

Brief Update on MANUSHI's Work for Street Vendors

Despite enormous hurdles, the Sewa Nagar pilot project is in good health. Majority of vendors are regular in paying their *tehbazari* to the Municipal Corporation through Manushi Sangathan, and most of them are observing essential internal and civic discipline. However, the Sewa Nagar Pilot Project continues to require lot of time, money and energy from MANUSHI Sangathan.

Some of the challenges we face are listed below:

- The police and MCD inspectors are not happy at the success of the Project because they have lost out on bribes. They continue to encourage vendors from outside Sewa Nagar to descend on the Market, to stand in the middle of the road and create chaos in an attempt to demoralize MANUSHI members and make them feel that there is no advantage in observing discipline. Therefore, we have designated two full time staff members to monitor civic discipline, collect *tehbazari*, *safai fund*, repayment of stall loan and daily collection for thrift and credit society. This is showing good results. Sewa Nagar is today among the most attractive, clean and disciplined markets of Delhi.
- A few of our own members also occasionally try to act in league with the MCD inspectors. Before the creation of the Model Market, these people acted as bribe collectors on behalf of the MCD and police. They too have had to be kept under control by constant vigilance.
- Some of the local mafia dons are trying to buy off stalls from the poorer among the Sewa Nagar vendors, especially those who are vulnerable because they have debts and cannot repay at the high illegal rate of interest (60 to 120 percent per year) at which they are compelled to borrow. We have had to take strict action against such sales, including sealing of a few stalls.
- While we are getting a better hearing from the national level politicians in implementing the National Policy for Street Vendors, within the MCD top brass there is still a good deal of resistance and attempts at sabotage. For example, even in Sewa Nagar, the local mafia has gone to the High Court once again to seek a stay order against the Sewa Nagar Project. The texts of the two petitions against MANUSHI, as well as our responses to them, are on our website www.manushi-india.org. This time, instead of fighting a defensive battle, we decided to file a counter petition in the High Court against the local officials of MCD and local police for not providing legally required support and protection to the Pilot Project. The petition we have filed in the High Court provides a glimpse of the daily challenges we face in Sewa Nagar.

Our petition describes how MANUSHI has honoured its commitments, as listed in the Memorandum of Understanding signed with MCD. However, the MCD is not delivering on its commitments. Instead, they are creating all manners of illegal hurdles. The text of our own Petition is also on our website www.manushi-india.org

But the good news is that the erstwhile opponents, including the local goons, are slowly accepting reality and beginning to accept our jurisdiction and discipline.

□Action Plan for Delhi

There has been a major breakthrough at the national policy levels due to the widely acknowledged success of the Sewa Nagar Project. For example, the Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India asked us to submit an Action Plan for Delhi's street vendors which is to provide a role model for the rest of India. (See issue No. 153 for The Action Plan which is also on our website). This Plan submitted jointly with Sewa has not found favour with MCD officials. Therefore, they are trying their best to circumvent it and strengthen the corrupt system through new means.

In case the Delhi Government succeeds in delaying or distorting the implementation of the Action Plan we have submitted for all of Delhi, MANUSHI intends to raise funds through private donations, if necessary, to implement it on our own strength in at least one zone out of the 13 municipal zones of Delhi. This will involve

- A complete digitalized photo census of vendors in the entire zone;
- Architectural planning for vending zones taking into account the availability of space and other local conditions;
- Organising vendors to accept the Sewa Nagar model of civic discipline;
- Organising committees of residents of neighbouring areas to join local vendors committees to become part of the endeavour to manage highly disciplined hawking zones.

This way we hope to exercise moral, political as well as legal pressure through the Supreme Court for empowering

MANUSHI and other likeminded organisations to take charge of creating and managing hawker zones all over Delhi.

☐National Level Public Hearing

MANUSHI has taken responsibility for organizing a Public Hearing of street vendors from all over India on July 26, 2006 at Kamani auditorium. The purpose of this *Jansunwayi* is to highlight that the National Policy for Street Vendors is not being implemented anywhere. In fact, all over India vendors are facing ever more vicious attacks through more determined Clearance Operations.

This Public Hearing will be presided over by Minister for Urban Development, Mr.Jaipal Reddy, along with a panel of eminent citizens.

We invite MANUSHI friends, especially those in Delhi, to attend this Public Hearing and lend support to this cause.

☐New Initiatives for Street Vendors:

- We intend to involve nutritionists and health professionals to train food vendors to observe better hygiene as well as cook more nutritious snacks and meals at low cost.
- We intend to introduce a carefully monitored certification process for those street vendors who successfully maintain hygienic standards and sell unadulterated products.

☐Thrift and Credit Society

In order to reduce the dependence of vendors and other self-employed poor on private moneylenders, who siphon off a large part of their incomes, Manushi Sangathan has started the process of forming a Credit and Thrift Cooperative Society. Out of the approximately 200 members who became shareholders and founders of this Society, nearly 165 are vendors from Nehru Place, Connaught Place, Garhi, and Sewa Nagar. The idea is to reach banking services at the vendors' locations. We have found that even poor vendors and rickshaw pullers are able to contribute a minimum of Rs.10 per day to the Credit Society if the money is collected from them on a daily basis. However, it is very difficult for them to save 300 Rupees a month in one lump sum. As a test case to assess their saving habits, we enrolled 50 daily savers in Sewa Nagar who together are depositing Rs.900 every day. At least 40 percent of Sewa Nagar vendors are saving Rs. 20 per day. Four vendors are saving Rs. 30 per day. The rest contribute Rs 10 daily. After six months of saving, savers become entitled to take loans at far lower rates than are currently available to them from private moneylenders.

As soon as the Thrift and Credit Society gets registered we will begin a large-scale outreach programme and hope to enroll at least 50,000 members in the first year itself. We are in the process of hiring a senior level manager to take charge of the Thrift & Credit Society. We will need to subsidise the operation for no more than six months, after which it will not only become self sufficient but hopefully also yield a surplus to the Society that can be used for further expansion.

We urge you to contribute to *Manushi Swachhnarayani Clean Governance Fund* to help us take this work forward.

We also welcome volunteers for assisting with this work.

MANUSHI Swachhnarayani Clean Governance Fund

I would like to contribute Rs towards MANUSHI's endeavour to develop model hawking zones, strengthen the organisation of street vendors towards self-regulation and cleansing of corruption in governance.

Name.....

Address.....

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You may send your cheque/draft/MO/cash payable to :

MANUSHI SANGATHAN, C1/3, Sangam Estate, No. 1 Under Hills Road, Civil Lines, Delhi -110054