

Abstract

Informal sector is one field that has witnessed an enormous increase in employment generation and women forms a huge proportion. The economic contribution of women has become a source of wealth to households and economy and one cannot afford to think of an economy devoid of women as human capital. The status of women in India has been subject to great changes over the past few decades. Treating women as living things of the house and making them do all the household chores without any recognition is slowly depreciating and instead women holding important possession in many fields have become the order of the day. Since, many women are still illiterates and lack skill many join in unorganized sector. Workers in the informal sector are unprotected, unorganized and undocumented by public laws and authorities. Street vending is an economic activity providing productive employment for many. Among those working in informal sector street vendors form a major group and women street vendors have a greater share in providing many essential goods at a cheaper rate to the general public. These women are vulnerable population, who are neither protected by government, NGOs, labour union nor by any labour law. Though they are exposed to many challenges in vending, women take an active role in the vending activities. In spite of different forms of harassment and lack of protection, female vendors contribute to overall urban economy in terms of employment and cheap availability of goods and services. The street vendor does not have easy access to any legal rights, they lack of social security, education, credit source, health security, and they face uncertainty in employment and income, lack of space, eviction and harassment by civil authorities. Further, there is lack of infrastructural facilities. Though the women street vendors work for long hours without adequate food and leisure their economic and social status and living conditions are deplorable. Against this background a study is taken up to understand the Socio-Economic conditions of select women street vendors in Coimbatore district and to identify the problems and challenges faced by these selected women. The study collected data from 445 women street vendors who sold several items in different parts of Coimbatore City. The study found out that despite their invaluable services, street vendors are marginalized section and their living condition is very poor. They face lots of problems at the vending areas. Though laws have been passed by the Government to protect the rights of street vendors, nothing much has come to rescue them.

Key words: women street vendors, poor infrastructure, police Harassment, No Labour Rights, Lack of Protection.