

Joint Conference-Workshop on

“Building Visibility and Voice through Responsive Homebased Workers’ Organizations in Asia: Focus on ILO Convention 177 on Home Work”

2-3 August 2010, Claremont Room, Discovery Suites, Pasig, Metro Manila, Philippines

The joint Conference-Workshop was participated in by 39 representatives from five (5) South Asian countries, namely, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and India and seven (7) Southeast Asia, namely, Philippines, Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Viet Nam and Malaysia together with representatives from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), Homenet South Asia (HNSA) and Homenet Southeast Asia.

The purpose of this meeting was three-fold, specifically:

- 1) to share experiences and assess the campaign for ILO C177 ratification on a per country and subregional basis, in order to plot the ways forward;
- 2) to share experiences and lessons in advocating for national policies and laws on homebased workers; and
- 3) to review the results of the membership-based organizing initiatives discussed in previous workshops conducted by SEWA in Ahmedabad as important steps in building cooperation and solidarity for greater visibility, participation, and empowerment of homebased workers at national, subregional, regional, and global levels.

1st session in the morning was chaired by Mr. Dilanthe Withanage, Program Director of HN Sri Lanka

OPENING CEREMONY – Ms. Zone Narito opened with a prayer participated in by our colleagues. Zone invited everybody to listen to the call of the movement of homebased workers in Asia, a call to listen, to share stories, joys, anxieties, celebrations, miseries and struggles of HBWs. Individual prayers embodying the Islamic, Christian, Buddhist and Hindu traditions followed from Peni of Indonesia, Benita of HNSA, Pensri Chuenwong of Thailand, and Om of Nepal, respectively, for the success of this event through sharing of experiences of homebased workers, in relation to advocacy for ILC 177 and work towards its ratification.

Ms. DAMYANTY SRIDHARAN, Senior Project Adviser from FES India welcomed the participants to this conference on “ Building Visibility and Voice Through Responsive Homebased Workers Organizations in Asia”. Although cooperation between the three organizations goes back for many years, this is the first time for a joint conference organized by HNSA, HNSEA and FES to take place in the Southeast Asian Region. There are actually many parallels in the functioning of FES in this region and that of HNSEA and

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Courtesy – Ms. Mylene Hega and Ms. Myrna Magbitang

HNSA. The respective organizations have country or national chapters and also subregional networks as in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Initiatives such as this conference are organized at the Asian regional level. The objective of the homenets is to achieve visibility of homebased workers and their issues. At the same time the network represents the voices of homebased workers at the national, regional and international levels to influence legislation, policies and programmes.

It is in this context that in February 2007, HNSA in partnership with FES India and Nepal together with the Global Labour Institute in Geneva organized the first workshop on social protection for homebased workers in South Asia. In Southeast Asia; a similar workshop was organized by FES Thailand, Global Labour Institute and Homenet Thailand. Then in 2008, HNSA and FES organized the workshop on “Homebased Workers in Asia – Building a Regional Presence” in Mumbai where leaders from Homenet Thailand, Homenet Philippines and Homenet Laos participated. The workshop sought to build solidarity, mutual learning and experience sharing for visibility and voice for policy advocacy at the national level and to lobby for the ratification of ILO Convention 177 on Home Work. Then in September 2009, Homenet SEA leaders joined HNSA in a Regional Workshop on “Change and Impact on Homebased Workers” held in Manesar, India with the collaboration of FES with the objective of studying the impact of HNSA on the lives and livelihood of homebased works in the region. The workshop also sought to build mutual learning through experience sharing to enable the participants to understand the changes that HNSA has been able to bring about in their lives and to identify challenges.

Ms Damyanty emphasized that the conference this time has a wider participation from both HNSA and HNSEA, and has the following three objectives, namely: (1) to share experiences and assess the campaign for ILO Convention 177 ratification on a per country and subregional basis; (2) to share experiences and lessons in advocating for national policies and laws on homebased workers; and (3) to review the results of membership based organizing initiatives in relation to the first two objectives. Coming back to what FES stands for in shaping politics in the spirit of freedom, solidarity and social justice, it is continuing the legacy of its founder Friedrich Ebert who was the first democratically elected German president. At the center of the Foundation’s work in Asia is the promotion of democratic development and realization of social justice as well as crisis prevention and international dialogue. Since the mid-80’s gender equality has been one of the focal points of the work of the FES and the main goal is to get more women involved in the political decision-making process and to advocate for the rights of women at work, a large percentage of whom are in the informal sector. In the last few years FES has also been engaged in developing an All-Asia Regional Project which is currently based in Singapore for the Trade Union and regional security issues and operates from India as the competence centre for gender. The Regional Gender Equality project is engaged with regional and subregional projects in the area of gender and political representation as well as gender, labor and social justice in Asia. It is within this context that cooperation between HomeNets and the FES aims at creating the regional presence and voice to advocate for the millions of women in the homebased workers sector in Asia.

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Dr. ROSALINDA OFRENEO welcomed our guests from ILO, FES, Malaysia, HNSEA, and HNSA - our sister network for almost ten years. Appreciation was given to local counterparts and more importantly to our homebased workers who will share their activities, experiences in advocacy and to push for their visibility, voice and empowerment so they can sit at the table and be in charge of initiating for relevant policies. She mentioned about ILO's big role in our history in the 1980s initiating activities for rural homeworkers project focusing on advocacy activities in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand. She also emphasized that FES has been very instrumental in cementing relationships between HNSA and HNSEA through sponsoring events where representatives from both subregions learn from each other to build an Asia-wide movement of homebased workers. Likewise, it has also been instrumental in the formation of Homenet Philippines and has been fully supportive of its launching in May 2007 ; we have currently have about 23 organizations in the Network. We are happy to note that this event today was actually able to bring in nine members of the Steering Committee of Homenet Philippines.

The Global Labour Institute has been doing the groundwork for the ratification of ILO C177. We are also happy to have Dan Gallin to be with us today to give us an assessment on the progress since 1996. Hopefully HomeNet will again fulfill its being truly an international movement visible not only in Asia but also in Europe, in Latin America and elsewhere in the world. The conference will also focus on membership based organizing (MBO) which is the core or substance of democracy, transparency, accountability and participation in social movements.

Keynote Speech by Jeff Lawrence Johnson, ILO Country Director: He congratulated FES, HNSA and HNSEA and the organizers for this event the important theme of which deals with home workers who constitute a particularly vulnerable category of workers many of whom are women. It is given that home workers face harsh realities –many do not enjoy adequate legal protection, are generally isolated, have no protection, are weak, earning less than minimum wage, have no written contracts, unaware of the value of their products and services, work for long hours, use hazardous equipment. The ILO recognizes these vulnerabilities and has discussed in many occasions the working and living conditions of home workers. Although there are a number of Conventions that have provisions relevant to home workers, ILO saw the need for standards that take into account the special needs and characteristics of home work. Part of ILO's work involves the formulation and adoption of international labour standards covering all aspects of work and the various categories of workers.

In 1996, the ILO tripartite constituents – employers, workers and government – around the world adopted ILO Convention 177, Home Work Convention and the corresponding ILO Recommendation No. 184 for Home Work. This signifies recognition that homebased work has increasingly become a globally widespread phenomenon and is no longer limited to a small number of communities or social groups. The objective of ILO C177 is to improve the situation of home workers. It sets out the definition of home workers and also requires the ratifying states to pursue and periodically review national policy in consultation with workers' organizations and employers concerned with home workers' issues. ILO Recommendation 184 supplements the Convention and further elaborates on principles promoting

equality of treatment between home workers vis-à-vis other wage earners. It also identifies programme elements related to home work. Mr. Johnson mentioned the Decent Work Agenda which promotes the opportunities for men and women to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equality, security and human dignity. Decent work is the convergence of the four pillars, namely:

- Promotion of basic rights at work
- Generation of quality employment
- Provision of social protection for all
- Engaging in sustained social dialogues

Current initiatives in the Philippines include steps to elaborate and operationalize decent work, defining priority concerns and identifying strategies to address these concerns. The ILO Country teams and Technical Units work closely with partners to promote and operationalize the concept. The Philippines' Decent Work Agenda includes ratification of ILO C177. He stressed that the constituents and social partners, particularly the homebased workers have taken strong ownership in promoting the Convention. The tripartite constituents have already endorsed its ratification.

Current initiatives under the ILO's Decent Work Country Programme for the Philippines promotes gender equality through both gender specific activities and gender mainstreaming strategies. ILO support in Asia mainly focused on technical advisory services to support formulation of national policies. For example, ILO provided advisory assistance to Thailand to support the adoption of an Act on protection for the home workers. The Act has been accepted by legislators and is now for discussion by the two houses of representatives in August 2010. In India, an important recent development is the admission of SEWA to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the world's largest trade union federation.

Mr. Johnson pointed out why ILO Convention 177, ratified in only 7 member states, should be ratified by a country in Asia. This two-day conference provides an opportunity for discussion on how to include Asia in the ratification record of ILO C177. HNSA and HNSEA, including the national networks of homeworkers, are in a position to be major advocates of ILO Convention 177 in the region.

He shared some thoughts on why countries should ratify ILO C177 and how it can support home workers to have a stronger voice. The increasing globalization of markets and financial structures reinforce the role of ILO Convention 177 because it provides the global minimum labour standards coverage for home workers. In today's global economy, firms tend to operate in various parts of the world and spread their production process across borders. Through subcontracts, home workers tend to be at the initial stage of production in the value chain. It is important therefore for home workers to be equipped with the knowledge and understanding of their rights under ILO C177 to enable them to use the instrument to establish the social floor and prevent downward spiral in applying standards.

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The ratification of ILO Convention 177 and Recommendation 184 provides an enabling environment for home workers to organize at the national, regional and global levels. These instruments recognize the rights of home workers to establish or join organizations of their own choice and to participate in the activities of such organizations, such as cooperatives, trade unions and confederations. The right to collective bargaining is specified in the Recommendation as a means for home workers to determine their terms and conditions of work. When home workers have stronger voice, there are greater chances for improved access to resources and programmes which in turn can lead to productivity growth and poverty reduction. Ratification can protect existing national policies and laws protecting home workers from being reversed or repealed that could come from change in political climate.

He mentioned that the ILO supervisory mechanism ensures compliance through sustained dialogue with government where legal and implementation gaps are identified. It also provides opportunities to identify areas of ILO technical assistance to improve application of the Convention.

He calls on the group to take the challenge as there is a need to translate the results of this two-day event to come up with recommendations and meaningful sustainable action which requires working together in partnership. He welcomes outputs of the conference that would identify ILO assistance that would be needed and he looks forward to deliberations during this event.

TEA BREAK

Ms. BABES TESIORNA introduced the next set of speakers for the next session about the policies and programs for homebased workers in the Philippines.

Ms. CHIT CILINDRO, Director of the Bureau of Workers with Special Concern, Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) on **Policies and Programs for HBWs in the Philippines**: She opened with a definition of homeworkers_ categorized as industrial homeworkers and homeworkers (self-employed) in the informal economy. She presented DOLE's Programs such as the LABOR STANDARDS ENFORCEMENT PROGRAM and the KABUHAYAN PROGRAM. She explained policies under the Labor Code of the Philippines particularly on the Implementing Rules and Regulations specifically Chapter IV referring to the three conditions of employment of Home Workers (Article 153 on the Regulation of Industrial Homeworkers, Article 154 on regulations of the Secretary of labor, and Article 155 on the Distribution of Home work). She elaborated on homeworkers' issues and concerns and DOLE's responses in terms of their programs. The problem of lack of entrepreneurial and managerial skills is responded to by the Kabuhayan Program. On social Security coverage, the Bureau has its advocacy and information dissemination program on SSS, Philhealth, and Red Cross. It also conducts learning sessions on workers' safety and health that are integrated in livelihood training programs. She explained the need for monitoring compliance with labor standards in terms of wages, hours of work, and other benefits where DOLE representatives go to workplaces to monitor and check if labor standards are in place or if they comply with the law. DOLE's KABUHAYAN PROGRAM is intended for livelihood formation, enhancement, and restoration.

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BETH ANGSIOCO, National Chairperson of the Democratic Socialist Women of the Philippines provided comments and reactions based on the proposed Magna Carta for Workers in Informal Employment (MACWIE). She emphasized the current move of the Bureau of Internal Revenue (BIR) on imposition of taxes on vendors, drivers, and workers in the informal sector. She questioned why these workers in the informal economy should be charged when in fact minimum wage earners are actually exempt from payment of income taxes. She highlighted MACWIE Bill which aims to make 25 million informal economy workers visible through adequate representation. Civil society, NGOs, and other organizations have come together and worked for years to come up with various versions of the MACWIE BILL and this is the first time that the various groups have come together to support just one bill. In the last Congress the support was divided.

We need support from the DOLE in pushing for this Bill because the draft clearly defines informal workers and addresses comprehensively the most important points regarding informal employment through a basically rights based framework. The Bill makes use of international standards, international conventions, and includes industrial home workers, and even government volunteers such as barangay health workers. Drivers, small fisher folks, service workers in the communities and all these workers are taken into consideration by the Bill. It recognizes that workers in the informal economy encompass 25 million in the country which is far bigger than those formally employed.

The Bill addresses visibility of workers through representation in different government decision making bodies, through data gathering that is not only sex disaggregated but also according to types of work, and through accreditation. This small amount collected for accreditation will be spent on a wide array of social protection mechanisms, entrepreneurship, building infrastructure, housing, occupational safety and health, coverage for social security system and government service insurance system, social safety nets, health care financing and medical insurance. Likewise, workers are assisted in the improvement of community-based day care services and cash transfers that overcome poverty. Provisions of MACWIE include the need for data to be disaggregated by sex and types of work; accreditation through which the government requires corresponding fees that will provide social mechanisms and protection for workers in the informal economy; training on gender sensitivity and reproductive rights, among others.

The Bill is quite ambitious as it covers a lot of services and has strong potential for education and training for entrepreneurial skills, gender sensitivity, and financial management. The Bill is also strong in providing security in the workplaces. The Bill is very friendly to women and has developed standards which are usually missing in terms of wages, safety and health, and others.

OLIVE PARILLA presented the features of the People's Social Protection Agenda and the issues such as of lack of visibility, representation and access to justice faced by workers in the informal economy. She presented the conceptual definition of the informal sector as well as workers in the informal sector. She also showed the distinction and operational definition of household unincorporated enterprises comprising of informal own account enterprises and enterprises of informal employers, and also explained who are excluded from the informal sector. She cited specific types of informal workers by the kind of work that they are engaged in. She presented the composition of the informal economy comprising 76% of the total labor force. She also presented some statistics on the breakdown of micro, *Report of FES conference (Manila) for South Asia and South East Asia.*

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small, and medium enterprises (MSME). She discussed sectoral goals such as visibility in statistics and recognition, improved access to productive resources (such as training, credit, capital, markets, technology, etc.), and improved access to social security, justice and protection. She also mentioned problems like irregularity of employment, vulnerability to exploitation, lack of awareness of their rights as workers and as women, and destructive competition in the market from cheap products from neighboring countries.

Hence, the People's Social Protection Agenda (PSPA) was developed through the existence of advocacy groups and coalitions, networking with researchers and the academe, and through the MAGCAISA and Homenet Philippines, a coalition of POs and NGOs working together and advocating for issues concerning homebased workers. The PSPA covers seven aspects: Jobs for All; Social Security for All; Health Care for All; Skills for All; Basic Services for All; Justice for All; and Voice for All.

Mr. DAN GALLIN, the Chairperson of the Global Labor Institute, talked on the *ILO Convention 177 on Home Work: Looking Back And Moving Forward*. He reported on a seminar for home workers in the Balkan region he attended in May and enlightened us about the confederation of employers and trade unions in Bulgaria. Bulgaria has an association of home workers and the situation is very interesting because it is one of the countries that have ratified the ILO Convention. The Association of Home Workers has double affiliation- with a trade union confederation and also an employers' confederation which can work for and live with unions. In Bulgaria only wage earners can be affiliated with trade unions. The bipartite body, including employers and workers, has been working on developing national legislation to implement provisions of the Convention. The interest of the employers in supporting the Convention is that they see an element of flexibility. The Association of home workers said that affiliation to the employers' confederation means orders, jobs, business connections, and access to markets for their products. To some extent this situation reflects and illustrates the uncertainty of what home workers really are and this uncertainty is the characteristic of home workers almost everywhere – Are we workers? Are we entrepreneurs? Despite its double affiliation, the Association of Home Workers in Bulgaria regards itself as a union and supports the policies of the trade union confederation.

The ILO discussion on informal employment has concluded that own account workers are clearly workers and therefore entitled to all rights of workers. In the Balkan region, the political situation is favourable for ratification of C. 177 and R. 184. Albania, Bulgaria, and Bosnia have already ratified. The Bulgarian Association has 3,500 members which is small in proportion to the estimated half a million home workers but that is substantial in the context of southeastern Europe. Only 1% of the monthly minimum wage is paid as monthly dues to the association. Voluntary work is rendered during free time for officers as there are no salaried employees in the association. Representative system of governance is through a General Assembly which is held annually and 20 members of the Coordinating Council meet quarterly. About 55% of membership are own account workers. All home workers are in the informal economy whether as industrial or own account home workers and majority of workers are in the informal economy. Discussion about where to go next, what to do next and a consensus on rebuilding Homenet International followed. Many of these groups have been part of Homeworkers Worldwide and have been looking for new solutions for organizing at international level. Building Homenet International may start with Asia and Southeastern Europe to begin with..

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Gallin emphasized that given the uncertainty of home work being unregulated and unprotected, there is an internal task on the need for the restructuring of the national movements and democratic structures. In this way, a lot of advocacy groups and NGOs which still do not have a representative membership based structure, may be able to be fully representative and increase their area of influence. On the external level, there should be consolidation of union alliances and union affiliations.

Mr. JOSUA MATA, Secretary General of Alliance of Progressive Labor (APL) gave reactions on Mr. Dan Gallin’s talk. He recalled that the Alliance of Progressive Labor started in the early ‘90s. On the social aspect, trade unions need to broaden their membership base and work with those in the informal sector in order to respond to massive changes in the labor market. A good starting point is to organize workers in the transport service and vendors, but the CHALLENGE is to learn their culture and environment. There is also a problem with critics from fellow trade unionists. Why focus on workers in the informal economy when in fact not all workers in the formal sector have been organized yet? There is also the problem with other NGOs working with communities for a long time in that there is no organization to speak of despite all this. Another challenge faced with working with informal workers themselves is the question of class – working class; they say “stop calling us workers or part of the working class”. We are the urban poor. It took us time to learn all these things and after 10 years, these NGOs started saying that they are now working with the informal economy. Even if the labor movement or trade unions say they work with the Informal sector, the question still is where should we best invest our resources in terms of organizing?

The LABOR MOVEMENT still has to get its act together and start working with the informal economy. Based on data, there are 38 million comprising the labor force and an estimated 2 million members in the labor movement which is an overestimation. But how many are really enjoying Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA)? Less than 250,000 workers are enjoying CBA.

Mr. Mata reiterated that it takes a lot of hard work to ensure self-sustainability of informal economy workers. He said It took us three years of massive work with MBOs and who in turn are encouraging others to organize. It is an ideological if not practical challenge that we are still wary of organizing industrial home workers. Are we supporting outsourcing or subcontracting? This is an issue that bothers labor unions in the country. While it is possible to be self-sustaining, that does not seem to be the case in actual cases. For example, it is difficult to sustain organizing construction workers because they have difficulty in paying dues. There is also a structural problem in that although they may have a core of dedicated organizers, membership is not sustained as members come and go. We therefore need TO ORGANIZE DEMOCRATIC ORGANIZATIONS.

Mr. ANTONIO ASPER, Executive Assistant on External Affairs to the President of the Federation of Free Workers (FFW) gave his reactions to Dan Galin’s presentation through the following four points : 1.) Unionism as the problem 2.) Double affiliation of most informal home workers in both unions and employers, 3.) Split in the international movement 4.) Value of labor statuses in defining the character, strategy and tactics of unions. He elaborated thus:

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Emphasizing the international setting, Dan asserts that unions are taking the lead in organizing informal workers. That is a good thing for me. I remember one of our international leaders saying that even before we organize the informal sector, we need first to organize the formal sector because that is where sustainability will come from. The problem is maybe in the premise that the formal and informal divide has moved unions to the formal side and that has become the state of affairs in so many decades. Thus, there is a tendency for the unions to bifurcate the definition of workers- formal and informal workers. It does not help either formal or informal unions to think in that manner as pointed out by Joshua. There is now an evaluation going on in the trade union movement and I would like to ask Dan on this.

Aside from the **traditional** definition of unionism, there is now a third strain referred to as **renewal unionism** and a fourth called **new unionism** – maybe the change is from traditional to new, or from renewal and new. Maybe Dan can further enlighten us on this. That definition will have a big impact on how you in the informal sector or traditional unions will define themselves. Another point that struck me is the situation in Southeastern Europe where there is double affiliation with the unions and the employers at the same time which is not the case in the Philippines. I wonder what will happen if that will become an international set up where unions in the formal and informal sector will both be affiliated with employers and the unions. Maybe that will remove the class divide or maybe that's a new way of organizing. Maybe Dan can further explain this and we can learn a lot on the split in the international unionism, what to do and what to avoid in this split in unionism. On the fourth regarding labor statuses -- that is, regular versus non regular, contractual versus permanent, such as farmer-tenant, lessee-landlord and other forms of labor statuses. The effect of this confusion in the labor status is that we forget one thing - that we are all workers and instead we tend to organize ourselves according to working status and working relations whether self-employed or wage workers. This may not help us in any way as it creates so many distinctions while we all fight for the rights that we should all deserve .

ILO defines decent work as productive work based on equity and security, and continuing social dialogue among partner to promote it. Let me conclude by saying that the world is changing so must we. The Philippines has the densest population of people's organizations, I surmise that if this is considered, the 38 million workers would have a unionization rate of 98%. I guess in other countries if we include all types of organizations, that is a power that we should be able to harness. Then the 98% organized would get direct hold of society to function according to that representation and we can have that potential to work more fully.

DAN GALLIN's reactions on the above points: I understand the merits of the argument that we need to organize where we are strong (formal economy) in order to support organizing where we are weak (informal economy), but I do not believe in so-called principles that stop us from seizing organizing opportunities. You will always have people with arguments that justify doing nothing. I think we need to be totally opportunistic in the sense of seizing every opportunity to organize workers who are obviously ready for it, no matter where they are. On Josua's "We are not workers we are the poor" is a very

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typical situation of confused identity you may encounter elsewhere among home workers of, for example, small farmers. There is also an issue of terminology and we should be careful not to add to the confusion. Why do we talk about "MBOs" or MBOPs" (membership based organizations of the poor) when we mean unions?, Are there MBOs of the rich? Maybe the Rotary Club? If we need unions, cooperatives, organizations, why don't we say so instead of developing jargon. Keep a language that can be understood by everyone.

The issue of double affiliation that Tony Asper mentioned is quite unique to Bulgaria, probably temporary and will not spread. It is quite inconceivable at international level. It is certainly not a new way of organizing and much less a way of abolishing the class struggle.

Are we supporting SUBCONTRACTING if we are organizing informal workers? This is another argument for doing nothing, and it has no merit.-- If we organize underage workers do we support child labor? On the issue earlier raised that international unions are taking the lead in organizing the informal sector, that is a misunderstanding. Actually, the international movement has been slow to move and even now only a few recognize the importance of organizing and there is great difficulty in organizing.

On "new unionism", for decades there have been efforts to put the "movement" back into the labor movement, under different labels. After World War II, in Europe and Japan, the labor movement emerged much weaker because of the tremendous losses it had suffered. It focused on what it perceived to be core issues like collective bargaining, setting aside the broader visions of social renewal and alternative vision of society. We paid a heavy price for that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the colonization of the former Soviet bloc by transnational capital and the domination of neoliberal ideology.

We cannot continue acting on a very narrow view of unionism and a self-limiting way of conducting trade union affairs. If trade unionism continues on this road then it is in great danger of disappearing as a factor of influence. The issue is restoring a sense or vision about social change. We need to gain ideological strength; restoring a vision to the labor movement about social change. We need to talk to society at large, not only a small section of the working class. On the class issue, this is fundamental because it is about exercising power that may only be dealt with by changing society.

The split I referred to was not the one that happened in the international trade unions in general, but the one in HomeNet International. That happened in 2003 because of differing conceptions in organizing. At the Congress in Bangkok, there were two alternatives -- whether unions and NGOs should have an equal voice in the governing bodies or whether. It was then that it was decided that the NGOs should run the organization and that was the position of the General Secretariat as well. HomeNet International was left basically with no funding but the Asian HomeNets -- HNSA and HNSEA -- decided to continue independently, and Homenet International disappeared. We need to repair the damage and

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reconstitute Homenet International because we need a worldwide organization and continue to rebuild the network created democratically as what we are now doing with domestic work where we have created an international network on the basis of unions of domestic workers. The NGOs involved as advocacy groups can be associate members but they do not run the organization. And this should I think be the basis for rebuilding Homenet International.

On Asper's statement: If the Philippines are 98% organized by people's organizations, why don't you have a progressive state with the rule of law, respect for trade union rights, a high standard of living, no poverty, no oppression? Where is your power?

Lunch Break was preceded by Homenet SEA giving tokens to the speakers.

Dr. DONNA DOANE, Programme Consultant of Homenet South Asia presented why it is important to build homebased workers organizations. The many sources of insecurities during the best and even the worst of times need focused efforts from homebased organizations as well as formal workers' organizations. But HBWs face a different set of challenges such as visibility, gender issues and acceptance as "real workers". The road towards building networks and organizations seems difficult but there are clear economic and political benefits, as well as social and psychological benefits. These organizations and networks can greatly help respond to the best of times and the worst of times by increasing visibility and voice as well as access to information, resources and other means of responding to rapid and destabilizing change. She also talked about what kinds of organizations are most effective as HBWs organizations. Are they MBOs such as SEWA? How relevant are they? What are the lessons from structure studies? How then are we going to promote MBOs and build democratic and representative networks? We from South Asia and Southeast Asia can learn from each other, can join fair trade movements, can share good ideas and practices. We can also learn from other organizations and networks of street vendors, waste pickers and others.

Ms Damyanti asked her about the issue on quantitative vs qualitative information on HBWs. Ms Donna replied that policymakers want both qualitative data as well as numbers in order for HBWs to get a voice and be visible. Research is critical for good advocacy which does not only include quantitative data, because there are good stories or anecdotes to be considered as well.

Ms Laila Azhar of HN Pakistan asked Ms Donna on the emergence of domestic workers, networks and organizations at the grassroot level: what should be our role of Homenets with these emerging issues as we are in the process of membership-based organizing? On the definition of workers vs definition of homebased workers, what should be our role as we work towards formation of Homenet International? How do you combine work with issues of HBWs given the structures and differences of organizations across all types of sectors?

Donna replied that it depends on the country situation and type of government. The amount of work depends on trade unions and informal workers organizations in each country. Cities with big budgets

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can work with unions. Sometimes there is a need to use backdoor strategies. For Nepal, there has been an attempt to get statistical data on registration. Pakistan has openness that other countries would like to have and that would make it easier to work on homebased workers issues with different organizations.

Ms BETH Angsioco enlightened us on the evolution of Homenet Philippines into MAGCAISA. Homenet was organized largely by women's organizations working on issues of livelihood and employment. One of its many activities was to look into the bills filed in Congress and examine and support these for passage into law. Eventually we saw the need to improve some of the bills so meetings and conferences were convened that led to consolidation of all comments into just one Bill. In finalizing the Bill we also invited other organizations, not members of Homenet, but also actively engaged with issues of informal workers such as construction workers, drivers, and vendors; the BILL then became MACWIE filed in 2007. In crafting the Bill, since HomeNET was comprised only of women's organizations, we saw the need to come together with other subsectors -- and that is how the Magna Carta for Informal Sector Alliance (MAGCAISA) evolved. Advocacy for the Bill is carried out simultaneously by Homenet within MAGCAISA and also other organizations that we continue to work with for the passage of the bill. While the provisions of the Bill aim to protect all workers, there are also very strong provisions guaranteeing women in the informal economy with substantial and adequate protection and services.

Dr Ofreneo: All MBOS are unions, according to Dan -- why should you call them something else when in essence they would constitute unions? The problem in some countries like the Philippines, the word "union" has very specific definitions and very stringent requirements, and you need employee-employer relations, registration, as well as other issues. There are workers who do not want to bargain with employers and create their own jobs instead and that goes against the usual understanding of unions as bodies working for rights against abusive employers.

BABES TESIORNA raised the problem of organizing workers in the informal sector as raised by Josua. The NSCB Resolution 15 gives a definition of informal sector according to economic activity and RA 8425 as Social Reform agenda where there are 14 basic sectors as partners of the government. When we start organizing we realized the need to determine what sectors are there to enable us to address the issues.

RA 8525 Soc Reform Agenda defines 14 basic sectors. When we consider the type of organization, we may consider this in accordance with the economic activity; e.g., planting, home production, etc. This is the reason why there is the Bureau of Workers with Special Concerns which is responsible for dealing with these various sectors

My second question is addressed to Dan Gallin on the uncertainties of home workers' affiliation to employers' groups. How shall we balance this? We are basically informal workers producing goods. Our relationship with employers, if we affiliate with them, becomes confusing. But we can make them partners for business and job and other economic activities. What we need is to prepare the policy environment if home workers want to go into trade unions, cooperatives, or basic organizations. There

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Courtesy – Ms. Mylene Hega and Ms. Myrna Magbitang

is now even further recognition that if an association is composed of workers, it is referred to DOLE for registration, while cooperatives are referred to CDA.

DAN's response to Babes Tesiorna and Dr. Ofreneo: Affiliation to an employers' group is not necessary to do business with it. We should not confuse a situation where there is a limited business relationship with a more general and long term relationship that assumes a broader common interest. Workers and employers do not have a common interest. On the issue of what is a union, we need to go with the broadest definition and find the overarching fundamental interest -- that a union is a self-help organization of workers regardless of the legal definition from country to country. In some countries, associations work like trade unions. Informal workers, like any other workers, create democratic organizations that enable them to use their collective strength to fight for their interests and these need to be broadly defined.

TESS BORGONOS FROM MAKALAYA: (She raised the issue of the decreasing number of workers having Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) in the Philippines; problems of organizing in the Informal Economy and the reality that the Trade Union movement cannot move on with just CBAs). If we are organizing workers in the Informal Economy we include other forms of agreements, for example in the case of NUBCW (National Union of Building and Construction Workers) and HABITAT covering working conditions. Homenets are working with or have agreements with local government units (LGUs) but HBWs are not visible and accounted for. We cannot see how much is done nor is there success in organizing just in the light of CBAs. Secondly, within NUBCW and the Building Workers International (BWI), we are covering construction workers. We accept that we will not be fighting with subcontractors and contractors but for standards of project-based workers and security of tenure and not really on regularization because that is impossible in the industry. On the definition of unionism, trade unions are still co-opted by the traditional definition provided by trade union leaders - the traditional way of organizing, thinking on unionism and way of succeeding. Formal workers are decreasing; therefore, CBAs are decreasing. Another point I would like to raise is in relation to adding to the definition of union. During the time when SEWA was affiliating with BWI, some pointed out they are not unions but rather NGOs. We pointed out that SEWA is a union. I suggest we do away with the traditional way of thinking, the traditional way of organizing, and from the traditional way of measuring success in organizing.

DAN GALLIN: On the issue of with whom do home workers bargain with in terms of employment relationships. many of them have no employers but that is irrelevant. It is a non-issue since workers have to work regardless of employment relationships. SEWA is of course a union, IUF accepted SEWA in 1983 and we knew that the formal trade unions of India were opposed to this. We knew that they would not accept SEWA as a union but we knew that SEWA was an organization of strong and independent women who had demonstrated their ability to organize, so I think it was not an issue then and it is not an issue now.

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JOSUA MATA added to the discussion by reminding that the trade union movement did not come up as an organization of regular employees. In 1902, there were 200,000 members who were mostly women workers from cigarette factories. Cofradias were religious based organizations, and they never acted as a trade union for collective bargaining purposes. During the first celebration of May 1, it was illegal to discuss wages.

But the question is “WORKERS POWER”. Americans then tried to atomize the working class. Who are the working class? But are we not part of the entire movement of workers? For me, what is more important is how do we weave all this organizing into one river of working class power as we are all part of the labor movement.

SELIM REZA of Homenet Bangladesh: HBWs are scattered and not organized in urban and rural areas. How can we introduce the trade union to the home workers?

Dr Ofreneo: If Informal workers are not organized into trade unions, who should represent them in tripartite discussions? There is still preference by government, and international organizations to recognize leaders of formal trade unions in formal tripartite discussions.

PANEL of SOUTH ASIA on Sharing of Experiences on MBO Organizing for Policy Advocacy: Homenet South Asia country Homenets

PRESENTATIONS were as follows:

1. **SELIM REZA, Senior Program Manager of HomeNet Bangladesh talked on Advocacy Around Organizing** and presented a situationer on HBWs and the major activities of Homenet Bangladesh as follows:
 - Of the 49.5 million economically active population, 47.4 million are employed (10.2 million in the formal sector while 37.2 million are informal workers)
 - Homenet Bangladesh has a total membership of 116 organizations most of which are NGOs. Among its activities include mapping and organizing HBWs, organizing local level meetings emphasizing the role of HBWs in economic development and in drafting and advocating for a national policy for HBWs. It also organized a workshop at the national level on minimum wage for HBWs.
 - There being no national policy and most HBWs being not yet organized plus non-recognition of HBWs in the rural areas, Homenet Bangladesh worked with the Bangladesh Homeworker Women’s Association (BHWA) in completing the draft national policy together with a team of experts and partners from NGOs, government, academe, civil society members, and labor law experts.
 - ILO C177 has not been ratified yet. Media campaigns and local level awareness programs are being conducted.
 - Major issues and challenges faced by HBWs include poor government financial support, limited access to market, poor banking support, no formal wages and long working hours,

uncertainty of employment opportunities, gender bias and exploitation, and the definition of informal workers which excludes homebased workers.

- Recommendations to address these issues aside from adopting a national policy and ratification of ILO C177 is to include HBWs in the definition contained in the labor law, forming a wage board for HBWs, inclusion in national data and statistics, advocacy for providing insurance and social security, introducing old-age allowance for HBWs, elimination of violence and discrimination, formation of a task force composed of concerned ministries, government agencies, NGOs, civil society and international organizations, and creating awareness among political leaders on HBWs issues.

2. **Om Thapaliya, Executive Director of HomeNet Nepal(HNN)** presented the network strength of HomeNet Nepal comprised of 159 organizations 51 of which are MBOs. It has developed good relationships with trade unions, government agencies and international partners such as the ILO. Trade unions initiated the policy on HBWs.

He presented a fact sheet on HBWs. Of total labor force of 13 million, 90% are in the informal sector. There are about 2.2 million HBWs comprising 18% of the informal labor force and 74% of whom are women. Women HBWs get only a meager 1,750 rupees per month which is far below the basic minimum wage set by government of 4,600 rupees.

Mr Om explained the process adopted by Homenet Nepal towards the MBO structure. It started with identifying, selecting and segregating participating organizations into Homenet as a network organization based on MBO principles. After selecting leaders to represent them in HNN, then capacity building programs are conducted for MBO leaders focusing on organizing, awareness raising, skills upgrading and raising voices of HBWs. Then elections follow and a governing body with a representation of 80% MBOs with voting rights is formed.

Efforts on the national policy for HBWs included working with the trade union alliances GEFONT and NTUC and the creation of a task force within the Ministry of Labor to initiate formulation of the policy. Discussions on the national policy are pending with the new government. Mr Om also mentioned activities towards ratification of ILO C177 such as awareness raising campaigns, focus group discussions, advocating and lobbying supported by an alliance of trade unions (GEFONT and NTUC), developing IEC materials, launching signature campaigns, and empowering MBOS of HBWs to raise their voice.

3. **Ms UME LAILA AZHAR, Executive Director of Homenet Pakistan,** made a presentation on the unique experience in MBO featuring the Bangle Union of HBWs. The glass bangle industry is one of the most hazardous among workers in the informal economy in Pakistan where more than 1 million workers are directly or indirectly involved in processing and marketing. The industry

involves predominantly women homebased workers and their families including their children who are equally exposed to the dangers and hazards of the process.

The women HBWs initiated discussing the prevailing situation of the bangle sector in 2006 by setting up two cooperatives in Hyderabad with the help of Labour Education Foundation (LEP). The journey started with organizing women HBWs through a survey among 500 families who were encouraged to be part of the union formation process. A core group of ten members each were formed in three areas in Hyderabad and were given training and orientation programs by LEP. The legal team of the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) equipped the group with know-how on labor related laws. The Union of HBWs was then formed and registration of the first 700 women HBWs followed. The Union of Homebased Women Workers (HBWW) then got registered with the Registrar of Trade Union. After registration, the Union then became the representative and voice of 600,000 women workers in the bangle industry. The Union worked with the government officials from the Labor Department and the Social Security Institute and Workers Welfare Board and held a series of meetings to discuss ways to protect the rights of workers. At present membership gained strength and there are clusters in local units of the Union in 12 new areas.

In terms of advocating for change, the HBWW look up to the union as a shield against contractors and employers. It has used the cooperative as its office where women HBWs converge to discuss issues and activities. The Union has been an advocate for change as seen in the contractors' behavior towards women workers who are now recognized to lead even the male workers.

4. **Mr. Dilanthe Withanage, Executive Director of Homenet Sri Lanka** presented the ROADMAP to MBO in Sri Lanka by characterizing the organizations, experiences and difficulties in membership based organizing. Most of the organizations are CBOs funded by NGOs. Experiences of coir weavers, handicraft makers and garment workers were studied and they were made to realize the need to be organized. Because of the different levels of understanding on membership based organizations, the presence of hard core unions, and in places where rural development has established a culture of CBOs, MBOs are perceived to be a threat. NGOs fund CBOs but differ in terms of structure and practice. Added to these are the political interest of some CBOs in urban areas and the double standards of funders and regional organizations. Leaders oftentimes don't allow members to talk. MBO is not an easy process because they want to enjoy existing privileges.

OPEN FORUM

DAN GALLIN on Pakistan: You described the Bangle Union as the sole representative of 600,000 workers. In what way does it become the representative? Is it the Union? Is the Union accountable to them? Do they have an influence on the policy of the Union - how does it work?

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Courtesy – Ms. Mylene Hega and Ms. Myrna Magbitang

Union membership is 1,900 and members advocate and raise their issues. They hold dialogues with the government as representatives of their constituency. This is a very new thing -- voice and representation during the Hyderabad and Karachi Conference.

PANEL of Homenet Southeast Asia Country Homenets: Sharing of Experiences on MBO Organizing for Policy Advocacy

1. Keang Sabay, General Manager of Rajana Association, Cambodia

He presented the Artisans Association of Cambodia (AAC) which is an MBO representing 50 different programs aimed at providing economic opportunity for persons with disabilities and the disadvantaged through the production and sale of high quality artisan products. It has been registered with the Ministry of Interior in 2004 and became a member of the World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) in 2005 and WFTO Asia in 2006. It became a member of HNSEA in June 2008. Member organizations grew from 4 in 2003 to 50 at present. AAC has around 2,000 producers and staff, 67.36% of which are women and 16.95% disabled. About 53% of the organizations are managed by women.

AAC as an MBO has in its advocacy initiatives the bringing up of issues pertaining to business operations. It joined the Trade Facilitation and Small and Medium Enterprise Working Group of the International Finance Corporation (IFC) since 2006. It has been regularly attending meetings with the Cambodia Chamber of Commerce and has been joining the Government Private Sector Forum. It has also initiated discussions with Sky Health Insurance to provide affordable health insurance package to its members. It has expanded its network with handicraft producer groups around Phnom Penh and has received assistance in production and marketing both at the local and international markets. Since it joined HNSEA, AAC has implemented its advocacy program on visibility and voice of HBWs and informal workers as well as in providing training on occupational safety and health as well as training on health, management, leadership and communication. Among the common issues faced by HBWs include low income, lack of capital, no market access, no health insurance, no permanent housing, threats from local authorities asking for unofficial or illegal fees, and difficulty in dealing with customs officials regarding exportation of products.

2. **Ms. PENI ASTUTI**, Coordinator of MWPRI made a presentation about the Association of Indonesian Women Homeworkers (HWPRI) which was an initiative of women homeworkers as a social organization established in 1995 to tackle issues and solve problems. HWPRI's vision is to develop social welfare and social protection for women HBWs. It aims to create an organization that can effectively and strategically promote and protect the rights of women homebased workers by increasing awareness and building their capacity. Currently HWPRI has 806 persons engaged in the putting out system (POS) of subcontracting and 1,120 self-employed workers. They are engaged in food processing, weaving, batik making, garments, handicrafts, and embroidery. Its strategies in creating a sustainable organization for women HBWs include making HWPRI financially sustainable, enabling women HBWs to obtain more access to external opportunities, strengthening its existing economic engagements to increase access to economic development opportunities and product promotion and product marketing, and advocacy to protect women HBWs' rights. To achieve all these, HWPRI has been active in coordination meetings at the local and provincial levels, holding conference and congress, designing a well-functioning management system, organizational membership activities, mapping and updating data of HWPRI members, providing membership ID cards, training on organizational management, and

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information dissemination through various media campaign programs, holding public dialogues, capacitating community organizers, and initiating workshops and policy dialogues with government and other stakeholders.

3. **Mr KHANTHONE PHAMUANG**, President of NALD and Homenet Laos presented a history of the Non-Profit Association of Lao Development (NALD). It started in 2004 setting up savings groups and using the revolving fund to strengthen and empower people in communities, especially poor women. At present there are now more than 600 savings groups both in rural and urban areas in the 7 provinces. With the Lao Women's Union and CODI there are 400 savings groups formed with 65,387 members. NALD aims to improve the economic and social well-being of people living in rural and urban areas through education, community awareness, and technical know-how. Its goal is to be the umbrella organization for HBWs for community development and poverty reduction. Policy advocacy initiatives include spreading the law on protecting the rights of women HBWs and to initiate the national policy for HBWs. NALD has among its programs and services a village bank and training center.

Through Homenet Lao, women get the opportunity to learn more about entrepreneurship and competitive market for their products to generate and supplement family income. It strengthens women's capacity in terms of leadership roles, and participation in decision making processes. A successful strategy of Homenet Lao is its concrete support for poor women and their families by giving the opportunity to participate in product development and marketing workshops. Homenet Lao built on experiences learned from the other country homenet and existing local linkages until it was able to muster ample strength to propose rules and regulations, management mechanisms and organizational structure for efficient and effective implementation of its activities.

Dr Ofreneo: We have seen a different context where government is everywhere and organizing takes place in a limited way. but if it can be done creatively, it can also result in something worthwhile for the homebased workers and producers who are still being developed and still capacitated in the context of Laos.

4. **Ms SUNTAREE SAENG-GING**, Coordinator of the Northeastern Women's Network translated the presentation of **Ms Pensri Chuenwong**, Committee of Homenet Thailand for Northern Region on **Experiences of Homenet Thailand on MBO Organizing for Policy Advocacy**. She presented a situationer of informal workers, membership, and advocacy for policy and law. Of the total labor force of 38.9 million, 38.4 million are employed and this is comprised of 14.1 million or 36.6% formal workers and 24.3 million or 63.4% informal workers. Informal workers are engaged in the agriculture sector, trade and services; homebased workers number about 1.3 million. Three years ago we changed to MBO. Our regional network is represented at the national level and now we have 1,696 members. Membership in Homenet Thailand requires paying an annual membership fee of 10 Baht. We have a funeral or cremation fund wherein members donate 10 Baht to the family of a member who pass away. Quarterly Newsletters are used to communicate with our members.

Homenet Thailand has four functions and duties: 1) organize and strengthen informal workers organizations; 2) raise awareness of workers so that they can enjoy their rights; 3) improve work conditions and promote occupational safety and health (OSH); 4) policy and law advocacy to protect and provide social security, welfare and services for informal workers. Homenet Thailand's mechanism to

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advocate for policy and law is through regional and national committees supported by the Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (FLEP). This involves participation in drafting the law, having dialogues with government agencies, labor lawyers and the academe; lobbying with politicians and members of Parliament. There is still the gap in terms of knowledge and awareness among leaders and members which remains to be a challenge for Homenet Thailand. Our policy advocacy focuses on the: a) Homeworkers Protection Act; b) to amend and improve the Social Security Act to cover informal workers; c) the National Health Security System in terms of occupational safety and health, and d) the policy of local administration to protect HBWs.

OPEN FORUM

SELIM REZA: I want to know more about the Lao Village Bank. On the Thailand statistics, it is interesting to know particularly how these were gathered and how data on the 1.38 HBWs were included. Does it mean government did the survey and included them?

TESS BORGONOS: She asked about the whole organizational framework of MBOs of which the focus is mainly for economic purposes. Although there are policies on HBWs, when we started organizing women HBWs in the Philippines, the women are the poorest in the Philippines so the action was on livelihood projects. But when they go back home they still experience violence. Along this line, how comprehensive are we in organizing? Are we touching the economic, social and political dimensions and are we changing orientation or just focusing on access to economic activities.? Are we dealing with power relations within MBO as we deal with power relations in the unions?

Dr. Ofreneo: Many homenets are doing gender awareness raising and that may be touched in more detail tomorrow.

BETH ANGSIOCO: First, organizing and advocacy has been going on in all other countries for years and years and I feel it is a bit of a disservice because we are limited by time. I suggest that experiences of successes can be a rich source of lessons for those who will be organizing in the future. I would like to know if it is possible to come up a compendium or public document highlighting activities of the countries in organizing. Secondly, I am happy to hear Dan and Joshua talk about organizing men and women but we still have a lot of work to do. I wrote a paper on practices and ideological divide of trade unions in the Philippines which are now surfacing at this point. We even have ways of doing things, even our own standards; for example our CBAs are not working anymore in the context of the working class. Should we focus on women as workers? These are not meant to divide us but enable us to touch on all of these. In this country everything is divided. I think it is high time to rethink on this and not be divided. I think we need to think about this but of course not giving up on our aspirations and ambitions. My last point is that we have to remember that advocacy should not be focused on the outside but advocate targeting our members. For example, social protection takes a long time and it actually took us ten years to advocate for a bill and those are not the controversial ones that usually take longer time. Perhaps we can something already do to improve the status of all our members and do advocacy within.

Dr. Ofreneo: All points are well taken and maybe we can consider them again when we discuss next steps for tomorrow's session. I think we can proceed to the next activity which takes us to a lighter side.

Coffee tables will be set up at the other side of the room. Each coffee table has a coordinator and a translator for the homebased workers to explain the situation in their own country.

HOMEBASED WORKERS' CAFE

The participants proceeded to the other room and grouped themselves with the country of their choice to listen to the situation and experiences of homebased workers. Craft papers were provided for writing and illustrations to enlighten the participants on the experiences and issues faced by HBWs.

1. Miss Lamphan, a homebased worker from Laos, finished secondary school and was a teacher at a primary school for many years. Her family lives in poverty. She has three kids. Prior to her joining Homenet Laos, she worked at a savings bank which provides micro finance for the village workers. She used to make blankets when she started working with Homenet Laos in 2004. She has been the head of Lao women union village level. She seized the opportunity to join every training program offered by NALD and this has further honed her skills as a homebased worker and a leader aside from knowledge on marketing of their group's products. Training provided was on traditional production skills.

She has her own group of about 18 women making blankets out of rag materials. She then became a community leader and is currently the deputy leader of Homenet Lao. Among the issues faced by women HBWs include health, workers' rights, child labor, family relations, access to markets, middlemen, competition, high cost of raw of materials, and low profits.

2. Apsara Maharjan, an HBW from Nepal. is currently the Treasurer of Homenet Nepal(HNN) and also chairperson of Khokana Women Awareness Society, a non-profit, non-political, social organization. It is an MBO of homebased workers established in 2000 under the Society Registration Act of 1977 in Lalitpur. Starting with seven women, the organization now has a membership base of more than 450 local women. Apsara became a member of HomeNet Nepal (HNN) in 2009.

Khokana Women Awareness Society is a member organization of HNN in Khokana, Lalitpur. Its vision is for women to have the right to empower themselves economically, physically, mentally, and socially. Its main objectives include the following:

- To provide reproductive health services;
- To enhance capacity of women through different skill development activities;
- To strengthen IEC/BCC activities pertinent to education, reproductive health, abortion, STI and HIV AIDS etc.
- To capacitate women to participate in the mainstream community development.
- To empower women HBWs of the community

Activities of HNN include running reproductive health clinics and health camps; conducting skills training on embroidery and sewing; awareness programs on nutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, family planning methods, and homebased workers rights. It has initiated a Signature Campaign for the "ROADMAP FROM KHOKANA TO GENEVA TO RATIFY ILO CONVENTION 177".

Apsara is a leader among a group of ten women engaged in sewing blouses and seat covers working for long hours every day starting at ten in the morning until eleven in the evening. They go to their workplace by bicycle. Apsara trains the women not only in sewing but also in raising awareness on health and nutrition because of the health care program where they participate through contributing 100 rupees monthly for the group. Earnings are mainly for the family and children's education but they see to it that they set aside an amount for the health care program. Apsara leads the women in organizing and advocating for their rights .

They avail of the services of community clinic which serves more than 500 women but has only four women volunteer workers, one of whom is a paramedic. The clinic provides medical check up services and temporary family planning methods in coordination with the Family Planning Association of Nepal.

Health camps provide treatment for the following in coordination with particular partners:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| • Gynecological diseases | Family Planning Association of Nepal |
| • Eye diseases | Lions Eye Care Center, Kathmandu |
| • General Check up | Kist Medical College, Lalitpur |
| • Heart Diseases | Norvic International Hospital, Kathmandu |
| • Child Disease | International Child Friendship Hospital, Kathmandu |

More than 1500 people benefit from Free Health Services and 10 individuals (especially poor and marginalized people) had undergone free cataract operation.

Homenet Nepal provided employment to 30 women. It initiated the establishment of DOTS (Direct Observe Treatment Short Course Tuberculosis) in Khokana VDC. Future plans include establishment of a Community Health Clinic and a Women Skills Development Training Centre.

3. Miss Chhoeurng Srey Mach, aged 29, is a homebased worker from the Korng Meas district, Kom Pong Cham Province, Cambodia. Her parents live in Angkor Bann village, Kom Pong Cham and she has four sisters and a brother.



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On her education background, she earned a Diploma at Peam Chi Korng secondary school in Kom Pong Cham province. She completed a clothes and bags sewing course at Association for Aid and Relief Japan (AAR Japan) and also successfully completed a training course on Pedagogical Skill at National Technical Training Institute (NTTI).

She worked as a sewing teacher at the Health Care Center for Children (HCC). In 2008 she opened a small workshop for sewing souvenir products for the Women For Women Foundation (WFW). Since 2009 up to the present she works as a sewing trainer at the Association for Aid and Relief Vocational Training for the Disabled (AAR VTD)

She left her small village to find a job as a garment worker in Phnom Penh city in 1997, and had been doing this job until 2002. On 16 June 2002, she attended a special event in Kom Pong Speu province. Together with her friends, she went to climb up a hill where thousands of monks were offered food by Buddhist people. When she arrived at the top of the hill, she relaxed under the huge tree. Unfortunately, she stepped on a land mine under that huge tree.

After her accident, she applied for a new job at the same garment factory but the employer and administrator turned down her application. They told her that people with disability cannot work as well as able-bodied employees, because in case of emergency, they cannot run like other workers. Even though she begged them for a job they still would not accept her and even looked down at her and discriminated against her as a worker with disability.

In 2005, she was very pleased that she found a job sewing souvenir products and also serving as a trainer at Healthcare Center for Children and other NGOs. She is inspired to train other people like her because she does not want to be discriminated against as a person with disability. She wants to show people around the world that people with disability have abilities and experience like those without disability.

She started her own mini workshop at home, and she can sew bags and clothes for Wat Than, Woman For Woman and other local NGOs. She always charges them on a piece rate basis. In her job as a home-based worker, she greatly values working independently and having the full right to do what she prefers to do. For example, when she needs to go to her village to visit her parents and siblings anytime, she can go without asking permission from the boss. She said that if she gets invited to attend a wedding or special event, she can do so freely. No one causes her any difficulties at all. However, working as a homebased worker, she said that she must ensure finishing orders on time because it is the main responsibility to the customers.

Being with Homenet Cambodia enables her to get a lot of benefits such as having the chance to visit many homebased workers in India, learning a lot from the experiences of people from SEW, India. She greatly appreciates the chance to attend this training workshop in Manila, Philippines. This experience will be an eye opener for others like her, as stories are shared with other homebased workers in the region.

Advocacy efforts of the women include having a definition of HBWs in relation to ILO C177 and a national policy. They are posed with the question of whether to restrict strategies for HBWs or elevate

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to a higher level by developing leaders and entrepreneurs. They want to provide political education to HBWs to enable them to sit and participate in decision making bodies. They also want recognition and involvement in trade unions.

4. Wewalpanawa Gamage, a homemaker from Sri Lanka, has been engaged in handicraft making for twelve years now. She joined Homenet Sri Lanka through a friend and she is currently the president of a social enterprise comprising of 78 women. The organization provides them with guidance on organizational matters and production as well as in getting bulk orders. Political unrest is a major challenge aside from lack of technology, capital, market accessibility and foreign competition.

She is a member of the Nimble Fingers Association which is a member of Homenet Sri Lanka. Nimble Fingers Association was formed by the women homebased workers involved in handicraft production working for the well being of women in Pollonaruwa district, Giritthala. The Association started in 2007 with about 20 women members which now has increased to 78.

Situated far from Colombo in a conflict area near to Batticaloa and Thoppigala, the women realized the need to organize due to common problems such as difficulty in finding raw materials and accessories, difficulty in processing materials, difficulty in getting bank loans when working as individuals, lack of access to water, electricity and transportation, lack of access to market and market knowledge. Forming and organization and working as a team helped them to overcome these issues and prevent exploitation.

Nimble Fingers is a Member Based Organization because of its having a democratic structure and members join on a voluntary basis. The members have agreed to work together not because of rules and regulations but because of mutual understanding. They value working towards the same objectives to overcome difficulties. Members have developed, agreed upon and engaged in their own decision-making structures. Members of Nimble Fingers provide financial or in-kind contribution of 30 Rupees monthly as a requirement for membership. Leaders are elected within the organization by the members' vote on yearly basis.

Women HBWs face the following issues:

- No recognition, sometimes not even from the family members.
- No fixed incomes.
- Difficulty in applying for loans.
- Difficulty in selling products.
- Expensive raw materials and processing is expensive and cannot be done alone.
- No standards or quality measurements, thus difficulty in selling for higher prices.
- Lack of market knowledge and market access.
- Lack of training.
- Rejection of finished goods.
- Paying less than agreed and lingering payments for products, and
- Difficulty in transporting finished products.

Given these issues, challenges and difficulties, they call for Government to take firm action and give them the adequate recognition and market to sell their products. There are a lot of women with unbelievable talents who should be empowered to work to their full potential. Training programs will enable them to have access to the international market in future.

5. Neazee Sultana is a homebased worker from Bangladesh engaged in producing garments and home accessories. She is one of the leaders among eight groups comprising of twenty women HBWs. Being an own account worker herself, she works with other women towards advocacy for government to provide social protection and assistance on enterprise development, specifically capital to expand production.

Major issues and challenges faced by HBWs in Bangladesh are the following:

- Recognition of HBWs as workers and policy to recognize HBW activities
- HBWs are unorganized and scattered
- Lack of government support
- Inclusion of HBWs issues into Labour Law of Bangladesh,
- Recognition for their collective bargaining and uprooting discrimination
- Uncertainty of employment, unhealthy working condition, lack of access to a wide range of social security, minimum wage, standard working hours, minimum age, housing etc.
- Limited market access
- Gender bias and exploitation
-

Advocacy efforts of HBWs are focused on the following:

- Adopting a National Policy in Bangladesh
- Ratifying Home Work Convention 177
- Include 'Home Based Worker' in the definition of Workers in the Bangladesh Labour Law or BLA 2006
- Inclusion of the data and information on the HBWs into national statistics
- Formation of a separate wage board for the HBWs
- Advocacy for insurance and social security for the HBWs
- Introduction of old-age allowances for the HBWs
- Formation of a task force comprising of concerned Ministries, Government Organizations, NGOs, civil society, ILO Bangladesh, UN organizations etc for taking care of HBWs.
- Media campaign/ documentaries to highlight the issues of HBWs;
- Gradually reduce and eliminate all forms of violence against HBWs through different activities
- Research on contribution of HBWs in national Development.
- Increase awareness of civil society and political leaders about HBW issues.

6. Peni Astuti, a homemaker from Indonesia, started as a homebased worker doing accessories made from beads and other items. She is now a leader among a group of HBWs but the issues raised earlier on non-recognition of homebased workers and the lack of government's awareness on ILO C177 hinder them from moving forward. According to Peni, we are hoping as we work on our advocacy that

we can put across our issues and concerns. The money we earn from our little activity is considered to belong to our husbands as a tradition in our culture. But we are hopeful that we can earn more to augment family income for our children's schooling. Through the Homenet we join product exhibits to promote sales of our HBW products. We also provide training to other members. The continuing challenge is for government to recognize HBWs and to have a national policy that can provide social protection to us and not only to "workers" in formal work places who are the ones recognized as workers - those with uniforms, IDs and all.

7. Pensri Chuenwong, a longtime key leader from Homenet Thailand, was born in 1962 in a small district called Payao which was at that time part of the famous and beautiful Chiangrai Province in Northern Thailand. After her high school years, Pensri got married to a school teacher in 1979. She then moved to Chiangkham District with her husband. She got involved in a community women's group which later developed to Ban Sanpoolieo Women Development Group through a community development official. Pensri was the group secretary.

From 1984 Ban Sanpoolieo Women Development Group (BSDG) initiated the Tai Lue indigenous ethnic weaving as an off-farm income generating activity to address the repeated drought and poor farming. Each group member of 29 contributed 100 baht (3.13 US \$) as their share at the beginning. Now the group has 91 members.

BSDG has been awarded many times and has earned a good reputation for its success in generating additional family income for its members. In 2002 BSDG was selected for the SME program of the Payao Non-formal Education Pilot Project. The BSDG's program areas became the notable study trip destination of non-formal education groups particularly on the know-how of group administration and management. BSDG was awarded the winner of the district SME and represented its district in provincial competition in 2004.

BSDG led by Pensri as the chairperson affiliated with and became a member of Homenet Thailand in 2004 targeting to improve the homebased worker members' quality of life and advocate for producers' safety. Pensri was the elected chairperson by her organization and the network committee members of the Northern Region Network during the year 2005 to 2007. Until now she has been actively involved as a committee member both at the regional and national networks. She feels strongly about the putting out system (POS) for homebased workers whose wages are very small and even far below the minimum wages. If their wages are cut for the members' contribution fee for the national social protection institutions, how much money will be left?

Pensri's roles are not limited only for BSDG and Homenet, but broadly cover aspects needed for coordinating with diverse government offices and mobilize collaboration from the network's alliances. She has served as a volunteer for many groups at community, districts and provincial levels; i.e. Credit Union/Saving Group, Ban Sanpoolieo Cooperative Store, the community school committee member, the Community Agricultural Cooperative, and OTOP Network (One Tambon One Product-SME program). Since 1996, she has been an active leader serving as a local politician as a member of Sub-district Administrative Organisation (SAO) of Anghthong Subdistrict at her Chaingkham District, Payao Province. She is now the vice president of SAO actively serving her community.

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DAY 2

Sharing of Good Practices

Ms. Suntaree Saeng-ging on Experiences of Homenet Thailand on Policy and Law Advocacy

The advocacy for law and policy started in 1997 when Homenet Thailand (HNT) conducted the study on the “Impact of the Economic Crisis on Homebased Workers” supported by ILO. The findings of the study, particularly on unfair wages and unsafe work, were utilized as campaign materials for policy advocacy. The national policy advocacy focused on three areas– the Homeworkers Protection Act; Amendment to the Social Security Act to cover informal workers; and the National Health Security System in terms of including occupational safety and health (OSH). The 1997 Constitution allowed 50,000 individuals to sign and submit the law to Parliament. There were two versions of the Homeworkers Protection Act – one from the Ministry of Labour and one from Homenet Thailand. It was only last year that the draft Homeworkers Protection Act was submitted to Parliament. Homenet Thailand lobbied for two major political parties to have the Act considered. HNT negotiated for quota seats from both parties for labour lawyer and for NGOs as HNT’s representative to the House of Representatives. Meetings were attended during the consideration process.

The Act passed the House of Representatives in March 2010 and the Senate in May 2010. The final consideration will be this August. The Homeworkers’ Protection Act called for fair wages in that HBWs should receive no less than the minimum wage prescribed by the Thai Labor Protection Act. It also focused on OSH, prohibiting the employer to use hazardous materials, and making injury or even death the employer’s responsibility. The Amendment to the Social Security Act now covers compensation on illness, disability, death, maternity, and retirement pension. The National Health Security System Act of 2002 is the first act that was submitted to Parliament with signatures from 50,000 individuals. It aims to provide universal health care coverage for all Thai people. HNT has representatives in committees and sub-committees to advocate for OSH and develop pilot programs in operational areas to organize a Primary Care Unit. HNT’s next steps include dissemination of information to both members and non-members on the progress of the law and secondly to develop potential leaders as group legal consultants on labor rights during implementation of the law.

Dr Ofreneo summarized the Philippine experience in organizing and advocacy . Organizing with an MBO basis started in the late ‘80s when we had the PATAMABA grassroots women from the rural areas forming their own own. The organization was run, managed and led basically by women HBWs . Then there was lobbying with the DOLE as mentioned by Chit Cilindro yesterday on Department Order 5 which preceded ILO C177. This actually was the result of lobbying efforts of grassroots women and using the multi-stakeholder approach involving government and international agencies like the ILO, which by the way, spearheaded and catalyzed organizing not only in the Philippines but also in Indonesia and Thailand as we were part of a five-year project on rural homeworkers.

Then in 1998 the Informal Sector Coalition was formed with funding from USAID. A huge campaign was conducted where they gathered 100,000 signatures and submitted these to the Senate in 1998. But that was the year of crisis. Employers said we cannot afford to pay this protection for informal workers and if employers say no, you cannot make any progress. We started campaigning again with the *Report of FES conference (Manila) for South Aisa and South East Asia.*

formation of Homenet Philippines in 2006 and that was launched with the help of FES Manila in 2006-2007. Then we saw how this morphed into a bigger coalition called MAGCAISA (Magna Carta for the Informal Sector Alliance) involving other sectors in the informal economy. That sums up the Philippine experience.

Sharing of problems and difficulties: Daniel Sugama Stephanus, Indonesia

- The Main Problem: ILO C177 is rejected by the Government. It does not give protection nor recognition to homeworkers. The workers who are protected by law are only the formal workers, with uniform, with IDs and working in legal factories. The Indonesian Labor Act gives protection to workers who have relationships with employers. The Indonesian government puts homeworkers in the market and face to face with the power of a free market that wants cheap workers to produce fancy and expensive products. Statistics show that majority of the workforce is in the informal sector. Homeworkers earn less than the minimum wage standard, have no social protection, no decent living environment as they live in extremely poor conditions. But micro, small and medium businesses comprise 99.9% of the national economy.
- This shows that the Indonesian Government has placed wrong priority to market economics and not to people economics. There is outsourcing flexibility in Indonesia and labor market flexibility makes it easy for real wages and working opportunities to adjust, thus making labor easy to recruit and also easy to be fired. This condition shows that the government regulation for labor issue can make their role and position weaker than the investors. Government only pays attention to big investors. The Indonesian Labor Act is against the Indonesian Constitution, equal rights, and people economics. Many data show that the flexible working relationship pattern for HBWs makes them unprotected and neglected by the government. Continuing challenges for homebased workers and their organizations prevail.
- Employers must register their workers with the social protection institutions and pay the members' contribution based on the employer-employee agreement. However, for homebased workers in the putting out system, who get a small amount of income, if their wages are cut, what will be left for the poor worker? The Labor Act 40/2004 stipulates that the government gives attention to the people and gives social protection. But until the deadline for the implementation of this Act, there is still no regulation to operate the National Social Protection System.
- Recommendations include ratification of ILO C177; revision of the Labor Act 13/2003 to put the textual definition of homebased workers including all characteristics to protect their basic needs and achieve a decent life; and full implementation of 40/2004 on the National Social Protection System.

Keang Sapbay, Homenet Cambodia ,presented their advocacy experiences

- The problem of HBWs is that their products should have a Certificate of Origin for export market. For example, for our soapstone which may come from our temples, the government must certify and ensure that they are really hand-made by our workers.
- We provide OSH training as well as training on health, management, leadership and communication.

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- We talk with ILO in Cambodia especially on garment and factory workers; we were assisted by AAC (Artisans Association of Cambodia) which also started establishing networks in Phnom Penh and Siem Reap where a study was conducted on MBO and HBWs in these two cities.
- Advocacy to address Issues faced by HBWs
 - Low income, lack of capital, no market access, cannot afford to buy the health insurance and problems when they move residence
 - For those who work at home, they are oftentimes approached by local authority who ask for unofficial fees. If the MBO does not pay, they are threatened with business stoppage. This is a common problem both in Phnom Penh and in the provinces. We have had the opportunity while participating in these working groups to raise such problems to the government.
 - Some goods produced by MBOs have been stopped by the customs clearance officers at the airport or sea port. So AAC Executive Director advocates and intercedes by directly talking to them. Only then can they export the goods successfully.
- Cambodia has not ratified the ILO Convention 177 for homebased workers yet but we are already working closely with ILO Cambodia on monitoring migrant workers and on domestic violence. I think for the government it is not a priority yet because workers have the freedom to work anywhere.

Khantone Phamuang, Homenet Laos, on problems and difficulties

- Government has a lot to do with different groups such as Trade Union which is organized by the government; same with youth organization also by the government.
- MBO started in 2004. Difficulty is they are not government – initiated so working with different government agencies is a difficulty.
- Sometimes people do not also like to participate in our activities because we are not government and they do not want to deal with political issues.
- They are also afraid to attend Homenet meetings.
- We help them with registration problems. We engage them in workshops to learn new ways of doing things.
- HBW problems include low income, no capacity to buy raw materials, no market access, lack of vocational training.

Dr Ofreneo: Summing up SEA experience. But first let me say something about Viet Nam as we have a participant from Craft Link here. Craft Link is a fair trade group and a social enterprise which has strong marketing structures and produce high quality designs. One good thing we learn from them is their being self-sustaining and not dependent on foreign or development assistance because they pool the profits of their social enterprises to organize and capacitate their leaders on the ground using their own resources. Maybe for country homenet in need of finding ways to be sustainable, maybe Viet Nam is a model we need to look into and think about.

On commonalities and differences, we have to look at the context of advocacy and the political economic and cultural aspects are all equally significant. The economic aspect is important, especially when we look at globalization, flexibilization, outsourcing and the emphasis on profits for big business

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that usually come at the expense of flexibilized workers who suffer from low wages and no social protection. We need also to look at the character of government – whether or not it is all over the place, whether or not it can tolerate or accept civil society organizations, whether or not it is aware of informal and HBWs issues, whether or not they are sympathetic towards having laws not only for formal but also for informal workers as well as HBWs. Sometimes there may be laws but no implementation. There could be representation mechanisms but only trade unions are accepted and Informal workers still have to lobby for their seats.

But what is significant is that we are all doing ILO C177 advocacy. The role of ILO can be both positive and negative. We heard Director Jeff Lawrence saying it is a priority here in the Philippines. However, that is not the case for Indonesia where there is no knowledge on ILO C177 because the focus is on migration and nothing else. I think we need to lobby with ILO office because they are very influential in terms of tripartite decision making especially in pushing for ratification of ILO C177.

On lessons learned, advocacy really takes time. It has been twenty years since we started doing advocacy in the Philippines. And the problem is funders, because usually funds are provided only for two years so the problem of resources is also a need to be addressed. We need to widen our base for advocacy first starting with HBWs. We need to capacitate them to really think for and represent themselves. OSH is a good entry point for advocacy as seen in Thailand. Social protection is also a good entry point. You can start with the funeral fund like in Lao where they have a welfare fund which the workers can start on their own. On a wider level, HBWs can interact with other informal workers groups such as vendors, construction workers and waste pickers to strengthen the informal workers' movement nationally, subregionally, and globally. That will also strengthen our hand when we deal with formal trade unions which only know formal workers and tend to neglect home workers because they are women, not visible and hard to organize.

Part of the larger context is the gender issue which came out strongly during our sharing when we had our café. Women are still multiple burdened with domestic work, child care and household work; that goes to show that women mix reproductive work with productive work to earn a living while the men are hardly involved. That is something we also need to address since women dominate the homebased workers' networks.

The role of NGOs can both be positive and negative. They can facilitate organizing but they can also monopolize power especially when it comes to resource generation and representation. This has to be dealt with diplomatically and in a determined manner but the only people who can only do this are people on the ground who can assert their place on the table.

Since we are focusing on ILO C177 we need to do a tripartite approach and government is important and has at least two branches we have to deal with – executive, and legislative. The executive branch includes the ministry of labor, trade, customs, internal revenue because HBW issues are not only labor issues but economic and social issues as well. Even the Ministry of Women, the Commission on Women need to be greatly involved. For example the Lao Women's Union is an important partner to work with. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment has also been very supportive. Sometimes, we can go to the gender route more easily than through the labor route through trade unions and the ministries of labor.

For the ILO C177 ratification, we need the consent of Parliament and in the Philippine case, the upper house or Senate. If we lobby for other issues such as MACWIE, for social protection, amendment of laws, we really need to go to legislature and do networking including campaigns addressed to political parties and candidates for positions for them to know our agenda and so that they can bring it up when they are already in Congress. Employers are a hard nut to crack as proven in the case of the Philippines, where they were the ones who blocked the ILO ratification. We were advised then by Linda Wirth, Director of the ILO Southeast Asia Regional Office, that we need to attract employers and really convince them that this will redound to more profit in the sense that when HBWs have good health and have good wages and feel protected, this can lead to increased productivity and economic gains for them.

Also, the role of academe needs to be recognized, especially when doing research which is participatory and in partnership with grassroots. International development agencies are also very important. UNIFEM has also been supportive and we have other agencies such as FNV, GTZ, FES with which we need to work more closely. Media is also very effective as it has a good multiplier effect. HNSEA has a website getting 40,000 hits a month. Websites are helpful and popular and do not need a large amount of expense. Maybe the Malaysian experience can also provide us more information on how to do this.

Homenet South Asia panel presentation: Summing up the last ten years of policy advocacy in the subregion – nodal points

1. SKYPE with SAPNA JOSHI, HNSA Regional Coordinator: She started by presenting statistics on HBWs in South Asia and the need to advocate on issues faced by them. HBWs are the most vulnerable and are not visible because they work from home with poor working conditions such as no ventilation and lighting, no basic services, no social security, low educational attainment and inadequate skills, low income earnings, subjected to exploitation by contractors, no direct contact with markets, irregular and unstable home work, and vulnerability to occupational health issues. The conference where the Kathmandu Declaration was issued in 2000 was attended by representatives from South Asian governments, NGOs and Trade Unions. The Declaration stated that poverty and instability of homebased workers could be overcome by forming organizations of homebased workers, formulation of a national policy as per ILO Convention 177, provision of minimum protection, remuneration, health and safety and child care services. There is also a need to incorporate homebased workers in official statistics. The group urged the SAARC to recognize and address the issues of HBWs in the region.

Taking forward the Kathmandu Declaration, several initiatives were done including mapping of organizations, formation of networks, building alliances with trade unions and media, conducting surveys and studies, political consultations at the state and provincial levels, and holding dialogues with stakeholders. The 2007 Regional Conference on *Women, Work and Poverty* tried to address the issue of HBWs in the presence of policy makers from five countries. There was mention on the requirement for statistics on HBWs and emphasis was to form a National Policy on homebased workers.

At the Delhi conference in 2007, the template for the national policy was presented by the Homenets. Post conference activities included dialogues and consultations with homebased workers in the respective homenet. In India and Nepal, a task force was formed to discuss the national policy. The *Report of FES conference (Manila) for South Asia and South East Asia*.

Ministry of Labour in Bangladesh asked for a letter to put pressure for a national policy for HBWs. In India, an independent group was formed by the government specifically from the Ministry of Statistics. Advocacy issues mainly focused on data on HBWs, definition, registration, organizing and building their organizations.

2. Ms Laila Azhar from Homenet Pakistan presented the movement towards a national policy. Like in other countries, HBWs are not considered workers in the official figures. Majority of them are women homebased workers. The constitutional provision has 70 labour laws for own account workers which cover industrial relations, employment and service conditions, OSH, HRD and Technical Vocational Education and Training competency, social safety nets/social security, wages and remuneration. In conclusion, the existing labour laws which are applicable to formal workers, almost ignore majority of men and women working in the country either in agriculture nor in the informal sector. Labour regulations need to address vulnerabilities of working women and men and overcome bottlenecks in terms of capacity and capability. HBWs have seasonal and irregular work.

On the status of the national policy, Homenet Pakistan together with partners organized a series of provincial consultations on regional recommendations for HBWs. Collaborative efforts with major partners were exerted. Consolidated findings and results were then presented to the MoWD for incorporation into the national Policy and for ratification of ILO C177. Legislative initiatives since 2007 include passing of a Resolution to the National Assembly recognizing HBWs. The draft bill on HBWs was endorsed by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Women's Development. The Balochistan Provincial Assembly also passed a Resolution on HBWs. In 2008, the Homebased Workers Social Protection Act was passed, aiming to protect women working at home or as domestic workers and also the provision for facilities to working women. In 2009 a Resolution was passed during the Baluchistan Assembly and also at Punjab and at Sindh. The draft National Policy was finalized and handed over to the MoWD and MoLMP in November 2009. With the MoLMP on board in 2010, a coordination forum discussed the policy. Advocacy is at the provincial level after the 18 Amendment. With NCSW on board, the Advisor to the Prime Minister showed willingness to take the policy for Cabinet approval. Provincial Ministries have also committed to endorse the policy. The Legislation on Social Protection Bill is currently under review.

Important components of the national policy focus on registration of HBWS with corresponding mechanisms and processes; gender disaggregated data; inclusion in labor and employment policies and legislation; ensuring minimum, decent and fair wages; ensuring access to market channels and linkages, government monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Talking of prospects of the national policy, there is consistent endeavor from civil society groups. A democratic government allows the ministries to be involved in the process and implementation. There is strong advocacy among NGOs, and partner organizations and the significant number of women in Parliament plus the commitment of parliamentarians to raise the issue of HBWs in assemblies and the formation of core groups at the provincial level for advocacy and lobbying is an advantage. However, obstacles are likely along the way such as uncertainty of government policies and priorities, political and economic crisis, lack of interest among other legislators, lack of public awareness, and lack or inability to orient concerned departments and institutions on issues pertaining to HBWs. Hence our next steps focus on stronger advocacy and lobbying with government at all levels, having a common and unified advocacy agenda of CSO, the need to build pressure through advocacy campaigns at the grassroots

level, increased awareness and orientation on labor issues components of the National Policy and its implications, redefining the role of the Insurance Industry to provide coverage for the poorest of the poor, and statistical work to highlight visibility and profile of HBWs and the informal economy workers.

3. Sharing of good practices by Mr Om of Nepal: We work for the registration of HBWs. Homenet Nepal has developed a data base using software and equipment from the local government. We provide computer training for staff of local government. The role of the local government is to identify clusters of HBWs within municipalities and VDCs, collect data from these clusters and keep data updated. We work with trade unions and, we get help from academicians and scholars on our data base. The data base on HBWs is linked with the sample survey of the Center Bureau of Statistics.

4. Mr Hari Karki from the National Executive Committee of GEFONT did a presentation on Social Protection for homebased workers. He started by presenting the situation of HBWs as in other countries -- they are not organized, they work in different places, they are not recognized as workers and treated as own account or self-employed, and have no legal protection. Among GEFONT's initiatives include organizing which started in 1990 but was scattered and done under various federations. There was an attempt to organize separately in 2005. Then in 2007 there was a national gathering of HBWs wherein the Nepal Homebased Workers Union (NHBWU) was formed as a national trade union and federation under the Trade Union Act. After establishment of the NHBWU, a charter was submitted to the Ministry of Labor demanding recognition of HBWs as workers, providing coverage under the social protection system, and coverage by law and legal protection.

Talking about existing laws on HBWs, there is a Trade Union Act with the provision to the right to organize. There is no provision for minimum wage, working hours and weekly leave, sick leave, even maternity leave. There is no provident fund, no gratuity fund, no medical insurance, no accident benefit, and no coverage for labor inspection. The draft Labour Law recognizes HBWs as dependent workers due to GEFONT's initiatives. GEFONT pushed for recognition of any worker working for a single employer. However, the draft provision still did not cover all HBWs. The draft Labour Law on dependent workers contains provisions for the Trade Union Act to recognize the right to organize, minimum wage, leave benefits, provident and gratuity funds, medical insurance, accident benefit, and labor inspection coverage.

Homenet Nepal is exerting efforts for the finalization of the HBW policy, organize to the maximum possible, conduct rights based and skills training, facilitate registration in local bodies as informal workers, motivate HBWs to work for own social protection schemes like developing micro cooperatives, and build awareness and advocacy towards ratification of ILO C177.

5. SELIM REZA on Movement Towards National Policy & Ratification of ILO C177

Activities in relation to this involve organizing the HBWs in Bangladesh which is done through area meeting at the local level to inform them of their problems and issues. We involve other stakeholders such as leaders of HBWs, academe, local government elected officials, and NGOs working on HBWs. Thinking of how we overcome difficulties, again we can learn from each other. We have our short-term and long-term goals when we talk of where we want to end up years from now. It is also important to carry out good, solid and substantial research because we cannot do advocacy without good grassroots

research. Finally, we need to use all these efforts to do organizing and advocacy as effectively as possible with complete sincerity and unselfishness.

6. Mr. Dilanthe Withanage, Homenet Sri Lanka talked on issues and difficulties of HBWs in his country. Internal factors and problems relate to Homenet Sri Lanka. As an organization/ we registered in Sri Lanka only in 2008. In 2010. there was shift in the organization and we separated as an organization and we have limited funds to handle new huge tasks. Main external factors include the need for data on homebased workers. Every ten years we do national census. But for the last thirty years no census in some provinces were done. Negotiations with the Department of Statistics have been going on to get proper data on HBWs and we are still struggling on this. We also have to request the Department to include HBWS as a separate category of the employment sector. Another problem is the definition of HBWs as in other countries, despite the general definition of ILO C177.

Membership in Homenet of individuals is another problem because there is preference to register organizations of HBWs. I can see that in other countries even individual homebased workers are registered as members with the Homenets. We need to look into the possibility of this as most partners want to work with individuals rather than organizations of HBWs. Another problem is that HBWs are scattered in small villages around the country and organizing them is a critical factor for us.

National policy for HBWs and discussion at the national level are also a difficulty because government says it is not a priority. For the last five years, government has been working on eliminating terrorism and fighting against it. It kept homebased workers' issues aside. The changing of government and ministries is another difficulty because we need to make them aware of these HBWs issues. Working in urban cities in Sri Lanka is another difficulty because as an organization we have limited experience in working with urban poverty and urban issues.

WHAT WE NEED TO DO: Advocate for the Ratification of ILO C177, acceptance of the national policy by the government and to have possible interventions to support HBWs.

DONNA DOANE's summing up: The Delhi Conference declaration was turning point for South Asia. Good practices in Nepal were cited. Registration of HBWs plus focus on data collection, inclusion in statistics, working with trade unions and city governments and at the national level are the main problems faced by HBWs. Like in Nepal there has been effort in making contact with a lot of city governments and they work closely with HBWs.

For Pakistan, I am happy to hear that there is some movement forward but again there are problems they are still working on; e.g., HBWs are still not considered as workers. The policy conference in Delhi generated enthusiasm among policymakers. I can't overemphasize the importance of getting top policy makers in this high profile event. Also, working with trade unions and organizations in Pakistan is important. Governments keep on changing faces. We hear about governments that are frozen and not making decisions and this affects legislation and mobility in terms of moving forward.

For Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, problems and difficulties focus on getting recognition of HBWs' issues, their geographic locations make it difficult to organize, the rapid change in government and, getting basic data on HBWs. Political tension in both countries makes difficult moving forward. I like the *Report of FES conference (Manila) for South Asia and South East Asia.*

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statement when Selim said there is a BUREAUCRATIC DEADLOCK in Bangladesh. We need to go step by step on national policy issues.

In South Asia there is a pattern of “follow the leader” and there is more chance of other countries following if India moves forward. Last year we expected NEP to be first in taking step forward for policy advocacy.

A lot of awareness-raising needed. There is news lately on TV on garment workers in Bangladesh pointing to gaps in payment, working conditions, plus other things also going on in other areas. For embroidery workers at home in Bangladesh, we ask the HBWs what additional things do you add if your income goes up. But we cannot ask them what happens if your income goes down because there is nothing else to go down with. This is another point also for media to consider across the border -- awareness raising. We have to plan it carefully-- how to go about this because we have a lot of stories of HBWs from different countries.

In Pakistan, **Laila** added that there is a lot of media activity and advocacy going on for pushing the issues of HBWs and this is the first time that these issues go on air in radio programs. This is important because unless the issues get into the newspapers, they are not considered seriously.

Mr. Dilanthe: Another success we would like to highlight is during the past two months we wrote to all Parliament members of Sri Lanka to make them aware of HBWs and the National Policy, and within one month one member of Parliament submitted recommendations as his private suggestion and was able to get it tabled for discussion. That significantly got support from Parliament to go with the National Policy.

From Malaysia, **Ms Jeyasothy Arulambalam, Event Administration Coordinator of eHomemakers.net** briefed the participants on success factors to bring prospects of ICT use to the home. We started with middle class members working from home -- experts in ICT. The poor and in the rural areas, there are NGOs helping them. In 1997, we started the Salam Wanita project with a survey to understand the various disabilities and impairments of our women, in order to create a program tailored to their needs.

The results of a general survey of women ranging in age from 17 to 61, showed that: 4% had chronic ailments like Lupus; 4% were single mothers with low/no income; 7% had either disabled or chronically ill dependents; 11% were disabled; 16% were hearing-impaired; and 2% had been abandoned by their husbands.

It is obvious that our group cuts across a range of disadvantaged and marginalized communities. So how do we organize ourselves to work on a project? During the various networking and training sessions, seminars and focus group discussions, the talents and capabilities were identified, and various tasks were assigned accordingly so that women can work as teams in income-generation projects. They help each other and complement each other's skills, time and resources. As we receive no monetary support from any assistance programs, the implementation of skills-based training and activities is dependent upon support from generous individuals and corporations.

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In organizing our efforts, Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are a great boon to us. ICTs allowed us to distribute large orders of Eco-Baskets and offer services like typing and translation to our members. Eco-baskets are made from recycled magazines by the less privileged women. With ICT, we can even meet tight deadlines to service clients and customers. To do this, we developed an innovative application which enables orderers to automatically relay orders to all our participating weavers via mobile phones and then it automatically tallies those responses to the coordinator. The application, known as "Distributed Work Management Application" (DWMA), made it possible for us to win one of seven international award grants from the 2003 Pan Asia R&D Small Grant Award. The women are now able to work as a team to fulfill customers' requests without leaving their homes. In this way, we save a lot of cost because DWMA is from computer to hand phone. In October 2008, the Distributed Work Management Application (DWMA) made eHomemakers win the MSC Malaysia - Ericsson CR Innovation Awards (Professional Category). A small grant provided in August 2009 by Cradle Sdn Bhd, a local ICT incubator, further helps to improve on the DWMA for the use of 17 NGOs and 20 micro-enterprises. In October 2009, DWMA was one of the finalists for the APICTA (Asia Pacific ICT Awards) under the e-Community category.

On the projects we are doing, we are training immigrants to Malaysia to produce eco-basket to generate homebased income. We also promote recycled kitchen wastes but this is still under research. Another is rearing earthworm to be sold to organic farmers, friends and neighbors. We are developing and refining a computer based system used now by 17 NGOs, training staff and volunteers on management skills, enterprise management, organizing high profile conferences. This is the first time we conduct high profile events with global companies and government to promote work life balance in Malaysia, especially flexible hours by job sharing. We also offer placement for overseas work.

Our mainline activities provide 17,000 workers registration in the website and of this number, 70% are women. We also offer telephone training, free small business training to allow home business to get a wide exposure to our networks. Web resources have various sections in the portal like home business management, homebased profile, etc. We provide resources, develop experts and enable women to work from home, embark on entrepreneurship and sustain their home businesses. The Forum Board is an avenue for members to network, exchange ideas and experiences. Typical day to day posting is discussed, including posting homebased jobs on the net, and various e-books and resources are available for lifelong learning. We have been doing this annual Mothers Day celebration for the past nine years for women with disability and disadvantaged women to enjoy by staying in a hotel for two days with the support from Nestle Malaysia. For the women we show a lot of care, love and courage and motivate them to work because no support can come either from family or from their husbands. Disadvantaged women are those with psychological barriers, financial barriers, technological and business barriers.

We also have a homebased administrative program for ICT for women with disability such as speaking, customer care, ecobasket marketing website. Donations provide Salam Wanita women with equipment. We also have an Ecotourism project in Tambun Perak empowering farming communities and helping families who established homesteads to provide farm-based activities that attract tourists and increase their income. All our projects are from a lot of grassroots based research and we experiment before we test the concept. Innovation includes pro-poor schemes, middle class work schemes, and ICT DWMA. Social enterprise as a solution enables women to participate in self-help e-community through mobile

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technology. In marketing our products, 60% goes to the person who made the products, 20% goes to person doing marketing, while the other 20% is for administration cost.

Lunch break

Workshop I: Action Plan for Advocating ILO C177 and other Policies for Homebased Workers (country and sub-regional levels)

Presentation of Results of Workshops for Consolidation In Plenary into an Asia-wide Plan

REPORTS ON THE ACTION PLANS from South Asia (by **Mr Om from Nepal**) to address Issues of HBWs:

- Organize more Homebased Workers by strengthening, mobilizing MBOs to build real voices
- Develop linkages with concerned stakeholders who are providing services
- Expand networks
- Incorporate HBW rights in the Labor Act Reformation
- Urge government to include HBWs into the existing social security mechanism
- Make local government responsible
- Develop leadership of HBWs and MBO leaders, creating opportunities for potential MBOs
- Enhance the capacity of HBWs, MBOs and country Homenets
- Urge SAARC to intervene on policy matters of HBWs in the region
- Develop database at country and regional level ,develop and publish IEC materials and advocacy tools especially in local languages
- Sensitize policymakers, parliamentarians seeking political manifesto in place
- Advocate to the government to mainstream HBWs as labor force and to include HBWs in the national budget
- Declare International Homebased Workers Day – 20th Oct
- Mass media campaign
- Intervene to ensure fair trade for HBWs

SOME possible FUND RAISING schemes

- Develop and publish institutional profile with vision and mission
- Appeal
- Events
- Exhibitions
- Supermarkets
- Proposing for project funds from donors
- Make private sector responsible on CSR concept and model

Dr Ofreneo presented initiatives of Southeast Asian country homenet to raise funds, based on their just concluded workshop. In Thailand, tax money was put into the National Health Promotion Institute and Homenet was able to access ten million Baht for three years from sin taxes which were used for OSH programs for informal workers and do initiatives at the ground level. Taxes were used in a positive way for informal workers. This is another illustration of using OSH as an entry point in organizing and promoting visibility and voice. Cambodia and Vietnam use **business development** to support themselves. Craft Link has 2 pillars – one is on business aspects, i.e., product development, export

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Courtesy – Ms. Mylene Hega and Ms. Myrna Magbitang

promotion, financial management, accounting and shop management. Profits fit into the empowerment side wherein they organize indigenous women doing craft work on product development, OSH and other forms of capacity building. Craft Link was founded by people who saw that when funders left, the projects they funded collapsed. Vietnamese model is another model of self-reliance and sustainability showing how they were able to use their own resources and strength and this is worth sharing with the group.

SOUTHEAST ASIA

The Philippine group made a short presentation on how they were able to craft a national level campaign plan and came up with the following recommendations:

A. Updating the ILO C177 ratification process :

1. Tripartite Industrial Peace Council Resolution No. 1, series of 2008 recommending for the ratification
2. Parallel activities for Workers in the Informal Economy :
 - 2.a ISP family with trade unions almost did the ratification process but the employers rejected it because of the financial crisis in 1998
 - 2.b ISP member organizations were able to put ILO C177 ratification in the NAPC Informal Agenda since 1999 up to the present
 - 2.c. Homenet Philippines continue the advocacy to ratify :
 - 2.c.1 IEC among member organizations
 - 2.c.2 Conduct of several fora and consultations towards building alliances such as TIPC, legislators, other labor rights advocates, academe, and executive bodies of the government and also regional for a, community based session , among members
 - 2.c.3 Inclusion in the Tripartite Common Agenda on Decent Work
 - 2.c.4 Commitment by Sen. Miriam Santiago to expedite the ratification process as soon as it reaches the Senate

B. Next steps :

- a. Follow-up with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) to expedite formal submission to the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) and courtesy meeting with the new DOLE Secretary
- b. Protocol meetings with the Senate President, Senate Committees on Labor and Foreign Relations, and DFA Secretary
- c. Identify bridges to the Office of the President (Cong. Erin Tanada, Marge Juico, Akbayan thru Makalaya, Ex Sen Ernesto Herrera, Shalani thru Ernie Prieto and Valenzuela Women's organizations, and other possible allies
- d. Continued IEC
- e. Development of more in depth IEC materials to popularize ILO C177
- f. Development of communication plan to adjust to current situation now that we have the

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- tripartite endorsement
- g. Tri-media campaign
- h. Resource mobilization

Dr Ofreneo, reporting on the results of the HNSEA workshop: In Southeast Asia, we are starting at different levels. In Viet Nam, there is nothing yet on organizing HBWs, Cambodia is just starting to organize and still working to expand their niche and network with trade unions. Philippines and Indonesia are a bit ahead. Everyone starts from organizing HBWs. Then in developing linkages with stakeholders for ILO C177 ratification, we need to have three on our side: trade unions, governments and employers.

Number one is Trade unions have to be on our side. In Indonesia it is a big problem because Trade Unions thought HBWs are like scabs taking the work of the formal workers. This is like pitting one group of workers against the other. In Laos, trade unions are allied with government and Homenet Laos is networking with them through the entry point of OSH so that they can better understand HBWs issues.

Governments in some countries do not support anything that are in favor of migrants, domestic and HBWs because governments imply that they are on the side of business. That has to be addressed especially in Indonesia. Incorporation into the Labor law Reformation is a tactic that Homenet Lao wants to try. In Cambodia the government focus is on garment workers and the industry is a big export earner. And because there are HBWs in the garment industry, are there any labor laws that need influence from government pertaining to HBWs?

In some countries, we need to work with employers more. In Thailand, there is a big chance to have ILO C177 ratified if the Homeworkers' Act passes Parliament. However, Homenet Thailand still has to assure the consent of employers in the tripartite discussions.

ILO is also a concerned stakeholder and this is a problem in Indonesia because the ILO Office in Jakarta does not seem to be interested. For the rest ILO is an ally.

We forgot to mention ASEAN where we have lobbied for universal health care since 2005. ASEAN claims to be a sharing and caring community, why can we not make this an issue to provide universal health for all? ASEAN has also conducted training on ICT for homebased workers through initiatives of groups like those in Malaysia. ICT utilization can be a way for ASEAN bodies to know more about us. We have also attended the ASEAN People's Forum in the last couple of years, where we consistently brought up the need for the ratification of ILO C177.

It may be worthwhile to add that in the Philippines we have an Informal Workers Day declared through lobbying efforts of informal workers' groups. The whole first week of May is intended for all types of

workers -- homebased workers, rural workers, women and young workers, etc. but only May 1 (which formal workers in trade unions traditionally celebrate) is an official holiday which is discriminatory.

Comments from Beth Angsioco. It may be of interest for all to know that in the Philippines, the newly approved Magna Carta on Women has sections dealing on social protection, access to and rights to food production for women, basic services, etc. Perhaps the copy of the law can be sent to our friends in the next few days.

Diane Respall stated that the ILO is interested in the outcome of this event especially on advocacy for ILO C177. This will help identify possible support, if resources are available, at the regional or national level. Part of what the ILO does is to support promotion for ratification and/or better application of ILO C177, in law and in practice. Many recommendations arising from the presentations and groupwork discussions coincide with the provisions of ILO Convention 177 and Recommendation 184.

Dr Ofreneo explained HNSEA and HNSA coordinated efforts for pushing ILO C177 done through our FNV project and with UNIFEM. The ILO Campaign is really an advocacy project and each country gets a small amount of money to keep the issue alive. The purpose of this two-day workshop is to see that it is possible not only in the Asian region but also worldwide. On the question from Diana Respall as to whether the ILO C177 campaign will be on national, regional, subregional, or global levels, I think it is all four. Country homenet can have the autonomy to approach each ILO office in their respective countries and see how cooperation can be possible.

The ILO-DANIDA in the late 80s funded the rural women homeworkers project in three countries, managed from the Bangkok office. If the coverage of the ILO Bangkok office is for the whole of Asia then maybe we can discuss this with Sapna and others from Homenet South Asia. We can coordinate and do a big proposal to move things forward.

There was a question from Ms Beth Angsioco about membership of Homenet Philippines in Homenet Southeast Asia.

Dr Ofreneo responded by saying that we are in the process of formalizing Homenet Philippines. Historically, it was PATAMABA which affiliated with Homenet Southeast Asia because of the ILO-DANIDA project. But we see that the time is ripe for Homenet Philippines, which includes PATAMABA, to develop as a legal entity from being a loose coalition. In Homenet Southeast Asia, we have our Constitution and By Laws which say that one country should have one network represented in HNSEA. PATAMABA is willing to step aside and have Homenet Philippines there. But the question is Homenet Philippines has to be a registered organization so it is up to us now --how we can have the legal personality and get into HNSEA as one whole group. We are currently in the process of discussing and doing things regarding its legal personality.

In other countries, Homenets started out as a coalition of NGOs in Thailand and Indonesia. In the Philippine case it is different in initiation because it was an MBO—PATAMABA – which emerged since the beginning. It was later that we saw the need to have other groups to have a critical mass for advocacy because grassroots women like those in PATAMABA need a lot of support in technical assistance, in writing and lobbying, and coalescing with other groups, and we realized that coalescing with other organizations is a fruitful undertaking. We are now in transition and this can be discussed in our next meeting. As you may have noticed Philippine participants here are not all from PATAMABA but from the other organizations we work with. With registration and getting a legal entity, Homenet Philippines can apply to enter HNSEA as a legally recognized coalition.

LAILA from Pakistan added that in 2007 there was this policy conference that created a position to create a national policy. As far as South Asia is concerned we can also arrange sort of a conference where we can involve the state. I propose that ILO can arrange for another policy conference maybe next year or this year where we can invite government machineries from all South Asia and Southeast Asian countries regarding this on how things can be done.

Ms Diane Respall said she will inform ILO regional office about this proposed policy conference.

Concluding and Synthesizing Observations from Dan Gallin

The group deserves congratulations for having this workshop and the political will emerging from cooperation between HNSA and HNSEA. This is a great step forward in building an international movement. We have learned much from each other. Unity from diversity would be much stronger. Another strong and welcome point made here is moving forward with the unions. I think it is wrong to exaggerate the difference between informal workers' organizations and trade unions because the borders between formal and informal workers are moving constantly. Formal workers can become informal workers overnight as they lose their jobs. We are actually talking about the same people and the issue here is fighting for workers' rights both in the formal and informal economy. This also means you should attempt to organize yourself as unions. This means adopting the union culture which is **solidarity - the concept of "one for all and all for one"**. And that is the very essence of the union culture and that should be the essence of the culture of the organizations that you are trying to develop.

There is an issue on the relationship between national policy and ratification of the Convention. Is the national policy a first step towards the goal of ratification or is it divergence or a pre-emptive way of diverting attention from ratification? By all means you should welcome progressive national policies but not as a substitute for the ratification of the Convention. The ratification has to remain to be the goal because it entails government obligations as a tool and one is international accountability. Governments that ratify the Convention commit themselves on how the Convention is applied to national laws and policies in terms of implementation and adoption. This international accountability does not exist when the government adopts a national policy. I suspect that in some cases it is possible that some governments might proclaim a national policy in order to escape submitting to international

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monitoring and therefore I think we must continue to insist on ratification of the Convention and the adoption of legislation in conformity with it.

There is a global aspect of our work towards an international movement. I mentioned the perspective of rebuilding Homenet International. We are all aware of the way Streetnet was done, the way domestic work was organized. The global effort to achieve economic security for home workers will obviously have success if you can organize internationally and I hope you can count on this in the coming months. I would like to remind you that WIEGO is at your disposal and at your service. You can use it as a tool to build your global organization and advance the general interest of your members internationally.

ZONE NARITO: Can I ask all homebased workers to come forward and give their comments, insights and share them after the tea break.

Ms DELILAH RIVERA from RISC Philippines considered this event very interesting with learning from other participants especially on the success story of the eHomeworkers using ICT for homebased and disadvantaged women especially in marketing their products and services.

Ms Lamphan from Homenet Laos (whose remarks were translated by Khantone Phamuang) said she is happy to come and participate in this event and know about Homenet Asia. She further said: I heard of different experiences of homeworkers and also learned about ILO C177. I hope in the near future Homenet Laos can achieve ILO C177. Thank you for your smiles and friendship though I cannot speak in English.

Ms Apsara Maharjan, a homemaker from Nepal (whose remarks were translated by Om Thapaliya) knew about Homenet a year ago and entered as an HBW. After learning the definition of HBW, she organized and gathered 200 homebased workers engaged in various activities of whom she now the leader. Women have so many responsibilities and also have to be engaged in home work so we need a common workplace. She learned from this workshop about minimum wage which can benefit HBWs. They need and want jobs for own account workers. She expects the policy will come soon and protect us.

Ms Neazee Sultana, a homemaker from Bangladesh (whose remarks were translated by Selim Reza) and Vice President of Homenet Bangladesh, expressed her appreciation for attending the workshop. This workshop provided her with more knowledge about HBWs which will enable her to assist more HBWs develop their products, address their problems and so on.

Ms WEWALPANAWA GAMAGE KANCHANA from Sri Lanka feels that ILO C177 is very important for HBWs in her country. She said: We are happy that it is now at Parliament level and they are discussing the national policy. I think we face problems in market and technology. I will be able to share knowledge and experience I gained from this workshop.

Ms Chhoeurng Sreymach from Cambodia (whose remarks were translated by Keang Sapbay) who is an HBW also trains other HBWs. She was very happy to come over. She said: I now realize I have the full right to make my choice now being an HBW. Before, when I used to work as a garment worker in a
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factory, I had to ask permission from my boss. But now I can decide for myself. A lot of experiences will be shared with my group when I go back home especially when I train them for skills to enable them to get enough income.

Ms Pensri Chuenwong from Thailand (whose remarks were translated by Suntaree Saeng-ging) expressed appreciation for the chance to come over, to learn how to apply learning and improve the situation of HBWs. Just like the other HBWs here with us, we thought nothing about workers' rights and OSH but instead focused on how to keep the family going through earnings from being HBWs. I now will be able to help organize HBWs and to learn more about ILO C177. These will all contribute to improvement of lives of HBWs. I promise to continue to work and continue to be a leader in my own country.

Peni Budi Astuti from Indonesia (whose remarks were translated by Daniel Stephanus) thanked the hosts and organizers. She said: This event enabled me to know about ILO C177, social protection advocacy, and also fund raising. I was able to meet and share success stories with other HBWs from other countries. I now know more about organizing and how to further develop Homenet Indonesia. I hope that with learnings from this meeting, I can form the movement for the social protection of HBWs in Indonesia. Another important learning for us is that we can join trade unions as a workers' movement.

Ms Nguyen Thuy Phuong from Craft Link, Viet Nam thanked the organizers. Being new in the group, I was able to learn from and about HNSA and HNSEA.

Ms Jeyasothy Arulambalam from Malaysia said the Government does not recognize Homenet yet nor do we have trade unions. Nevertheless, we hope we could move together towards our common goal.

For the participatory evaluation portion, Ms PRIMAR JARDELEZA from PATAMABA-Homenet Philippines facilitated the group exercise wherein there were four posters on the wall with different forms of the emoticon. The group was then asked to write on metacards how they feel about the whole 2-day event by completing the phrases how they felt about the two-day activities.

Ms. Kristina Birke, Director, Regional Cooperation for Gender Equality, FES recapped the group's evaluation based on the metacards and they are as follows



I am **HAPPY** because....

- A very fruitful workshop transpired, having a lot of good inputs
- I understand more about each country's experiences and know better HBWs that will enable me to work better in helping address HBW issues and problems in Bangladesh
- I met new friends and learned about the homeworkers' movement around Asia
- Intensive discussions about ILO C177 and HBWs' issues and concerns
- I met friends and got to know that advocacy efforts are moving fast
- It fostered friendly relationships among all of us, pushed us to learn and move towards a common advocacy

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- I met all HBWs groups, knew what are were doing and how they help women in their respective countries
- Though I am confused because of the huge task ahead, I am sure there will be lots of problems but with this kind of collective effort I am sure we will all find solutions
- It is my first time to attend a program about HBWs' experiences and activities and everybody was active
- I now know better about HBWs and Homenet
- I got the chance to be invited in this event
- Excellent idea to bring South Asia and Southeast Asia together and also great food
- Had a chance to learn about organizing
- The workshop will help in advocating towards ratification of ILO C177
- Gain new insights
-



I am SAD because

- Could have been better if there were field visits included in the program
- Time was so short
- My colleague from Pakistan could not make it due to flooding in Pakistan
- Agenda is too tight, cannot read power point presentations in a few seconds, many people talking too fast. This needs an extra day
- We still don't have Homenet to help HBWs especially to voice out on fair wages
- Language barrier does not enable me to interact directly with everybody
- I learned that there is still much more to learn from others and yet time was so short
- Difficulty of ratification of ILO C177 in SEA especially in Indonesia
- There is no dancing



I am ENLIGHTENED because of

- Useful information about various country experiences of homebased workers
- Learning about MBOs in SEA
- Great knowledge on Homenets, ILO, FES and the great job they are doing
- The opportunity to learn and share from the experiences of the two regions - South East Asia and South Asia
- Learning more about ILO C177 but still need more time
- Gave me enough self-confidence to speak and present in an international event such as this
- Learn about self-reliance from own business such as the experience of Craftlink of Viet Nam



I feel UNCERTAIN / CONFUSED because....

- Concepts and terms are used interchangeably
- No ice breaker to wake me up and lessen boredom

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- I can't understand why labor law cannot recognize HBWs and make provisions for them to have equal rights with formal workers

Closing Remarks by Kristina Birke. It is very encouraging to take this direction. From the inputs, I can see diverse experiences and cultures coming from different political, economic and social backgrounds. In the beginning I thought it was too much, but when you think about it going home you can realize and also based on practical experiences, everything will fall into place. It is really difficult to do and from a regional perspective, Homenet is one of the true regional partners and we recognize the fact that there is not much organization in this field from this gender equality perspective working at this level all the time. That is one privilege and also we can bargain and interact with regional organizations such as SAARC, and maybe ASEAN on opportunities that may arise. Homenet is one of our organized partners and they can do great conferences together with us because we share the same social values – social justice, solidarity, social and equal rights. We also work with ILO on this together with Trade Unions. I also strongly encourage you to work with FES in collaborating with Trade Unions because they have a wealth of experience in that field. We know that it is not an easy task but we can find a way to bring this two worlds together and get a common ground.

I also found it interesting that someone said you “can look at government issues, issues of the formal sector, the economy, what kind of economy is doing for our future, for our country or for our region which is a highly political issue”. We are doing more work in the gender unit on these big issues, and on what to do then. If an export based economy model is favoring the sector then we can work on that. We don't always agree with them. How do we organize on the ground, regionally, nationally, how do we make this a big movement?

Ms Damyanty. There are a few points I would like to reiterate : First, advocacy has to be seen in the context of economic, political and social concerns which came across all presentations. Another is that there are different levels at each country HomeNet, a compendium of these. MBOs need to organize not only for economic reasons but for other reasons such as political and social aspects. Another strong point that came in is on standards for workers- not being divided as NGOs, MBOs, and women. But of course seen as not giving up the aspirations we want as workers. Advocacy is not only meant to be for outsiders. Within organizations it is important that more and more people within the organization need to be sensitized on social protection. Employers' aspect is also important as we have seen in South Asia and in India where numbers played a big role and that it has to be numbers with standardization and not numbers alone. About Dan's statement about the Bulgarian experience as windows of opportunities which have to be capitalized on and it was possible to ratify the Convention due to certain circumstances, I disagree a bit with you on that. If the opportunity is there to push through for a national policy, that can be seen as a window of opportunity and with the Convention as an overall aim which we should be working towards.

It was an enriching experience for me and I would like to thank HNSEA and FES Philippines because as you all know this was supposed to be in Bangkok but due to some reasons, we had to shift to the Philippines. FES Philippines has been very helpful in all logistics. Thank you very much.

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Dr. Ofreneo: To express our appreciation for this successful conference, may I present some small gifts to the people in the gender project of FES in Delhi who encouraged us to make the proposal and now we have this. From the beginning FES has been very supportive to Homenet Philippines and Thailand and now even at the subregional level. The relationship has been very fruitful. Allow me to present these cards made by homebased workers in Cambodia and table runners made by indigenous women in the Philippines to Kristina and Damyanti. We also wish to present the same to Benita Coelho of HNSA for their support to get the South Asian people here. We also wish to express our appreciation to Diane Respall from ILO Manila, who sat with us for the entire two days and joined the Philippine workshop.

Benita Coelho on behalf of HNSA, also expressed her vote of thanks to the organizers and to everybody in the workshop. Ideas for making MBO as a tool for advocacy will be brought home by all.

Zone Narito led the Closing Ceremonies. Participants from all countries were asked to write on metacards their commitments in one to three words for example, "Forward the HBW of Laos". To the sound of a background music, participants were also given flowers and together with stating their commitment statement they were asked to lay it down on the map of Asia as the rest were dancing around.

Bangladesh: Make Visible the Invisible

India: Go for It!

Philippines: Forward Social Protection for All

Indonesia: Extraordinary

Cambodia: See you again!

Laos: ---- Forward, HBWs!

Thailand: Keep on going!

Prepared by:

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HNSEA