



## ISSUES FACED BY STREET VENDORS - GS II AND III MAINS MAINS

Q. Street vendors are vulnerable to eviction and harassment along with economic uncertainties in India. Discuss the measures taken by the government to enhance their lives. (15 marks, 250 words)

**News: *Implementing the Street Vendors Act***

### What's in the news?

- The recent celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 marks a significant milestone in the legal evolution and advocacy efforts of street vendor movements in India, spanning four decades.

### Street Vendors Act:

- The Street Vendors Act aims to safeguard and regulate street vending activities across Indian cities, involving local authorities in establishing designated vending zones.
- It recognizes the importance of street vendors to urban life and endeavors to secure their livelihoods while integrating their activities into formal urban planning.

### Governance Structure:

- The Act establishes Town Vending Committees (TVCs), comprising street vendor representatives, with a mandated 33% representation of women vendors.
- These committees are tasked with including vendors in designated zones and addressing grievances through mechanisms like the Grievance Redressal Committee.

### Other Provisions:

- The Act delineates the roles and responsibilities of vendors and government entities at different levels.
- States/Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) are required to conduct surveys to identify street vendors at least once every five years.

### Implementation Challenges:

#### 1. Administrative Challenges:

- Despite legal protections, street vendors often face harassment and eviction due to entrenched bureaucratic views of vending as illegal.

#### 2. Governance Integration Issues:

- The Act struggles to integrate with broader urban governance frameworks, with ULBs lacking power and resources for effective implementation.

#### 3. Societal Perception Problems:



- The societal stigma against street vendors affects urban planning and policy, leading to marginalization.

## Ways to Strengthen the Law:

### 1. Supportive Implementation:

- Effective top-down guidance from higher government levels is essential initially, followed by a shift towards decentralized governance.

### 2. Integration with Urban Schemes:

- Policies and urban planning guidelines must be revised to better incorporate street vending, moving towards inclusive, deliberative processes.

### 3. Addressing New Challenges:

- Emerging issues such as climate change impacts and competition from e-commerce require innovative use of the Act's provisions.

## Challenges Faced by Street Vendors in India:

### 1. Uncertain Legal Status:

- Despite the Street Vendors Act, enforcement remains uneven, leaving vendors vulnerable to eviction and harassment.

### 2. Bribes and Extortion:

- Vendors often face demands for bribes from authorities and local intermediaries.

### 3. Competition and Fluctuating Income:

- Saturation in certain areas and competition from established businesses lead to economic insecurity.

### 4. Lack of Basic Amenities:

- Limited access to amenities like clean water and sanitation poses health hazards.

### 5. Difficult Licensing Process:

- The bureaucratic licensing process discourages vendors from formalization.

### 6. Limited Access to Credit:

- Informal income makes it challenging for vendors to secure loans.

### 7. Gender-Based Discrimination:

- Women vendors face gender-based discrimination, affecting their business opportunities and safety.



## 8. Impact of Covid-19:

- The pandemic exacerbated economic hardships for street vendors, leading to loss of income and increased poverty.

## Steps Needed to Deal with the Problem of Street Vendors:

### 1. Formalization and Regulation:

- Establishing registration systems and issuing identity cards for vendors, as seen in cities like Hanoi and Ahmedabad.

### 2. Designated Zones:

- Creating designated vending zones, as observed in Rio de Janeiro and Kigali, to ensure order and improved pedestrian flow.

### 3. Infrastructure and Support:

- Providing access to amenities and offering training and micro-loans for equipment upgrades, modelled after cities like Lima.

### 4. Vendor Associations:

- Encouraging vendor associations to facilitate dialogue with authorities and foster collective bargaining.

### 5. Fostering a Collaborative Approach:

- Involving local authorities, street vendors, and resident associations in a collaborative approach to street vendor management.

India's approach to street vendor regulation must be tailored to each city's unique characteristics, prioritizing economic stability through skill development and microfinance programs.