



SUSTAINABLE HYDERABAD PROJECT

Utilising Potentials of Street Food for Sustainable City Development



(Photo: A. Dahmen)

Executive summary

Street food vending holds great potential to foster sustainable urban development. The street food sector generates regular incomes for thousands of families, is part of the local cultural heritage in Hyderabad, and contributes to low greenhouse emissions and climate protection. Street food also contributes to urban food security. However, serious institutional obstacles and political constraints prevent the utilisation of these potentials. The ambitious aim towards sustainable street food can only be achieved if government authorities, research institutions, NGOs and vendor representatives work closely together in a coordinated manner.

Context and importance of the problem

Street food vending promises a high potential to foster sustainable development. Recent applied research in Hyderabad has revealed that:

1. street food contributes to urban food security, particularly of the weaker sections of society (Bergmann and Dittrich 2012);
2. street food vending is generating regular incomes for about 15000 families who do not fit into the formal economy (Rani and Dittrich 2010);
3. street food is part of the city's cultural heritage (Hoffmann and Dittrich 2009); and

Policy message

1. Street food vending promises high potentials to foster urban food security, generate regular incomes for weaker economic sections of the society and contribute to climate protection.
 2. The implementation of a Street Vendors' Bill is likely to create legal certainty, which can unleash innovation and creativity in the sector, increase readiness of vendors to participate in capacity building, and enhance public acceptance.
 3. Food safety trainings can improve hygienic and health standards considerably.
 4. Regularly conducted roundtables as a potential policy measure may contribute towards settling disputes and integrating the street vending sector in urban planning activities.
4. the street food sector, as one major element of a highly decentralised urban food distribution system, contributes towards lower greenhouse gas emissions and therefore to climate protection.

Yet the street food sector also faces serious obstacles and challenges related to legal constraints and hygienic issues. With regard to issues of sustainable urban development, the following questions need to be raised:

- How can the potentials of Hyderabad's street food sector be released and applied to the needs and requirements of sustainable urban planning?
- How do the realms of policy makers and urban planning authorities respond to these challenges?

Methods

This policy brief is based upon the pilot project Sustainable Street Food Plan (SSFP). The SSFP (1) builds on evidence-based research results, (2) conceptually integrates key elements of a decentralised, low-emission urban food provision system with food security, sustainable food demand and normative concepts of climate change mitigation, and (3) identifies major areas of policy intervention. Three best practice activities (BPA) viz., Street Food Manual and Training, capacity building of women vendors, and building visibility of street food as part of city's

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cultural heritage. These BPAs tested the conceptual frame of the SSFP in applied micro-projects.

The Street Food Safety Manual and Trainings (BPA 1), focuses on the improvement of street food safety standards by providing knowledge, skills and trainings to the vendor community. Main focus is to empower the vendors' community to comply with food safety laws to enable their legal integration into formal structures. Training of the Trainers (ToT) has been organised for representatives of street food vendors' cooperatives. Members of the ToT have further trained other street vendors. The four-day training provides orientation to vendors on hygiene improving measures and behaviour, requirement of the



Fig. 1 Food Safety–Training of trainers 2012 (Photo: S. Schultz)

Food Safety and Standards Act and training methodology. The manual and curriculum prepared in collaboration with experts from College of Home Science (ANGRAU), National Institute of Nutrition and other experts are resources focusing on sensitising the vendors at large about the law and areas for improvement. The manual also lays down the standards that authorities could facilitate in the context of street food units. The second BPA concentrates on empowering female street food vendors in food safety, the law as well as collective action of women vendors. The third BPA highlights street food as part of Hyderabad's cultural heritage by organising Street Food Festivals and melas as well as dialogue with authorities and civil society. Evaluation of activities in these three BPAs has been integrated into the SSFP to complement policy recommendations derived from research findings with realistic and feasible solutions to existing challenges.

Results

Hyderabad offers a unique, well-established street food provision system, promising potentials to improve/maintain food security in the city, to be part of a climate change mitigation strategy, and to foster social, ecological and economic sustainable development. But, the street food sector also faces serious obstacles and challenges. It has been seen as backward and out of date, is associated with health hazards and traffic obstructions and is, ultimately, regarded as not being fit to meet the needs of modern urban development. Petty-trade street food vendors are at risk due to legal constraints. One major constraint is their uncertain legal status (see text box).

Major concern: Legal uncertainty

The draft state bill for Street Vendors is still pending enactment in Andhra Pradesh to this day. The vendors' community in Hyderabad is either partly unaware of this upcoming law, has become disaffected by its long delay or is not convinced, that it will actually realise vendors' rights. Alternatives have been developed by some institutions (e.g. by the National Vendors Association). Also provides the effort regarding the implementation of the Food Safety and Standards Act 2011, new options for the registration of those vendors who only sell food items. The National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (Gol 2009), recognizes street vending as an important element of urban economy and provides for vendors' zones in the municipal plans further introduces the participatory and self regulatory process, while providing scope for the formation of organizations to advocate for their rights.

The draft state bill, prepared on base of the model bill circulated by Government of India, provides for the above, while adding section of food-safety and grievance redress system.

Comprehensive guidelines for implementation at the local level and a reasonable balance of restrictions, responsibilities and rights of the vendors, will make the bill a powerful tool to meet persistent challenges and are likely to ease many constraints vendors face during their day-to-day activities. The compilation and sound implementation of these guidelines is the most important step to be taken by the local and state authorities. Same accounts for the implementation of the Food Safety and Standards Act.

Having no licences these vendors are prone to crises and constantly threatened by harassment, displacement and confiscation of their belongings (cash, cooking utensils, push carts etc.), leading to income loss and reduced capacity to invest in their businesses (e.g. food safety measures). Our field surveys have also revealed that pavement vendors play only a marginal role in causing traffic congestion. The existing zoning law for street vendors, with its negative impact on petty-trade business, might therefore not be an adequate answer to solve traffic congestion at street crossings. Studies have also revealed that street food in Hyderabad is not unhygienic compared to other eateries because it serves food cooked fresh, served within couple of hours in most cases, and there is very seldom use of the left overs (Neeraja 2006).

Still, there is need or scope for further improvement of the hygiene in street food sector, as there are in the most food related businesses in Indian cities. Yet, concerns of food hygiene are prevalent among the experts and authorities owing to stigma especially attached to street food. Other constraints are related to the overall 'poor' hygienic conditions and problems of waste disposal in the street food sector that discourage particularly health-conscious middle-class consumers. Several health risks related to, for example, food storage and handling practices could be identified and addressed to protect interests of both the consumers and the street food vendors.



Example of food safety risk, which could be easily prevented if vendor would be aware.

Our research outcomes also reveal the high potential of the street food sector to foster urban food security and improve livelihoods for the vendor community. Street food vending provides regular income to about 18,000 families in the city. It contributes to food security to not only weaker social sections by providing affordable and nutritious food items; but also serves the palate of many middle-class workers, single population, tourists and connoisseurs of ethnic food. Around one fourth of the city population avails services of street food sector at least once during the day. Moreover, compared to processed and convenience foods, many street food items are characterised by high nutritional value, resource efficiency, little waste and low GHG-emissions. Short distance supply, another typical feature of the street food sector, reduces traffic volume and emission levels. Finally, locally produced street food is culturally embedded and fosters the food culture which is unique of Hyderabad.

Conclusions

The street food sector of Hyderabad merits heightened attention. The operational political framework needs to be modified so that it is able to simultaneously tackle the identified major constraints and to unlock manifold potentials for sustainability within the mega urban development that Hyderabad is undergoing. It is crucial to consider the relationship between the persistent challenges vendors and authorities face and the illegal status of vendors. Based on our analysis of vendors' statements, it appears that attaining a secure and transparent status for vendors' rights can foster their motivation to invest in their businesses and accept the requirements of new responsibilities. Effective implementation of Street Vendors Policy could hence play a sensitive and promising role in approaching the described challenges.

Nevertheless, to use the existing potentials for a pro-poor development along with a structure that allows for distribution of affordable food with environmentally friendly food production, not only requires a legal status, but even more an overall positive acknowledgement of the street food sector in general. Implementation of such guidelines has to include enabling vendors (e. g. through awareness raising and trainings) to consciously act within the given rules. The ambitious aim towards sustainable street food requires collective and collaborative action of government authorities, research institutions, NGOs and vendor representatives since the proposed changes have serious implications to the stakeholders and there are no earlier examples of how to negotiate with the changes in this sector. Introduction of participatory approaches in other sectors like forest management, school education, and health have acknowledged the need to orient and change the mindset of the authorities in tune with the spirit of the new legislation and proposed approach of transparent and participatory governance.

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Policy implications

To utilise the inherent potentials we recommend state commitment, transparent dialogue, capacity building and infrastructure, and improvement of public image. We recommend the following:

With regard to state commitment

- To unleash the potential of the street food sector in building a sustainable city, the role of the state should not be regulating, but facilitating. Adequate voice of vendors' community is critical to an effective implementation of Street Vendors Policy.
- Implementation guidelines and proposed compliance with standards need to be contextualised and relevant to the nature of the street food sector.
- It must be ensured that vendors play the key role in the Town Vending Committees' decision-making process and governance, to avoid their discrimination and displacement.
- The need for sensitising authorities and vendors has to be recognised, because of the challenges, e.g. threat of displacement, neglect by stakeholders, and the complexity of the street vending sector.
- Policy on street food can be integrated in measures related to tourism, employment, food security, health, and social safety nets for vulnerable sections of the city.

Transparent dialogue

- A transparent dialogue is needed to actively integrate vendors in modern city development. There must be a single agency/authority vendors can approach for all their requirements: Capacity building and infrastructural service provision, redress of grievance, promotional activities etc.
- Related agencies should be engaged so as to be sensitive towards the sector's needs. The master plan for the Hyderabad Metropolitan Region should acknowledge street food vending as a legitimate component with regard to use of public space.

Capacity building and infrastructure

- Addressing the persistent challenges of street food sector and enabling the vendor community, authorities should provide infrastructural support and assist in capacity building of vendors. The support include access to space, drinking water and cooking fuel, electricity, waste disposal, institutional credit and insurance. Capacity building should cover food-safety standards, small-enterprise training, legal rights and entitlement orientation critical for collective action and organisation of vendors.
- Infrastructural support and capacity building has to be linked with the registration of vendors.

Public image

- The city government can play a significant role in building public opinion in favour of street food.
- Regular events, like festivals, melas, and bazaars and branding help to improve visibility, highlight, and promote the potentials of street food for a sustainable Hyderabad.

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PROJECT LEADER :**Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Konrad Hagedorn**

Phone: +49-30/2093-6305/6320

Fax: +49-30/2093-6497

E-mail: k.hagedorn@agrar.hu-berlin.de

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

POLICY BRIEF COORDINATOR :**Dr. Ramesh Chennamaneni**

Phone: +49-30/2093-6392

Fax: +49-30/2093-6497

E-mail: r.chennamaneni@agrar.hu-berlin.de

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

POLICY BRIEF EDITOR :**Dr. Raghu Chaliganti**

Phone: +49-30/2093-6231

Fax: +49-30/2093-6497

E-mail: raghucha@cms.hu-berlin.de

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin

ABOUT THE PROJECT

The focus of the Project is the emerging megacity of Hyderabad, which is expected to reach 10.5 million inhabitants by 2015. Driven by consumption and life-style changes, per capita greenhouse gas emissions are constantly increasing in the emerging megacity. The use of traditional biomass for fuel (e.g. firewood) is high in peri-urban areas; at the same time, modernization and urbanization processes have led to a growth of commercial energy and indirect energy uses, e.g. of energy embodied in products and services, indicating Hyderabad's shift towards a modern consumer society. Severe floods in 2002, strong heat waves in 2003 and altogether three drought years between 2000 and 2007 have caused serious damage to human life, property and economic advancement. Therefore, the role of climate change in everyday life of the people in Hyderabad has become a central issue that the Project aims to explore and contribute to the resolution of the arising problems. This requires commitment of numerous actors to subscribe to institutions of sustainability, which the Project encourages by organizing discourses for changing the rules-in-use.

<http://www.sustainable-hyderabad.de>

WORK PACKAGE

WP 2.2 "Food, nutrition and nutrition-related health" (CultGeo, University of Goettingen), deals with the rapidly changing food system of Hyderabad. The major foci are improvement and strengthening of a decentralised, low-emission urban food provision system, food security issues of urban low-income classes, and sustainable food demand. As such, the overall objectives of this work package are to (1) generate knowledge for action that will improve the food system of Hyderabad with respect to food and nutrition security, resource efficiency and climate protection; (2) promote discussion, uptake and implementation of actionable research by policy makers, authorities, civil society and other actors ("transition management"); and (3) promote elements of sustainable agriculture, food consumption and lifestyles. The pilot project Sustainable Street Food Plan develops detailed research findings on institutions, governance practices and governmental regulations concerning food, nutrition and food-related health issues.

WORK PACKAGE CO-ORDINATOR**Prof. Dr. Christoph Dittrich**

Phone: +49-551-398021

Fax: +49-551-391240

E-mail: christoph.dittrich@geo.uni-goettingen.de

University of Göttingen

Dipl. Geogr. Anne Dahmen &**Susanne Schultz**

University of Göttingen

Mamidi Bharath Bhushan,Director, Centre for Action Research and
People's Development, Hyderabad**AUTHORS****G. Ernest Leslie**Regional Centre for Urban and
Environmental Studies
Osmania University, Hyderabad**Usha Rani**Centre for Women and Girl Children Society,
Hyderabad**Contact :**

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Division of Resource Economics Philipstr. 13,
House 12, D-10115 Berlin, Germany +49/(0)30/2093 6231

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