



## **WORKSHOP ON KEY URBAN ISSUES OF HOMEBASED WORKERS**

### **IN KANPUR**

**23<sup>rd</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> AUGUST, 2012**

A two-day workshop on “*Key Urban Issues of Kanpur’s Homebased Workers*” was organized on 23<sup>rd</sup> -24<sup>th</sup> August in Hotel Royal Cliff, Kanpur by HomeNet South Asia, HomeNet India and Hind Mahila Sabah. The workshop included representatives from HomeNet South Asia, HomeNet India, and networks that are part of HomeNet South East Asia – specifically from Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines, where similar dialogues with city officials and agencies have been conducted. Approximately 20 homebased workers based in Kanpur participated in this workshop, sharing their insights and experiences. The workshop was facilitated by Mr. Mahesh Gulati, Coordinator HomeNet India, and Ms. Firoza Mehrotra, Director, HomeNet South Asia.

Ms. Abha Chaturvedi, General Secretary of Hind Mahila Sabah, welcomed the participants. Thereafter, Ms. Leela Vijayvergia, President of HomeNet India, explained that HomeNet India is a national network working in 12 states of India for the advancement of homebased workers.

Ms. Sapna Joshi, Regional Coordinator of HomeNet South Asia, discussed the structure and activities of HomeNet South Asia, which is a regional network composed of national networks in Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka working for the recognition and visibility of homebased workers. Under the Inclusive Cities Programme, which is being implemented in South Asia and South East Asia, a “Study of Key Urban Issues of Homebased Workers around Livelihood Concerns” has been conducted in 16 cities in seven countries. The findings have focused on issues such as those tied to *electricity (illegal electricity, power cuts, electricity charged at higher commercial rates); lack of water supply; lack of drainage and sanitation; absence of public transport; poor housing conditions; no titles and tenure clearance; migration from other cities; and health issues around their livelihoods.*



The findings of the Kanpur study were presented by the Programme Manager of HomeNet India. The study estimates that there are approximately 46000 homebased workers in Kanpur City, working mostly in the textile and leatherworking sectors. The issues identified by the study include such key concerns as ***illegal electricity connection, commercial charges for electricity, poor housing conditions, contaminated water, poor sanitation which leads to health issues, illiteracy which leads to exploitation by middlemen and contractors, and the absence of land titles, depriving them of urban services usually provided by the city.***

This presentation was given in the presence of distinguished guests from Kanpur City, including the City Commissioner, Mr. Narendra Singh Chauhan; Mr. Satydev Pachori, MLA; and Mr. Irfan Solanki, MLA, along with distinguished representatives from KESCO, the Kanpur Municipal Corporation, MSME, and Jan Shikshan Sansthan, Kanpur.

The workshop was inaugurated by the Kanpur City Commissioner, Mr. Narendra Singh Chauhan, who noted, ***"This workshop is very timely conducted. The study conducted in Kanpur clearly shows that homebased workers lack awareness of existing programmes and thus are not able to avail the benefits of schemes such as those under housing, slum improvement, and livelihood programmes. They therefore live in poor work and living conditions. An initiative based on the pattern of the Construction Workers' Act, which provides benefits to construction workers from the CESS of 1% given by contractors, should be given for homebased workers, and therefore homebased workers should be registered with the Labour Department and the Development Authority in order to be recognized as workers and receive adequate benefits"***.

Further, Mr. Satyadev Pauchori, MLA, emphasised the need to work more closely with city authorities to avail the schemes and programmes that already exist, as well as to develop new initiatives. He added how important it will be to educate and orient the city authorities about the plight of homebased workers, especially regarding wages and related concerns.



Session Two of the first day highlighted the discussion around electricity. The representative from KESCO, Mr. J D Dwidi, Executive Engineer, explained how KESCO has worked on the distribution of electricity at a subsidised rate for the urban poor. He noted that the government has schemes to provide cluster connections, which could be availed by clusters of 10 members. He also explained about tariff revision, which is a policy issue that HomeNet India and HomeNet South Asia may be able to contribute to regarding the tariffs facing homebased workers. Regarding the issue of pending bills of homebased workers, he said that homebased workers can visit KESCO to discuss the annual settlement act procedures through which they can settle their long-pending bills.

Mr. Uday Narayan Tiwari, Additional Commissioner from Nagar Nigam, explained how the budget is allocated for the redevelopment of slums, which is allocated together with the recommendations of ward committees. He also noted that Nagar Nigam is working on providing space to vendors, and that they would be willing to give the space to the homebased workers to sell their products.

Day Two also involved the presentation of very relevant and valuable schemes. The day started with a presentation from Mr. Ram Agarwal, Directorate of Industries Director, who discussed the schemes of the state government regarding pensions, skill development, health and marketing channels. In addition, he explained how skilled workers can avail the benefits of an artisan identity card designed for those engaging in the making of crafts who are above the age of 18 years.

Jan Shiksha Sanstha-Mr. R K Bajyapai, provided valuable information about the ongoing schemes of vocational training and accessing markets to display their products. He shared about upcoming events, including a public meeting which is scheduled on 8<sup>th</sup> September named "CHOPAAL". He has invited homebased workers to prepare a discussion of their issues for this meeting.



Mr. Nazm Hamraz, Garment and Hoisery Industrialist, suggested providing homebased workers with a common place that includes machinery and the required equipment, so that homebased workers can deliver timely and high-quality products.

Lastly, Mr. Shalendra Dixit, General Secretary, Congress State Committee, UP, ensured his support to the take the homebased workers' issues to the cabinet.

After the presentations of all speakers, 15 recommendations were presented. These were unanimously agreed upon by the participants and the list was read by Ms. Firoza Mehrotra, Director, HomeNet South Asia. Please find attached the recommendations (below).

**Recommendations of the Workshop with Kanpur City Authorities with regard to Home Based Workers, Kanpur, 23-24th August 2012**

The following recommendations were unanimously agreed on, at the above workshop attended by city authorities of the departments/bodies mentioned below and home based workers of Kanpur city.

1. Training programmes especially for skill development and health and education, of Central Board of Worker's Education should be accessed by HomeNet India and/or HBWs organizations. If this is not possible materials produced by the Board could be used for the awareness and benefit of HBWs.
2. Efforts should be made to include home based workers as a separate category of workers, in the Labour Force Survey which is going to be undertaken shortly.
3. HNSA/HomeNet India should compile and distribute widely a compendium of schemes of various government departments and organizations which are relevant for home based workers and which they can access. The compendium should contain all details of the schemes including eligibility criteria, how, where and who to contact etc.



4. HomeNet India/HBWs organizations should launch a strong campaign to advocate for inclusion and concessions to home based workers (or as close to them as we can get) in the new scheme for housing, being developed at present in the Urban Poverty Alleviation Department. This would be most timely and the opportunity should not be lost.
5. Since 'cluster connections' for electricity attract a lower tariff, organizations of HBWs should try and avail this facility for their members.
6. Solar lanterns as an alternative/back up for the regular supply of electricity should be considered by HBWs. Subsidy on solar lanterns are also available.
7. At present home based workers are being charged commercial rates for the power they consume, since they are engaged in production. In view of the very low productivity of HBWs and the very difficult circumstances in which they work, advocacy to change this tariff structure in urban poor areas and charge them at domestic rates should be taken up. A tariff revision process is likely to be held later this month and this matter should be taken up with them. Such revisions happen annually or every 2 years. There is a tremendous opportunity in this and it should not be lost. Since tariffs are uniform for the entire state, any favourable change in the tariff structure will benefit all HBWs in the state of U.P.
8. Awareness about the 'One time settlement' scheme of KESCO to settle outstanding dues, under which interest on dues is often exempted, should be spread so that HBWs can avail of the same.
9. Kanpur Municipal Corporation should consider providing space and other facilities for a weekly 'women's market' at a suitable place in Kanpur to facilitate the marketing of the products of HBWs.
10. Kanpur Municipal Corporation should consider identifying HBWs in their jurisdiction, with the help of HomeNet India and issuing identity cards to them.



11. Kanpur Municipal Corporation should consider including women HBWs by reserving slots for them in their ward committees and /or thematic committees (eg. Sanitation Committee, Transport Committee etc)
12. Artisans can get registered and get identity cards (for artisans) from the Director Industries (Development Commissioner Handlooms and Handicrafts, Ministry of Textiles, GoI)
13. Training programmes and marketing avenues of Jan Shiksha Sanstha are very appropriate for HBWs as this organization caters to uneducated and/or up to class V educated and their training programmes are based on the needs of the market. Schemes of this organization should be made use of by HBWs.
14. The gaps between the trained personnel required by industry and the existing availability of trained workers, can be met by the organization of need based training programmes by Jan Shiksha Sanstha and other such training institutes.
15. Common facility centres, with appropriate machines, especially for the leather and hosiery trades could be set up with assistance from the Director Industries, Kanpur.
16. Open an office of DC Handloom and Handicrafts in Kanpur (presently Barabanki caters to Kanpur).