

Mapping markets in Mumbai

By actively participating in the mapping of the city's fish markets, Mumbai's fish vendors take an important step towards having a greater say in the development of the city

By **Shuddhawati S Peke** (shuddhawati@gmail.com), Programme Associate, ICSF

On the western coast of India, Greater Mumbai, with an estimated population of 12.5 million, is home to the women's wing of the Maharashtra Macchimar Kruti Samiti (MMKS), a local state union of fishworkers. Recently, MMKS Women's Wing, which has been struggling for women fish vendors' rights, took an important first step towards having a greater say in the city's development by getting the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) to agree to a joint exercise of mapping the city's fish markets.

Mumbai has 60 municipal fish markets and any number of informal ones. Informal fish markets include street fish markets as well as privately owned fish markets. Apart from these, Mumbai's *koliwad*s (urban fishing villages) also have landing centres, auction halls and retail markets. The development of these fish markets, of urban fishing villages and of infrastructure related to transport and other activities falls under the purview of the MCGM. Currently, the MCGM is drafting the development plan for the period 2014 to 2034.

As part of this process, the MCGM, after preparing a land use plan, called for public consultations based on twelve different themes including land use, transportation, environmental sustainability, formal housing and public amenities, education

and gender. This was jointly done with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure public participation. The MMKS Women's Wing was also involved with this exercise. They brought to the discussion issues of the women fish vendors operating in fish markets and landing centres, in particular the need for land and amenities for their activities.

According to MCGM data, there are 60 municipal fish markets in Greater Mumbai but, up until this particular survey exercise, there was no data on informal fish markets in the city. Not surprisingly, there was also no initiative until recently from the government to provide basic amenities to informal vendors. Now however, the National Policy on Street Vendors (2009) makes mandatory the protection of street vendors and hawkers by formulating town vending committees, registering hawkers and giving them identity cards, and delineating markets or hawker's zones. At the request of the MCGM, the women's wing of the MMKS in coordination with MCGM and local fish vendors in a month mapped all the formal and informal fish markets in the city.

The survey found that while Mumbai city has formal markets, suburban areas are covered largely by informal markets. There are 30 formal markets in Mumbai city while there are 22 in western suburbs and only twelve in eastern suburbs. The suburbs are largely covered by unstructured and semi structured or fully structured informal markets, located or built on government land and funded from discretionary funds of local government representatives.

A number of development issues were revealed by the survey. Commercial activities including large corporate markets had displaced a number of old fish markets. In the case of the Babulnath Municipal Market, a big business house received sanction to set up a shopping complex due to which 20 women fish vendors were displaced. At the Habib private fish market, the owner evacuated fish vendors systematically by cutting off the electricity and water supply, and now for the past 15 years the place provides poor housing to migrants in the city. In the Byculla Gujarji private market and the Chira Bazaar private market the owners have stopped providing basic amenities, and are waiting for fish vendors to leave to give the land over for commercial development.

SHUDDHAWATI S PEKE



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Municipal markets provide formalised built structures and tax the vendors on their premises. However, in many cases fish markets are pushed to a corner with poor amenities and unhygienic conditions. Vendors have no security for either their fish, or themselves. Street fish markets have another set of issues including absence of regulation and security.

In Mumbai, there are three routes to the development of urban market areas: through government funding; through Public Private Partnership (PPP); and self development. Wholly government funded projects are extremely rare. Government agencies prefer to develop up-market projects. While the PPP model is supposed to be inclusive, builders and private developers attempt to corner premium space for their commercial activities. Often residential complexes are built by the private developers on space allotted to fish markets in the development area, leading to clashes between residents and fish market users. Activists working with women therefore recommend self development as this ensures maximum benefit to vendors and gives control over their land and land use. They are not faced with the constant threat of commercial and semi-commercial developments under the PPP model that coexist with their establishments, and gradually bring pressure

on the fish vendors to move out for various purported reasons like public nuisance and hygiene. In the year ahead, the task for MMKS is to use the learning from the mapping survey to advocate for transparent and inclusive process of market development.

This mapping process has achieved many important things. Formal fish markets, and for the first time even informal markets, got documented officially by the city corporation. Photographic documentation has been created, which will be an important reference source and evidence for fish vendors to fight for their rights in the face of future developmental activities. The next step in the exercise is circulating a questionnaire developed in collaboration with market department of MCGM to get detailed information on fish markets. A comprehensive report including the survey and the questionnaire data will then be submitted to the MCGM. The MCGM Commissioner has promised to call for a meeting, based on the report of fish vendor representatives, to settle fish market issues one by one. Over the next two decades, the city is looking at large developmental projects and expansion activities that will change its urban landscape. Informal establishments will face increasing problems to safeguard user rights and access basic amenities. ❏