9.1 INTRODUCTION

Street vendors are the informal workers who may be stationary in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or other public/private spaces, or mobile in the sense that they move from place to place by carrying their wares on push carts or on their heads. The increase in number of street vendors started in the post independence period.

As permanent protected jobs in the formal sector are shrinking; so, those having the requisite skills are unable to find proper employment. For such people who work in the informal sector is the only means of survival. For the urban poor, street vending is one way of earning a livelihood, as it requires minor financial input and minimal skills though the income too is low. A large section of street vendors in urban areas are those with low skills and who have migrated to the larger cities from rural areas or small towns in search of employment.

Street Vendors in Kolkata is numbering to about 2, 75,000 generated business worth 87.72 billion. These vendors form a very important component of the urban informal sector in India. It is estimated that the total number of street vendors in the country is around 10 million. They comprise around 2% of the total population in the metropolitan cities. Poverty and lack of gainful employment in the rural areas and in the smaller towns drive large numbers of people to the cities for work and livelihood.

The 1951 census found that only 33.2 percent of Kolkata's inhabitants were city-born, the rest were immigrants: 12.3 percent were from elsewhere in West Bengal, 26.6 percent from other Indian states, and 26.9 percent from East Pakistan. In 1981, the Government of West Bengal estimated the total number of persons displaced from East Bengal to the state to be around 8 million or one sixth of the total population of the state. Several million refugees settled in the outskirts of Kolkata. The percentage of migrants in Kolkata's population has been declining since the 1950s, though around a third of the population still consists of fresh migrants. Kolkata is gradually attaining a state of saturation. It has also been affected by economic decline resulting from industrial sickness. In 2005, West Bengal headed the list of states with sick units. The overall economic scenario is highlighted by the growing number of pavement dwellers. Kolkata had 48,802 pavement dwellers in 1971 and 55,571 in 1985(according to Census and/or KMDA figures).
9.2 CHANGES IN NUMBER OF STREET VENDORS SINCE 1940-2015

There has been a phenomenal increase in the total number of street vendors over time. Since 1940s the number has increased from 256 to almost thousand times by the end of 2015. The reason for this huge increase is the declining scope of employment amongst the poor masses. This group finds it difficult to get into other sectors due to their lower educational qualifications, so it is easier for them to earn a living by vending on streets or in mobile vehicles. There has been a huge leap from 8592 in 1961-70 to 30393 in 1970-80.

A lot of people mainly migrants in the post Independence Period, who have suffered a lot due to political backwardness, are searching work in a big city like Kolkata. Due to more inclination towards shopping malls, where each and every goods for regular usage are available, is leading to declining identity crisis in the coming decades although in 2015 the number of street vendors is appreciably high to about 2,50,000 vendors under different zones of K.M.C. The percentage change was from 1% in 1940-50 to 36% in 2010-2015.

![Image: Change in Number of Street Vendors Since 1940 to 2015](image)

Figure No. – 72

9.2.1 DISTRIBUTION OF STREET VENDORS (2012 TO 2015)

Throughout Kolkata Municipal Corporation, there has been an increase in the number of street vendors, and this increase is mostly visible in the Central Zone and the least is seen in Southern zone of K.M.C. There is a big issue for the vendors which is, they have a problem of the place where they generally sit for exhibiting their business. All the zones have an increasing trend of
number of vendors over time and it is quite high in 2015 which is very evident from the Map No.-

TABLE NO. 49 – Zone wise Distribution of street vendors (2012-15)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of Zones</th>
<th>Boroughs Included</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North</td>
<td>1,2</td>
<td>4737</td>
<td>4423</td>
<td>3645</td>
<td>4406</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>1120</td>
<td>1344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>4,5,6,7,8</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2116</td>
<td>1334</td>
<td>1395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>9,15</td>
<td>1291</td>
<td>1236</td>
<td>1086</td>
<td>1098</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>10,11,12,13</td>
<td>2329</td>
<td>2229</td>
<td>1685</td>
<td>2146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-West</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>461</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SOURCE** - West Bengal Hawkers 'Trade Union, 2015

**MAP NO.-8-ZONEWISE DISTRIBUTION OF STREET VENDORS**

**9.3 STUDY OF STREET VENDORS (ZONE WISE)**

The street vendors have changed over the years since 2012 which is seen throughout K.M.C. and mentioned in Section no. 9.2.1. In this section the detailed changes of proportion of street vendors in individual zone is analysed as-
9.3.1 NORTHERN ZONE

Out of the total proportion of street vendors, 25% was in the northern zone during 2012 but due to certain local disturbances, the percentage fell to 24% in 2013. The growth of street vendors has gained momentum, it increased to 25% in 2014 and it is 26% in 2015.

![Change of Street Vendors in Northern Zone of K.M.C. (2012-2015)](image)

Figure No. - 73

9.3.2 NORTH-EASTERN ZONE

The percentage of street vendors has decreased over the years from 2012 till 2014. The proportion is 27% in 2012 but it fell to 24% in 2014. There is a slight rise in 2015 which is 25% and is mainly due to some steps taken by the trade unions.

![Change of Street Vendors in North-Eastern Zone of K.M.C. (2012-2015)](image)

Figure No. - 74
9.3.3 CENTRAL ZONE

The share of street vendors was 22% in 2012 which increased to 25% in 2013. Due to various political issues the percentage of street vendors reduced to 24% in 2014. In 2015 we see the percentage of vendors again rose to 29%.

9.3.4 WESTERN ZONE

A constant fall in proportion of vendors was observed from 2012-2014 in this zone. The percentages have fallen from 27% in 2012 to 23% in 2014. From 2014 the proportion started increasing.
9.3.5 SOUTHERN ZONE

In 2012, the proportion of street vendors in K.M.C. was 22\%, they were 25\% in 2013, 26 \% in 2014 and finally the proportion increased to 27\% in 2015.

9.3.6 SOUTH-WESTERN ZONE

A steady rise in proportion of vendors was observed from 2012-2015 in this zone. The percentage has increased from 23\% in 2012 to 27\% in 2015.
9.4 COMMON INFORMATION FOR STREET VENDORS

1). MONTHLY SAVINGS- Rs. 50-500 is saved by different vendors as Provident Funds in their Local Committees. These funds are benevolent in nature, which is received by the vendors in times of need.

2). MARITAL STATUS- Almost 95% of the street vendors are married.

3). AGE GROUP- The street vendors are ranging from young age of below 15 years to above 60 years of age. Like all other survey groups, here also, the maximum proportions of street vendors are in the middle age group.

9.5 THE CHALLENGES OF GATHERING STATISTICS ON STREET VENDORS

Finding reliable data on the size of the street vending population in any given city can be challenging. To begin with, official statistics on street vendors are available only in a few countries. One reason that street vendors are absent from official statistics is that national population censuses and labour force surveys often do not contain a question on “place of work” with appropriate response alternatives that would allow data analysts to identify street traders. Where they do have a question on place of work, the results are often not tabulated or disseminated. Moreover, although street vending is present in the international standard classification of occupations, the categories for street traders are rarely presented in official statistics (ILO 2002: Street Vendors and Official Statistics)