

# **The Paradox of ‘Jobless Growth’ Can there be Sustainable Employment through Informal Sector?**

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***Sub-Theme: Research to Sustainable Development Action***

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- ‘Jobless growth’
- Lack of formal sector jobs is leading to ‘Informalisation’ of work

## ***Is there an employment crisis?***

- Empirically data highlights the crisis – questions the decency of informal work and precariousness of informal labour
- Policy action: Move towards formalization and regularization of informal sector
- However narratives from the field show a different story

***Informalization is the way ahead for a stable and sustainable employment.***

# Context of the Research

Domain: **Labour rights in the informal self-enterprise sector**

Theme: **Research to Sustainable Development Action**

Research Subjects and Site: **Street Food Vendors in Bangalore city, India**

Methodology:

- Combining empirical research and primary field research narratives to propose development actions which are more sustainable
- Empirically testing the decent work framework for the informal self-owned enterprises
- Ethnographic field work with the street food vendors of Bangalore, to understand their narratives of 'decency' and 'sustainability' of work



# The Decent work framework

## ILO's Decent Work Framework (2008)

<b>Employment</b>	<b>Social Security</b>	<b>Labour Rights</b>	<b>Social Dialogue</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employment Opportunity</li> <li>- Remunerative employment</li> <li>- Conditions of Work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Medicare</li> <li>- Old Age Benefits</li> <li>- Unemployment Benefits</li> <li>- Occupational Injury</li> <li>- Family Benefits</li> <li>- Maternity Benefits</li> <li>- Invalidity and Survival Benefits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Forced or Child labour</li> <li>- Discrimination at work</li> <li>- Freedom of association</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collective Bargaining</li> <li>- Economic Democracy</li> <li>- Participation at National Level</li> </ul>

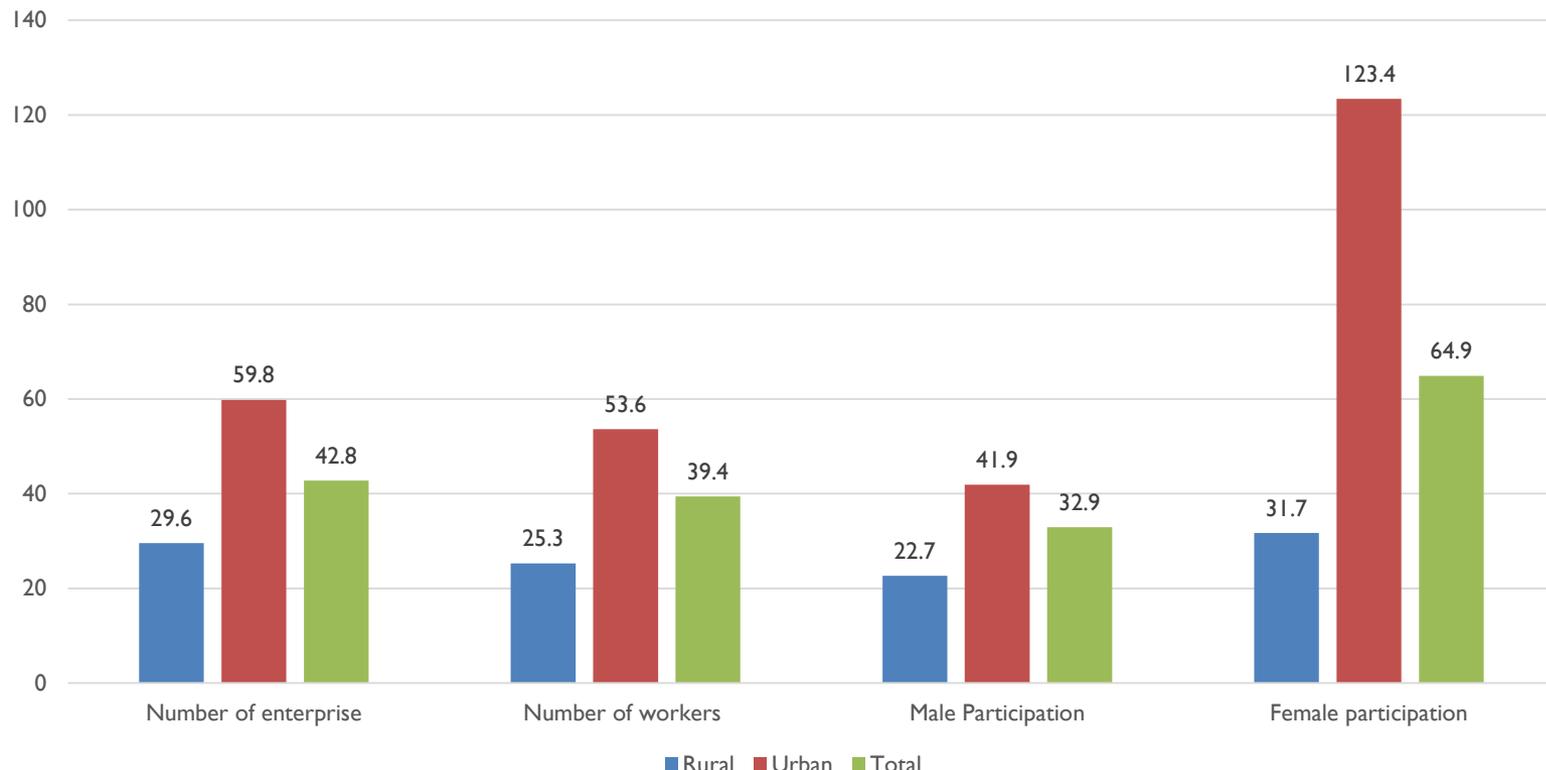


<b>Pillars of Decent Work</b>	<b>Conceptual Dimensions (Anker et.al., 2003)</b>	<b>People Security Surveys (Anker R., 2002)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Employment</li> <li>- Social Security</li> <li>- Labour Rights</li> <li>- Social Dialogue</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities of work</li> <li>- Freedom of choice of work</li> <li>- Productive work</li> <li>- Equity</li> <li>- Security</li> <li>- Dignity of work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Labour market security</li> <li>- Employment Security</li> <li>- Job Security</li> <li>- Work Security</li> <li>- Skill Reproduction Security</li> <li>- Income Security</li> <li>- Representation Security</li> </ul>

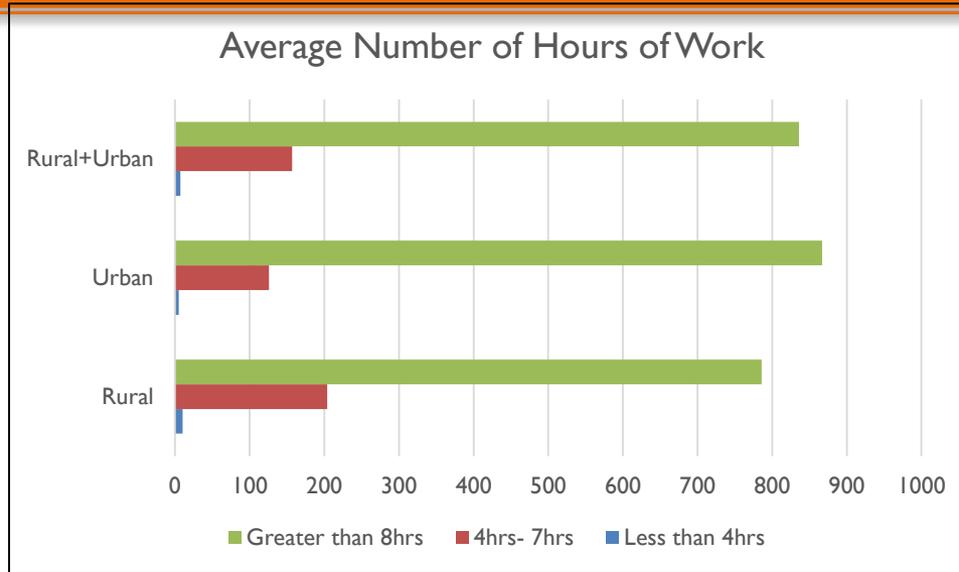
# The Case of Informal Enterprises in India

- Close to 80% of the total workforce in India is employed in informal sector work.
- Informal enterprise in India have shown significant increase in the last 15 years.

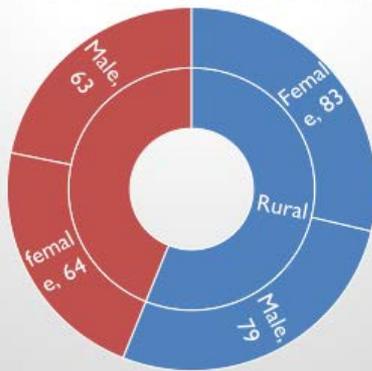
Percentage Increase in the Number of enterprise, Number of workers and Male and Female Participation rates from 1999-2015 (%)



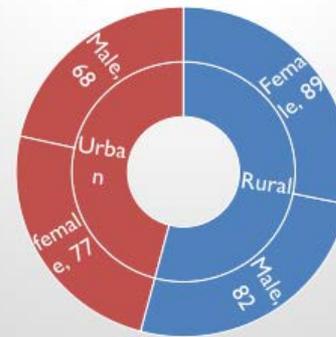
# Decent Work Deficits



Percentage of Workers with no social security benefits



Percentage of Workers with no access to association/unions



# Street Food Vendors in Bangalore – A Precarious Existence

- ‘Street’ as a place of work – vulnerable to public vs private space contestation
- Harassment by authorities, residents etc.
- Long hours of work with no access to sanitation and other facilities
- Street food vending is a household activity – no livelihood diversification at a household level
- No social security and absence of any formal/informal association



## ***In Search of a more ‘Secured’ job***

- All the respondents had transitioned from a different livelihood activity to street food vending, and for most of them the transition was voluntary
- all the respondent equivocally agreed that they were doing much better, both economically and socially, once they transitioned to street food vending. Food vending gave them the agency and ownership over their livelihood.

## ***Vending Food – Dignity and Social Inclusion***

- serving food to people is a dignified livelihood activity - the role of ‘food’ which help the migrants get included in the society.
- While empirically street vending is very low on decency parameters, when we juxtapose the narratives of the vendors on their perception on different parameters of decent work

# An Alternate View – Narratives from Field



Decent Work Deficit	Alternative Explanations
<p>Excessively long hours of work</p> <p>Overall the proportion of women in street vending is lower than men, however it is increasing at an increasing rate</p>	<p>For street vendors, there appears to be an agency related to the long hours.</p> <p>This is more for women, where the issue of double burden is very much there.</p>
<p>Irregular and informal livelihood</p>	<p>There is a willingness to be unincorporated as it gives the vendors mobility.</p> <p>In terms of expansion, the idea is to have more number of carts or mobile units, again to ensure mobility and flexibility.</p>
<p>Work Security and constant harassment</p>	<p>They have a strong social network to deal with such harassment.</p>

- Intervention with street vendors through regularizing and formalizing the livelihood may not work
- While ILO's decent work framework is one of the ways of understanding the work deficits, the narratives of the vendors gives a different side of the picture.
- For the vendors the choice of moving into an informal livelihood is an informed one
- It is based on the **inclusion, agency and dignity** aspect of the work.
- Research has significant implications on implementation of Street Vendors Act (2014) in India.

# Some Photos from the Field

