

SUNDAY WEEKLY BAZAAR ON NORTH VELLODROME ROAD

About

Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) is a women's trade union, involved in developmental as well as advocacy related initiatives to highlight the issues of the informal sector women workers and has been active in getting the National policy for Street vendors implemented in Delhi. SEWA in Delhi has been working very closely with the members of popular weekly markets namely Book Bazaar, Qutub Bazaar, Lal quila Bazaar and has gained expertise in protecting and preserving the livelihood of the poor vendors which they loose every now and then due to abrupt closure of their workplaces through court, advocacy, protests etc. SEWA also incepted a Greenfield idea of having an all ladies market in Delhi. The said idea was put before the Honorable Supreme court and was highly appreciated. HRD minister Shri Kapil Sibal in fact recommended SEWA's name to MCD to explore its expertise in making the all ladies market functional. In order to make any market functional SEWA always seeks opinions of experts like Architects (Pardip Sachdeva extended his cooperation for the planning of the site of Mahila market). Similarly SEWA has worked with the Architect firm Parekh and associates who designed the North Vellodrome Road.

Vellodrome road.

Sunday bazaar has a historic trace since mughal era. Sunday Weekly Market at Vellodrome is one of the oldest weekly markets of Delhi. This market was previously held behind the Lal Quila and was known as the Kabadi Bazaar. The vendors of Vellodrome Road Sunday weekly market have, for more than two years, been facing hardships due to the closure of their vending location.

Struggle Behind Reinstatement Of The Sunday Bazaar

The vendors of the Vellodrome Sunday weekly market were unemployed for more than 2 years. Particularly since 17.01.2009, when the MCD received a letter from the Office of the Engineer asking for closure of the Sunday Weekly Bazaar Market until the construction of the Flyover and till commonwealth games are over. SEWA immediately met the Architecture firm responsible for the construction of the Flyover and put forth the idea of having a weekly market beneath the said flyover and the Architecture firm meticulously included SEWA's proposal in its site plan. During the commonwealth preparations SEWA repeatedly wrote to Delhi Government, PWD and MCD , we always received assurance that the market would get reinstated beneath the north Vellodrome road as per the site plan. After the Commonwealth games were over SEWA restarted with the process of seeking attention of the Authorities concerned for allowing reinstatement of the said Sunday market, which had to be closed in accordance with the letter dated 17.01.2009.As a result of the repeated follow-ups and correspondences a meeting with Principal Secretary(PWD) took place and in the said the meeting we were informed that the Chief Secretary has called for a joint-inspection of the site on 02/12/2011 to explore the possibilities of allowing market, also to chalk out the sitting lay-out and further, holding the market without any damage to the sitting provisions etc. As a result of the joint inspection SEWA was informed that the market can be allowed to be reinstated however only after the final approval of the

Honorable Chief Minister. Accordingly on 6, January 2011 SEWA met with the Honorable Chief Minister and made a presentation expressing the idea of making the Lal Quila markets a model market. The idea was highly appreciated by the Honorable CM and thereby the market was approved based upon SEWA expertise of handling the street vendors markets, honest and transparent working pattern. On 24.01.2011 SEWA wrote to proceed in accordance with the above decision dated 06.01.2011 and the Chief Secretary wrote a letter dated 27.01.2011 to SEWA asking to sign Memorandum of Understanding. Thereafter a number of meetings took place to finalize the provisions of Agreements in the presence of SEWA, PWD, Police and MCD. In all the meetings all the authorities concerned highly appreciated the Memorandum to be executed by SEWA. Finally SEWA executed an agreement on 13 May 2011 and also deposited a security deposit of Rs 50,000 to PWD.

Numbers of Vendors to be Accommodated

The site plan reflects that approximately 1200 vendors could sit and vend at the site. Therefore during discussions in order to be fair SEWA put across that first and foremost priority shall be given to 1167 Khaki card holders of the Sunday bazaar as recorded in the D&C register of Municipal Corporation. In order to procure the list of the khaki card holders SEWA made various correspondences to MCD but MCD failed to respond to any of the correspondence, called various meetings with so called unions to decide upon the list of card holders and invite them to come to the market. Furthermore to call the khaki card holders SEWA published a notice in the Punjab Kesari inviting khaki card holders to come and sit in the market. But, it is very unfortunate to mention that these poor vendors are ruled by **“so called unions”** who earn illicit money by exploiting the poor vendors. The **“so called unions”** for their self motive increase the number vendors beyond the permissible limits and extort unreasonable sums from these vendors by illegally allowing them to sit. The same situation was witnessed when the said market was reinstated to Vellodorme road in the year 2005 where these unions increase the permitted number to 5000 vendors and the market became unruly and vendors were exploited by these unions. Thus this time SEWA ensured that no such extortion takes place in the market therefore executed the agreement ensuring the responsibility of smooth functioning the market.

The unions illegally possess Khaki cards of vendors due to which vendors despite of their free will to come and sit in the market are unable to do so. Thus after a lot of efforts to call in the cardholders SEWA began with the functioning of the market with 160 cardholders and with some pink slip vendors who have been vending at the Vellodrome road. These pink slips vendors who are allowed to vend are either single bread earner, physically challenged or old widow etc. All these people have been informed that the place has been allocated to them on temporary basis and anything shall become final only after High Courts order. Despite of the abovementioned people sitting at the site. The place for cardholders is left vacant and we are still waiting for them to come, record their names in the register we are maintaining to prevent encroachments and start sitting at the site.

In the whole process SEWA has only intended to preserve the means of livelihood of these poor vendors in proper and systematic manner and getting these vendors free from those so called union's trap. And would be acting as a facilitator for the smooth functioning of the market. SEWA is desirous in setting up a model market which could be looked as an example by other weekly markets to function.