta Kumari

B.A. III year, Geography (Hons.), Session: 2009-2012,
Patna Women's College, Patna University, Patna,
Bihar, India

Debjani Sarkar (Ghose)

Assistant Professor, Department of Geography,
Patna Women's College, Bailey Road,
Patna – 800 001, Bihar, India
E-mail : debjani2pat@rediffmail.com

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