



## DELEGATION REPRESENTING HOME-BASED WORKER'S RIGHTS, ATTENDED THE 105TH INTERNATIONAL LABOUR CONFERENCE (ILC) ON GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS IN GENEVA

A WIEGO led delegation of 16 people attended the 105th ILC in Geneva from 29th May to 10th June, 2016. The theme of the conference was 'Decent work in global supply chains'.

The delegation aimed to represent and voice concerns of home-based workers, seeking recognition for them in global supply chains.

Prior to the ILC, the WIEGO network developed a platform of demands on decent work for homeworkers in global supply chains. This helped to strategically outline the issues faced by home workers in global supply chains, at the plenary session of the ILC. Dialogues with National Trade Union were initiated as a part of lobbying to get their concurrence on homeworkers. As a result, the delegation was able to successfully raise issues of home workers at the plenary session. Main areas of discussion and inputs revolved around the poor recognition of home-based workers as labour in different countries, menial wages paid in piece rate rather than minimum labour wages, lack of social security and collective bargaining strength, etc. With the help of Chairperson Ms. Catelene Passchier from FNV, the homemaker's agenda in supply chains was supported and discussions of homeworkers in the worker's group was ably stimulated.

**Key demands of a delegation at the ILC centred around the acceptance of homeworkers as part of global supply chains, enhancing their stance and position, the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining which would translate into improved social security and employment benefits, decent remuneration equivalent to minimum wages and, the ratification and implementation of Convention 177 for homeworkers.**

A significant milestone was achieved, with the inclusion of homeworkers in the "Concluding remarks on decent work in global supply chains".

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**Prabha Pokhrel**

On the advocacy strategy required to liaison with Global Trade Unions Federations and National Trade unions: Ms. Prabha Pokhrel, HomeNet South Asia representative at ILC 2016 shares her views

Bring homeworkers in Trade Unions agenda, formally

Further research should be undertaken on home-based worker's economic contributions, investments needed to enhance their skills, advocate for home-based worker rights and enhance recognition of these workers through policy and legislation.

The issues of homeworkers have to be highlighted and shared amongst the donor network, which would be able to contribute meaningfully and support research related to them.

Recognition of homeworkers and their issues is the first step to initiate work in this direction.

The distinction between homeworkers, and own account workers should be made clear at all levels.

Trade unions need to be intrinsically involved in the informal sector, as in coming years employment will be diversified to more informality. Homeworkers need to be registered with trade unions with a formal agenda, since home workers are increasingly getting informal work such as telework, electronic assembling and office work from home.

Action advocacy should be strengthened with more data and research, which will substantiate demands and make stronger claims to the support required by homeworkers.



**Zehra Khan, Pakistan**

Attending ILC as part of the delegation representing home-based workers, was a unique and exciting experience. It helped me tremendously to gain an insight on the process of making conclusions and recommendations at such a prestigious international platform.

It was interesting for me to realise how the consultations debated living wages while home-based workers receive piece rate wages. I feel that for future work, it is important to differentiate between the two wages strategically. The most extraordinary thing for me was to see home workers at the bottom of the supply chain being discussed and acknowledged at such a high level consultation

Chris Bonner led the delegation at the ILC. In conversation with her, HNSA learnt how the 'conclusions at ILC, concerning decent work in global supply chains' can be taken forward for organizing, mobilising, lobbying and networking for homeworkers globally.

She said " there is an urgent need to organise homeworkers at a global level. Along with organising home workers, it is essential to build relationships with various worker groups and trade unions to discuss homeworkers in supply chains.

The 'Conclusions' at ILC is the start of a journey on fruitful deliberations regarding homeworkers in supply chains, and a way towards an international legal instrument. The conclusion is an apt tool to advocate for the visibility and recognition of homeworkers in supply chains. To strengthen advocacy efforts, it is important to bring homeworkers and their issues in the main agenda of ACTRAV, ITUC and National Trade unions. Moving forward, a campaign on C.177 can be initiated, outlining milestones to be achieved over the next five years (2020).

**Chris Bonner**



*Excerpts of the discussions can be accessed @ [www.homenetsouthasia.net](http://www.homenetsouthasia.net)*

# ENGAGEMENT OF HOME-BASED WORKERS IN INDUSTRIAL WORK

## Instances from India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan

### INDIA : Homeworkers engaged in assembling surgical equipment in Ahmedabad



The exploitation of home workers involved in assembling syringes for medical use, is glaring in an industrial area of Ahmedabad. Visits to the factories and conversations with homeworkers brought their story to light.

These women are engaged with two different kinds of processes to assemble the syringe; one is of fixing the chamber and the other entails fixing the regulator. They avail of work directly from these factories, with no involvement of contractors or middlemen. According to the women, work is available throughout the year. They maintain no personal records of their assembled deliveries, payment dues or days spent on work, but the factory keeps these records.

The job requires each worker to visit the factory twice a day to pick up raw material and the day's work is delivered to the

factory every evening. The raw material itself weighs a hefty 8kg. or more which is carried by these women themselves. Obviously, no transport costs are borne by the factories.

Assembling one chamber takes not more than a minute and approximately 8 kg. can be assembled in two hours. In a day, women claimed to be able to assemble 16 kg. chambers. While those engaged in assembling regulators would be able to do not more than two 'sacks' in a day. Women engaged in assembling chambers earn Rs. 64 for 16 kg. (less than a 1\$ a day) a day while women engaged in assembling regulators could earn Rs. 23 per sack, amounting to an approximate Rs. 46 per day wage. On an average, the home-based worker earns around Rs. 5000 per month.

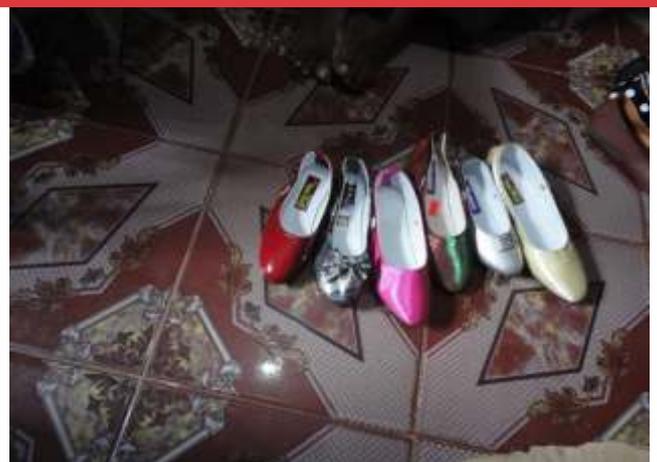
These low wages, the difficulties of transporting raw material, related (and uncompensated) travel costs and the unrecognised hard work put in by these vulnerable homeworkers, who are at the bottom strata of supply chain is a matter of serious concern, which needs to be addressed.

### SRI LANKA : Shoe making and repairing

The Regional Study on Risk and Vulnerability of Home-based Workers in South Asia, profiled home workers involved in shoe making and repairing from urban areas in and around Kandy town in Sri Lanka. 45 respondents shared details on this trade.

It was found that most of the home workers invoked in this job were from the Tamil community, mostly men and hindus, residing in the same areas since birth. Almost all the homeworkers were making shoes for more than six years.

Their houses were comparatively small with several occupants living under one roof, with very poor ventilation. The living conditions become even worse since a part of the house is being used for production.



They work for at least 7-10 hours a day and are piece rate workers. They earn around \$130 a month during peak seasons. It was interesting to learn that work is available to them throughout the year.

The workers are predominantly dependent on contractors and the most common means of arranging their work is through middlemen or individual contractors. Findings pointed to the fact that steady business transactions need to be established for the security of these workers in the supply chain.



Shamim Bano is a resident of Godhra Colony in New Karachi. She has been a home worker since the last 16 years engaged in cropping and buckle pressing on shirts (this is done by a machine).

She gets the work directly from factory owners. Earlier, she had to procure the raw material from the factory but since the last four years, the raw material is provided to her at home. This is because the employer works only with her.

She works for 12-18 hours to prepare 24 dozen shirts, a day. Depending on the work, she is paid Rs. 6 for cropping and Rs. 12 for buckle press work and is able to earn between Rs. 100-150, per day. To undertake this work, she is also supported by her two daughters who do not get compensated.

The work is available depending on the work load, which is approximately 20 to 25 days of the month. Her monthly income amounts to around measily Rs .2500 to 3000. The employer provides her with the cloth, buckle and press machine, while she bears a cost of around Rs. 25 to 30.

She is one of the oldest active members of HBWWF in the area. She has been able to successfully negotiate an increase of 2 to 4 rupees (according to the work order) per dozen, with her employer.

# HOME BASED WORKERS CELEBRATE 20 YEARS OF CONVENTION 177 ACROSS SOUTH ASIA

Home Net South Asia's member organisation hosted a number of events across South Asia, to mark and celebrate twenty years of the International Labour Organization (ILO)'s Convention 177 on homework.

## ● Bangladesh

Bangladesh Home-based Workers' Rights Network (BHWRN), an informal network of 9 organisations in Bangladesh (member of HomeNet South Asia) organised a rally in front of National press Club in Dhaka.

Home-based Worker Leaders stated their demands to the Government of Bangladesh to sign Convention 177.

**Slogans read, “Now the time has come to enact laws and policies to protect the rights of Home Workers”.**



*Human chains formed at the National Press Club in Dhaka, demanding policies and laws to protect homeworkers.*

## ● India

56 home-based workers affiliated with LEARN from India, got together to celebrate the day. The celebration involved women in colourful attire 'dressed to the nines', singing songs, shedding tears to pain and, still cheerful to talk and demand that

**“home-based work should be recognised by the employers and the Government and appropriate facilities should be made available, with the powerful C-177 as the guiding framework”.**



*The congregation of home based workers celebrating C 177*

## ● Pakistan

HomeNet Pakistan organised various events like press conferences, consultations, study circles and peace walks to observe the 20th anniversary of Convention 177 on homework, and to demand for policy changes related to home based workers in Punjab and Sindh, for the recognition and safety of home-based workers.

**HBWs leaders Samina, Munaza and Zia ul Qamar said, “We face severe hardships but there are no laws and schemes to protect us. This needs to change.”**



*Hand in Hand with Home Based Workers' a campaign by HBWs and CS representatives in Pakistan.*

Home Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) called a press conference to draw attention to Convention 177, to safe guard the rights of home-based workers. The press conference focused on the increasing informality of the labour sector owing to globalization. Leaders stated facts about increasing work from factories to homes in trades of shoe manufacturing, textiles, electrical appliances, sports goods, automobiles, etc. Data on homeworkers found in the lowest rung of global supply chains and the unjust practices they deal with in terms of bearing production costs like rent, electricity, gas, etc. were shared. They demanded home workers to be legally recognised, and for contractors and middlemen to be involved in their registration.



Leaders of women home-based workers at the Press Club in Karachi on 20th June, 2016

## ● Nepal

A seminar on "Revisiting ILO C 177" was organised jointly by 6 member organisations in Nepal, on 10th July. Deepak Bohara, Honourable Labour Minister was the chief guest along with Joint secretary of Ministry of Women and Children. The president of Joint Trade Union Coordination Committee was also present as a special guest along with 100 homeworkers. Ms. Chandni Joshi, Enforcer, HomeNet South Asia chaired the session.

The fruitful half day seminar received a commitment from the Labour Minister on generating home-based worker's data (based on specific indicators) in the upcoming labour survey of 2016, and to put in place a task force for the way forward.

**Referring to C.177, he said, “Nepal is open to ratification, however, an in-depth analysis on its implementation is required. In this regard, it is important for a Regional/SAARC level discussion on the pros and cons of the ratification of C177.”**



# STUDY ON INVOLVEMENT OF HOME-BASED WORKERS IN GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAINS



HomeNet South Asia with the technical support of WIEGO conducted a Study on Global Supply Chains. The research aimed to gather concrete evidence from South Asia, on the work and issues of women home workers engaged in global supply chains for production..

Several challenges were faced during the study, which included identifying home workers involved in global supply chains, issues related to their invisibility and establishing connections with international brands. Even once home workers were identified, they were reluctant to participate in the study and provide information on sensitive aspects like incomes, owing to a lack of confidence and trust.

The study identified few international brands. Some of them included an Australian menswear brand, Italian sports wear company, European fashion chains and others producing women clothing and woollens. It was established that many home workers are connected to global chains and make complete or partial products.

**Homeworkers engage in labour intensive processes of supply chains, for value additions in final products. They are involved in smaller processes of the final product. Their work usually is of stitching buttons, stitching parts of collars, button hole making, trimming, knotting, foam removing, folding, checking, packing, embellishment embroidery and knitting. Final products include Hosiery-T shirts, shorts, sports T-shirts, jackets, track pants, headbands, ladies fashion-embroidered panels and accessories and knitted products, among others.**

## Other study findings

- 1 Homeworkers bear the cost of production equipment (cone needle, trimmer, bags, and scissors), space and electricity and transaction costs like transport and phone bills, leaving them with very low profit margins
- 2 Payments are delayed by month or two months and they have no say in this matter
- 3 Occupational health issues like body aches, eye related issues, respiratory problems, etc. are rampant among homeworkers owing to poor quality production spaces
- 4 No records are maintained by home workers which results in exploitation and unjust practices

## HAPPENINGS AT HNSA

Bandana Rana has become the First Nepali candidate to serve in the United Nations Committee for the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Her term will span two years. HomeNet South Asia conveys best wishes to her.

Ms. Firoza Mehrotra (Strategic Advisor, HomeNet South Asia) and Ms. Shalini Sinha (WIEGO) presented the Global Supply chain study conducted by HomeNet South Asia, at the Feminist Economist forum on 23rd July, 2016. Access the presentation at [www.homenetsouthasia.net](http://www.homenetsouthasia.net)