

## **Struggle For Social Space, From Residence To Road: A Special Focus On Women Street Vendors Of Barasat And Basirhat Municipal Area ,North Twenty Four Parganas District,Westbengal**

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**ABSTRACT:** Women workforce is an important segment of the total labour force in India. For a long period the contributions of women of informal sectors in Indian economic development were unrecognized as the activities of women had been restricted from their household .There are five broad categories of Indian Women: women who were 1) Below the subsistence line and dependent on others, 2) Below the subsistence line but independent. 3) Above the subsistence line and independent. 4) Above the subsistence line but dependent4 5) Move continuously above and below the subsistence line. This paper listed reasons against the participation in the informal sector of women below the subsistence line. Women are closely affected by the stages and methods of development .At present India is regarded as one of the rapid rising economic super power. So in the present context, due to impetuous Socio-Economic change many research paper discussed on women work force involved in the formal sector and have cited the empowerment these Indian women had gained due to their economic independence. However, very limited study has been done on women workforce belonging to the urban informal sector, specially street vendors. Hence this study attempts to understand the participation of women in an informal activity like Street Vending in the Barasat and Basirhat Municipal Areas, North Twenty Four Parganas District in West Bengal.

**Key Words:** Economic independence, Encroachment ,Empowerment, Informal Activity, Street Vending.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

In the urban area Street Vending is considered as one of the common source of income for the poor segment who face continuous harassment by civic authorities. This paper highlights on the women street vendor , faced more problems and challenges to their survival because they do not have legal recognition. A snapshot of their everyday life reflects different colours, beck, effigy and spaces which categorize women street vendors as being pitiful poor . This paper presents the Socio-Economic Security Index (S.E.S.I.) a new and comprehensive measure of socio-economic security . By combining data from primary survey, we create an integrated measure of Socio-Economic Security of the female workforce of informal sector, specially women street vendors.

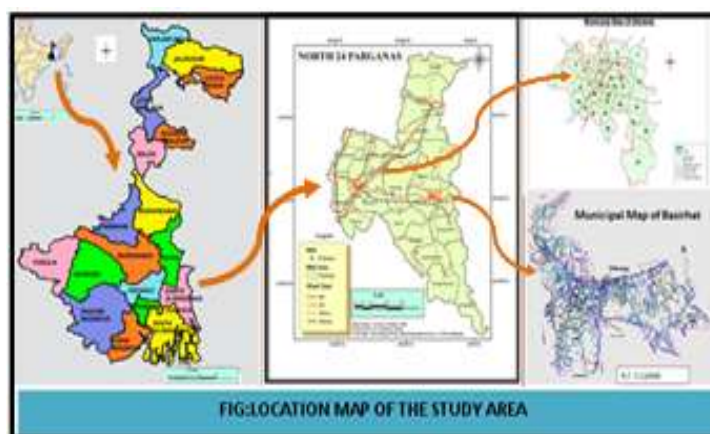
Street vendors are the most visible section of the informal economy (Nidan,2010). Street as a public space is contested as it changes and takes various forms for many marginalized groups. Street vendors occupy one of the largest and most visible occupational groups in the informal economy which is found in the public space 'street'. (Sharma & Konwar ,2014). Street vendors are identified as self-employed workers in the informal sector who offer their labour to sell goods and services on the street without having any permanent built-up structure (National Policy on Urban Street Vendors [NPUSV], 2006, p. 11). However Street vendor or hawker is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for sale to the public at large having a semi- permanent or non -permanent built up structure or open air from which to sell their service. In our study area(Barasat and Basirhat Municipality ) 34.36 %( Population Share 0.346) are women street vendors. Although Women's workforce in the economy neglected and invisible in Indian context. According to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, there were more than 10 million (1 crore) street vendors in India(Sharma & Konwar ,2014)AS their work is insecure, they are not sure of their earnings all times (Jhabvala 2003). The National

Commission on Self-Employed Women Workers (1987) in the unorganized sector recorded this sector as one in which women do arduous work as piece-rated, casual or unpaid workers. The commission reported that women in the unorganized sector are paid extremely low wage rates with total lack of job security (Sharma & Konwar, 2014). Despite their contribution to the urban society, the work of women street vendor has been facing subsequent challenges and numerous problems including political harassment, economic pressures, socio-cultural challenges etc.

The general objective of this study is to determine different forms of struggle for social space as well as the main constraints experiencing Women street vendors in the study area.

## II. STUDY AREA

There is substantial increase in the number of street vendors in the major cities around the North 24 Parganas, an important district of West Bengal, having four sub divisional towns. Barasat, the headquarter of this district is an important municipal town in the North 24 Parganas district as well as entire West Bengal. Barasat Municipality (Latitude : 88°48'E, Longitude : 22°50'N) was born on 1 April 1869 and after 1882 Barasat Municipality was formed as an autonomous body and became local government. The population of Barasat were 283,443 according to 2011 census. As an urban setup in the vicinity of the Kolkata, the town is within the area of Greater Kolkata. Several significant roads like National Highway 34 (Krishnanagar Road leading towards North Bengal), Jessore Road i.e NH-35 (road leading to Jessore in Bangladesh via Bongaon); Taki road (leading to Basirhat), Barrackpur Road etc. cross through the town. The town is an important railway and roadway junction. Basirhat Municipality is another important town of this district. It is an International Border town, established on 1st April, 1869. This riverside Municipality, (area of 8.5 sq. miles.) is located at 22°56' N 88°59' E. It was constituted by Basirhat Mouza and 13 surrounding Mouzas. One of the main infrastructural problems of these towns is narrowness of roads, caused by encroachment, too many vehicles, car parking and over population. Taki Road, Martin Road and Itindia Road cross through this town.



## III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hassan (2003) traces the changing characteristics of the street hawker in Kuala Lumpur. In course of tracing the transitions, he enhances the understanding of the issues related to strategies adopted for managing their lives and economic prospects. This should ideally follow Dimas (2008)' paper which highlighted on the many trials faced by city managers in developing countries, one of the most challenging is undoubtedly the Street Vendors problem. There is a perpetual problem for street and sidewalk users in most Indonesian cities. Their spill-over business onto roadways is the source of traffic congestion. Their informal setting and business refuse (garbage) cause unsightly urban vista. Dimas is general on underdeveloped countries, Hassan is a specific case study on Kuala Lumpur. Pang and Singh are specific issues – electricity, food safety etc. The purpose of the paper by Pang (2008) is to explore the socio-demographic factors affecting food safety strategies of hawkers in an urban and less urban setting of Malaysia. It is found that, all types of hawkers with higher educational levels and hawkers in an urban setting scored the highest on food safety knowledge. This study found inadequate guidelines for hawkers, ambiguities with licensing procedures, weaknesses in training programmes and significant complaints of designated sites by hawkers. The paper by Singh (2009) specially highlighted on Informal markets for electricity. The paper by Roy Sourobh and Daspatanayak (2016) emphasis on employment. The major thrust of this paper is to understand, the demographic and socio-economic conditions of Hawkers and Street Vendors in the College Square area of Cuttack City. The paper by Pillay Pinky Lalhapersad (2004) explores the nature of street trading of female vendors undertaken in the Johannesburg

CBD, characterised by poor working conditions, low income, extremely long hours and overcrowding. This should also follow Abebe's (2017) paper which highlighted on the challenges and opportunities of women participating in the informal sector in Ethiopia with a particular emphasis of street vendors in Arba Minch city. This paper also highlighted on the challenges that women street vendors faced

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) To investigate and measure the Socio-Economic obstacles and Constraints faced by Women Street Vendors in the study area. 2) To examine the struggle and challenges confronted by women street vendors in the study area.

#### **IV. METHODOLOGY:**

A case study was taken as an appropriate research design to achieve these research objectives among the various types of research design. This study was mainly based on primary data, collected through personal interview. Random sampling has been performed for the collection of data. A questionnaire was used based on the objectives of the study. The socio-economic profile of 545 samples (Barasat Municipality) and 422 (Basirhat Municipality) of women street vendors are being collected. The analysis has been made on the basis of simple statistical method include chi square ( $\chi^2$ ) test & hypothesis testing, correlation co-efficient and simple cartographic tools.

**NATIONAL STREET VENDORS ACT AND SCENARIO OF WEST BENGAL :** In spite of being the biggest service sector in India, Street vending have a negative public image, being associated with accidents, congestion, environmental degradation etc. On 6 September 2014, *Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014* was passed which recognized street vending as a legal occupation. According to the Government of India, there are three basic categories of street vendors: stationary, peripatetic and mobile. Stationary vendors are those who carry out vending on a regular basis at a specific location, with implicit or explicit consent of the authorities. Peripatetic vendors are those who carry out vending on foot. Mobile street vendors are those who move from place to place vending their goods or services on bicycles or motorized vehicles. Women constitute a large segment of these street vendors in almost every city. YUVA and NHF together played a major role in the creation of the Model Act and the Street Vendor Policy of 2004 and 2009 and Street vendors Act 2014. YUVA and NHF together played a major role in the creation of the Model Act and the Street Vendor Policy of 2004 and 2009 and Street vendors Act 2014. On 9th September 2013, Supreme Court of India has given an order to all Union Territories and States Chief Secretaries to follow National Street Vendors Policy 2009 and formulate Town Vending Committee in every district of the states. But Odisha Government & West Bengal Government has not replied anything on Supreme Court Order. Hawker's Movement in West Bengal began in 1980's and hawkers and their leaders started fighting for their right with the government to demand for legalizing their occupation. In West Bengal the Street Vendors Act, 2014 has not been implemented by the government but in the year 2010, a state policy was prepared by the government which was not passed in the assembly. Town vending committee has not been formed yet in West Bengal. There is no separate direction for women street vendors on National Policy.

#### **V. DATA INTERPRETATION**

The majority of women in the survivalist or poor end of street trading are independent traders, who work for themselves and rarely employ others. The working conditions of street vendors are precarious, as they endure harsh physical environments, limited or no infrastructure, no shelter against the elements, or access to water, sanitation and storage facilities (Lund, 1998: 30). There is a close association between socio-economic insecurity and participation of women as street vendors. The growth of Urban Poor and socio-economic insecurity are growing with uneven and unplanned urbanization. Therefore, it is rightly said that Street vending by women is directly related with socio-economic insecurity. There are two major socio-economic challenges that forced the women to street vending. i.e. 1) There is no other earning member in their family due to divorce or becoming widowed. 2) Cycle of poverty forced them to vending. The major socio-economic challenges faced by women street vendors are : 1) Harassment faced by their male counterpart, political leaders and customers. 2) They have no proper savings security. This article describes the method to compute Socio-Economic Security Index (S.E.S.I.), introduced by the authors. There should be a parameter which can assess growth. This is to track the growth and filling the gaps or loopholes and correcting mistakes and try to develop further. Women working force of any in formal sectors is also in the same approach, needs to be assessed and track its growth and perform well in coming days through better ideas providing welfare to all workers. Human Development Index (H.D.I.), Gender Related Development Index (G.D.I.), Happiness Index (H.I.), Economic Security Index (E.S.I.), Social Development Index (S.D.I.) etc. could not satisfy the proper assessment and ignored completely welfare of the informal sectors. The Socio-Economic Security Index (S.E.S.I.) is not a ultimate

measurement but a better index to assess the social status as well as struggle for existence of women in any informal sectors .

**Table-1:Design Considerations:**

<i>DIMENSION</i>	ECONOMIC		SOCIAL	
<i>INDICATORS</i>	Single Earner of the family	No Banking facility	Divorced and Widow	Harassed as a woman vendor
<i>DIMENSION INDEX</i>	Lone Earner Index(L.E.I.):	Savings Insecurity index(S.I.I.)	Married Single Index(M.S.I)	Harassment Index(H.I.)
Socio-Economic Security Index(S.E.S.I.)				

Computing the Socio-Economic Security Index(S.E.S.I.) involve the following steps:

Step-1:

Parameters: The following formulas are used to determine different indices of S.E.S.I.:

$$= (\sum x - Xi) \times \frac{1}{\sum x}$$

Where,  $\sum x$  = the total no. of sample of the particular area,  $X_i$  = no of sample of i parameter. Each individual index have been normalized and  $\frac{1}{\sum x}$  is assigned as the weights ,which will reduce the number of indicators(dimensionality) but will remain most of the original variability amongst the data. So that the value lie between 0 to 1 .

1)Lone Earner Index(L.E.I.): (Total Women Vendor-Total women vendor who have no other earning members in family) / Total Women Vendor

2) Savings Insecurity index(S.I.I.): (Total Women Vendor - Total women vendor who have no Banking Facilities) / Total Women Vendor

3)Married Single Index(M.S.I) : { Total Women Vendor -(Total Divorced +Total Widow)} / Total Women Vendor

4)Harassment Index(H.I.): (Total Women Vendor - Total women vendor who faced harassment) / Total Women Vendor

Step-2:

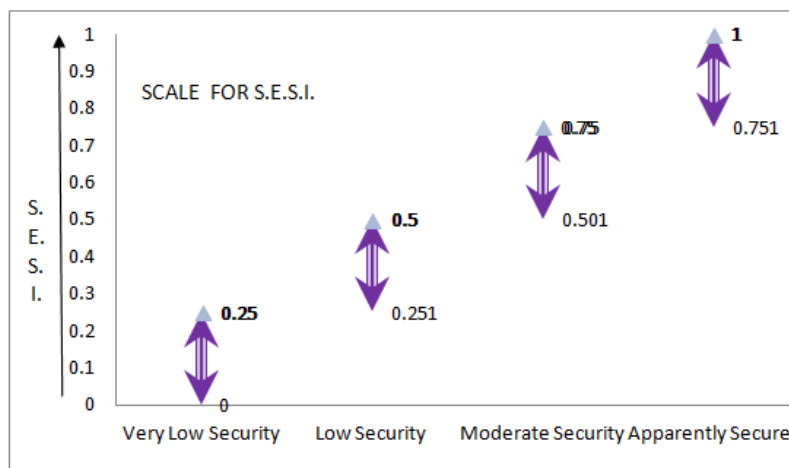
**Procedure to compute the Socio-Economic Security Index(S.E.S.I.)** : Finally the following formulas are used to determine the Socio-Economic Security Index(S.E.S.I.):

$$\sqrt[4]{(L.E.I. \times S.I.I. \times M.S.I. \times H.I.)}$$

So, **S.E.S.I.** is the geometric mean of the previous four normalized indices and higher value of index implies higher security.

**Table-2:** Statement of S.E.S.I.

Socio-Economic Security Index (S.E.S.I.) Value	Statement
0.000-0.250	Very Low Security
0.250-0.500	Low Security
0.500-0.750	Moderate Security
0.750-1.000	Apparently Secure

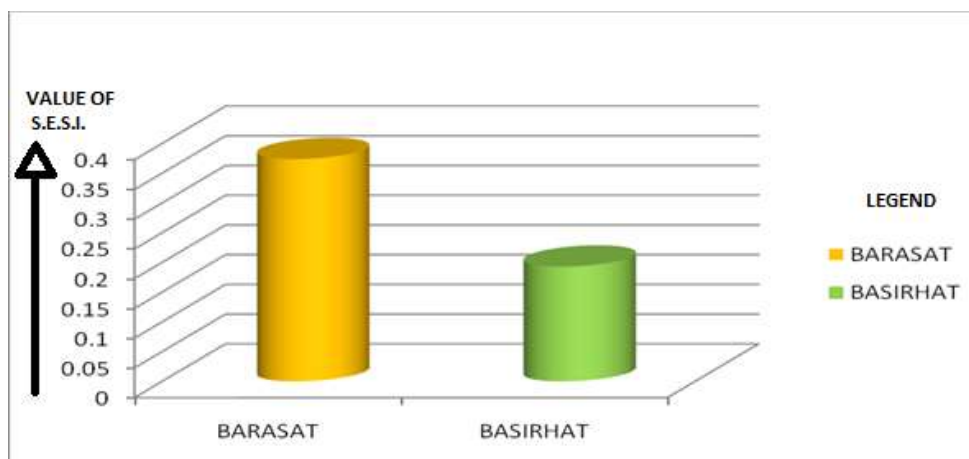


**FIG-2:** Socio – Economic Security Index

**Table-3:** Computation of S.E.S.I Value of the study area

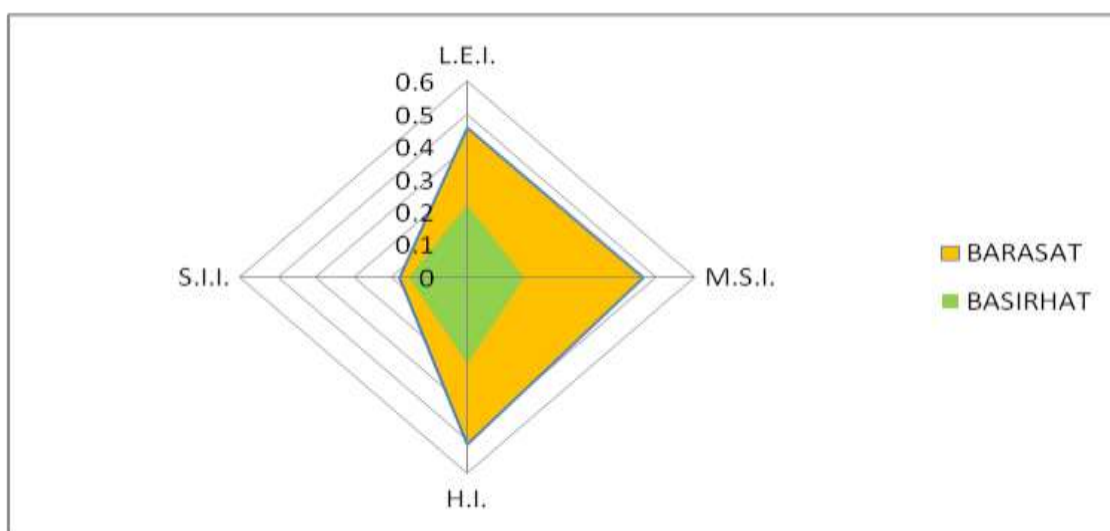
	L.E.I.	S.I.I.	M.S.I.	H.I.	S.E.S.I	Remarks
<b>BARASAT</b>	<b>0.459</b>	<b>0.179</b>	<b>0.466</b>	<b>0.510</b>	<b>0.374</b>	<b>Low Security</b>
<b>BASIRHAT</b>	<b>0.223</b>	<b>0.154</b>	<b>0.151</b>	<b>0.265</b>	<b>0.193</b>	<b>Very Low Security</b>

Source: Computed by Authors based on Primary Data



**FIG-3:** S.E.S.I. of the Study Area

From the above computation , it can be said that women street vendors of both urban areas are insecure .But as the District Headquarter comparatively the socio economic security of Barasat is better than Basirhat which is very closer to Bangladesh boarder. “Women are likely to earn less than men for the same type of work even in traditionally female occupations. Family responsibility is still very much assigned to women when they have to combine child raising activity with work activities. Women are required to find a solution for balancing these two roles.” (Parveen Shabnam , 2014) .



**FIG4:** Components of S.E.S.I. of the Study Area

Women Street Vendor are considered as the most vulnerable groups in the study area as well as Indian Urban Economy. The causes of vulnerability are (a) insecure work because they have no trade license (b) low bargaining power with customers (c) lack of control over earnings (d) need to balance between working place and homework. Maximum women street vendor are the one and only earning member of their family. Maximum Women street vendor choose their profession due to divorce or become widow or elder member of the family is physically challenged . Married Single Index(M.S.I) of Basirhat is lower than Barasat . So the Lone Earner Index(L.E.I.) of Basirhat is lower than Barasat too. Because lone earning is one of the effect of divorce or become widow.

**Table-4: Relationship Between Marital Status and Lone Earner at Barasat**

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>): There is no relationship between marital status and lone earner

Alternative Hypothesis(H<sub>1</sub>): There is a relationship between marital status and lone earner

Barasat	Divorced (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	Widow (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	Married (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	Unmarried (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	
Lone Earner	158	$\frac{(291 \times 158)}{545} = 84.36$	133	$\frac{(291 \times 133)}{545} = 71.01$	0	$\frac{(291 \times 250)}{545} = 133.49$	0	$\frac{(291 \times 4)}{545} = 2.14$	<b>291</b>
Earning for more better economic status	0	$\frac{(254 \times 158)}{545} = 73.64$	0	$\frac{(254 \times 133)}{545} = 61.99$	250	$\frac{(254 \times 250)}{545} = 116.51$	04	$\frac{(254 \times 4)}{545} = 1.86$	<b>254</b>
		158		133		250		4	545

O	158	0	133	0	0	250	0	4	$\sum O = 545$
E	84.36	73.64	71.01	61.99	133.49	116.51	2.14	1.86	$\sum E = 545$
O <sup>2</sup> /E	295.92	0	209.68	0	0	740.87	0	0.19	$\sum O^2/E = 1246.66$

Source: Computed by Authors based on Primary Data

$$\chi^2 = \sum O^2/E - \sum O = 1246.66 - 545 = 701.66$$

Degree of freedom=(C-1)(R-1)=(4-1)(2-1)=3. The critical value for 3 degree of freedom and 0.01 significance level refer to  $\chi^2$  table is 11.345 which is less than calculated value. So the value is 701.66 fall into acceptance region. Therefore H<sub>1</sub> is accepted and H<sub>0</sub> is rejected. So we conclude there is a relationship between marital status and lone earner.

**Table-5: Relationship Between Marital Status and Lone Earner at Basirhat**

Null Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>): There is no relationship between marital status and lone earner

Alternative Hypothesis(H<sub>1</sub>): There is a relationship between marital status and lone earner

Basirhat	Divorced (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	Widow (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	Married (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	Unmarried (O)	Expected Frequency (E)	
Lone Earner	274	$\frac{(332 \times 288)}{426} = 224.45$	58	$\frac{(332 \times 74)}{426} = 57.67$	0	$\frac{(332 \times 64)}{426} = 49.88$	0	$\frac{(291 \times 0)}{426} = 0$	<b>332</b>
Earning for more better economic status	14	$\frac{(94 \times 288)}{426} = 63.55$	16	$\frac{(94 \times 74)}{426} = 16.33$	64	$\frac{(94 \times 64)}{426} = 14.12$	0	$\frac{(94 \times 0)}{426} = 0$	<b>94</b>
		288		74		64		0	426

O	274	14	58	16	0	64	0	0	$\sum O = 426$
E	224.45	63.55	57.67	16.33	49.88	14.12	0	0	$\sum E = 426$
O <sup>2</sup> /E	334.49	3.08	58.33	15.68	0	290.08	0	0	$\sum O^2/E = 701.66$

Source: Computed by Authors based on Primary Data

$$\chi^2 = \sum O^2/E - \sum O = 701.66 - 426 = 275.66$$

Degree of freedom=(C-1)(R-1)=(4-1)(2-1)=3.

The critical value for 3 degree of freedom and 0.01 significance level refer to  $\chi^2$  table is 11.345 which is less than calculated value. So the value (275.66) is fall into acceptance region. Therefore H<sub>1</sub> is accepted and H<sub>0</sub> is rejected. So we conclude there is a relationship between marital status and lone earner. A large number of street vendors have no bank account due to difficulties to open and access the account. Moreover a large number of

women street vendors lost their capital during Sarada , Rose Valley , Ramell etc scam. There is a relationship between banking facilities and saving security.The following computation proved this:

**Table-6: Relationship Between Banking Facility and Lost Capital During Sarada,Rose Valley,Ramell etc scam at Barasat**

BARASAT		Banking Facility		a+b = m
		No(x=1)	Yes(x=0)	
Lost Capital During Sarada,Rose Valley,Ramell etc scam	Yes(y=1)	391	19	410
		c	d	c+d = n
	No(y=0)	56	79	135
a+c = r		447		
b+d = s		-	98	

Source: Computed by Authors based on Primary Data

Following the formula we can have the value of the within Region Correlation Co-efficient (For Barasat Municipal Area) expressed as :

$$r_{xy} = \frac{(a.d-b.c)}{\sqrt{(m.n.r.s)}} = 0.605696187$$

Thus for each pair (X<sub>ij</sub> Y<sub>ij</sub>) we find that, a = No of women street vendor in Barasat Municipality who lost their capital during Sarada,Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam and have no banking facilities.b= No of women street vendor in Barasat Municipality who lost their capital during Sarada,Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam but they have banking facilities ,c= No of women street vendor in Barasat Municipality who did not lost their capital during Sarada , Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam but have no banking facilities, d= No of women street vendor in Barasat Municipality who did not lost their capital during Sarada,Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam and have banking facilities.

**Table-7: Relationship Between Banking Facility and Lost Capital During Sarada,Rose Valley,Ramell etc scam at Basirhat**

BASIRHAT		Banking Facility		a+b = m
		No(x=1)	Yes(x=0)	
Lost Capital During Sarada,Rose Valley,Ramell etc scam	Yes(y=1)	342	15	357
		c	d	c+d = n
	No(y=0)	12	53	65
a+c = r		354		
b+d = s		-	68	

Source: Computed by Authors based on Primary Data

Following the formula we can have the value of the within Region Correlation Co-efficient (For Barasat Municipal Area) expressed as :

$$r_{xy} = \frac{(a.d-b.c)}{\sqrt{(m.n.r.s)}} = 0.75931292$$

Thus for each pair (X<sub>ij</sub> Y<sub>ij</sub>) we find that, a = No of women street vendor in Basirhat Municipality who lost their capital during Sarada,Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam and have no banking facilities.b= No of women street vendor in Basirhat Municipality who lost their capital during Sarada,Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam but they have banking facilities ,c= No of women street vendor in Basirhat Municipality who did not lost their capital during Sarada , Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam but have no banking facilities, d= No of women street vendor in Basirhat Municipality who did not lost their capital during Sarada,Rose Valley ,Ramell etc scam and have banking facilities Now,  $r_{xy}(\text{Barasat Municipality}) = 0.605696187$  and  $r_{xy} = 0.75931292$  which are impressive result that established ,the lac of proper banking facility the savings of capital of women street vendor are insecure .So the Banking facilities should be most easiest for the informal worker specially women .The women street

vendors are not conscious about their legal and proper documents like AADHAAR Card, PAN Card etc .The following table provide this

**Table-8: Different important documents issued by Govt.**

	Total Women Street Vendors	Have Votar ID Card	Have Ration Card	Have AADHAAR Card	Have PAN card
Barasat Municipality	545	512	539	312	21
Basirhat Municipality	422	377	407	289	13

Source:Primary data

**Table-9:The nature of savings of women street vendor,who have no Banking facilities**

	Husband	Home(Own responsibility)	Relatives	Total
Barasat Municipality	40	395	12	447
Basirhat Municipality	12	338	07	357

Source:Primary data

Sometimes the capital ,deposited to the husband or relatives are refunded partially or sometimes not refunded .So, the savings is totally insecure to their husband or relatives.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Major findings of the study are-

- ▶ 1)Most of the spaces occupied by the street vendors considered as illegal since the spaces have not been set aside for trade. In cases where they are allowed to operate, the spaces are considered temporary and eviction occurs at the will of urban authorities and police.
- ▶ 2) Despite many challenges faced by women street vendors, they were optimist in some circumstances. Among these, they often bring home the main source of income for their family. The study investigate that women street vendors attempt to increase security and smoothen consumption rather than maximizing profits .Low social security found in the study areas-Basirhat even Lower.
- ▶ 3) In this report we have seen that the struggle of women are more than men; they are working as hard as men do but can't get the same status .Married single women are mostly low earner.
- ▶ 4)Maximum poor women street vendor lost their savings by chit fund due to strict Banking System.

Overall they don't get have any security from the society. So the following recommendations have been provided to develop their socio economic condition:**1.** Provide security of tenure, as a matter of priority, to women street vendor. **2.** Combat violence against women street vendors. **3.** Ensure joint ownership of and control over housing , bank savings , land, and property, as well as equal rights between men and women in marriage **4.**Enforce women's inheritance rights and equal rights to marital property **5.**Improve access to basic economic services, such as easy banking system, and co-operative system to provide economic security for street vendors. **6.**To create anti harassment cell to provide social security for women street vendors. **7.**The municipalities should take steps to provide space by reviewing which are appropriate to street vending without creating traffic congestion and the free movement of the people.

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