

# AN OVERVIEW ON STREET VENDING IN BANGKOK

(A report submitted by a delegation of APSWDP members at Bangkok, Thailand in September 2019)



**ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORKERS AND  
DEVELOPMENT PRACTITIONERS (APSWDP),  
CHANDIGARH**

---

Designed & Edited by : **Dr. Sumit Arora**

---

Conceptualized by : **Mr. Amit Joshi & Mr. Balbir Singh**

---

**PHOTO COURTESY: DR. SUMIT ARORA**

**ALL PICTURES USED IN THE REPORT ARE COPYRIGHT 2019**

## **Introduction:**

Street vending is a vital limb of our society as it facilitates us with almost everything required in our day to day life at our door step and that too at a very reasonable price. Street vending is an essential livelihood option for the urban poor in developing countries since it requires less investment whereas the profit margins are reported to be high. Although street vending is seen as an option for the poor, their legal and social status and business prospects differ domestically as well as regionally. In addition to various policies on urban development and street vending, macroeconomic conditions in each country have different impacts on street vendors.

For recognizing their importance in society, Government of India has taken few initiatives to provide a sustainable working environment to the street vendors. However, much is still required to be done at the central as well as at state level. Being a development practitioner organization, team APSWDP endeavored to explore more potential areas as well as the best practices available to learn across the globe with a tagline of the organization “**Think globally Act locally**”.

During our week long stay at Bangkok, while APSWDP represented at the Asia Pacific Climate Week 2019 at UNESCAP (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), the team observed that majority of the streets are full of vendors i.e. markets, roads, streets, prominent places as well as on the outskirts of the city. Based on the observations, it was further anticipated that the profession (Street vending) is a very well organized sector in the city of Bangkok. While we stayed at a local hostel, it was observed that majority of the street vendors (primarily food) begin to gather at their respective areas of vending nearly by 4:00 am to 4:30 am. The most amazing part was to find that majority of them are ready with their vending items by 5:00 am to 5:30 am. However, with regard to other items (non-food), there was some variation in timings.

While we moved outside on the street in morning as well as during evening, it was realized that street vendors (selling items such as fruits, vegetables, snacks, clothes and wardrobes etc.) were quiet responsive in maintaining the hygiene and sanitation around their vending area. Majority of them were equipped with dust bins for self-collection of waste. While interacting with few of the street vendors who could talk in English, it was mentioned that the shifts keep on changing. For next shift in the same day, the vendors keep very punctual about their timings. The interesting part is that no conflict among them has been reported so far. This

shows the collectivization, community engagement and development, and henceforth, a sign of sustainability.

It was altogether a new and different experience for team APSWDP since the vendor adopt very casual approach toward maintaining the cleanliness and hygiene around their place of vending in India. We were very much impressed by their standards of working. As we move ahead, it was further observed that the waste collected by them in their bins were put at one place in area earmarked by the waste collection team.

With regard to the waste collection, it was also observed that the cleaning was done twice in a day time which is again a good practice. The vehicles approach the waste collection center without making any disturbance either to the vendors and community members and nor to the traffic. No stench or foul smell was felt during the entire process adopted by them. Each of the waste collection team were well equipped with the safety precautions such as face mask, gloves etc. and were involved very diligently and professionally.

In order to understand the underlying mechanism of street vending in the city of Bangkok, APSWDP team visited Department of Local Administration (DLA), also known as Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA) without any prior appointment/ intimation. The officers present were delighted to interact with us during our sudden visit. Since the local language was more used by the concerned officers, **Ms. Titta Buabut** facilitate the interaction by the way of translating the communication.

### **Regulation and Management of Street Vending:**

DLA/BMA is responsible for the management of the city's basic requirements. The Public Health Act regulates street vending in Bangkok. Under the Act, no person is allowed to carry out street vending activities along public roads and footpaths unless the same is authorized by the BMA.

While interacting with the officials of Public Health Department, it came to light that several acts have been put in place in order to regulate street vendors in Bangkok. The first was the cleanliness and order of the city act which prohibits the individuals from cooking and selling food items on public roads and areas. Moreover, it also prohibits the use of cars/ carts for cooking food for economic purposes in public as well as selling merchandise. Law empowers and encourages local officials to prohibit vending activities by the way of using enforcement. However, the law does not apply on private roads and properties. Vendors are allowed to sell

their products in certain zones for particular days and time. This law specified that vendors have to cease operation on Wednesdays or on any other designated day, and that they must be registered, have vending identification, and dress appropriately. They are also responsible for cleaning their work areas before leaving. For busy designated vending areas, there are time slots allocated to vendors on a shift basis.

The Public Health Act forbids vendors from selling things on footpaths, public roads, and public pathways. They are allowed to sell their products only after getting the requisite permission from authorized officials. Officials from BMA/ DLA are authorized to determine prohibited zones, days and time when vending activities are banned, and other vending rules and regulations. They are also authorized to monitor the cleanliness of the vendors.

The Traffic and Land Transportation Act as well as the Highway Act also prohibit any kind of activity that obstructs traffic and pedestrian paths. This law empowers police officers and traffic officials to control the use of public roads. Thus, street vendors can be subject to punishment by both local officials and well as police officers in case of breaching the law.

#### **Vending Related Fees:**

Representative informed that “vending fees” are varying, depending on the vendor’s legal status. Licensed vendors do not have ownership over their vending spot and thus are unable to give or sell it to anyone else. Selling the right to a vending location or subleasing it is an act of law violation. However, designated vending space is in high demand. The value depends on the cart size, location and busyness of the road/ street.

#### **No-vending day for cleaning streets:**

As a measure to deal with the hygiene problem caused by street vending, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration/ Department of Local Administration has designated only one day in a week as the cleaning day following which no vending is allowed on streets. Street vendors are allowed to conduct their business on alternate Monday’s when street cleaning does not take place.

#### **Cleaning fee and waste management:**

Licensed vendors are obligated to pay a cleaning fee on annual basis. Vendors are expected to get rid of their waste by themselves and not to leave garbage at the vending spot. Alongside, they are also expected not to drain waste-water into nearby public drains.



### Social Protection Scheme and Government Support:

BMA helps to provide space to street vendors only and do not offer any social protection scheme to them. Similarly, when we asked street vendors to list the entitlements they have received as a licensed street vendor, most of them, at first, could not figure out any, until few examples were put forth. Few of them talked about BMA’s training opportunities about food safety. However, the following are what the respondents mentioned as the state’s social support that they had access to:

- Soft loans
- Old Age Allowance
- Universal Coverage Scheme (UCS)
- Social Security (voluntary insurance for informal workers).

### Picture Gallery





**-End of the Report-**