

*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Street vending as the safety-net for the disadvantaged people: The case of Jimma Town**

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Jimma town is one of the largest towns in South Western part of the country; it hosts significant amount of people who make their life through informal sectors in general and street vending in particular. This study was aimed at exploring the street vending activities in urban informal sector in Jimma town with particular reference to three streets with too much concentration of street vendors. The general objective of the study was to explore the existing condition of people engaged in street vending in urban informal sector. The specific objectives of the study are analyzing the socio-economic backgrounds of street vendors, the working conditions of the street vendors at their work settings, exploring the threats and risks faced by them and their managing strategies, the reason why they engaged in the activity of street vendors and analyzing the livelihood contribution of the activity to both the operators and the poor urban dwellers in the study area and the dilemma on street vending activity. Related literatures were reviewed and examined thoroughly to validate the study. The study was conducted in Jimma, western Ethiopia; because the researcher is familiar to the area and the research site is easily accessible than other towns and cities to the researcher. *Three streets* were purposefully selected. In addition to secondary data, in-depth-interview, key informant interview, focus group discussion and the personal observation of the researcher were used to address the specific objectives stated at the beginning of the study. This study has examined various aspects of the objectives stated and analyzed some aspects in relation to the literature and data collected regarding the contribution of street vending to the safety of the disadvantaged people in urban areas. Thus, some of the analysis include that the street vendors have low socio-economic status which resulted from low educational level and lack of adequate skill to get better employment, ethnic shifting of some activities (casual works and petty trades), the domination of youth in vending, participation of women who have more barriers to enter the formal sector. Some of the reasons for engaging in street vending for some people is because they consider it as a better option to low-wage employment and to supplement the income they get from the formal employment (low-wage earners), but the others are engaged in it due to acute poverty. Some of the vendors romanticize street vending as a vital occupation. They praise it for enhancement in their financial, human and social capital.

**Key words:** Street vending, urbanization, informal sector, developing countries.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Urban areas have been experiencing rapid growth of informal sector economic activities in developing

countries. This condition has attracted the attention of researchers, policy planners, and social development

activists recently. Urbanization is characterized by rapid population growth and wide spread poverty which have led to reliance on the informal sector in most urban areas of developing countries and this situation has become life making strategy for urban poor increasingly (Timalsina, 2007:11).

In some developing countries such as India, Nepal, Bangladesh and some Sub-Saharan African countries larger cities like Zimbabwe, Malawi and Zambia, about half of the employed urban populations work in the informal sector. Since the entrance to this sector is not full of barriers as the case of formal sector, the amount of labor force informal sector will encompass is predicted to increase in these countries (Timalsina, 2007:12). The majority of the participants of this sector are people who disadvantaged socially and economically, such as low skilled poor people, recent migrants to cities, poor women and sometimes disabled people who hardly fulfill the criteria to be employed in the formal sector which is full of barrier to entrance (Losby et al., 2002:21-25).

The informal sector operators are intimidated by urban government in most of the developing country cities. There is a sorrow relationship between informal sector participants and urban authorities. Since they are unlicensed by urban government and accused of illegal access to urban spaces, they are in conflict usually with the latter ones. Majority of the urban poor depend on it for their daily life requirements due to increasing inflation of goods and services. Although the contribution of street vending in informal sector for the safety of the majority of poor by urban authorities is disregarded, it has a very considerable share of national economies for several reasons: since it provides goods and services at a low price; provides opportunities for earning income otherwise unemployed people (Bhowmik, 2003:2).

The study by Manganga (2007:5-6) depicts that street vending which is the main and visible part of the informal sector is a global phenomenon. And millions of people earn their living by selling goods and services on the sidewalks in the majority of developing country urban centers. They represent a significant share of the urban informal sector. Street vending is a shield which buffers many people in it, who are not formally employed and also disadvantaged in many aspects. It gives a relative safety for life which cannot be fulfilled by the government and it is their only income and employment source.

Street vendors can be used by local and national political authorities as tool in pursuit of their political objectives in various developing countries larger cities. They can both be assets or liabilities to the political leaders and the political opposition parties. Thus, Manganga (2007) tried to show how much they are

potential asset if they are handled properly and how much they can be a threat to the incumbent government if not handled properly.

In less developed countries, it is associated with low income, miserable working conditions and little accumulation. This is because of the conception that the participants in this sector are always poor people who struggle to survive. Whereas in developed countries, there are possibilities for accumulation and even incomes comparable to the formal sector that emanates from it. As it has been mentioned above, in developing countries, people became engaged in the sector due to the acute poverty which prevents them from accumulation. On the contrary, in developed countries, people engage in informal sector, particularly in street vending in order to get additional money to what they get from their formal employment. In other words, they engage in it in order to diversify the source of their earnings or sometimes to take the advantage of tax evasion (Smelser and Swedberg, 1994:429).

The informal sector encompasses in itself a number of activities. From these activities, street vending is more visible and important due to its entrepreneurial character and its relation with urban spaces. Whether legitimately or not, street vendors are practicing their trade under inhospitable conditions. Since street vending is directly related to the urban spaces or illegal access to public places, eviction orders are issued arbitrarily in the causing of congestions, health reasons, and public inconvenience over the street vendors (Kumar and Singh, 2009:8).

According to Cross (1998), although it has been argued that street vending mainly attracts those who have limited opportunities for obtaining formal employment (*the disadvantaged*), it is also increasingly becoming an option for some citizens who are better off economically in many of the developing countries. The purpose of entrance to the disadvantaged people is for survival whereas those of better off people are to accumulate capital.

According to Mitullah (2005:3) generally, there has been little research done on informal sector activities in Africa. The studies conducted regarding street vending were inadequate and information available is largely deficient and locality specific in Africa. Like in other countries of Africa, the situation is also true in the case of Ethiopia, that little documented information exists on informal sector activities. In spite of that, in majority of African countries and Ethiopia there has been growing recognition that this sector is becoming the major employer (Asmamaw, n.d:10-13).

Currently, the condition of life making through informal

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sector activities in Ethiopian cities and towns is a common phenomenon. Majority of the main roads of the main cities in the country are overcrowded with street vendors, and petty traders. Jimma, being the largest town in the western Ethiopia is also hosting a significant share of these phenomena. This is due to its large composition of urban poor and migrant population from different corners of the neighboring zones, regions. Street vendors on the road sides of Jimma work throughout the day closing at the same time the pedestrians' road.

Thus, we wanted to investigate the existing condition of street vendors deeply and whether it is a source of livelihood for people (*particularly for the disadvantaged who mainly participate in it, according to Losby et al. (2002) and Mitullah (2005:4)*) or challenge for the urban authority. Since *the town of Jimma* is one of the largest towns of Ethiopia which has a significant amount of informal sector operators, our study focused on street vending activities particularly in some neighborhoods in this town.

### Statement of the problem

The informal sector economic activities are rapidly expanding globally, especially in developing countries. In Africa for instance, informal sector activities accounted for almost 80% of non agricultural employment, over 60% of urban employment and over 90% of new jobs for approximately the past decades (Manganga, 2007:4). It was also pointed out that the informal economy can no longer be considered a temporary phenomenon, neither in Africa nor in other parts of the world. Moreover, it serves as a safety net for the disadvantaged people in developing countries. People, who could not get credit, could not be absorbed by the formal sector due to lack of adequate skills, become increasingly engage in it. It is a very essential activity for the survival of people in cities who could not fulfill their needs through formal sector. Thus, it has become a shield for the disadvantaged people of many of the developing countries' larger cities (Losby et al., 2002:14).

Although there are less privileged people (*disadvantaged*) such as poor women or widowed, migrants, children, youths or people who have no chance of getting a job in the street vending sub-sector, some studies such as the study of Manganga (2007) and Mitullah (2005) tried to demonstrate that the sector is not only a place where the poor and marginalized are to be found. But, they pointed out that, there are people economically better off that are operating in the sector. Moreover, it serves as a safety net for the disadvantaged people in developing countries. People, who could not get credit, could not be absorbed by the formal sector due to lack of adequate skills, become increasingly engage in it. It is a very essential activity for the survival of people in cities who could not fulfill their needs through

formal sector. Thus, it has become a shield for the disadvantaged people of many of the developing countries' larger cities (Losby et al., 2002:14).

The street vendors are blamed for problems created in the sidewalks of streets in many of the developing countries. According to Bhowmik (2005), Timalsina (2007) and Kumar and Singh (2009), insanitary condition of urban spaces, congestion, chaos, crime and illegal access to urban spaces are some of the issues they are accused of. However, the spaces are mostly not occupied by street vendors totally. Some of the parked cars and other materials are city's greatest encroachers of public space and obstacle to the movement of pedestrians (Jonathan, 2006:4). But these groups of people are not blamed for either congestion or overcrowding of the urban spaces and foot paths of the pedestrians.

According to Asmamaw (n.d:2-3), the existence of a renewed interest in the study of informal sector is reflected in various national and international initiatives. This is considered as a turning point to the sector to be recognized in many corners. He pointed out that, more emphasis should be placed on improving socio-economic situation of the disadvantaged people at the grass root levels to create better opportunities for income generating activities. However, his assessment on informal sector was too general and focused on the entire informality but did not see the dynamic situation of street vendors particularly.

The negligence of the street vendors has resulted in the lack of accurate estimates of the numbers of street traders in various sub-Saharan countries. As a result of this, there is less understanding of the working conditions and other aspects of street vendors in various African larger cities (Mitullah, 2005). This led to undervaluing of the contribution and the role it plays making the life of poor safe or ease. Moreover, the number of people entering vending activities tends to increase from time to time. On the other hand, although it has been threatened by local urban authorities, what is being observed is that street vending is a flourishing phenomenon in many developing countries (Mitullah, 2005:3; Cross, 1998; Kayuni and Tambulasi, 2009).

Since street vending is one of the most visible and important part of urban informal sectors, investigations regarding the condition how they earn their living from it, and their relation with government authorities, its contribution to livelihood security, the diversification strategy of income and their socio-economic background is important to further inquiries in the field. The main reason for this study's focus on street vending activities in Jimma is, studies by Metasebia (2009), Asmamaw (n.d), Fransen and van Dijk (2008) and Mulugeta (2008) did not emphasize the aforementioned aspects of street vendors. Particularly, this study tried to give due consideration to address them.

This study generally will contribute to widening the horizon of our knowledge about the contribution of

informal sector to the society, and it specifically widens our understanding of the nature of street vending activity in Jimma. Thus, the aspects which were not addressed by the existing rare studies will be examined thoroughly and comprehensively. Hence, this study mainly concerned itself with investigating on the causes that enforce people engage in this sub-sector, investigating why the working conditions hostile to them, examining whether it eases the life challenges or contributes to the livelihood security of street vendors, exploring what socio-economic background they have and the stance of public and the urban authority regarding street vending activities.

## Objectives of the study

### General objective

The general objective of this study is to examine the living condition of street vendors and the contribution of street vending to the livelihood of the poor (*disadvantaged*).

### Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study include the following:

- 1) To examine the socio-economic backgrounds of street vendors in the study area.
- 2) To examine the working conditions of street vendors in the study area.
- 3) To identify the reasons why people are engaged in street vending in Jimma.
- 4) To investigate the contribution of street vending to livelihood security of the operators.
- 5) To analyze the stances of the general public and urban authority regarding the increasing vending
- 6) To examine the dilemma on street vending activity in general

### Definition of terms

**Safety-Net:** This concept is used in this study in a sense to show the role street vending activities play in poverty reduction or making life easier for disadvantaged people (*low socio-economic group*) by redistributing income to the poorest, enable individuals to make productive investments in their future that they may otherwise miss, e.g. education, health, income generating opportunities, help individuals/households manage risk, improves livelihood.

**Disadvantaged People:** The "disadvantaged" is often applied in a third world context and typically relates to women and other groups of society with reduced "upward mobility" or suffering social exclusion and having limited access to natural resources and economic opportunities

(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Disadvantaged>). In this study, this concept is intended to refer to those from low socio-economic background who have little opportunity to get employment in the formal sector and due to that; participating in the urban informal sector for survival.

**Economic Dualism:** The concept which highlights the distinction between two systems of employment i.e. self employment and wage-labor (Reid and Rubin, 2003:2-3). Thus, according to this idea, the concept informal sector also emanates from 'the self-employed' (*for detail explanation, see please the theoretical framework of the study*).

**Street Vendor:** "A person who offers goods for sale to the public without having a permanent built-up structure from which to sell ... they may be stationary in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or other public/private spaces or, they may be mobile in the sense they move from place to place by carrying their wares on pushcarts or in baskets on their hands...." (Bhowmik, 2005:2256).

**Informal Sector Economy:** "Economic actions that by pass the costs and are excluded from the protection of laws and administrative rules covering" (Smelser and Swedberg, 1994:428).

**Illegal economy:** The production of and distribution of legally prohibited goods and services. This includes such activities as drug trafficking, prostitution, and illegal gambling (Smelser and Swedberg, 1994).

**Unreported Economy:** Consists of actions that circumvent or evade established fiscal rules as codified in the tax code. The amount of income that should be reported to the tax authorities.

**Unrecorded Economy:** It encompasses activities that circumvent reporting requirements of government statistical agencies. Its summary measure is the amount of income that should be recorded in national accounting systems but is not (Smelser and Swedberg, 1994).

## RESEARCH METHODS

This part includes description of the study area, study design, study subjects, method of data collection and sampling method, data collection instruments and analysis plan; and the justifications for choosing them.

### Selection of study area and subjects of study

Jimma is one of the Ethiopian towns in which informal sector activities especially street vending activity is undertaken widely in South Western Ethiopia. The study was conducted in Jimma because of the following reasons;

1. The researchers are familiar to the area and knows some of the situations of street vendors in the area referred.
2. The research site is easily accessible than other towns or cities of Ethiopia to the researcher.

These were used in order to simplify the problems potentially encountered during data collection. The study was undertaken by

employing purposive sampling method. Street vendors such as (street food vendors, shoe-shine youths, clothes and other electronic equipments and house hold utensils) were the subjects of the study. Primary data were collected from the street vendors from some selected streets or public places in both towns. These streets were chosen purposively, since; the objective of the research is to study the living condition of street vendors in informal sector by focusing on the case of street vendors in Jimma.

**Qualitative research methodology:** Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings. There are five major purposes qualitative studies are especially suitable. These are: 1) Understanding the meaning, 2) Understanding the particular context, 3) Identifying unanticipated phenomena and 4) Generating new grounded theories about these, 5) Understanding the process by which actions take place, and developing causal explanation. Thus, the aim of the researcher was associated with the 5th uses of the qualitative research.

**Reasons for choosing qualitative methodology:** The reasons for using qualitative research methods in this study include; since we wanted to understand the views of street vendors regarding the condition of their street trade; the reasons why they adopted street vending activities as their source of income and employment, the challenges they face when they undertake vending activities and their managing strategies, their socio-economic background will be studied deeply in their work settings. Those questions are all in nature of understanding the situation of street vendors, which suit qualitative methodology. Secondly, we wanted to find out the responses by the urban authorities, and the general public regarding the street vending activities in this town. In-depth analysis and understanding of these questions cannot be answered without qualitative methodologies.

**The study design:** Jimma was chosen for the study. It is the largest and oldest town in the south western part of the country. Due to that Jimma has densely populated urban centers with high concentration of informal economic activities where street vendors are undertaking an active role. Therefore, the study used purposive non-probability sampling to select the specific key locations where the street vendors are at work. Since the study is paying attention in studying different street vending activities in Jimma, the researchers selected purposively the main locations where the vendors exist.

**Methods of data collection:** Qualitative data were collected from street vendors, the urban authorities, the general public regarding the working condition, livelihood contribution of street vending, diversification strategy employed, the stance of public and urban authorities regarding street vending activities in the area of study. The qualitative data collections instruments employed to address these issues include in-depth interview, key-informant interview, focus group discussion and observation. Primary data were collected by two month long field work in the study area.

### Primary data

**Interviews:** According to Glibert (1993), qualitative interviewing is a kind of guided conversation in which there is careful listening so as to hear the meaning of what is being conveyed. Interview is the key technique and the most commonly used in qualitative research. It allows the researcher to produce a rich, depth and varied data set in an informal setting. It provides a thorough examination of experiences, feelings or opinions that closed questions could never hope to capture. There are many types of interview. But, we chose key informants interview, in-depth interviews in our study.

**In-depth Interview:** In-depth interview was conducted with some of the street vendors regarding the mechanisms of how the street vendors work on the streets; make relation with the urban authorities and the threats and risks they face when they undertake their work on the street and with the general public regarding the stance towards the street vending activity in the city. For the purpose of employing case studies as research strategy in the study, 15 in-depth interviews in the study area were conducted with the street vendors. The informants were interviewed in-depth about their lives before they got engaged in vending activities, the factors that led them into vending; the lives they were living as street vendors and what they thought was the best thing to do so as to improve their lives.

**Key-informant interview:** Key-informant interview was conducted with 2 officials from local urban authorities. And also two people from the general public who were customers of street vendors interviewed reported by the street vendors themselves. The interviews have provided valuable supplement to the data collected by employing the above methods.

**Focus Group Discussion:** Focus group discussion was also conducted with street vendors in the study area. Since we believe that making more FGD is difficult due to their fulltime working and highly mobile nature of their work, one FGD was conducted. The participants were recruited from the aforementioned town streets based on their friendship. The FGD checklist was made to include topics regarding the major causes for engaging in street vending, the challenges they face when they undertake their activity, the livelihood contribution of street vending, the managing strategies of risks face them. The researcher took the role of a moderator during the discussion. The outcome from the FGD was triangulated with data from in-depth interviews as well as with data from secondary sources.

**Observation:** In addition to the data gathered using the above described data collection methods, information canvass through the personal observation of the researcher on the situation of street vendors in the study area.

**Methodological triangulation:** The data collected in the study will be analyzed using qualitative methods. The primary data collected by using key-informant interview, in-depth interviews, observation and the FGD will be analyzed and presented qualitatively. However, what is more important is that, for the purpose of showing all possible indications in the responses gathered using the various data collection methods, the researcher will employ a methodological triangulation scheme which clearly specifies what information was needed, from whom the needed information will be obtained and how the needed information will be collected and analyzed.

**Secondary Source:** Journal articles, books and other unpublished reports related to the issue under study were consulted. Research results conducted on areas of informal sector economy and urban informal sectors in Ethiopia and foreign countries will be reviewed thoroughly to substantiate the study at hand.

**Data Collection Instruments:** Interview guide will be used for the in-depth interviews and FGD guide will be used for the FGDs and also the observation checklist will be used for the observation. The interviews will be conducted in Afan Oromo or Amharic; and will be tape-recorded with the interviewees consent. Field notes will also be taken during the interview.

**Data presentation and analysis:** The data gathered are presented and analyzed qualitatively. Special emphasis was given to qualitative analysis which will help to understand the causes, the socio-economic backgrounds, the working conditions, vulnerability

of street vendors face and coping strategies they use the livelihood contribution it has, the diversification strategy employed among the street vendors in the study area.

**Scope and limitation:** While informal sector encompasses many components in itself, the study concentrated on street vending activities which are the most important and visible components of the informal sector. The study emphasized on assessing the living situation of people engaged in street vending activities. The street vendors such as food vendors, news paper hawkers, cloth vendors, vegetables vendors, cloth and various household utensils vendors, the shoe shiners will be addressed in this study. The study investigates their socio-economic backgrounds, the challenges they face and managing strategies, and relation with urban authority and street vendors, and the contribution of the activity to the livelihood security of operators, and the diversification strategy used by them if there is any.

**Ethical consideration:** All of the participants of this study were informed about the purpose of the study. Informed verbal consent was obtained from all respondents before the interviews and discussions. The participants were assured that the information they give would be kept confidential. Pseudo names were used to keep the confidentiality. The participants were also assured that their participation was voluntary; and they were free to withhold their consent and quit the interview anytime.

## RESULTS

### The general socio-economic backgrounds of street vendors

This part of the paper is concerned with data presentation and analysis of the data or facts from the field by using various qualitative data collection instruments such as in-depth interview, focus group discussion, and observation supported by the check lists or guides to undertake them. And hence, in-depth interview with street vendors, key-informant interview with some of the urban authorities, focus group discussion with a group encompassing seven street vendors and the observation of the researcher employed to gather data through one month stay in the field.

This section is concerned with the analysis of the general socio-economic background of the street vendors in Jimma town. Examining the general socio-economic background of street vendors is essential to understand the relation between the socio-economic status and their working condition, the reason why they are engaged in the activity and other related conditions of the street vendors in informal sector. Thus, the place of origin, marital status, family size, ethnic affiliation, educational level of the street vendors in the study area are analyzed in this section.

**Education status of street vendors:** Low educational level, which is caused by low socio-economic status resulted in low skill, dropping of education from primary level are the common characteristics of the informants interviewed. Street vendor's educational status is generally low according to the in-depth interview with some of the informants in the study areas. Majority of them did not

complete their primary level and secondary level education. Some of them have dropped from school due to poverty of their family. However, some vendors are striving to continue their education at evening after vending at day time; although the majorities of them quitted their education and spent much time on vending. But generally, street vendors lack adequate education to get formal employment, due to their early dropping of schools to support themselves and their family. The main participants of the activity are the unmarried youths similarly to the case of many countries, in Jimma town also the migrant youths dominate the activity. Sometimes, women are observed with their children at work sites. But most of them are divorced women though there are some with their husband. I have also encountered the family members engaged in vending around 'Ajjip' street in Jimma. The interview with one female vendor in her 30s who vends with her children revealed that, the little boy with her hawks lottery around her and the female one sells the "lewz." In the area, there are a significant amount of people who vend with their teenager children. Apart from this, there are so many migrant youth women who are engaged in this type of activity particularly in Ajip Street. They came from mainly Wolayta and Dawro zones. They speak Dawro and Wolayta languages. In general, the salient marital features of the vendors in the study area; as it has been mentioned above, the unmarried youth migrants from the rural area dominate the activity.

**Place of Origin of street vendors:** Regarding the place of origin, some of them came from Gurage zone, Silte Zone, in Addis Ababa. According to the research conducted by Tamirat (2012), although there are participants in this activity from many Ethnic groups, those vendors who came from Wolayita and Hadiya tend to dominate the casual self-employed activities (petty trading activities) and street vending. Similarly, recent migrants from Wolayita, Dawro and Hadiya are engaged in street vending in Jimma. It became a fashion to hawk lottery by Wolayita teenagers. Though the root cause of teenagers' influx to Jimma from *Wolayita Zone Kindo Koyisha, duguna Fango Woreda is unknown, teenagers massively migrate to Jimma town* recently according to my own observation and interview with them. Thus, the majorities of participants in street vending activities in Jimma came from SNNPR.

**Age structure of street vendors:** the study conducted in Addis Ababa city revealed that in terms of age category, street vending activities are composed of youths, adults and some of the elderly people (both women and men) (Tamirat, 2012). Though youths are dominating groups among others, there is a significant amount of elderly people in vending various things like selling lottery and some handcrafts. As mentioned above, there are a significant amount of teenagers of new migrants especially from SNNPR Wolayita Zone and Hadiya zones. The possible reason for the massive influx vending teenagers from Wolayita area is assumed to be land fragmentation

and its concomitant food insecurity as a result of historical factors. On top of that, some of them complain the failure of government to employ university and college graduates in their vicinity. Because of that, they preferred to do business than spending their time on education which ends up in unemployment (Yonas, 2012).

**Ethnic Composition of Street Vendors:** similar study conducted in Addis Ababa by Tamirat (2012) reveal that the street vending activities were dominated by Gurages and Silte ethnic groups. Despite that, there is a gradual shifting of the vending activities done by Silte and Gurage migrants in Addis Ababa to the Wolayta and the Hadiya migrant's recently. However, still now there are some amount of the former ethnic group members participating in both petty trades and street vending. The Gurage and Silte are mostly engaged in vending which demands significant initial capital. But most of the assertions are based on the personal observation of the researcher and little interviews made in the study area. It is difficult to generalize and needs a further research even to know what happened in this area different from other areas which push youths to Addis Ababa rampantly recently. The same trend is observed in Jimma regarding the ethnic composition of the participants of street vending. As it is mentioned above, youths from Gurage, Silte, Wolayita and Hadiya are becoming the key participants of street vending activities in Jimma town. It is something common to hear vendors who speak Wolatigna, Hadyigna and other languages from southern region.

### **Employment history of street vendors**

In this sub-section, the employment background of the street vendors is presented and analyzed. Considering the employment background when analyzing the current activities they are engaged in gives a good understanding of the pain of the working condition of the street vendors. This is because, their employment history is related to their socio-economic background which made them disadvantaged in various aspects and engages in vulnerable activities. Therefore, this sub-section is concerned with the street vendors' employment background before they engage in street vending in the study area. According to the interview with the informants, street vendors have the experience of involving in the casual activities before their engagement in street vending profession as a livelihood strategy. Since it requires some amount of capital to start street vending, they have to involve in casual self-employment to generate initial capital. Some of them directly joined vending when they become unsuccessful in farming. Frequent failure of crop due to changing climatic conditions, summed up with too much dependence on rain fed agriculture, so many migrants are leaving their rural land and ended up unemployed in urban centers in spite of their assumption of getting better living condition before their migration. By

and large, casual employment is the primary employment source for them before engagement in street vending which is also demanding some initial capital to buy manufactured goods. Since it is demanding physical force, they do not want to spend too much time on it.

According to some vendors, the absence of rural off-farm employment is assumed to be the major cause for the rampant unemployment in rural area and the massive migration. In Jimma town, vendors who came from Wolayta, Dawro and Hadiya share the same reason to migrate and engage in this activity. On the other hand, there are street vendors who were also previously employed as home based laborer, especially those of female vendors. According to the interview and focus group discussion with them, they assert that since the income they get from domestic or home based employment too less and the working condition is harsher; they have shifted from home based laborer to street vending in *Ajip, Mendera Kochi and Merkato streets*.

**Causes for Engaging in Street Vending Activity:** In this part of analysis, one of the objectives stated to examine the causes of engagement in street vending activity is addressed. To address this objective, data collected through various techniques of qualitative methods were analyzed comprehensively. Thus, the section concerns itself with analyzing the main factors pressurized people to engage in street vending amid the intense hostility of urban authority towards it. Some of these factors include, poverty (low socio-economic status), being a better alternative (street vending activities) than low-wage formal employment, as a means to supplement income they get from low-wage formal sector were addressed.

According to the focus group discussion participants, people engage in informal works for a variety of reasons. For some it is their last resort, as a better alternative than the low-wage formal employment, to become self-reliant or to fulfill personal needs and wants, and others engage in it to diversify the income they get from low-wage formal employment.

In some literatures, it has been made clear that, street vending activities are not undertaken to breach the rules of the municipality. The prime intention of operators is not to disobey/breach the laws of Urban Authority. However, as stated by Kayuni and Tambulasi (2009: 6-7), it (engaging in informal sector works like street vendors) is the only livelihood strategy that the poor in urban area can employ in the times of hardships. Since they have generally low educational level, the only asset which is abundant for them is their labor. Hence, they can extricate themselves from the social humiliation and economic hardship by engaging in the only possible employing sector which does not ask them any qualification except limited amount of capital and a very low skill.

Most of the informants entered the street to do vending activity due to the poverty of their family and other problems related to their family life situations. For some

others, unemployment is the factor which has forced them to engage in street vending activity. Since the majority of them have low educational status, they could not get job in rural and urban area.

In contrary to the low skill and low educational levels always associated with the informal sector works, there are also some vendors graduated from colleges and universities according to the study conducted by Tamirat (2012) in Addis Ababa.

Thus, as a better alternative to low-wage formal sector employment, some people prefer to be engaged in the informal sector. Another reason for participating in street vending is to diversify the source of income. This is currently the most important reason for some of people to engage in street vending. Relatively speaking, economically better off people also engage in the activity for multiplication of their source of income. Some others arrange members of their family to be engaged in informal sector even if they have employment in formal sector. Low-wage employees in the formal sector also prefer to be engaged in street vending in order to supplement their primary income. Thus, diversification of the source of income they get from one sector is the reason why some of the street vendors begin to participate in it.

On the other hand, the reason for the engagement of youths in this activity is assumed to be the crime committing of the operators in the rural area. Some members of the public are not content with the massive influx of youth from some other region to their town. Because, they believed that the youths committed some type of crime in the rural area and they take urban centers as their refuge. Particularly, in Jimma town, there is a wide conception that youths from the aforementioned area are burglars, vagrants, street gangs though there is no single concrete evidence. Thus, this type of association is sometimes a mere stereotype against some minority ethnic group members. It is common to label the poor and the one from minority ethnic group negatively.

**Working Conditions of the Street Vendors:** In this part of analysis, the objective stated to examine the working conditions of the street vendors addressed. The conditions which surround the working environments, the nature of working hour per day, the actions of the police, the income level they get, addressed in this sub section and the nature of customers of street vendors is addressed in the next section.

Concerning the working hours of the street vendors, like in many countries, street vendors work the longest hours in the streets. According to the study conducted by Tamirat (2012) in Addis Ababa, street vendors spent averagely about 10 h per day at streets. Sometimes they wander from one street to another in search of safe streets from police patrolling. The most lucrative time for vending is at evening starting from 11:00 to 9:00 pm in Addis Ababa. Because, at this time the police men return back to their office and workers from the government

office visit the street sellers in search of cheap goods. Since the goods are cheaper than that of sold by shop keepers, some people prefer to buy goods from street vendors.

The working hour of vendors in Jimma town is similar to that of Addis Ababa. Vendors are observed throughout the day in the streets of Jimma. They start to vend at 10:00 am and finish at 7:00pm. Throughout the week, they are at streets. But there are vendors also who start at evening only in the streets which are commonly allotted for the vending services.

Regarding their interaction with the police, Tamirat (2012) pointed out that most of the time there is a hostile relation in other cities like Addis Ababa. When the police come, they just hide themselves. When the police leave the street, they start to come out of their hiding places. This situation sometimes makes street vendors vulnerable to the traffic accidents. Since the vendors' aim is to escape from the police raid, they blindly run over the streets.

However, the relationship between police and street vendors slightly differs from that of Addis Ababa's case. It has been said that in Addis Ababa, there is a hostile relation. On the contrary, street vendors of Jimma are conducting their job safely relatively speaking. There is no regular raiding by the police though in principle the activity is not allowed. Occasional patrolling of the roads is conducted by police in Jimma.

Regarding the income earn from vending, there is a great variation of earning depending on the items. Some vendors even get more return from some shopkeepers. And also there are vendors who vend for the sake of survival. Since vending by itself is conducted with some level of established social networking, recent migrants from other area cannot start a better vending. A better vendor is the one who has contact with shop keepers in the formal sector and developed customers. These vendors have good social capital. They also have relationship with police. Thus, those vendors with good social capital earn 2000-4500 birr.

Therefore, vendors stay for long in the streets in Jimma town, like in other cities and towns of Ethiopia like Addis Ababa, Adama, according to the study conducted by Tamirat (2012) while struggling with variety of challenges in the streets. Their income also varies depending on the level of social capital they have. But majority of the vendors are working just to survival in Jimma, though they hope to expand in future.

Challenges and strategies to mitigate the risks at work sites: This section is concerned with addressing the challenges faced by street vendors in the streets. Challenges like lack of permanent sites, their relationship with police, and lack of organization or coordination among the vendors and others will be analyzed in this section.

In the same study conducted in Addis Ababa, the capital of the country by Tamirat (2012), there are

insufficient institutional arrangements for the street vendors, that is, lack of appropriate associations that can bargain on their behalf with the government authorities, long working hours, coping with the debilitating consequences of their poverty, lack of convenient materials amidst the raiding of the police to transport their goods, making the lives of street vendors more challenging according to the majorities of the informants in the study area. Police raiding, eviction and confiscation are also the main challenging issues of the majority of the vendors. Fear of crime, hostility to each other in the case of vending site and sometimes theft of commodities in work sites due to the precarious situations of work, too much dependence on cash economy for everything are the challenges that some of them face according to the interview made.

Though there is a variation degree of problems faced by vendors in Addis Ababa and Jimma, the nature of the problems is similar. For example, there is no vendor association.

Tamirat's finding reveals that, in Addis Ababa, the majorities of the vendors agree that the main challenge in the streets is the police raid which comes unexpectedly at peak of business. If the police confiscate a good, it can stay even up to a month in the police office. On the other hand, theft of commodity during the police raid is also another challenge. In addition to that, when they run hastily, they drop some of their goods. Fear of crime and clash with other vendors also causes challenge to some of them in their work site.

Compared to this, the situation in Jimma town is safe to vendors. Since Jimma is a small town compared to Addis Ababa, the capital of the country, there is a variation in the nature of the problems. Vending is more challenging in Addis Ababa than Jimma, which contains small amount of vendors.

Thus, similar to the case of Addis Ababa, in Jimma town, poverty, lack of legal space/site for vending, lack of awareness about their rights among the vendors, and lack of unionization of street vendors, lack of license, and too much dependence on cash economy are some of the sources of challenging situations for the street vendors. The degree of vulnerability decreases in Jimma when it is compared to Addis Ababa.

Strategies Employed to mitigate risks by Street Vendors:

This sub-section is the extension of the section which discusses the challenges street vendors face when they operate their activities. Thus, in this section therefore, the strategies and mechanisms employed by street vendors in the study area are discussed and analyzed. It has been analyzed by Tamirat (2012) that, like street vendors of other countries, vendors in Addis Ababa, when faced with various factors such as market vagaries, political or urban authority's threat of eviction, environmental factors, devise mechanism to cope with shocks which can be

immediate or long term. Some of the coping strategies employed by them include; walking to working places, jumping lunch or dinner, diversifying the source of income by arranging some members of the family to engage in other activity. Some of them diversify their income source by participating in various types of trading activities such as being broker to find house rent. Therefore; the aforementioned mechanisms or strategies are employed by the majority of the street vendors in the study area. The strategy used by some street vendors to reduce the pain of the problem in Jimma town was more or less similar to that of Addis Ababa. However, there are some variations. For example, there is no threat of confiscation of vending items in Jimma since police raiding is occasional. Like the vendors of Addis Ababa, vendors in Jimma also participate in diversification strategies to earn income, making some members of the family to be engaged in income generating activity starting like domestic home services.

### **The stance of members of the public and urban authorities concerning vending activities**

This section is designed to analyze the interventions and responses of authorities and individuals from the general public.

Tamirat (2012) pointed in his thesis that WIC (2009:1), the justice and legal affairs bureau of Addis Ababa City Administration called on the public to collaborate with the government in providing information on illegal activities in the city. The bureau emphasized that, society should collaborate with the government in providing information on illegal activities to fight them (street vending was also listed).

Implicitly, the same legal frame works in Jimma town. Since the magnitude of vending is not similar with Addis Ababa, the legal bodies and police were not that much involved in raiding and confiscation of the properties of the street vendors in Jimma town. However, Individuals from Legal and Justice Office strongly oppose lawlessness in streets. The prevention of street vending in Addis Ababa and other large cities of the country is explicit and formal but in small towns like Jimma, the prevention is conducted occasionally and implicitly. On the other hand, some members of the public and police assert that street vending is associated with a number of illicit and illegal activities. In Addis Ababa vendors are considered as criminals. The same attitude is reflected in Jimma during our interview with members of the public who dwell in Jimma town. Some of them argue that since the majority of the vendors currently came from southern part of the country, they are suspicious with their massive migration to the town. They believe that sometimes street vendors are engaged in organized criminal offences in the town. They are also accused of theft. As it has been mentioned above, their massive migration to Jimma

particularly created high public concern as they have some hidden agenda.

Thus, in Addis Ababa and Jimma, the main problems the authorities pointed out are the encroachment of main road and public places by street vendors, creations of congestion and pollution. Garbage spreads in the places where vendors put up their mats because they leave all waste materials on the street (especially food vendors). The places where vendors sell vegetables and cooked foods are more polluted than others. They do not clean their surroundings, and especially during the festivals, they leave too much waste materials on the street.

In *Mercato*, *Ajip* and *Kochi* streets in Jimma town, there is a huge accumulation of all types of garbage in places where street vendors dwell. In addition to that, since they use the pedestrian passages, people encroach the main street to share road with cars. It is common to walk at center of the streets in Jimma together with vehicles. This situation makes pedestrians more vulnerable to traffic accidents. Moreover, street vendors leave a huge amount of garbage after they finish their vending activities in the evening.

In addition to the street vendors occupying the street sides, they are also occupied by construction materials like sands, stones. Sometimes, people who drive cars also park on the street sides. But, no police asks the drivers who park at the pedestrian side. Again, nobody asks people who close the pedestrian roads with construction materials. According to Bhowmik (2005:13) and Timalisina (2007:6), despite the illegal name labeled on the street vendors, they are popular in urban centers, and they provide urban population with much needed services that neither the municipalities nor the larger retailing shops can fulfill. Like in India and Nepal, the services rendered by the street vendors in Addis Ababa, jimma and other cities and towns of the country are much needed since they meet the needs and wants of the majorities of the urban dwellers cheaply.

As Bhowmik (2003:1-2) has tried to explain that; one section of the urban poor helps another section to survive in Indian Metropolitan cities. Similarly, this is also true in the case of Ethiopia. The lower income groups mostly and some of the middle income groups are spending their income in making purchase from street vendors; mainly because, their goods are cheap and affordable. By doing this, street vendors are providing subsidy to the urban poor, which is not done by the government. In the study conducted in Addis Ababa, according to the interview of some members of the public, they oppose the actions of the urban authorities against street vendors. This is because; mostly their life depends on the provisions of those street vendors on the street sides rather than the formal whole sellers. Their dependence on street vendors for various goods has been increasing due to high inflation.

Therefore, due to the aforementioned factors, street vendors are threatened by Urban Authorities. The rea-

sons were not acknowledged by the street vendors and some members of the general public. This is because the majorities of the urban poor depend on it for their needs and wants. Although the stance of the public depends on the socioeconomic background of the households, most of the poor dwellers support it. In general, it can be concluded that, the opinion of the public and the municipal authority is contrary to each other. The socio-economically poor segment of the society is mostly pro-street vending activity in which they depend on. The urban authorities focus only on the negative consequences of the street vending. People who own shops in the formal sector support the action of the urban authorities by informing them of when street vendors stall their mats. Street vendors do not pay tax; the customers go to the nearby street vendors to buy goods.

The contribution of street vending to livelihood security: This chapter is designed to analyze the livelihood contribution of street vending to the operators. The section also deals with the livelihood outcomes which the street vendors achieve by engaging in it. The type of asset (financial) they have enhanced and other outcomes of pursuing this strategy are discussed. Vending activity is dominated by unskilled labor force and some of them are migrants from rural area. Street vending has grown in the recent years rapidly, since poor people migrate to urban areas for survival and to create their own work; although some better off people also migrate to urban areas for work and to earn cash income. Thus, street vending in various cities and towns of Ethiopia including Addis Ababa has become an employment opportunity for both poor and some of better off people.

According to Tamirat (2012), this sector provides livelihood earning and employment opportunities for the poor and some educated people (10<sup>th</sup> grade up to 10+3). Due to decreased absorption of labor force by the formal sector, people do not get job even if they are having some education level and skills due to the worse bureaucratic system in the case of Ethiopia recently.

This sector currently employs the majority of the labor force including college graduates. Since the formal sector is unable to provide job for all graduates, there is also resentment among the youths to pursue education because of unemployment. Some youths, by dropping from schools now engage in vending activities like lottery hawking in Jimma. One informant in Ajip street who hawks lottery said:

*"We came here from Wolayta zone. Because many youths who completed college education are idle, we become hopeless in education. They were better than us in education but now they are poor and unemployed. So why continue our education? Let us get some money and then we will continue our education."*(taken from the in-depth interview with Gedebo (pseudo name).

The contribution of street vending to the (safety) of the

operators can be examined by taking into consideration the enhancements created via this activity. We can ask what has been enhanced through engaging in street vending activity. If there are some positive outcomes (indicators) from the activity they pursue as their livelihood, it is possible to say their livelihood is secured; although some of them are operating for the survival purpose. Some of them talk about the blessing they get this activity, while others talk about the adventure they face in this sector.

Regarding the enhancement of financial capital, the interview with Balote (in her early 30s) a *lewz* seller in Ajip revealed that:

*"I get 40 to 60 birr per day and around 400-450 birr per week. I can fulfill my daily requirements with this money and I save from what I get at the end of the month to begin another business other than newspaper selling. At the end of the month, I earn around 2000 up to 2500 birr. I send some amount of money to my family members sometimes. "*

Some of the street vendors enhance their educational level after getting financial means via engaging in this activity. They go to night schools. However, they do not give full attention to their education due to the fatigue of day time vending (according to the FGD participants). The financial, human and social capital enhancement is important to strengthen the living conditions; by reducing certain kinds of social and economic risks. This shows that street vending as an employment source enhances the safety or security of the people by improving their assets. Therefore, the livelihood outcome from street vending makes people survive in a better way.

Some of them pay house rent, school fee, and transport and meet their daily needs and wants from the returns of this activity. Since some of them get good return, they claim that it is better than some government sector. They earn more than what BA degree holder earns at the initial time of employment. According to the interview, street vendor's lead better life than some government employees, because their business is not taxed, they do not pay for the vending site and there is no overhead cost in general.

On the other hand, there are some street vendors who claim that what they get from the street business only helps for subsistence. These vendors are those who engage in casual self-employment works and who vend goods of very little amount. They are also highly mobile and the capital amount they have is inadequate. Due to that, they buy goods in small amount and in return they also earn little money which forces them to lead in-secured life. Although there is no severe police raiding and confiscation in Jimma town, vendors who are mostly recent migrants lead in-secured life (according to the FGD participants).

Although the majority of street vendors claim that street

vending gives them safety in many aspects of their life, their life is not free from vulnerabilities. The source of risks they face might be multifaceted. Some of this is their too much dependence on cash economy for basic goods and services. Spending money for everything is mandatory for urban poor dwellers. For example, they spend on house rent, water, electricity, transportation, food, cloth, education and since there is no free access to services in urban centers, it is challenging to allocate the limited income they earn by adventure. Since the majorities of them have not accumulated surplus income rather struggling to survive their daily life, they face challenge to cope with this situation. Despite that, they are self-reliant and do not depend on anybody for their basic needs.

Thus, like in many cities and towns of Ethiopia, in Jimma town also, the only opportunity for the disadvantaged people, people without bureaucrat relative, cash, education, some recent migrants, disabled and women, is participating in street vending; since the formal sector is not accessible to these groups. Thus, that is why through only this activity, they wear clothes, eat, drink and hope to win the other life challenges but not through the government help or NGOs. That is why we see the proliferation of vending people with variety of goods almost all over the Metropolitan city of Addis Ababa recently amidst hostile working conditions.

### **The dilemma of Street vending activities**

This section addresses the dilemma of street vending. Data were collected from both secondary and primary sources. Primary sources were obtained from the interviews, focus group discussion.

*"Street vending offers both a number of benefits to the community and a number of conflicts and problems. Street vending provides affordable outlets for small businesses, which can add value to a town or city centre and make a positive contribution to the vitality and viability of that centre. Street traders can cause both vehicular and pedestrian congestion and potentially restrict safety and emergency vehicle access to and from buildings. Retailers trading from shops and stores within town and city centers may object to street traders on the grounds that they may compete unfairly with them and take away some of their business, that they may obscure shop windows and displays and that they may change the ambience of the general shopping environment. More general environmental concerns focus on waste disposal, litter generation and the creation of noise and smells, especially from hot food vendors. There are also concerns that street trading can give rise to problems associated with crime and disorder but there is little hard evidence that street trading provides an outlet for the sale of stolen goods. However, there are concerns about the*

*sale of dangerous goods and the sale of prohibited goods to minors. Street markets can also encourage street robbery and pick pocketing” (Jones et al., 2004:249).*

Amidst the deepening poverty among the large segments of urban populations in developing country Metropolitan cities especially in India, Nepal and some of Sub-Saharan countries as pointed out by Bhowmik (2003:1) and Mitullah (2005:2-4), it is also the duty of the city government to become diligent to uphold a modern city image through interventions that have a direct impact on the livelihood of the poor. These groups involve in street vending activities to sustain their life. Mostly, the urban governments use the eviction and confiscation strategy as a last solution for problems created by street vendors in the aforementioned countries. Despite the hostile interventions by urban authorities as explained by Mitullah (2005); Manganga (2007); Bhowmik (2003); Msoka (2006) and Bhattacharya (n.d), street vending activities are proliferating in various developing countries' large cities (Timalsina, 2007) and since Ethiopia is also one of the developing countries, the situation is becoming common in Addis Ababa, Jimma, Hawassa cities and towns and other larger cities of the country. Its contribution to the safety or easiness of life to disadvantaged people like poor women, youths, and disabled people is contrasted with the problems created during its operations. Due to the latter factor, the accusation against street vendors from local urban authorities has increased throughout the developing countries' Metropolitan Cities.

### **The attitude of media outlets concerning street vending activities**

The Ethiopian Herald Magazine pointed out that there are massive developments in the cities of Ethiopia particularly, Addis Ababa. The massive development activities taking place in the city attracted the government towards it. According to the same source, there are proliferations of socio-economic activities, most of which are illegal and damaging to the economy. The Ethiopian Herald Magazine considers street vending as a major problem. It categorizes street vendors into two: those that existed in the past and the present ones. The former were very different from what we see everywhere these days, for two main reasons. First of all, they were retailers buying from wholesalers. Second, they were not mobile. Whether they pay taxes or not, their impact in the economy was relatively negligible. It was easier to bring them to the mainstream legal business realm.

Regarding today's vending in cities and towns of Ethiopia, the magazine explains that:

*“Today, a street vending has become a characteristic feature of Addis Ababa. Everything that you buy from a shop is also there in the open air. New clothes with their*

*tags, kitchen utensils, shoes, electronics materials, books, CDs and software, are available with a much cheaper price compared to that of the price in legal shops, super markets and boutiques. This poses serious questions and demands appropriate intervention from the government. The situation is precarious and the impact on the economy is incalculable. “*

In the magazine, emphasis is given to the main problems emanated from street vendors to the national economy. The problem with this magazine is its overemphasis of the negative sides of vending in cities. The article ignores the root causes of engagement of people in this activity. By ignoring the root causes of its proliferation, its power to become a safety net for people systematically disadvantaged, it is possible to romanticize and beautify some negative effects of street vending on the national economy.

Although the article emphasized the sins of the street vendors in Ethiopian cities and towns, it also tried to indicate the hypocrisy of formal sectors, because they are the providers of the items for the street vendors. For example, according to the same source, vendors get the items from a friend who is also a street vendor. But where do the friends get them? They obtain the goods from legal shops. The street vendors pay no house rent, no tax. By default, the selling price of goods in the legal shops normally are set after calculating the VAT and the unit cost of the item with reference to the monthly house rent bill. What remains for the seller is a profit margin. But when he/she delivers the goods to the street vendors, obviously he/she earns more income than when working by the rule.

Regarding its effect on the formal traders and the way to mitigate vending, the magazine indicated that since there are businessmen who are free from such illicit form of trading scheme. Actions should be taken to safeguard the interests of the legal or formal traders. They are loyal tax payers who always complain about street vending and the government's "motionlessness" to tackle the situation. They are the major victims of street vending. So far, the effort to stop street vending seems to be limited to chasing them by a law enforcement squad and confiscating the goods when caught. It has been pointed out in this article that chasing the fugitives and creating hustle to the public is not the best way to tackle it. It also creates havoc to the general public. During the hide and seek game, many street vendors have endured car accidents. Sometimes pedestrians are pushed to walk on the main roads by the street vendors. In addition, when they see regulatory bodies street vendors run into the traffic endangering themselves and the drivers.

In the same source, emphasis has been given to the genuine and proper intervention against the street vending activities. Hence, the intervention should start from the source. Since most of the time, *the legally established businesses are the ultimate providers of the*

items to the street vendors.

The Ethiopian Herald and fortune magazine tried to depict the evil of street vending in cities and towns of Ethiopia as follows:

*“By the look of the scale of street vending and the source backing it, it is safe to conclude that the government is losing millions of birr to the untaxed street vending, and the source that supply goods to the street vendors are responsible for that. The street vendors do not have the slightest comprehension that they are doing business against the law. They don't know paying taxes is their responsibility and obligation. They quarrel with law enforcement bodies as if they were doing such work in order to win their daily bread. True, the street vendors are not to blame. One can even argue that it is better to have them in the street than see them unemployed. But that is bogus argument. The upheavals of street vending outweigh the benefits. The thing is, how can we stop illegal street businesses? Many people believe that the effort should start from awareness creation and mobilizing the public towards the same goal. Continuous awareness creation workshops should be prepared at Sub-city and Kebele level because there exists a knowledge gap among the business community regarding the law. Many of the business people operate with fear of the law, but they do not know it. Neither do they realize the benefits of collecting taxes and their contribution to the growth of this country. Parallel to this, strict legal measure to stop street vending should be put into effect. The ideas and ideals behind street vending are not to scare street vendors away. It is also government's conviction that they should be mainstreamed in the legal business making framework.”The Ethiopian Herald and Fortune, 2014:1).*

As a temporary solution for the havoc and chaos created by vendors and the raiding police in the streets of Addis Ababa, government has allowed street vending to take place on the streets of Addis Ababa only during weekends and after working hours on weekdays. During this time, the roads are closed for traffic so that the vendors use it as an open market. For example, street markets around Sidist Kilo, Stadium, Mexico, Kazanchis and Merkato share essentially common rural markets. In some areas, these markets take place daily after working hours around 5pm. However, this is not a lasting solution which government can afford to allow to continue. A lasting solution should be mainstreaming them in the legal business framework and make them loyal to the law of the land.

## Conclusion

This study was carried out with the major objective of investigating the existing conditions of street vendors in

informal sector in Jimma town with particular reference to three streets. The socio-economic backgrounds of street vendors, the livelihood contribution of the street vending activity to the operators and the poor urban dwellers, the reasons why people engage in street vending, the stances of the general public and government authorities regarding the increasing street vending activities, and the challenges and strategies they devise to mitigate the risks (challenges) which they face and the dilemma of street vending are addressed in this study.

In this study, qualitative methodologies have been used to examine the research objectives set out before the beginning of the research. Varieties of qualitative methods were employed to get in-depth or rich information. Some of these include in-depth interviews, key-informant interviews, focus group discussion with seven street vendors in which all of them were guided by interview guides; and observation that was guided by observation check lists and some photographs were also taken. The data collected through qualitative methods were analyzed carefully and comprehensively.

Like in any other developing countries' experiences, the informal sector works are considered like the training ground for skills and entrepreneurship characteristics especially for low socio-economic background people. It gives the poor people an opportunity to be aware that they are valuable something and they can effectively take action to sustain themselves and their families. They do their best in order to survive and even sometimes to accumulate capital. Their reliance on their own capacity to do better things should be appreciated and provided with support from the concerned bodies.

Urban informal sectors are a safety-net for more than half of the total labor force and many poor urban dwellers in many developing countries. This situation is also true in Ethiopia as stated by Tamirat (2012), (Fransen and van Dijk, 2008) that 65% employment in Addis Ababa is informal. The situation in Jimma is not different from this since the majority of the labor force are engaged in this activity. Particularly, for those people who have low skill and unable to find jobs in the formal sector, the sector serves as a better opportunity for their life sustenance in urban centers.

Being one of the developing countries, it is obvious that Ethiopian larger cities also host a significant number of urban informal sector operators. It (street vending activity) has become the only important livelihood option to large amount of the poor urban dwellers and recent rural-urban migrants in Jimma, Addis Ababa and other major towns and cities.

There are so much street vendors in Addis Ababa in general and Arada Sub-City in particular. Although the exact number is not known due to less research work in the area, their amount is increasing at alarming rate due to many social problems.

Low socio-economic background of the people or their impoverished background was considered as the main

factor for the engagement of people in street vending activity in Addis Ababa, similarly to other developing country cities. Low educational level of the street vendors was the source for low-skills and results in inability to find formal job with better payment. Thus, lack of skills (due to low education) to be employed in the formal sectors is one of the major causes for engaging in street vending activity. Others also have migrated from rural to urban area due to various factors to be engaged in it. The reason for their migration was crop failure due to seasonal fluctuation of rain, diminishing landholding system and using of obsolete technology to farm.

Being the member of poor family, most of the time, the people engage in street vending in order to become self-reliant and sometimes to help their family. They (especially the migrant vendors) in the area remit money to their rural families. However, others have involved in it either to diversify their source of income in addition to the primary income they get from formal sector or as a better alternative to low-wage formal sector especially for low skilled people. People who earn very low payment in formal sector employment recently tend to engage in urban informal sector activities to augment their meager income.

Some people in street vending sub-sector are economically better off people and they have connection with formal sector traders. Cars, pushcarts and cooking machines were used in the streets which are expensive for other vendors (those who operate for survival) to buy. Some of the vendors not only vend for survival purpose, but also for accumulation of capital. By selling in mass by cheap price, this group of vendors can easily earn more money due to tax evasion technique employed by them. There are also people in the formal sector who use street vendors to use the advantage of tax evasion. And hence, formal sector traders also participate in such way in street vending activities to maximize profits. Thus, although the majority of street vendors engage in the activity to extricate themselves from acute poverty, some others enter/engage to use the advantage of tax evasion in the sector in order to get better income (especially those who have shops).

Low socio-economic backgrounds (which has resulted in low educational level) of the majority have an effect on the skills of vendors which are the main human capital that can also affect other types of capital such as the financial capital, and others. Contrary to the conception by ILO bureaucracy, which associates its operators and the activity generally with impoverished and destitute life and lower education and meager income generating sector, some of the vendors are the graduates of colleges, holders of diploma certificate and some have engaged in street vending to use the advantage of not paying tax in order to accumulate capital in Jimma according to the review of secondary sources and focus group discussion with some of vendors in the area.

The street vending activity in urban informal sector is

found to be pivotal for the livelihood enhancement of the street vendors and other sections of the poor dwellers. The users of the advantage of street vending are not only the street vendors, but also the majority of the urban poor dwellers who buy much of their daily needs and wants from them. Life for these people becomes precarious without street vendors and even they assume that they cannot survive without them amidst the increasing inflation of services and goods. The disadvantaged people cannot fulfill their needs and wants through formal setting which is accompanied by increasing barriers to entrance for especially these groups. Thus, engaging in street vending activities is an affordable and convenient livelihood strategy for this group of people; otherwise it might starve to death.

The eviction and confiscation strategy of government authorities is not acknowledged by almost all of the vendors and some of the public. It threatens the safety of both the street vendors and other poor urban dwellers life that depend on them for the fulfillment of majority of their needs and wants. Recently starting from earphones, chargers, flashdiscs, dividers, socks, pants, handkerchiefs, soaps, films, books to various types of clothes and foods are vended in affordable price which have also attracted university students. These items at this time are vital for university students in the area and unaffordable if someone goes to supermarkets amidst the escalating inflation. Thus, the confiscation and eviction of street vendors from the vicinity of potential customers is not giving convenience to some of the people in addition to jeopardizing the last option livelihood of the poor.

The informal sector in general and the street vending activities specifically directly associated with illegality, criminality, poor sanitation of urban environment and congestion or overcrowding of pedestrians' footpaths on the behalf of the urban authorities. These are the common pretexts to evict and confiscate street vendors in many developing countries and also happening in Ethiopia. However, according to the observation made by the researcher, it is not only the street vending activity that congests and closes the paths of pedestrians, but construction materials irresponsibly deposited on the street sides, cars, and beggars that make pedestrians encroach main roads. And hence, rather than intimidating street vendors, who are subsidizing the poor in urban area amid the soaring inflation, those materials which the disadvantaged get nothing from should be removed and arranged to make the roadsides safe.

Vulnerability is found to be the most common situation amongst the street vendors in Addis Ababa, similarly to many of the developing countries' larger cities according to the review of literatures. This is largely because of the association of their activity with illegality/criminality and other problems by urban authorities. They access to the spaces in the sidewalks of the city without the license of the urban authority, similarly to the conditions of other developing countries. However, those people who access

the public spaces in urban areas were found to be not only the street vendors. People, parked cars, children playing and construction materials mostly occupy the urban spaces. Hence, as mentioned above, it is not only the street vendors that encroach the urban spaces (pedestrian paths at street sides), but stakeholders also are the main encroachers, who are not prevented or evicted by an urban local body.

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