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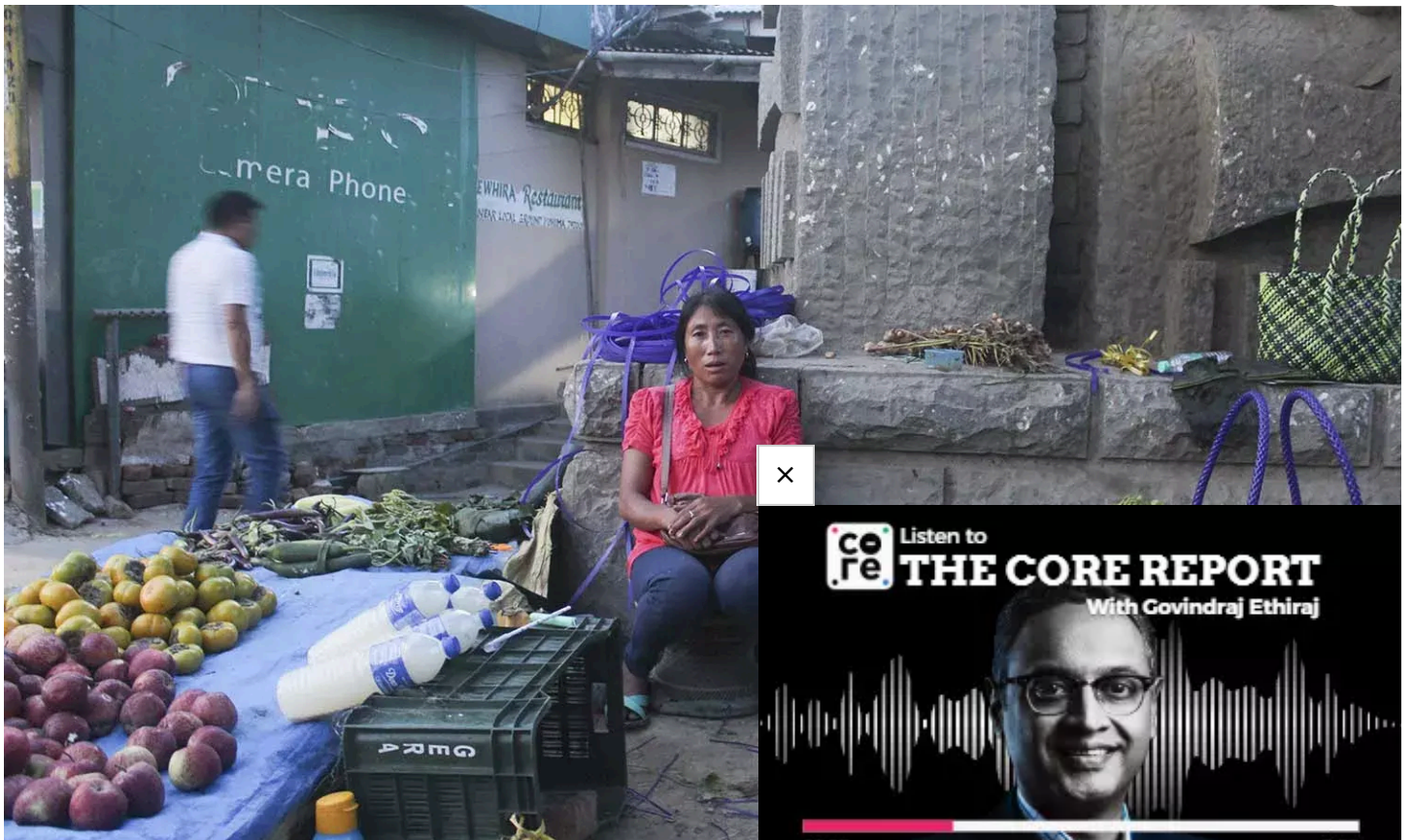


In Nagaland, Despite An Act To Protect Street Vendors, Women Vendors Struggle For Basic Amenities

The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 aims to protect livelihood rights and social security of street vendors but its implementation has been sluggish, putting street vendors at risk.

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By Sanskrita Bharadwaj | 29 Nov, 2022



Loni Yalie has been the sole breadwinner for her

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Kohima/Chümoukedima/Dimapur/Guwahati: Every morning, 42-year-old Loni neatly places vegetables, fruits, dry fish and a variety of edible worms at a in the Local Ground area in Nagaland's capital Kohima. After the death of husband, Yalie has been the sole breadwinner for her three school-going ren. "I don't know how to read and write," Yalie, who belongs to the enous Lotha tribe, told **IndiaSpend**. "So, I couldn't have done any other job from street vending even if I wanted to."

It has been nearly 20 years since Yalie began street vending. She earns somewhere between Rs 10,000 and Rs 15,000 every month, barely enough to by. "It's tough. But we try to adjust," she said. She says she has come around being somewhat satisfied with her work but that it's a risky life, as "we are out the streets the whole day".

For women street vendors, it is harder, she told **IndiaSpend**. "On some days, unruly locals would just steal my stuff, and this is something one has to endure as a woman street vendor." Women street vendors carry out their businesses under the fear of being evicted, and are also forced to set up their vending spaces in unhygienic locations, often without access to toilets, making them vulnerable to diseases.

Things would have been different for Yalie and many others like her, if the [Street Vendors \(Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending\) Act, 2014](#) would have been properly implemented. In It aims to protect livelihood rights and social zones for vending and regulate street vendors. Town Vending Committees (TVC), with stake vendor associations, to identify street vendors and keep records of vendors.

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A 2021 [report](#) by the Standing Committee on Urban Development noted that many of the Act's provisions, including issuing vending certificates and constituting TVCs, are yet to be implemented by several states and Union territories. **IndiaSpend** spoke to street vendors and social activists in Nagaland who confirm that the implementation of the Act in the state has been sluggish and its provisions largely ignored.



✕ The numbers



Number of street vendors in India is unknown, with different estimates over years.



In 2009, the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors [estimated](#) that, in several cities, street vendors make up 2% of the population. One [estimate](#), which cites the 2017-18 Periodic Labour Force Survey says India had 11.9 million street vendors of which 1.2 million are women. Another estimate based on the [street vendor survey](#) in 3,257 cities and towns, by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs identified nearly 5 million street vendors.

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The National Hawkers Federation [estimates say](#) that 50% of street vendors sell food, while 20% sell clothes, plastic goods, unbranded crockery, cutlery and household items.

In Kohima, women vendors throng the footpaths, selling a variety of indigenous and organic food products. A [survey](#), conducted by the Entrepreneurs Associates--a not-for-profit organisation in Nagaland--estimates that about 30,000 women are engaged in street vending local products across the state.

The Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated some of their problems. Because of the lockdowns in 2020 and 2021, many vendors were forced to close their shops, which meant they had to dip into their savings. A [survey](#) of women street vendors by the Institute for Social Studies Trust (ISST) in 2020 highlighted that many have completely lost their livelihoods.



Post the pandemic, vegetables at the wholesale market, where Yalie and other vendors buy produce, have become expensive, eating into their profits. Fifty-year-old Shekhozolu Vadeo, a street vendor in Kohima, said she earns so little that when asked how much money she makes, she was embarrassed to tell us.

For Atholo Ezung, another street vendor in Kohima, the main problem is that post pandemic, she has been unable to sell her produce. "Some days it can be Rs 2,000

on other days, it's as low as Rs 250-300."



lack of vending shed, toilets

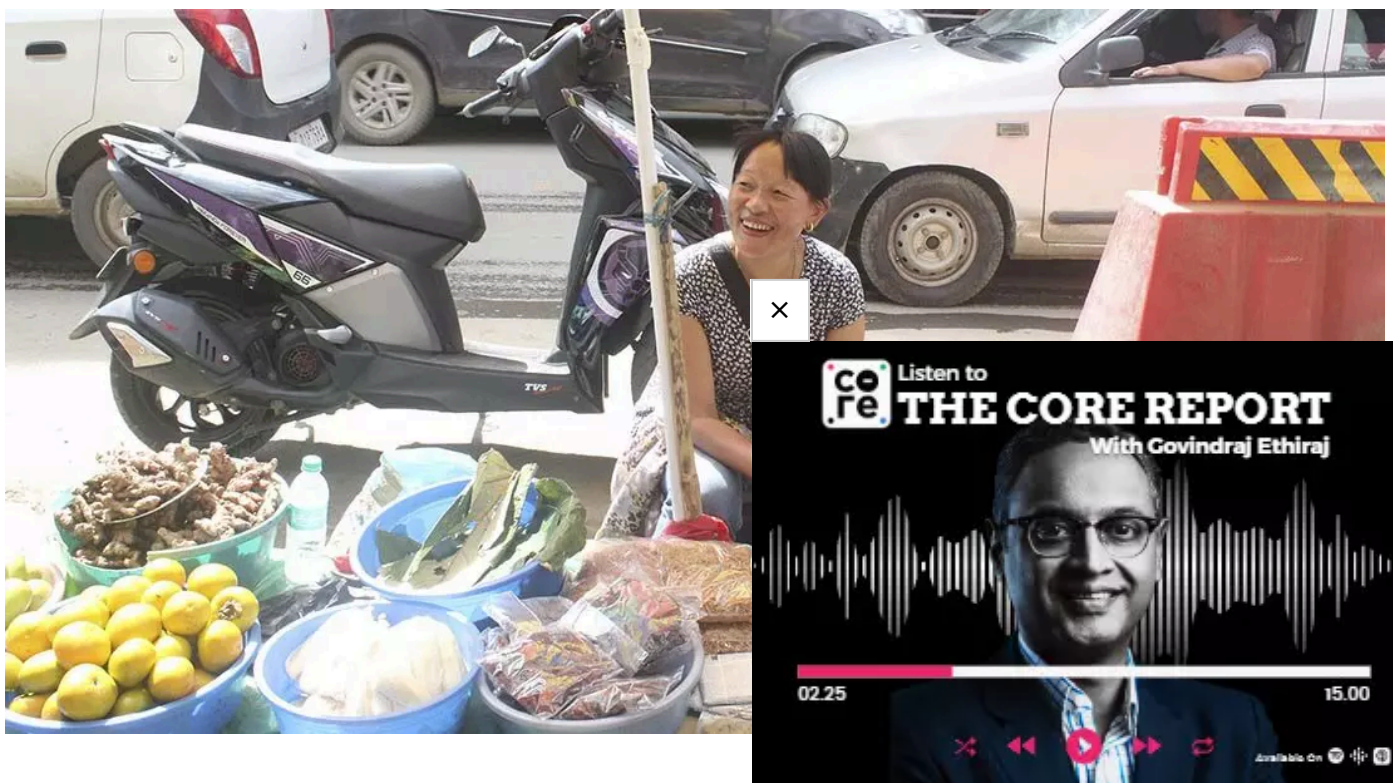


On a humid September morning, Vadeo sat on one corner of the street below the ground at Local Ground in Kohima. Like Yalie, Vadeo, a single mother, sells produce, vegetables and a variety of worms.



Summer, from March until May, is humid in hilly Kohima. Many vendors **IndiaSpend** spoke to said that this year, even September was more humid than usual. "No proper shed, no concrete structure, the sun is too harsh," Vadeo said, adding that it's worse during the monsoons. "During rains, there is always a chance that my stuff will get damaged."

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Shekhozolu Vadeo sells vegetables, fruits, and more in Kohima, Nagaland. The 2014 street vendors act should have protracted street vendors like her, but its implementation has been slow.

About 62 km away from Kohima is Chümoukedima town--an important urban centre in Nagaland. At Chümoukedima, **IndiaSpend** spoke to Atoli Sema, another street vendor, who has been vending for 17 years at the market. Forty-five-year-

f Sema was formerly the vice-president of [SEWA \(Self-Employed Women's Association\)](#) in Nagaland. She is currently serving as an advisor to SEWA, land.

Chümoukedima and the nearby town of Dimapur, summers are hotter and humid than Kohima. "We don't have a vending shed, it's too hot for us to sit the whole day," Sema, a registered street vendor, said.

At Chümoukedima market, Sema says, 70-80% of the vendors sit outside on pavements and streets. "We have complained to the urban development authority. They keep telling us that they will arrange for a protected shed but they have not done anything so far."

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Atoli Sema, a street vendor in Nagaland's Chümoukedima, has been vending for seventeen years at the Chümoukedima market.

Still there is no vending zone created for street vendors and they are at risk of eviction.

Some areas have proper sheds where vendors work. Sema says Neikule Doulo, head of communication, Kohima. "But there are more vulnerable vendors in villages and towns. They usually sit on the streets and often chases them off or asks them not to sit

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Ezung, the street vendor in Kohima, pointed out the lack of designated toilets for vendors, especially for women. "We have to look for hotels that would let us in or sometimes we end up not going to the toilet for hours," said Ezung, who has been vending as far back as she can remember. Sema says that the toilets that are available are often dirty and unhygienic.

Doulo, whose organisation focuses on financial literacy of women street vendors

in Nagaland and Manipur, said that some women meet good neighbours, who are friendly and allow them to use their toilets for free. "But some women don't drink water to avoid going to the toilet."

Women vendors are more inclined to illnesses due to the shortfall of public toilets than their male counterparts, according to an [article](#) published by the National Alliance of Street Vendors. "Because of the absence of public toilets, most women street vendors experience urinary tract infections and kidney problems," the article noted.

The lack of vending sheds and amenities continues despite the Act that [requires](#) local authorities to frame street vending plans to address matters that include identification of vending zones.

Akole Tsuhah, the Nagaland State Coordinator of Northeast Network (NEN), a women's rights organisation from Northeast India, explained that since 2013, "we have noticed that the biggest challenge for women street vendors is to secure vending spaces" where they will not be chased off from. Tsuhah added that this is important because there is still no clear demarcation of proper vending zones, which means vendors can be evicted at will.

Ummey Honey, a fellow with the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI), who mainly works in the neighbourhood of Assam, the Act hasn't been implemented. "The government is asking the government to go out of its way but they are not. Vendors are seen spilling onto the streets, and the police then chases them away. It's a cycle that keeps repeating. If vending zones could solve the problem."



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No town vending committees

One of the important rules, says Tsuhah, is the constitution of TVCs that represent street vendors, including women. "But that has barely been done," she said.

Town vending committees were created in the main districts of Chümoukedima, Dimapur, Kohima, after the Act was passed in 2019 in Nagaland, Tsuhah added, but the implementation is far from perfect.



For instance, members of SEWA found that in several districts, town council members are not aware what TVCs are, says Angunuo Miari, General secretary of



SEWA Nagaland. "In urban districts like Kohima and Dimapur, they [government officials and street vendors] are aware about TVCs but in the other interior and rural districts, they are not aware of the fact that TVCs should exist."



In Kohima, where TVCs have been set up, they do not hold the three monthly meetings they are supposed to. "Last year they conducted two but this year not even a single meeting was called," said Miari. When SEWA members visited Kohima municipal corporation, they were told that without any information from the 'ministry', they could not hold these meetings.

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"In Kohima, we haven't been able to conduct the meetings regularly because officers are busy with other work...But TVC has been set up here and just a few days back we met SEWA members and it was fruitful," said T Lanusenla Longkumer, an administrator at KMC. The KMC administrator said that municipal councils verify and issue vending cards too. "There are so many issues in Nagaland and the municipality does not have absolute control, so we have to function and do our best within our limits."

The 2021 Standing Committee [report](#) noted that in several states--"making street vendors pro


Honey of NASVI pointed out that 5% of TVCs are women-led. "women's voices are not encouraged", and the implementation of TVCs "has been very slow




Further, while vending certificates are supposed to be issued under the TVCs, there is a lack of transparency around it. Sema from Chümoukedima, who has a street vendor's ID card, said that the municipal body is issuing cards to even non-street vendors. This, she said, is mainly because many people who are not vendors are aware that under the [PM SVANidhi scheme](#)--a government micro-credit programme to help street vendors formalise their businesses--they can avail a loan of Rs 10,000. "There are original street vendors who haven't been

 to avail the loan but non street vendors are being issued ID cards," Sema



 reached out to the municipal body for their comment but did not receive a response. We will update the story when we receive a response.



 Standing Committee recommended constituting a monitoring committee to track the progress on the street vendors Act's implementation.

"I have not come across any reviewing of the Act. The responsibility & ownership towards it are lacking," Tsuhah said, adding that government authorities should collaborate with other NGOs, workers' unions to implement the Act and to check its effectiveness.

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We reached out to A. Chenithung Lotha, additional director at the directorate of municipal affairs, emailed the Nagaland [Urban Development department](#), but we were unable to get in touch. We will update the story when we receive a response.

This story was produced as a part of the Smitu Kothari Fellowship of the Centre for Financial Accountability, Delhi.

We welcome feedback. Please write to [response@thehindu.co.in](#). We reserve the right to edit responses for language and grammar.





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Nagaland women Governance

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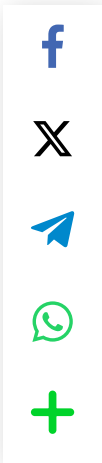
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