

Thela Social Innovation Challenge under “Ehsaas Program”

Title: INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF A NEW GENERATION OF THELA: DESIGN AND ZONING IN RAILWAYS

Background:

The ‘Thela Wala’ is an essential part of the informal economy in Pakistan. By a Gallup estimate, at least 75% of people have access to a street vendor, underlying the existence of a large number of street vendors in Pakistan. By creating a new modern design and zoning at various locations, this can generate income, which leads to poverty alleviation. In spite of being present in all major urban cities of Pakistan, little effort has been made to formalize and institutionalize ‘Thelas’ in Pakistan and to catalyze innovations. By innovating and formalizing the ‘thela’, the bottom of pyramid will be governed by a better mechanism, where they understand the rules and regulations, which prevents the authorities removing them from various locations.

Efforts in this regards have been made by the Punjab Food authority when it launched its model pushcart pilot project. Research does indicate that zoning in location is important because it ensures continuity that leads to higher income generation. The local authorities through these permits are able to increase their revenues resulting in a model that is both scalable while being sustainable. Various countries have adopted their approaches, which have been successful in institutionalizing and formalizing the pushcart.

Vietnam has championed the ‘Sharing Cities’ initiative to facilitate vendors in Ho Chi Minh City through training, improving access to financial services, access to markets and giving them access to the formal sector. Several countries are organizing street vendor food festivals and giving them hygiene trainings. Boston and Los Angeles in the United States are similarly recognizing the importance of street vendors and incorporating them in their wider urban planning. It is evident that the pushcart needs to become part of cities, and this is achieved through zoning.

In Pakistan, although street vendors have existed since the creation of this country, little effort has been made to create a structure for street vendors that will allow them to operate without fear of eviction, extortion by police. Little has been done to create vending zones, and space utilization for better footfall for street vendors. There needs to be a holistic model for street vendors that creates incentives for the Thela Walay and there is ease of doing business for them. Innovations in design of the Thela is an important aspect of this.

What is a Thela?

Thela is a pushcart that sells food and non-food items. The food can be further classified as raw food and cooked. Non-food items consist of selling household items, clothes etc. By some estimates the biggest component is food. This provides the livelihood for the poor, most importantly for rural to urban migrants, who move to the cities to earn a living. It is important to look at models that will enhance the income generating capacity of the thela.

Objectives:

Pakistan Railways carried 60 million passengers in 2018, and with over 700 platforms across the country, Pakistan Railways is ideally suited to provide an opportunity for street vendors to earn a livelihood while creating new job opportunities. This will also lead to revenue generation for the organization, and usher in a new era of the 'thela'.

We are soliciting applications from prospective planners, urban developers and anyone else who can re-invent the traditional thela to enhance the income generating capacity of street vendors. The Centre for Social Entrepreneurship has announced the Ehsaas Social Innovation Challenge on national newspapers, social media and on their website www.cse.govpk. We want to institutionalize a new generation of the 'Thela'.

The plans include the following:

1. Objective 1
 - a. Design for a Model Thela for food & non-food commodities
2. Proposal for zoning policy
 - a. Creating vending zones for the thelas in railway stations, and within that setting:
Proposals on how to govern, develop One window for permits/licenses for thelas
 - b. How Pakistan Railways will be able to generate revenues

Benefits:

- ✓ Objective 1
 - Prize money worth of PKR one million which is based on the design.
 - Ehsaas co-branding
 - The Successful social innovation model plan can be used as the preference model under the interest free loan program for borrowers that want to setup their vending stalls.
- ✓ Objective 2
 - Wining idea will be adopted by Railways
 - Potentially, opportunities to scale up in other parts of the country upon successful completion

Execution:

- ✓ Objective 1
 - CSE on behalf of the Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety Division
- ✓ Objective 2
 - Steering committee with representation from Railways and PA&SSDP

Process:

The Centre for Social Entrepreneurship, Poverty Alleviation & Social Safety Division will launch a business plan competition, where potential organizations and individuals will send in their detailed business plan through the CSE website. If they are shortlisted, they will present to a panel who will decide the winner. The winner of the prize will get Prize money worth of PKR

1million; and will be connected with the Railway Ministry to execute their zoning and install the new modern, innovative 'thela'.

Timeline:

No	Tasks	Expected Completion
1	Close of Application	20 th November 2019
2	Announcement of Shortlisted Project	1 st Week December 2019
3	Pitching Session	3 rd Week December 2019
4	Winner	Same day