

Home-based Workers Raise Their Voices

Impact: Home-based workers, the majority of whom are women, constitute an invisible workforce that numbers in the millions globally, but which has very little protection, representation or access to social security available to other workers in the economy. HomeNet has built networks across South Asia and Southeast Asia to begin bringing the realities of home-based workers into the public eye. Through a series of events in 2011, HomeNet South Asia was successful in raising the profile of home-based workers in the national press in Pakistan, and building the confidence of workers to speak out about their situation.

I, Zarina Ghulam, (26 years) am a home-based worker and live with my husband and 3 children in Sialkot, Pakistan. My husband does daily wage work so the income is not enough to meet the family expenses. I am illiterate but strongly feel that I should contribute in some way to improve our economic condition. Therefore I do embroidery work and manage poultry at home to increase the family income. I am leading a miserable life but I don't want the same for my children. I am working hard just to give a better future to my children. I want to give them higher education so that they may become officers one day. Home-based workers should be given social security and all other facilities like other formal workers. If we are given these facilities, we will be leading a better life and our work will improve. Who will provide social security to us?

In urban areas, home-based workers dwell in slums where lack of basic amenities makes their living and working conditions difficult and makes them vulnerable to ill health and low productivity.

HomeNet South Asia (HNSA) is working to improve the lives and livelihoods of poor, urban home-based workers by helping them organize and form membership-based organizations. Through Inclusive Cities, HNSA also builds the capacity of organizations and individuals. It also strives to determine what urban policies and practices can affect home-based workers and then sensitize the city officials and municipal corporations to the issues.



photo: HomeNet South Asia

The Inclusive Cities programme for home-based workers is being implemented in eight South and South-east Asian countries namely India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Cambodia, Laos and Philippines, Thailand.

In September, members of HomeNets from India, Nepal, Pakistan and Thailand met in Lahore, Pakistan to discuss strengthening their networks and improving the lives of home-based workers, mostly women, in their countries.

The challenges on their agenda include expanding organization into all parts of their countries and promoting social security benefits for these workers.

The conference did more than provide a crucial opportunity to exchange knowledge and strategize – it garnered considerable media attention, increasing visibility for the issues. Home-based workers shared the challenges of they face and their visions for tomorrow in three Pakistan Today articles that told their stories and raised their visibility across a large audience.

*“Registration of home-based workers remains elusive”
Pakistan Today, 21 September 2011*

The speakers at a seminar organised by Home Net Pakistan in collaboration with Labour Education Foundation said the government should honour its international commitments to recognise labour rights and implement the decisions of ILO conventions C 177 for home workers and ILO convention C189 for domestic workers in letter and spirit to improve the informal working sector in Pakistan,



photo: HomeNet South Asia

particularly home based workers. The seminar was organised on “Recognition of labour rights in the informal sector: ratification of ILO C 177 and C 189”. Women rights activist and former MNA Mehnaz Rafi, economist Dr Qais Aslam, Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO) Regional Head Salman Abid, **Home Net Pakistan Executive Director Ume Laila Azhar**, labourers’ leader Farooq Tariq and Senior Programme Officer Javed Pasha and District Labour Officer Sheikh Sabir among others participated in the seminar.

“Vulnerable female home-based workers finding it hard to make both ends meet” by Xari Jalil

Pakistan Today, 21 September 2011

Home-based workers occupy a defenceless position in the economy, not just in Pakistan but also in Thailand, Nepal and India. Poonsap Tulaphan from Thailand, manager of the Foundation of Labour and Employment Promotion, Bangkok, said that around 50 percent of Thailand’s informal sector is made of women, many of whom work from their homes. **Sapna Joshi**, regional coordinator for HomeNet India highlighted some issues in India during her meeting with the media. India is one of the main sources of products by home-based women workers globally.

“HomeNet works for women home-based worker rights”

Pakistan Today, 21 September 2011, by Xari Jalil

In a South Asian consultation, members from India, Nepal, Pakistan and Thailand came to Lahore to begin their session on how to improve their network and how to bring about betterment for the women

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August 2011

Note: Full articles available at:

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2011/09/registration-of-home-based-workers-remains-elusive/>

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2011/09/vulnerable-female-hbws-finding-it-hard-to-make-both-ends-meet/>

<http://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2011/09/home-net-works-for-women-hbw-rights/>

Inclusive Cities project: Inclusive Cities focuses on support and capacity building for membership-based organizations (MBOs) of the working poor in the urban informal economy. Through organizing, advocacy, and policy analysis, informal workers are making their needs heard within urban planning processes. Partners in the Inclusive Cities project include MBOs of the working poor and technical support organizations committed to improving the situation of the working poor. For more information, and to access research and publications on inclusive urban planning and capacity building tools for MBOs, visit: www.InclusiveCities.org