

## EE03

# Public Management for Street Vendor Problems in Dhaka City, Bangladesh

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**Abstract**— Dhaka City has a large number of street vendors as an informal trade. They create problems in urban areas to produce street garbage and crowd the footpath. Local authorities evict them as a solution but at the same time a large number of urban dwellers become jobless which creates a new problem in urban areas. Street vendor is one of the better informal job opportunities for poor. This study aims to clarify the real urban street environmental situation in Dhaka City reflected by street vendors. It was conducted to organize the field survey to observe the street vending situation in urban footpath of Dhaka City. Due to the lack of formalization and management systems, urban authorities cannot touch them without eviction and vendors don't take responsibility to maintain their surrounding environment. It can be considered the formalization and public management systems will be beneficial participated by street vendor community itself.

and especially obstruction for pedestrian<sup>[2]</sup>. The word *Problem* in this case does not have its usual meaning. If the street vendor is usually a *Problem* for urban areas, removal or eviction is one of the best solutions for Dhaka City as well as other South Asian developing cities. However, when the local authorities evict the street vendors from urban area it becomes a *Problem* for a large number of urban dwellers. Especially, whose lives are being maintained by street vendors or access shops from the street vendors in their urban live. A large number of urban dwellers considerations, street vendors are part of their lives as jobs or as shopping center in Dhaka City. According to the urban situation, it can be considered that, street vending is an important urban informal trade sector, not a *Problem* for urban area of Dhaka City.

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

Dhaka City has a large number of urban dwellers who are poor and have no formal skills to get jobs in formal sectors. They often become street vendor in urban areas. Most of them are rural-urban migrant due to the lack of work facilities and public services in rural area. Being a street vendor is one of the best job opportunities for them as informal activities. In addition, poor urban dwellers can not fulfill their basic need without those informal activities in urban areas. For example, the vendors operate their street business and depend on it; so, they cannot provide foods, cloths, and shelters for their families without these informal activities. Most of South Asian developing cities have a large number of street vendors as an informal trade in the main urban transaction points as well as Dhaka City. The local authorities of Dhaka City see that, the street vendors a *Problem* for their urban area. Without street vending in urban areas a large number of urban dwellers fall into a critical situation in their lives. Not only the low-income group but also the middle-income group of urban dweller depends on street vendor for shopping in their life. According to the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) report *In the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) area 60% houses are of low-income, 37% middle income and the rest 3% constitutes high-income houses are in the Dhaka City, Bangladesh*<sup>[1]</sup>. Based on this report, more than 60% of urban dwellers depend on urban street vendors. However, the local authority has no proper rehabilitation policy for their street vendors. Sometime the authority evicts them from their area and vendors become jobless due to this eviction from their urban area.

### The Meaning of Problem

According to Jung-Hyung LEE, *Those street vendors are illegally possessed on the public sidewalk, thus they are not originally designed in a city street planning, which inherited various problem such as unpleasant urban scape*

### Public Management

*Public management is deliberate changes to the structure and processes of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better* (Pollit and Bouckaert, 2000)<sup>[3]</sup>. Based on this definition, public management is a method to improve living conditions of the human with the surrounding environment. By implementation of public management systems in urban areas, each of the urban dweller benefits in their urban lives. This study considered that, management process would be established by the participation of all stakeholders and creators. Thus street vendors could become responsible for their actions in urban environment. This public management pursues to improve living conditions of all groups of urban dwellers. The local authority considers improving their urban planning and urban management issue to exclude their existing street vendors in Dhaka City. The authority has indicated that *street vendor is an illegal trade in urban area of Dhaka City*<sup>[4]</sup>. However, street vending is an essential factor for a large number of urban dwellers to maintain their livelihood. It would be considered that, by the implementing a public management system, street vendors would become a comfort for urban dwellers of Dhaka City as well as become a model for South Asian developing cities.

## RESEARCH PROBLEMS AND PURPOSE

### Research Problems

Based on the field survey, street vendors create two problems in Dhaka City as well as other developing South Asian cities. They are as follow:

1) *Street Garbage*: The vendors dispose of their garbage on the footpaths or on the streets after their sale in urban area of Dhaka City (left side of Fig.1). Sometimes the food is sold wrapped by using paper, and consumers throw that paper on the street as Fig. 9. According to this issue, street garbage's problem has a strong relation with urban street

vending in Dhaka City.

2) *Footpath Crowded*

From January 2007 street vending is strictly prohibited in



Street Garbage

Footpath Crowded

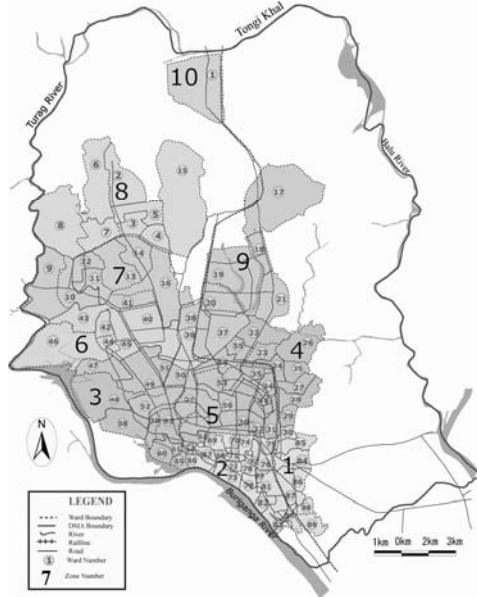


Fig. 2 Map of Dhaka City Included DCC Area

the urban area of Dhaka City until next EID (Bangladeshi Islamic traditional festival) of that year. The general people who have no relation with street vendors, they are happy for this eviction. As one local newspaper published in a report “Usually I was compelled to walk through the main road risking being run over by speeding vehicles as street vendors kept footpaths occupied. I am really happy to see that the footpath at Farmgate is clear” said Saifur Rahman, a resident of East Rajabazar<sup>[5]</sup> (The Daily star January 19, 2007). But this research, have a question for him, what is the necessity of street vendors in Dhaka City?

**Research Objective**

This study seeks to clarify the vending process and the problem created in the urban area of Dhaka City. In addition, it concedes the informal economic activities relating to the street environment of Dhaka City as follow:

- i) To find out the real street vending process that has create a problem for the urban street environment in Dhaka City.
- ii) To analyze the necessity of street vendors and public management systems for the street vendors in Dhaka City.
- iii) This study seeks to clarify 1) The real situation of vending and shopping and 2) The urban street vendors’ perception in individual research area in Dhaka City

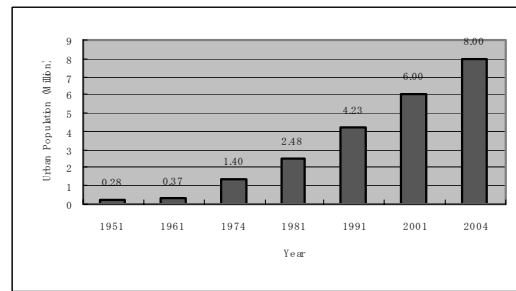


Fig. 3 Population Growth of DCC Area

Source: DCC Profile

CASE STUDY

It was selected study area in Dhaka City and it has a large number of urban problems as well as other South Asian developing cities. Urban street vending process is one of them which is indicated as a *Problem* by the local authority.

**Research Field**

The research field is a central part of Dhaka City urban area as the name of Dhaka City Corporation (DCC). It is located at the central urban administrative area (grey area of Fig.2). It was selected as some specific urban area based on the main transaction point or an important and a good place for street vending in Dhaka City. There are some inner-city bus stops, Rickshaw stands, inter district connection, and other transportation systems located here. In addition, some important offices or educational institute or shopping centers is located at that place. For those reasons, a large number of urban dwellers use these areas for their daily commute and street vendors take this chance to operate their street business in those areas.

**Outline of Dhaka City**

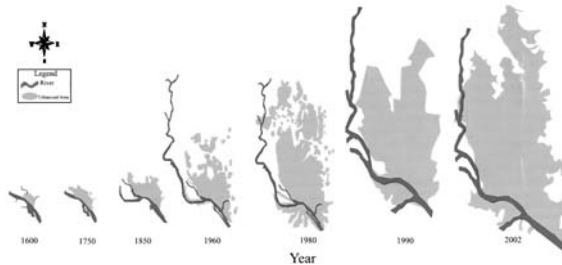
1) *Population Growth*

Dhaka City is one of the high-density urban areas among Asian countries. Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has only 145km<sup>2</sup> lands with more than 8.00 million population, where all kinds of offices are located as like as other capital city (DCC profile 2004) <sup>[6]</sup>. Also high rate population growth is due to the rural-urban migration and natural growth. According to the World Bank estimation, 0.3 to 0.4 million people are migrating in Dhaka City per year <sup>[7]</sup>. Fig. 3 shows that, from 1991 to 2004 the population of DCC areas increased from 4.23 million to 8.00 million which almost doubled within 13 years. Migration is one of the most important sources for population growth in central urban areas of Dhaka City.

2) *Growth of Urban Area*

The area of Dhaka City is increasing rapidly because of rural-urban migration. In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Dhaka City had a large number of low lands and water channels. However, some housing companies and landlords have been developing housing projects to build up the residential areas or the industrial company. This is the main source of the urban expansion in Dhaka City. According to the DCC profile in 1990 Dhaka Municipal Corporation was renamed Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) and was divided into 10 zones within 90 wards to fulfill the objectives of decentralization. In 1998, Dhaka City

Corporation has increased to 100 wards but this was not implemented due to the boundary problems. Dhaka City urban area expanded as for the necessity of new urban people Fig.No.4.



**Fig. 4 Growth of Dhaka City Urban Area**  
Source: DCC Profile

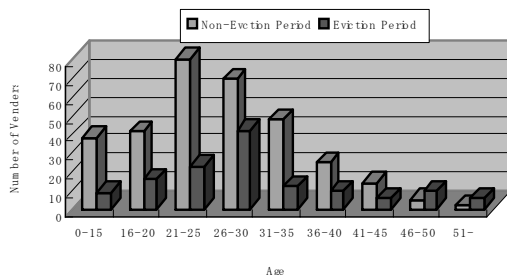
## RESEARCH METHOD

This study conducted the field survey at May 2007 under the internship program of UN-Habitat Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Fukuoka, Japan and at September 2008 supported by Fukuoka Asian Urban Research Center, Fukuoka, Japan in Dhaka City. This research organized as the following:

- i) Collecting data by field observation in Dhaka City.
- ii) Analyzing the primary and secondary data from relevant sources.
- iii) Consulting with vendors and customers in vending areas of Dhaka City.
- iv) Collecting some digital data for analyzing the real issue of vending situation in Dhaka City

## RESEARCH RESULT

This research has analyzed the data, vendor's comment, observation's episodic, and vendors and public precipitation. In addition it has shown how street vendors will benefit from their informal vending in their urban lives.



**Fig.5 Vendors' Age in Dhaka City**

### Data Analysis

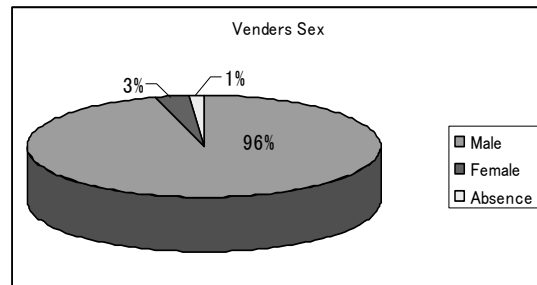
#### 1) Vendors Age

Most of the street vendors were 16-40 years old who are able to do the formal jobs and some children involved in vending who able to go to school Fig. 5. Based on the author's observation, street vendors of a developed city is more than 50 years old. However, the developing city they are still youth. Most of the children who operate the street vending in the urban areas have no chance to be educated from formal academic institutions due to their family's economical condition. These children grew up as street vendors without formal education. For that case, they

become unfit to get a job in formal sector. Especially, some of these children provide the main income source in their family.

#### 2) Vendors Gender

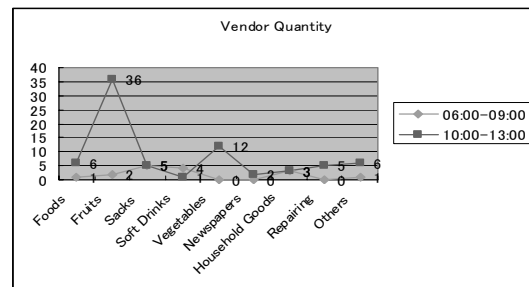
Most of the poor female urban dwellers work in garments factories, housemaids or work in a construction farm. Street vending is not a suitable job for females in Dhaka City because it is difficult to protect them from local leader and local authority's harassment. According to the Fig.6, 96% of vendors were working as male vendors in urban main transaction points of Dhaka City. It's their main source of income to maintain their families in urban area.



**Fig. 6 Vendors type in Dhaka city**

#### 3) Vendors Quantity in Different Time

It was strictly prohibited to do street vending in Dhaka



**Fig.7 Vendors in Different Time**

City's urban area at May, 2007. However, at the same time a few number of cloths and household goods vendors were operating their business in prohibited urban areas. This data (Fig.7) was collected at the time of eviction period from Farmgate area (Central part of Dhaka City Table.1) in the morning time 06:00AM to 09:00AM. Most of those vendors offered breakfast to pedestrians at that time. However, from 10:00AM to 13:00PM most of the fruit and vegetable vendors offered their goods to the pedestrians as *KACHA BAZAR* (Fresh Market). Especially, the urban dwellers that live in the surrounding area do their shopping from this *KACHA BAZAR*. The fruit vendors were offering good quality fruits not only to the surrounding residents but also to all income groups of pedestrian.

#### 4) Vendor Position and Number at Different Times

The data was collected at two times in the same place in the morning and evening from indira road of Framgate area. Fig.8, the black color represents vendors in the morning time at 06:00 to 09:00 AM and red color represents vendors in the evening time at 10:00 AM to 13:00PM. For the case of eviction period, most of the vendors were offering their goods in normal zone as a mobile system.

### Observation Analysis

It was consulted with different people who have a relation with urban street vendors in Dhaka City.

### 1) Observation Situation

During the author's survey former vendors and local people thought that author was a governmental officer or person from the media. And they thought that, it would be submitted in DCC or it would be published in media, then street business would become more strictly prohibited. People who were suffering due to the eviction, they come

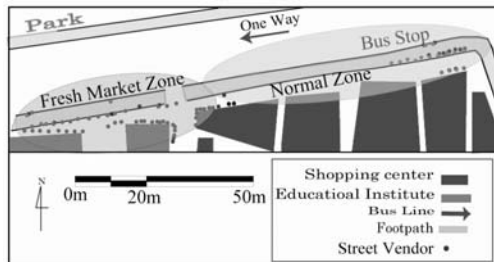


Fig.8 Vendors' Position in Farmgate Area

to author to know about him. Some of them were asking him "who you are and what are you doing this area" (Survey 2007). Finally it was clear that they were former street vendors and affected by the eviction and become jobless. One of them was around 25 to 30 years old, gave an overall idea of street vending in Farmgate area. He told that *only in Farmgate more than 1000 of street vendors have been located where one vendor could create a job opportunity for three before eviction. By the eviction they became completely jobless and they were maintaining their urban life by balancing money and it was a critical period for them* (Survey 2007). In addition, he showed a useless urban space which was maintained by themselves to create their informal businesses as a source of income.

### 2) Use of Street Vendors

Based on the daily newspaper, street vending is the most important job opportunity for more than 0.3 million urban dwellers in Dhaka City [8]. Some of them are operating mobile vending as a simple business to keep away the food poverty. On the other hand, street vending is the cheapest way to shop for low-income group of urban dwellers and it's necessary for their urban livelihood in Dhaka City.

### Picture Analysis

Fig.9 shows, one mobile vender is selling snacks wrapped by used paper. The pedestrians are eating at the place and throw the garbage unconsciously on the footpaths. In addition, street vendors also throw the garbage on the footpath after one day businesses (Fig.1). It's become a main source of streets garbage due to the lack of responsibility. Fig.10 shows the evicted and non-evicted situation of street vending in urban area of Dhaka City. The vendors operated their businesses on urban footpaths according to their self-designed systems in urban main transaction point of Dhaka City.

Some street vendors located in the backspace or take simple place for operating the informal street businesses. It can be considered that, vendors seemed to realize their



Fig.9 Street Garbage from Vendors

trade is prohibited in urban area. So they made more space for pedestrians to walk and offered their goods to moving people within a short time from their position.

## OVERALL DISCUSSION

### Necessity of Street Vendor in Dhaka City

This study finds out that, two parts of urban dwellers get benefit directly from street vendors in Dhaka City and other South Asian developing cities. These two parts are the following:

#### 1) Vendors as Job

Part of urban dwellers maintains their lives by street vending as their job in urban main transaction points. Based on age groups (Fig.5), most of the street vendors are able to work in formal job. However, due to the lacking of job opportunities in Dhaka City, they become street vendors in urban areas as an informal worker. These kind of urban dwellers have no alternative opportunity to maintain their lives expenses without street vending. Some street vendors operate a very simple business to keep away their food poverty. One street vender opinion is that; *I have no savings, since my income was very low. How will I provide food for my family of four now? Questioned Mohammad Slim, an evicted street vendor from Gulistan. He requested the government to introduce alternative source of income to the evicted vendors.* (The Daily star January 19, 2007).

#### 2) Vendors as Shop

The other part of urban dwellers is not operating street vendors but they depend on them to do shop for their urban livelihood. Low-income group of urban dwellers cannot shop from luxurious shopping centers in the developing cities. The street vendor is the main source of shopping in their lives. Not only the low-income group but also the middle-income and high-income group of urban dwellers is shopping for some household goods in their daily life from street vendors. One Dhaka University student, who poor and come from a rural area said: *Not only the low income group people, student like us and sometimes middle class people also shop from footpath vendors as*



Before Eviction After Eviction  
Fig.10 Comparing Urban Vending Situation

*they sell products in comparatively cheaper rates than of the markets. He said the corporation should provide some particular places with the street vendors for avoiding traffic jams as well as for the interests of shoppers.* (New Age September 25, 2006). It shows that, street vendor is an important informal trade sector in Dhaka City as well as other South Asian developing cities.

Based on this vending situation, street vendor a beneficial trade sector in Dhaka City; however, the urban authorities have no developmental policy to improve their

vending system and to maintain the surrounding environment.

**Type of Urban Street Vendor in Dhaka City**









Based on the field survey of Dhaka City, Street vendors operate by four different types of vending systems in urban areas: Permanent, Semi-Permanent, Semi-Mobile, and

extreme poor in Dhaka City and their income level was very low in their urban lives.

**Situation of Street Vendor in Dhaka City**

Due to the lack of formalization, urban authority cannot get a single penny from street vendors as legal taxes. In addition, vendors face harassment from their local

**Table.1 Street Vendors Typology in Dhaka City Urban Area**

Type	Picture	Location Map	Goods Quantity	Goods Quality	Remarks
Permanent		 Gulistan Area	These kinds of vendors are selling various cloths, fresh fruits, cooked food etc. Usually they sell one or two types of goods	The goods quality is not so bad and middle and low-income people are shop from these vendors due to the down price	This street business is operated by more than one person as permanent until eviction of urban authorities
Semi-Permanent		 Mirpur Area	They sell household goods, cloths, vegetables, fruits, services etc	These goods are not so good quality but middle and low-income people shops here due to their urban livelihood	They bring their goods in home but they put their selling platform in footpath for next day business
Semi-Mobile		 New Market Area	Mainly they are selling seasonal fruits, household goods, snacks, services, etc	Some time the seasonal fruits is good quality but most of goods are not good quality and poor people shops for their livelihood	They don't put their personal existence in urban footpath after their business in a day. They bring their business in home everyday
Mobile		 Farmgate Area	They are selling traditional snacks, household goods, toys etc	They are selling goods as mobile vendors in urban area as low quality to the moving people	They are completely mobile vendors in Dhaka City and it's difficult to control them by evction or management from urban area

Mobile (Table 1). Permanent types of vendors were doing their street business as permanent shop and they put their goods on the street after the business day. Some of them have a relation with nearest shop as an external business on the urban street. Their income level is good compared with other vendors. Semi-permanent vendors were one of the biggest numbers of street vendors in Dhaka City and according to the vender's opinion from Mirpur area they strongly affected by the government's eviction. After sale, they bring their goods home and put their business's platform and stand on the urban footpaths for next day. Their income level is not so good compared with permanent one. Semi-mobile vendors were the temporary street business in urban area of Dhaka City. They don't put up their existence in an urban footpath after their business. Some of them were providing their own products like fruits, snacks, and handicaps etc. Their income level is not good and some children operate this kind of street vendors in Dhaka City. Mobile vendors were moving in different urban areas to sell their goods to the moving urban dwellers. Some of them were selling in transportation vehicles. Based on their business condition, they were

authority by eviction from their vending areas.

**1) Before Eviction**

According the daily Newspaper, vendors operate their businesses in Farmgate, Gulistan, and New Market areas paid by 0.5 million BDT (Bangladeshi Currency, Taka. 1\$ = 69 BDT) per day as an illegal toll to local political leaders and local authorities for unofficial permission [6]. These are the illegal tolls, which have no benefit for urban development funds. For the lack of formalization vendors have no responsibility to maintain their urban footpaths in vending areas.

**2) After Eviction**

As a part of illegal and informal sector urban authority strictly evict them at January 2007 and street vendors' became job less in Dhaka City. However, a few vendors were still operating their street businesses as mobile systems during this eviction period. Based on their vending condition, most of them are extreme poor and they cannot maintain lives without their daily street vending.

After eviction, the local government established the holiday market for street vending in some individuals urban areas. But according to the vender's opinion, holiday market doesn't have enough space for the large number of

street vendors in Dhaka City and selling was not good for the vendors. Secondly, Before Eid urban authority decided that, 20 spots (20 previous vending places) were permitted for vending including the Farmgate, Gulistan, Mirpur, and New Market area in Dhaka City. For this policy, street vendors were going to previous condition. Because poor urban dwellers are not responsible for their urban areas and they pushed to operate street vending in central urban areas for the lack of gainful job opportunities for their urban life expenses.

The developing cities have no guidelines for street vending. However; a large number of urban dwellers depend on urban street vending. However, the local governments of developed cities have special guidelines for controlling their street businesses.

The vendors of developing city have no alternative opportunity to maintain their lives without street vending due to the lack of formal job opportunities for them. On the other hand, urban authorities of developing cities have no proper guideline for their large number of street vendors. Both urban authority and the urban street vendors harass each other in Dhaka City and other South Asian developing cities. It might comfort both, vendors and Local authorities, to shear the responsibilities established by the public management systems for Dhaka City. It could be considered that, after implementation of public management systems street vending will be a beneficial urban trade sector in Dhaka City as well as a model for South Asian developing cities.

#### CONCLUSION

Street vendors are operating their informal business as a temporary process without a sustainable management system for the lack of authority involvement in Dhaka City. Due to that lack of responsibility, street vendors are creating problems, street garbage and crowded the footpaths in urban areas. But a large number of urban dwellers depend on the street vendors to maintain their life expenses as a job or for shopping. Due to the eviction of street vendors part of urban dweller would be in a critical situation in Dhaka City. Based on these issues, street vending is an essential urban trade sector for a large number of urban dwellers in Dhaka City as a part of their urban lives. However, due to the informal situation at present, local government cannot do anything other than eviction them and street vendors cannot operate their business without being harassed. Local authority has to create a management system for street vendors so that street vendors could operate their business with self responsibility and the authority could collect legal taxes from the street vendors. This public management system should be organized by local government with participation from urban street vendors and local people as a community work. Then the public management of street vendors will be more responsible in their urban area. Doing so, street vendors will become beneficial for both urban dwellers and street vendors and it will become an urban identity for Dhaka City as well as South Asian developing cities.

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