inclusive Cities

IEMS Informal Economy Monitoring Study

Home-based Workers in Bangkok, Thailand

by Zoe Horn, Boonsom Namsonboon and Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan

July 2013

Informal Economy Monitoring Study: Home-based Workers in Bangkok, Thailand

Field research for this report was conducted in Bangkok between June - October 2012. The Bangkok Research Team consisted of: Sayamol Charoenratana, Amornrat Kaewsing, Boonsom Namsomboon, Chidchanok Samantrakul, and Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan.

Authors
Zoe Horn is a researcher and analyst based in Sydney, Australia. She is a graduate of the University of Toronto and the London School of Economics. Her research and writing has focused on economic crises and its impacts on informal livelihoods, particularly those of women in the global south. She was the coordinator and report author of WIEGO and the Inclusive Cities' Global Economic Crisis Study, which contributed to the launch of the Informal Economy Monitoring Study.

Boonsom Namsomboon is a researcher and community development worker based in Bangkok, Thailand. Her education background is education, sociology, gender and development. She has worked with informal workers for more than 30 years and her recent work has focused on social protection for Thailand's home-based workers as well as public health advocacy and HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention in Thailand.

Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan is a social worker based in Bangkok, Thailand. She has more than three decades of experience working with women and informal workers in Thailand. In her current role as director of HomeNet Thailand (Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion) her work focuses on the legal recognition and social protection of informal workers across Thailand.

Acknowledgements

This study was initiated and led by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) as part of its research co-ordination role within the Inclusive Cities project. The authors of this study would like to thank the IEMS's International Coordinator, Imraan Valodia as well Martha Chen, Sally Roever and Michael Rogan for their significant guidance throughout the study, as well as the other members of the study's Technical Advisory Committee, whose inputs and support have made this study possible: Sonia Dias, Rhonda Douglas, Zoe Horn, Francie Lund, Melanie Samson, and Caroline Skinner.

The authors would also like to thank all the institutional partners who partook in the study for all their hard work and collaboration: Asiye eTafuleni, Asociación de Recicladores de Bogotá (ARB), Federación Departamental de Vendedores Ambulantes de Lima y Callao (FEDEVAL); StreetNet Ghana Alliance; HomeNet Thailand; HomeNet Pakistan; Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER); Instituto Nenuca de Desenvolvimento Sustentável de Belo Horizonte; Kenya National Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders (KENASVIT); Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP); and Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA).

In particular, the authors would like to thank the individual members of the research team in Bangkok for their hard work, inputs and commitment, which have led towards the realization of this report: the quantitative researchers Sayamol Charoenratana and Amornrat Kaewsing; and the qualitative researchers Boonsom Namsomboon, Chidchanok Samantrakul and Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan, who represented the collective wisdom of HomeNet Thailand. And finally, special thanks are due to the 150 informally employed women who participated in this study. The authors and all those involved in the project are deeply grateful to them for their time, their contributions, and their candour.

Publication date: July 2013

ISBN number: 978-92-95095-70-0

Published by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO). A Charitable Company Limited by Guarantee – Company No. 6273538, Registered Charity No. 1143510

WIEGO Secretariat
Harvard University
79 John F. Kennedy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138, USA

WIEGO Limited
521 Royal Exchange
Manchester M2 7EN
United Kingdom

www.wiego.org

Full citation: Horn, Zoe, Boonsom Namsonboon, and Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan. 2013. *Informal Economy Monitoring Study: Home-based Workers in Bangkok, Thailand*. Manchester, UK: WIEGO.

Cover photograph by: Ms. Supranee Tubsakul

Design by: Julian Luckham of Luckham Creative

About the Informal Economy Monitoring Study

The Informal Economy Monitoring Study (IEMS) is a major, longitudinal study of the urban informal economy being undertaken initially at two points in time, 2012 and 2015, in 10 cities around the world: Accra, Ghana; Ahmedabad, India; Bangkok, Thailand; Belo Horizonte, Brazil; Bogota, Colombia; Durban, South Africa; Lahore, Pakistan; Lima, Peru; Nakuru, Kenya; and Pune, India. The study combines qualitative and quantitative research methods to provide an in-depth understanding of how three groups of urban informal workers – home-based workers, street vendors, and waste pickers – are affected by and respond to economic trends, urban policies and practices, value chain dynamics, and other economic and social forces. The IEMS will generate panel data on the urban informal economy.

In each city, a team of five researchers worked in collaboration with a local membership-based organization of informal workers from April 2012 to April 2013 to collect and analyze the first round of the data.

All city research reports, as well as sector reports (one each for home-based work, street vending and waste work), a global report, and other information on the study can be found at www.inclusivecities.org and www.wiego.org.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	4
Study Objectives	4
Conceptual Framework	4
Methodology	5
Home-Based Workers in Bangkok	7
HomeNet Thailand	8
Part 1: Characteristics of Workers, Households & Enterprises	9
1.1 Characteristics of Individual Workers & Households	9
1.2 Characteristics of Individual Enterprises	12
1.2.1 Types of employment	12
1.2.2 Turnover, Working Hours and Types of Support	14
1.3 Characteristics of Home-Based Workers' Value Chains	18
Part 2: Changes in Bangkok's Home-Based Work	22
2.1 Driving Forces in Bangkok	22
2.1.1 The Economy	22
2.1.2 Government Policies & Practices and Urban Planning	25
2.1.3 Value Chain Dynamics	29
2.1.4 Other Forces	31
2.2 Responses	32
2.2.1 Intermediary Institutions and Actors	35
2.2.2 HomeNet Thailand	41
Part 3: Linkages & Contributions	43
3.1 Linkages to Formal Economy	43
3.2 Linkages to the City/Planning/Regulatory Environment	44
3.3 Contributions	47
3.3.1 Economic Contributions	48
3.3.2 Societal Contributions	49
3.3.3 Environmental Contributions	49
Part 4: Conclusion: Key Findings & Policy Implications	50
References	55
Appendix	58

List of Tables

Table 1 - Respondents' Level of Education by Employment Status (%)	9
Table 2 - Household Demographic Characteristics, by Employment Status	10
Table 3 - Basic Household Worker Characteristics, by Employment Status (%)	10
Table 4 - Main Source of Household Income by Employment Status (%)	11
Table 5 - Access to Other Types of Household Income, by Product Type (%)	11

Table 6 - Status in Employment, by Product Type (%) 13
Table 7 - Paid and Unpaid Helpers, by Product Type and Employment Type (%) 13
Table 8 - Employment Activities Among Focus Group Participants, by Product Type and Employment Status 14
Table 9 - Mean Turnover and Working Hours, by Employment Status and Product Type 15
Table 10 - Mean Monthly Expenditure (Bhat) on Business Expenses, by Product Type 15
Table 11 - Earnings, Work Stability and Secondary Work, by Employment Status and Product Type (%) 16
Table 12 - Type of Second Work Activity, by Employment Status (%) 16
Table 13 - Types of Support When Unable to Work, by Employment Status (%) 17
Table 14 - Locale of Buyers for Products, by Employment Status (%) 19
Table 15 - Work Related Problems, by Employment Status (%) 22
Table 16 - Perception of Change in Home-Based Work over the Past Year (%) 23
Table 17 - Driving Force – The Economy, by Frequency of Citation 23
Table 18 - Reported Problems with Local Infrastructure and Institutions, by Employment Status (%) 26
Table 19 - FG Driving Forces – Government Policies & Practices at the City Level, by Frequency of Citation 27
Table 20 - Party that Determines Prices, by Employment Status (%) 29
Table 21 - Driving Forces – Value Chain Dynamics, by Frequency of Citation in Focus Groups 30
Table 22 - Attitudes Towards Local Competition, by Employment Status (%) 30
Table 23 - Driving Forces – Other, by Frequency of Citation in Focus Groups 32
Table 24 - Main Ways of Coping with Fallen Revenues, by Employment Status (%) 33
Table 25 - Prices Received for Main Good Compared with Last Year, by Employment Status (%) 34
Table 26 - Perceptions of Types of Organizations, by Employment Status (%) 36
Table 23 - Matrix of Institutions Showing Frequency of Mention and Perception 37
Table 28 - Main Buyers of Home-Based Workers' Products, by Employment Status (%) 43
Summary of Application of Sampling Approach for Focus Groups 58

List of Figures, Diagrams and Charts

Figure 1 - What type of home-based work do you do? 17
Figure 2 - Focus Group Spatial Map – Where do you buy materials and sell products? 18
Figure 3 - Focus Group Exercise – What type of work do you do as a home-based worker? 19
Figure 4 - FG Causal Flow Diagram – What materials are purchased, and from whom? What products are made and sold, and to whom? 20
Figure 5 - Focus Group Spatial Map – Where do you buy materials and sell products? 21
Figure 6 - FG Flow Diagram – High Transportation Costs 25
Figure 7 - Focus Group Causal Flow Diagram – Policy to Use Residential Area as a Floodway 28
Figure 8 - FG Flow Diagram – Work Impacts and Responses to a Bad Economy 34
Figure 9 - Focus Group Institutional Map – Mixed-Status Garment Workers 37
Figure 10 - Focus Group Institutional Map – Sub-Contracted Non-Garment Workers 40
Figure 11 - Focus Group Institutional Map – Sub-Contracted Garment Workers 42
Figure 12 - Causal Flow Diagram – What inputs are bought and from whom, and what products are sold and to whom? 44
Figure 13 - Focus Group Spatial Map – Visual Representation of Where Materials Are Bought and Products Are Sold 45
Figure 14 - What is your contribution to the city? 48

Executive Summary

It is now widely recognized that a significant and, in some contexts, growing proportion of workers in the developing world earn their livelihoods in the informal economy. Yet the persistence, growth and characteristics of informal employment in cities like Bangkok are not well understood. Home-based workers – those who carry out remunerative work within their homes or in surrounding grounds – likely constitute up to 2 million members of Thailand's workforce. These workers – disproportionately women – typically have the least security and lowest earnings among the Thai workforce, placing them among the lowest paid workers in the world.

In 2011, the partners in the Inclusive Cities project set out to provide credible, grounded evidence of the range of driving forces, both positive and negative, that affect working conditions, over time, for urban informal workers from three sectors – home-based work, waste picking, and street vending – across 10 cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Home-based workers in Bangkok were a participant group.

With overall guidance and co-ordination by the global network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), interviews and focus group discussions were completed from June to August 2012. Seventy-five home-based workers, all women, participated in 15 focus groups. A survey questionnaire was also administered to the 75 focus group participants, plus another 75 workers for a total of 150. This research assessed the individual and sector characteristics, driving forces and changes in the sector as well as informal-formal linkages and linkages to the city and formal regulatory environment. Findings also provided analysis and comparison across the two major employment categories of home-based workers – self-employed and sub-contracted – by size and range of employment conditions.

Findings

Worker Characteristics

Study participants were found to be among Bangkok's least educated workers – substantially less educated than the formal workforce but also with less schooling than other informal workers, which suggests few options for other forms of employment. Many workers, particularly older workers, confirmed that they had worked in informal employment from a young age.

Almost all women in the study reported more than one earner in their households, which contain an average of three working-age adults. These earners, however, are more likely to be informal rather than formal workers. Nearly half of respondents said their own earnings were the main source of household income, though this was true for twice the proportion of self-employed workers as compared to sub-contracted. Sub-contracted workers' households also rely strongly on formal wage earnings by another household member. Respondents in the study have few sources of income beyond employment earnings. This reliance on informal earnings suggests that respondents' households are quite poor. In discussion, workers confirmed that they have little or no savings and that a large proportion of their incomes go to cover basic household necessities.

The Economy

Volatility in the national and global economies is a primary driver of instability in demand – identified as a problem by 74 per cent of self-employed home-based workers and 55 per cent of sub-contracted home-based workers. Historic flooding and a sluggish global economy weakened demand for local consumer goods and halted or depressed factory orders to some sub-contracted workers. Forty-seven per cent of self-employed workers and 33 per cent of sub-contracted workers had seen their revenue fall in the 12 months preceding the research. Evidence suggests that sub-contracted workers were the first to lose their contracts and when orders returned, they were expected to quickly address the backlog.

Institutions and Responses

Sub-contracted workers waited for the orders to rebound. Self-employed workers tried to work harder – take on additional work or work longer hours – and tried minimize their work costs. Central government stimulus measures targeted formal workers and had mixed results for informal workers, stimulating consumption but driving up input prices. Most respondents made cutbacks to household spending, particularly food, and relied on extended family or neighbours and, at times, informal lenders, for financial assistance.

Value Chain Dynamics
Working without enforceable contracts and at the bottom of medium to long value chains were key driving forces weakening *sub-contracted* home-based workers' capacity to exert control over the terms and conditions of their work. Sub-contracted workers had little or no contact with the lead firm or even their sub-contractor. Sixty per cent of sub-contracted workers reported that their wages were set by their sub-contractor and 51 per cent reported that they were not able to bargain with this contractor. Their dependency on contractors made workers fearful of reprisals for poor or slow work, or efforts to increase their employment security. Among *self-employed* home-based workers, the dual forces of high input costs and competition pressures acted to restrict pricing schemes and lower bargaining power with customers. Self-employed producers had to spend 80 per cent or more of their earnings on work inputs, and had great difficulty competing against the large, often international, retailers ubiquitous in Bangkok who could access cheap imports or buy in larger quantities to lower cost.

Institutions and Responses
Sub-contracted workers had few responses to address bargaining power. Most responded by working harder and working faster. Self-employed workers made adjustments to their costs and product range but had few means to compete against large retailers. Institutions supporting home-based workers were those who could provide assistance with training or market access (HomeNet, other NGOs, the Office of Non-Formal Education) and actors that could provide immediate assistance with production activities or financial assistance (other workers, unpaid family workers, and neighbours).

The City
Lack of responsiveness among local government offices is a key driver impacting study respondents' working conditions, including their investments of time and money, as well as their security. Most workers have good access to basic utilities, but reported poorly maintained roads and inefficient public transportation, which limit economic opportunities for self-employed workers and increase the dependency of sub-contracted workers on their contractors. Evictions and land-reallocation – taken without consultation – also have major impacts for workers' livelihoods and well-being, disrupting communities and reorganizing workers' spatial relationships with markets and customers/buyers. Decentralization efforts also created confusion about which government agencies and actors were responsible for key policy and planning decisions.

Confusing and inaccessible policies and practices were found to drive home-based workers' engagement with local regulatory frameworks. New labour protections have been put in place to increase security for sub-contracted home-based workers, but it is not clear if the government will commit adequate resources and attention to enforcing these laws. Without reliable enforcement measures, protections do little to guarantee better working conditions for home-based workers. Also, new schemes to extend social security to informal workers and provide loans to sub-contracted workers are undersubscribed as a result of lack of knowledge, unrealistic pre-conditions, and community skepticism about government.

Institutions and Responses
Respondents said they had infrequent and indirect contact with the local administrators at the District Office – who in turn had limited financial and human resources to help the home-based workers. Most workers could offer few strategies for decreasing this "distance" from local authorities, which is not helped by the non-supportive attitudes and actions of local officials. Workers continue to rely on informal community schemes – such as community savings funds – for emergency situations such as illness or death. Membership-based organizations also provided an informal social safety net for some participants, and also served as a source of information and advocacy regarding policies and programs related to workers' livelihoods although the specific causal relationships between membership (length and intensity of engagement) and livelihood outcomes was not clear from available study data.

The Climate
Home-based workers are affected by seasonal events, with sales varying by seasons and decreasing during rainy periods. Furthermore, they are particularly vulnerable to severe weather events, such as floods, especially if they live in large housing projects located in more remote and underserviced areas of the city. Poor housing conditions, along with under-maintained roads and infrastructure, can mean it takes longer for assistance to reach these households, disrupts access to contractors and markets, and increases the longer-term impacts of these events. When the home is the workplace,

damage to the home is doubly devastating as it directly impacts family income levels. Flooding in 2011 was particularly destructive, but these conditions are expected to become more frequent as a result of global climate change.

Institutions and Responses
Oftentimes, workers said they had been relocated by the National Housing Authority (NHA) to flood-prone areas.

During and after the 2011 floods, manufacturing was severely disrupted and there was a strong contraction in household consumption. This depressed demand for home-based work. Local customers bought less or less often, or even stopped buying entirely, from self-employed producers. Many sub-contracted workers faced a shortage or stoppage of orders as well. Local governments were slow to respond to reach workers' communities during recovery efforts, exacerbating the challenges.

Conclusions
Study findings provide the following conclusions. Bangkok's home-based workers:

- have many forwards and backward linkages with firms and actors across an informal-formal continuum
- are integral to modern, industrial chains of production central to Thailand's industrial growth, particularly sub-contracted home-based workers
- continue to operate in a regulatory environment that is largely unknown, inappropriate and sometimes hostile to them – particularly with respect to taxation, social security access and roles and administrative responsibilities of local authorities
- do not try to avoid regulation but cannot yet see how to engage with regulatory frameworks or how they might benefit from them
- face economic and urban policies – wage and employment standards, relocation and land-use decisions – that are at times enacted without consultation and little regard for impacts to their well-being and livelihoods
- are vitally dependent on Bangkok's infrastructure and services – especially reliable roads, utilities and public transportation – and make important contributions to the city's economic, social and environmental well-being

The nature of home-based works' economic and urban linkages, its size and economic contribution to Thailand's economy, as well as the workers' significant vulnerability, require central and local governments to pursue greater knowledge and understanding of home-based workers. This knowledge can be gained through statistics and research, but also via direct engagement through participatory processes, community visitation and allocation of greater resources to community development offices across the city. Regulatory environments should be designed more appropriately to deal with the issues confronting home-based workers. Also, more should be done to educate informal workers about the advantages of engagement with the regulatory environment and to ensure benefits reach those they are intended to target. Greater visibility in planning and policy processes and improved communication and consultation between agencies and home-based workers or their representatives – such as HomeNet Thailand – will help avoid future policy decisions that further undermine vulnerable workers and ensure that their local input matches their strong local impact. Failure to do so will increase urban vulnerabilities. Significantly, it will also result in lost opportunities to build strong cities and, in turn, an economically strong Thailand.

Introduction

Study Objectives

It is now widely recognized that the majority of workers in the developing world earn their livelihoods in the informal economy. Advancements in official statistics show that informal employment accounts for more than half of total non-agricultural employment in most regions, and as much as 82 per cent in South Asia and 80 per cent in many sub-Saharan African countries (WIEGO website 2013). Though many studies offer theories to explain the persistence, characteristics and growth of informal employment, few have evaluated the grounded realities of work in the informal economy – and none have done so over time and across a sufficiently large number of sectors and cities. The IEMS seeks to fill this gap.

More specifically, the objective of the study is to provide credible, grounded evidence of the range of driving forces, both positive and negative, that affect conditions of work in the informal economy over time. The study, which places informal workers and their organizations at the centre of the analysis, examines not only the impact of these forces but also informal workers' strategic responses to them. It is based on a collaborative approach between researchers and membership-based organizations (MBOs) of informal workers to monitor, on an ongoing basis, the state of the working poor in three sectors – home-based work, street vending, and waste picking – and also to build the capacity of MBOs to assess and mediate the driving forces that affect their work.

The study is based in 10 cities, as follows:

	Sector(s)	Local Partner
Africa		
Accra, Ghana	Street Vending	Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) and StreetNet Ghana Alliance
Durban, South Africa	Street Vending, Waste Picking	Asiye eTafuleni (AeT)
Nakuru, Kenya	Street Vending, Waste Picking	Kenya National Alliance of Street Vendors and Informal Traders (KENASVIT)
Asia		
Ahmedabad, India	Home-Based Work, Street Vending	Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)
Bangkok, Thailand	Home-Based Work	HomeNet Thailand
Lahore, Pakistan	Home-Based Work	HomeNet Pakistan
Pune, India	Waste Picking	Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP)
Latin America		
Belo Horizonte, Brazil	Waste Picking	Instituto Nenuca de Desenvolvimento Sustentável de Belo Horizonte
Bogota, Colombia	Waste Picking	Asociación de Recicladores de Bogotá (ARB)
Lima, Peru	Street Vending	Federación Departamental de Vendedores Ambulantes de Lima y Callao (FEDEVAL)

Conceptual Framework

In the IEMS, the term "driving forces" is used to refer to **systemic factors** that may impact, in either positive or negative ways, the occupations or livelihoods of urban informal workers. Three categories of "driving forces" anchor the study. First, the IEMS explores **the economy** as a driving force: that is, the macroeconomic conditions such as inflation, recession, and patterns of growth that may influence working conditions in the informal economy. Second, the IEMS examines **government policies and practice, specifically, but not exclusively, at the city level**, including urban planning and policies, zoning regulations, sector-specific policies, regulatory norms, and urban infrastructure and service delivery. Third, the IEMS considers sector-specific **value chain dynamics**, including the power relations between informal workers and their suppliers and buyers, and the role of intermediaries in the value chain. The framework also allows for the identification of other driving forces, such as migration, that may have a significant impact on working conditions in a particular sector or city.

The IEMS assumes that the impact of these driving forces is mediated by institutions and actors related to the particular sector under study in each city. The study examines a range of institutions including government institutions, civil society organizations, and, fundamentally, MBOs of informal workers. It explores the responses of informal workers to key driving forces in each city, as well as the economic, political, and spatial linkages within each sector. Finally, through its sampling design, the study allows for comparisons at the individual level by sex (in cities in which both men and women belong to the partner MBO), employment status, and location of the workplace.

Methodology

The IEMS is based on both qualitative and quantitative methods. The qualitative component consists of a participatory informal economy appraisal (PIEA), an innovative method designed to capture systematically the perceptions and understandings of informal workers in their own words, in a focus group setting.[1] Each city team conducted 15 focus groups (per sector), in which nine tools – organized around the themes of sector characteristics, driving forces and responses, the institutional environment, and contributions of the sector to the city – were used to generate data related to the conceptual framework. The results of the focus groups were recorded in reports of about 12 pages, on average, immediately after each focus group was conducted, and those reports were then analyzed.

The quantitative component consists of a survey questionnaire administered to all focus group (FG) participants, plus another 75 workers. Thus an overall sample size of about 150 was achieved (with minor variation in the sample size in some cities/sectors). The questionnaire is designed to supplement the data collected through the focus groups by collecting information on the household profile and income sources of the workers; the assets profile of the workers' households; detailed information on the enterprise or occupation of the workers; and linkages between the informal economy and the formal economy. The questionnaires were administered using a data-capture tool. It took approximately 90 minutes for each respondent to complete the questionnaire.

Collectively, the focus groups and questionnaires provide data on the context within which informal workers earn their livelihoods, and the forces that impact, both positively and negatively, on workers' incomes and working conditions. We are also able to understand how workers adapt their work strategies in the face of these economic, social and institutional forces.

The sampling approach was designed to maintain comparability in the results across the 13 city-sectors, on the one hand, and to allow some flexibility as demanded by local circumstances, on the other hand. To the maximum extent possible, the following principles were followed in every city-sector::

- Only MBO members were included in the sample.[2]
- Each sector sample was based on two variables, as follows, where possible:

Sector	Sampling Variable 1		Sampling Variable 2	
Home-Based Work	**Employment Status**		**Product Category**	
	Self-Employed	Sub-Contracted	Category 1	Category 2
Street Vending	**Sex**		**Location of Workplace**	
	Women	Men	Central city	Periphery
Waste Picking	**Sex**		**Source of Materials**	
	Women	Men	Fixed	Variable

1 The methodology was developed collaboratively with Caroline Moser, Angélica Acosta, and Irene Vance, who also trained the city teams in the data collection methods and later in data analysis. PIEA is an adaptation of earlier participatory methodologies developed by Chambers (1994), Moser and Holland (1997), Moser and McIlwaine (1999, 2004), and Moser, Acosta and Vásquez (2006).

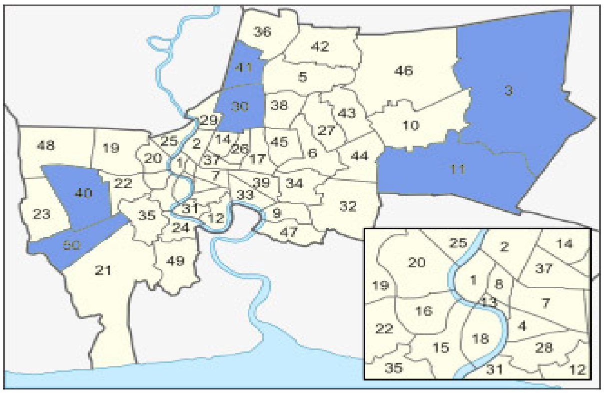
2 Substantively, being a "member" of an MBO means different things in different cities; in some cities it means being formally registered, for example, while in other cities it implies a looser affiliation.

- Each city team developed the "best sample possible," based on the sampling variables outlined above. "Best" was defined as (a) the most representative sample possible of the study population of MBO members, and (b) the most sensible, feasible, and locally appropriate sample possible. In cities where the partner MBO maintains an updated registry of members with data on the sampling variables, for example, it was possible to develop a stratified random sample that was statistically representative of the MBO population on the sampling variables; in cities where there was no accurate registry, the city team used a quota sampling approach. In each city, the local researchers worked with the MBO to identify what the best possible sample would be, based on local circumstances.
- The second sampling variable – product category for home-based workers, location of workplace for street vendors, and source of materials for waste pickers – was designed to correlate with a degree of vulnerability that stems from sector-specific circumstances. In the street vending sector, for example, vendors who work in the central city are typically more vulnerable to evictions than those who work in the periphery. Each city team identified the best way to operationalize this variable according to local circumstances.

In Bangkok, all study participants were women in order to reflect HomeNet Thailand's membership composition and those of other home-based worker MBOs participating in other cities within the study. The city team in Bangkok identified "employment status" as the first sample variable, operationalized as "self-employed" and "sub-contracted" in order to represent the two major employment categories of home-based workers by size and range of employment conditions. The second sample variable selected was "category of production," operationalized by those working in the garment industry and those working outside the garment industry. These variables were chosen because of the size and significance of home-based employment in Bangkok's garment industry, and because of the complexity and global nature of the industry's production chains. As a result, these variables were expected to capture a wide variance in home-based workers' value-chain dynamics and vulnerabilities to different economic conditions.

Half of the survey sample also participated in the 15 focus group discussions conducted between 29 June, 2012 and 24 October, 2012. All focus groups were composed of five women from the same community – and in one case from two communities (FG12) – within the same administrative district of the Bangkok Municipal Area. The following map depicts the residential districts of focus group participants in blue. Of the 15 groups, seven were composed of individuals from Nong Chok District (map reference 3), three were from Lat Krabang District (11), two were from Bang Khae District (40), and one group each came from Bang Bon District (50), Chatuchak District (30) and Lak Si District (41). Further details on focus group composition and referencing can be found in the Appendix.

Greater Bangkok Municipal Area and Districts



Source: Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_districts_of_Bangkok

Home-Based Workers in Bangkok

Bangkok is home to 8.3 million residents – roughly 13 per cent of Thailand's population – and covers just over 1,550 km^2 in the Chao Phraya River delta in Central Thailand. Formerly, Thailand had a highly centralized system of administration and policy. Since 1997, Thailand has engaged in a major decentralization effort, shifting responsibilities to lower levels of government. Under this plan, new local government responsibilities now include basic infrastructure, improvement of quality of life, community order and local economic development (Haque 2010). Today, Bangkok is governed locally by the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration (BMA), with 50 districts serving as administrative subdivisions.

In the 1960s, Bangkok embarked on a period of rapid growth that intensified with the industrialization of Thailand's economy through the 1980s and 90s. During this period, the Thai economy was one of the world's fastest growing, at an average rate of 8-9 per cent per year, with much of this industrial and economic development concentrated around Bangkok. The city has since become Thailand's largest economic centre, but the benefits of economic successes have not been shared equally (Siriprachai 2007). Much of this growth was associated with the migration of rural agricultural workers to urban informal employment, fuelled by, and also fuelling, the growth of export-oriented manufacturing. Bangkok's factory boom provided employment to urban workers and rural migrants, as well as new economic opportunities for women, who were traditionally underemployed (Krongkaew 1999). However, rising global demand for cheap, labour-intensive goods spurred regional competition and put pressure on Thailand's manufacturers to cuts labour and production costs. Casualization of employment and sub-contracting emerged as a strategy to circumvent labour laws while cutting labour costs (Doane 2007). In the absence of employer-employee contractual relationships, employers minimized their obligation while transferring cost and risk to workers with little or no protection compared to those performing the same work directly for employers. Informal employment now constitutes 21 per cent of manufacturing jobs in Thailand (ILO 2012). The National Statistical Office (NSO) reports that 63 per cent of non-agricultural workers in Thailand are informal workers (NSO 2011).[3]

The term *home-based worker* refers to the general category of informal workers who carry out remunerative work within their homes or in the surrounding grounds.[4] Home-based work includes skilled production, entrepreneurial and professional activities as well as low-skilled manual work and survival activities. Home-based work activities are wide-ranging – from manufacturing and assembly to artisan production, personal services as well as work in the "new" economy and professional work. A distinction can be made between *self-employed workers* and *sub-contracted workers.* Self-employed workers are those who are generally in direct contact with the market and buy their own raw materials. Sub-contracted workers, often called "homeworkers," may be contracted by firms, individual entrepreneurs, sub-contractors or other intermediaries. They are often provided with the raw materials for their production, and are typically paid a stated amount per piece produced. They have little or no direct contact with the markets for the goods they produce.

Bangkok's low-income residents tend to be self-organized into communities (*chumchon)* which are self-identified, voluntary associations of households, typically representing between 100-150 families. These urban communities are registered, local administrative units. For Bangkok's home-based workers, the "community" presents an important work context. There is no singular organization of home-based work within a community. Some home-based workers may operate alone, while other members of a community may engage in a particular, common production as an economic strategy. Production groups within the community can register with local administrative (district) offices, which may improve access to certain government programs and services as well as lending from formal institutions. Although there are no official figures available, it is estimated that a very small percentage of Bangkok's production groups are registered with local or central government agencies. There are also no official employment statistics estimating the total number of informal home-based workers in Bangkok. A 2007 survey by the National Statistical Office of Thailand identified just over 440,000 *sub-contracted* home-based workers across the country, of whom 12 per cent – 52,000 workers – resided in Bangkok. Sixty per cent of these workers were female. However, estimates based on export

[3] The Thai National Statistics Office defines informal workers as workers who are not covered by the existing workplace laws, regulations and protections. The International Labour Office defines informal employment as all remunerative work – both self-employment and wage employment – that is not recognized, regulated, or protected by existing legal or regulatory frameworks and non-remunerative work undertaken in an income-producing enterprise (ILO 2002).

[4] Home-based work does not refer to either unpaid housework or paid domestic work.

values and production capacity suggest that there may be up to 2 million home-based workers across the country (Namsomboon and Tulaphan 2009).

Available evidence suggests that home-based workers typically have the least security and lowest earnings among urban informal workers. Additionally, available statistics suggest women are more likely than men to perform their main work in the home, and are far more likely than men to be engaged in low-paid manual work, placing them among the lowest paid workers in the world (Chen et al. 1999; Charmes 1998; Sethuraman 1998). For many years, home-based workers had only access to ad-hoc, means-tested social assistance programmes, no health insurance and no coverage under Thailand's Labour Protection Act, Workmen's Compensation Act (B.E 2537) or Social Security Act (B.E 2533).

In recent years, Thailand's central government has taken steps to increase support and protection for home-based workers and move towards greater inclusion of informal workers in regulatory frameworks. In 2001, informal home-based workers were incorporated into the public health care scheme through the adoption of the Universal Coverage Scheme. Informal workers also became eligible for old-age pension through Thailand's adoption of the 500 Baht Universal Pension Scheme in 2009. In 2010, the Ministry of Labour, in cooperation with the Thailand Development Research Institute, set forth its "Strategies for informal labour administration, 2011," a framework and guideline for the management of the informal workforce in conjunction with the Thai government's National Economic and Social Development (NESDP) Plan for 2012-2016. The National Strategic Committee for Informal Sector Administration and associated working groups were established to develop strategic plans to address social protection, employment and administrative affairs related to Thailand's informal workers. In September 2010, Parliament ratified the Homeworkers Protection Act B.E.2553, which came into effect in May 2011. This law provides minimum labour standards for home-based work with respect to employment documentation, protection of wages, minimum work safety standards, employers' obligations, compensation, termination and dispute resolution through the Labour Courts. It also establishes a Committee for the Protection of Homeworkers on which both men and women serve. Also in 2011, informal workers gained coverage under Article 40 of the Social Security Act (B.E 2533) through subscription to a voluntary social insurance scheme, subsidized by the government, that covers sickness, invalidity, death and an optional old-age benefit.

HomeNet Thailand

HomeNet Thailand was established in 1992 by home-based producers and concerned NGOs under an International Labour Organization (ILO) project on Social Protection Promotion in Thailand. In 2003, the organization was formally registered as The Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (FLEP). HomeNet Thailand operates under FLEP. The organization is headquartered in Bangkok and currently works with home-based workers through three regional networks covering the major operation areas of Bangkok, Chiang Rai and Khon Kaen provinces. On a more limited basis, HomeNet Thailand also engages with other groups of informal workers such as domestic workers, street vendors and waste pickers.

HomeNet Thailand strives to enhance home-based workers' capacity in production and management and to promote and strengthen informal workers' organizations. In their research and advocacy role, HomeNet Thailand works to develop greater recognition for informal workers, and foster and promote positive policy change with respect to legal and social protections for informal workers.

HomeNet Thailand works with over 160 home-based worker groups (nearly 4,000 workers) across Thailand and in 10 districts across Bangkok, comprising approximately 50 production groups and 600 home-based workers. HomeNet Thailand's current strategic approaches include training and other economic development activities for producers, campaigning for homeworkers' welfare in the areas of occupational health and safety, social security, urban planning, and fair wages; working to make home-based workers more visible in national statistics and engaging in dialogues with government officials, policymakers, academics, and international agencies in its role as policy advocates. HomeNet Thailand also works to achieve these goals within a wider network of organizations in South Asia and South-East Asia.[5]

[5] More information about HomeNet Thailand, its programs and activities is available at: http://homenetthailand.org/.

Part 1: Characteristics of Workers, Households & Enterprises

Home-based workers participating in this study were asked a range of questions designed to provide a detailed picture of their working lives, their households and enterprises, and the value chains in which they earn their living.

1.1 Characteristics of Individual Workers & Households

Home-based workers in this study were aged between 13 and 78, with an average age of 46. Table 1 provides a summary of respondents' educational attainment by employment status and as a group. Few respondents had no formal education, but 60 per cent had not progressed beyond primary school, and only 11 per cent had completed secondary schooling. Figures suggest that sub-contracted workers were more likely to have stopped their education earlier – before finishing secondary school, while self-employed workers were somewhat more likely to have completed secondary school and progressed to a tertiary degree. A 2011 survey on formal and informal employment by the NSO revealed that 50 per cent of Bangkok's female informal workers had only primary education or lower, whereas this was true for 44 per cent of male informal workers and only 27 per cent of male and female formal workers (NSO 2011). This suggests that the study's home-based workers were among Bangkok's least educated workers – substantially less educated than the formal workforce as a whole but also with less schooling than male informal workers *and* female informal workers as a group.

Table 1- Respondents' Level of Education by Employment Status (%)

Level	Sub-contracted	Self-employed	Total
None	4.30	5.45	4.73
Some primary	33.33	30.91	32.43
Completed primary	22.58	23.64	22.97
Some secondary	24.73	18.18	22.30
Completed secondary	10.75	12.73	11.49
At least some tertiary	0.00	5.45	2.03
Completed tertiary	4.30	3.64	4.05
No response	0	2.00	2.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
N	**93**	**57**	**150**

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Participants also lived in relatively large households with few secondary school graduates. Table 2 provides a summary of basic household demographics among survey participants. Typically, households were composed of four individuals, with three working age individuals, one child and fewer than one pensioner. Only one in three adults had completed secondary school. These rates suggest that respondents were frequently the most educated members of their households. Average household sizes were also large when compared to Bangkok's average household size of just under three persons (NSO 2010). With relatively few children and pensioners in each household, results also suggest that respondents' households may include more adult children, extended family members or unrelated individuals than typical Bangkok households. On average, self-employed workers had slightly larger households than sub-contracted workers, though there were no clear indicators as to why this might be.

Table 2 - Household Demographic Characteristics, by Employment Status			
	Sub-contracted	Self-employed	Total
Household size	4.17	4.53	4.39
Number of working-age adults	3.12	3.11	3.11
Number of children	0.74	1.11	0.97
Number of pensioners	0.26	0.29	0.28
Number of adults that completed secondary school	1.39	1.09	1.20
N	93	57	150

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

With an average of three working-age adults, 91 per cent of households had more than one earner working at the time of interview. These earners, however, were more likely to be other informal workers than individuals with formal jobs – table 3 figures reveal that 65 per cent of households contained additional informal workers, while 55 per cent had one or more formal workers. Sub-contracted workers were more likely to be the sole earner in their household, and were slightly less likely to have household members with formal jobs.

Table 3 - Basic Household Worker Characteristics, by Employment Status (%)			
	Sub-contracted	Self-employed	Total
Other workers in the household earning an income	89.25	94.74	91.33
Other informal workers in the household earning an income	64.52	66.67	65.33
Other formal workers in the household earning an income	53.76	57.89	55.33
N	93	57	150

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Table 4 shows that nearly half of respondents reported that their own earnings were the main source of household income, though results differed considerably by employment status – true for two thirds (67 per cent) of self-employed workers and one third (32 per cent) of sub-contracted workers. Sub-contracted workers' households also relied strongly on formal wage earnings by another household member working in the public sector (31 per cent) and private firms (16 per cent). After their own earnings, self-employed workers were next most likely to cite the earnings from informal work by another household member. The contrast between sub-contracted workers and self-employed workers becomes sharper when tables 3 and 4 are considered together. Households of self-employed workers were much more reliant on earnings from informal sources even though they had a slightly higher incidence of formal workers in their households. The tables also reveal that, while sub-contracted workers were more likely to be the sole earner in their household, only 32 per cent reported that they were the primary income contributor.

Table 4 - Main Source of Household Income by Employment Status (%)			
	Sub-contracted	**Self-employed**	**Total**
Respondent			
Informal business/enterprise/work	32.26	66.67	45.33
Formal wage employment - private firm	1.08	1.75	1.33
Formal wage employment - public sector	1.08	0.00	0.67
Other Household Member			
Formal wage employment - public sector	31.18	12.28	24.00
Earnings from informal work	15.05	14.04	15
Formal wage employment - private firm	16.13	5.26	12.00
Non-agricultural - other	1.08	0.00	0.67
Other			
Rent, interest, dividends, savings	1.08	0.00	0.67
Remittances	1.08	0.00	0.67
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
N	**93**	**57**	**150**

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Workers in this study had few sources of income beyond employment earnings. Table 5 reveals that 28 per cent of respondents received some kind of pension, but fewer than ten per cent of workers received income from remittances and or government grants and less than five per cent received income from unemployment, childcare, rental, retrenchment packages or workers' compensation. No workers reported household income from social assistance, additional benefits, charity, gifts, scholarships, alimony or money from a religious organization. Survey and focus group responses provided no substantive details related to the pensions identified in table 5, therefore it is difficult to comment on the source or relative contribution they made to income. It is possible some older workers received cash benefits (600 baht per month) through the Universal Pension Scheme.[6] If so, table figures would suggest that a higher proportion of self-employed workers are registered for the scheme than sub-contracted workers.

Table 5 - Access to Other Types of Household Income, by Product Type (%)			
%	**Sub-contracted**	**Self-employed**	**Total**
Pension	23.66	35.09	28.00
Remittances	7.53	5.26	6.67
Government grants	5.38	3.51	4.67
Unemployment pay-out	2.15	3.51	2.67
Child maintenance	2.15	3.51	2.67
Rental income	2.15	3.51	2.67
Retrenchment package	0.00	1.75	0.67
Worker's compensation	1.08	0.00	0.67
N	**93**	**57**	**150**

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

[6] As of 2010, recipients of the 500 baht pension represented approximately 78 per cent of Thailand's over-60 population. Under the scheme, registered recipients receive a cash benefit of 500 baht per month (Sakunphanit and Suwanrada 2011).

Findings in this section of the report suggest that Bangkok's home-based workers and their households are strongly dependent on earnings from their informal employment activities. In focus group discussions many workers, particularly older workers, confirmed that they became engaged in informal earnings activities from a young age, often as contributing family members to family enterprises. In Thailand, women have historically faced cultural and economic barriers to education and formal training schemes (Esara 2004). There are positive signs of change, but for older home-based workers in particular, the barriers to new employment are significant. Additionally, the reliance of households on earnings from informal work, particularly those of the respondent, suggests that households were quite poor. In discussion, workers confirmed that their households had little or no savings and that a large proportion of their incomes went to cover basic household necessities. The importance of their incomes to the household may reflect the reality that women, in particular, are likely to perceive the wellbeing and interest of their family and children as paramount to their own well-being (Haddad et al. 1997) and more likely to accept less favourable economic arrangements in order to guarantee a steady, if low, cash flow into the household budget (Ghosh 2002).

1.2 Characteristics of Individual Enterprises

Study participants were asked to identify their production and employment arrangement as a home-based worker. In addition to survey questions, enterprise characteristics were probed through targeted focus group exercises.

1.2.1 Types of employment

Among study participants, garment workers were much more likely to be employed under sub-contracted arrangement than to work as self-employed producers (73 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively). Those working outside of the garment industry were somewhat more likely to be self-employed (56 per cent) than sub-contracted (44 per cent). Table 6 details respondents' employment status with respect to their primary production. The vast majority of sub-contracted workers (90 per cent) identified themselves as industrial outworkers – individuals producing goods or services through a sub-contracting arrangement with a fixed employer. Less than 10 per cent of sub-contracted workers identified themselves as casual day labourers (without fixed employers) and they were more likely to work outside the garment industry, as did the only individual who identified herself as an unpaid worker assisting a family enterprise. No respondents identified themselves as paid employees. Among self-employed workers, 58 per cent of respondents identified themselves as own account workers – individuals operating their own unincorporated enterprise *without* paid employees. Non-garment workers were more than twice as likely as garment workers to identify themselves as own account operators and they were more than three times as likely to be an employer. Among self-employed respondents, 18 per cent were members of a production cooperative, with identical rates among garment and non-garment workers. It should be noted that table 6 reflects the *primary* production and employment status of survey respondents. Many home-based workers were employed under multiple employment arrangements because they engaged in more than one production at a time, either simultaneously or at different times in the year. One garment worker in this study, who produced men's Islamic shirts and prayer caps (*taqiyah*) reported that at different times in the year the volume of her industrial outwork overtook her own account work, and vice versa. She explained that customers placed individual and wholesale orders at her home year-round, but during peak times (Islamic festivals) she maintained a retail business at a local mosque and filled orders for a nearby firm that provided her with cloth and other raw materials. At times she also sub-contracted to other home-based workers, depending on the volume of her work (FG14).

Table 6 - Status in Employment, by Product Type (%)			
	Garment	Non-garment	Total
Sub-contracted			
Industrial outworker	69.89	33.33	56.00
Casual day labourer	3.23	8.77	5.33
Contributing family worker	0.00	1.75	0.67
Self-employed			
Own account worker	15.05	33.33	22.00
Employer	5.38	15.79	9.33
Member of a cooperative	6.45	7.02	6.67
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
N	93	57	150

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Most home-based workers in this study did not have paid or unpaid assistants. In table 7, sub-contracted non-garment workers were most likely to have had assistance from unpaid family members in the previous week, while self-employed non-garment workers were most likely to have paid someone to assist them in their work. These patterns held true at the busiest time of year as well, though self-employed garment workers became somewhat more likely to receive paid and unpaid help. Unpaid family contributions are more common in large, less educated households (Antonopoulos 2009), which are characteristic of participants in this study. The variance of rates between self-employed and sub-contracted workers may partly reflect relative turnover reported in the next section of this report (table 9). Self-employed non-garment workers – those most likely to have paid assistants – reported the highest mean earnings in the study and may have had the greatest capacity and sufficient workload to hire assistants. On the other hand, higher incidence of unpaid assistance among sub-contracted non-garment workers may reflect a strategy to boost productivity among those reporting the lowest mean earnings.

Table 7 - Paid and Unpaid Helpers, by Product Type and Employment Type (%)				
	Self-employed		Sub-contracted	
	Garment	Non-garment	Garment	Non-garment
	Previous Week			
Unpaid family	17.39	21.88	8.57	28.00
Paid	17.39	28.13	17.14	0.00
	At the busiest time of the year			
Unpaid family	21.74	21.88	10.00	24.00
Paid	21.74	28.13	17.14	4.00
N	24	33	68	25

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Self-employed participants generally reported a wider range of working arrangements than sub-contracted workers, as well as a broader range of production activities. Table 8 provides a summary of work activities across the study's 15 focus groups. All activities listed by focus group participants were limited to low-medium skilled manufacturing and assembly work, skilled artisan production, or entrepreneurial activities related to personal service provision. The prevalence of sub-contracting among garment workers was likely related to patterns of growth in Thailand's economy over the past two decades. While the growth of sub-contracting can be considered characteristic of Thailand's overall manufacturing sector (Saptari 2000), evidence suggests this trend is particularly strong where the flexibilization and decentralization of labour can provide a comparative advantage for firms engaged in competitive globalized markets, such as those of the garment industry (Dangler 1994). A survey by the National Statistics Office found that, among sub-contracted workers, 87 per cent of non-agricultural home-based employment was in the manufacturing sector; 54 per cent of this employment was related to garments and textiles (NSO 2007). Non-garment workers, on the other hand, produced goods and services for local consumer tastes and markets and this specialization decreased some of the forces driving sub-contracting in the garment industry.

Table 8 - Employment Activities Among Focus Group Participants, by Product Type and Employment Status

	Self-employed	Sub-contracted
Garment	• Tailoring/dressmaking • T-shirts • Handbags • Islamic caps	• Brand label shirts • Handbags • Cloth diapers • Embroidery • Shoes
Non-Garment	• Woven baskets • Carved buffalo horn • Charred wild boar • Prepared foods • Chilli paste • Grocery service • Ironing service	• Buddhist flower garlands • Plastics processing • Traditional lottery games

Source: Focus Groups 1-15, summarized from focus group exercises

Earnings vs. Turnover

The data presented here were generated through a question designed to capture ***turnover*—**that is, the total value of sales. They **do not** take into consideration the cost of sales (opening stock or supplies needed to complete work) or other expenses incurred in generating the sales, such as transport, storage, and fees. The literature on income clearly establishes that it is very difficult to capture distinctions between turnover, gross earnings, and net earnings reliably. As with similar studies, these data should not be taken out of context and should be interpreted with caution.

Data on turnover from all cities included in the IEMS study showed very high standard deviations and means that far exceeded medians. Means (rather than medians) for turnover are presented in the IEMS city reports.

1.2.2 Turnover, Working Hours and Types of Support

In this study, self-employed non-garment workers reported the highest mean turnover while sub-contracted non-garment workers had the lowest turnover (see the box Earnings vs. Turnover for an explanation of terminology). Figures from table 9 can be used to illustrate comparative turnover rates based on a hypothetical workday.[7] Among self-employed workers, a garment producer worked seven hours a day and had a turnover of 845 baht (approx. US $28[8]) while a non-garment worker worked eight hours for 1047 baht (US $35). Both groups had a turnover *rate* of around 120 baht (US $4) per hour of work. Among sub-contracted workers, non-garment workers worked seven and a half hours and were paid 162 baht (US $5) while garment workers worked nine hours and were paid 264 baht (US $9). Therefore, garment workers were paid at a rate just under 30 baht (US $1) an hour while non-garment workers received over 21 baht (US $0.72). Importantly, many (if not most) sub-contracted workers earn by *piece rate* and are paid a fixed price for each unit produced. Hourly rates calculated above provide an illustration of gross relative remuneration with respect to time, but do not take into account the workers' costs and expenses.

[7] Respondents' hours were reported from the week leading up to the survey. This comparison assumes a six day work week. A 1999 study by Chasombat Pradit found that Thai homeworkers typically work 6 days a week.

[8] Conversion rate US 1 dollar = 30 baht based on currency valuation at the time of study.

Table 9 - Mean Turnover and Working Hours, by Employment Status and Product Type				
	Self-employed		Sub-contracted	
	Garment	Non-garment	Garment	Non-garment
Mean monthly turnover (baht)	25,782.61	31,960.94	8,044.98	4,937.33
Mean hours last week	43.21	48.37	54.64	44.88
Mean months per year	10.86	10.53	9.78	10.28
N	24	33	68	25

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Survey responses indicate that self-employed workers had a turnover three to seven times higher than sub-contracted workers when compared by product type, the gap can be wider. For example, among Buddhist flower garland producers participating in focus groups, one sub-contracted worker reported that she received about 30 baht for producing 1,000 garlands per day, while a self-employed garland producer with a family enterprise reported that she received 700-800 baht per day (FG5). However, self-employed workers must usually take on the risk of paying for all raw materials, equipment, transportation and utilities, while sub-contracted workers also paid for many of the non-wage costs of production (overhead costs, utilities, equipment and sometimes some or all raw materials). Figures from table 10 provide an illustration of the monthly expenses incurred by respondents. According to these figures, self-employed workers may spend more than half their monthly earnings on raw materials, and more than 80 per cent after the costs of utilities, transportation and membership fees (excluding potential costs for wages, storage or stock, which were not reported by respondents in this study). One shoe maker explained, "Sometimes, after I deduct all my expenses, I am only left with a profit of 5 baht per a pair of shoes" (FG3). Sub-contracted workers also spend a considerable proportion of their earnings on inputs. Figures in table 10 suggest they may spend more than half their wages on work inputs, challenging the common conception that sub-contracted workers have few work-related costs. When turnover less costs are compared for these groups, sub-contracted workers are left with 4212 baht at the end of the month compared with 4550 baht for self-employed workers. In addition, self-employed workers reported that they work 11 months out of the year on average (table 9) while sub-contracted workers are engaged for 10 months.

Table 10 - Mean Monthly Expenditure (Bhat) on Business Expenses, by Product Type			
	Self-employed	Sub-contracted	Total
Materials	15,475.00 (N=34)	2,792.79 (N=37)	8,865.96 (N=71)
Utilities	1,656.82 (N=44)	1,067.50 (N=60)	1,316.83 (N=104)
Transport	2,729.17 (N=16)	1,070.00 (N=15)	1,926.34 (N=31)
Membership fees	1,100.00 (N=2)	None	1,100.00 (N=2)

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Work volatility also contributed to relative earnings, as findings suggest that workers faced considerable instability over the previous 12 months. Table 11 figures indicate that self-employed workers were more likely than sub-contracted workers to have seen their incomes drop in the previous year and nearly half said they would have liked to work more than they did. Among self-employed workers, non-garment workers were more likely to report fallen revenue than garment workers. Nearly half of all sub-contracted workers would also have preferred more work hours. Here, sub-contracted garment workers appear to have experienced higher incidences of decline in the past year than non-garment workers, while self-employed workers experienced greater incidences overall.

This may be corroborated by average work hours reported by participants (table 9), which were somewhat lower than those reported in other studies on home-based workers in Thailand.[9]

Table 11 - Earnings, Work Stability and Secondary Work, by Employment Status and Product Type (%)				
	Self-employed		Sub-contracted	
	Garment	Non-garment	Garment	Non-garment
Revenue fallen over past 12 months	43.48	50.00	35.71	24.00
Would have liked more hours	47.83	43.75	50.00	44.00
Have a second job	47.83	40.63	25.71	32.00
N	24	33	68	25

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Depressed earnings may help explain high incidences of secondary employment among respondents, particularly self-employed workers. Aside from their primary production, a third of respondents carried out additional income generating activities – 43 per cent (25 of 57) of self-employed workers and 28 per cent of sub-contracted workers (25 of 93). In table 12, 44 per cent of those with supplemental work reported earning income as a wage earner, 24 per cent engaged in vending activities, 20 per cent engaged in additional home-based production, and 12 per cent provided services. Three self-employed producers engaged in farming or animal husbandry, while two home-based workers did not specify their work and one was a caterer. No respondents reported receiving tips, working on commission or working for free in a family enterprise.

Table 12 - Type of Second Work Activity, by Employment Status (%)			
	Sub-contracted	Self-employed	Total
Wage earner	46.67	40.00	44.00
Selling goods for sale	26.67	20.00	24.00
Producing goods for sale	20.00	20.00	20.00
Services	16.67	5.00	12.00
Farming and/or animal husbandry	0.00	15.00	6.00
Other	3.33	5.00	4.00
Catering for an individual/household	0.00	5.00	2.00
N	25	25	50

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Focus group discussions elaborated on the incidence and nature of respondents' secondary work. During one focus group exercise, participants developed a collective description of their sector by identifying their work activities on cue cards. The group then discussed and organized the cards in a manner they felt best represented their sector. Figure 1 depicts the work activities of five self-employed women (FG7). Four out of five women listed two productive activities. The first activity listed – charring wild boar or carving buffalo horn – involves community production that tended to be time and labour intensive, with high capital investment requirements for the materials. The second activity was generally more flexible and undertaken at lower cost, such as making and selling food (FG7). In other groups, many participants identified their secondary work as industrial outwork. This was true of both sub-contracted and self-employed workers, suggesting that the wage earning activities identified in table 12 were very likely sub-contracted production work rather than formal wage employment.

9 Results of the 2005 NSO survey of homeworkers found that Bangkok homeworkers worked an average of 10 hours, and during peak season the workday could extend to between 10 and 20 hours (NSO 2007). Other studies have reported a range from 9-10 hours a day during regular production periods (Mehrotra and Biggeri 2002; FLEP 2010).

Figure 1 - What type of home-based work do you do?

Buffalo horn carving
Selling congee

Burning wild boar
Selling vegetable

Buffalo horn carving
Selling coffee

Burning wild boar
Embroidering

Buffalo horn carving

Source: FG7 with five self-employed women, held in Bangkok on 20 September 2012.

Table 13 shows that nearly a third of respondents have no support to maintain production and earnings when they were sick or otherwise unable to work. Under these circumstances, workers' strategies differ considerably by employment category. Self-employed workers are more likely to increase their work hours on return to work, or have a household member take over. Some are able to rely on employees, but a quarter of self-employed workers still said they had no support at all. Sub-contracted workers, on the other hand, were nearly twice as likely to report no support, but were more likely than self-employed workers to have another informal worker or friend take over.

Table 13 - Types of Support When Unable to Work, by Employment Status (%)

	Self-employed	Sub-contracted	Total
No support	22.58	43.86	30.67
Will work more on return to work	34.41	14.04	26.67
Household member will take over	33.33	18.28	24.00
An employee will take over	10.53	1.08	4.67
Another informal worker will take over	10.53	18.28	15.33
Friend will take over	0.00	11.83	7.33
N	**57**	**93**	**150**

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Overall, turnover and income strategies reported in this study suggest that home-based workers – both self-employed and sub-contracted – earned significantly less than the monthly income of the legal minimum wage for formal workers of 300 baht per day. One focus group participant reported that she sewed bags for 2-3 sub-contractors and worked from 4 a.m. until 4 p.m. She produced 100-200 pieces a day at 1 baht per piece and received between 100 and 200 baht a day (FG9)[10]. Findings also suggest that self-employed workers likely had a small comparative earnings advantage over sub-contracted workers, but much less so than suggested by figures reporting turnover. Sub-contracted workers had little control over their work hours and some variation tends to reflect changes in volume and number of orders received from employers. Patterns among self-employed workers may reflect a wider set of variables related to enterprise conditions, such as cost of inputs and demand. These trends will be explored further in Section II of the report.

Turnover also differed by product type. Focus group findings (table 8) suggested that sub-contracted garment workers were likely engaged in more highly skilled work when compared to the activities

[10] It is important to note that in focus group discussions participants often did not specify whether reported earnings reflected turnover or income. Reported figures should be considered in the context of respondents' specific remarks.

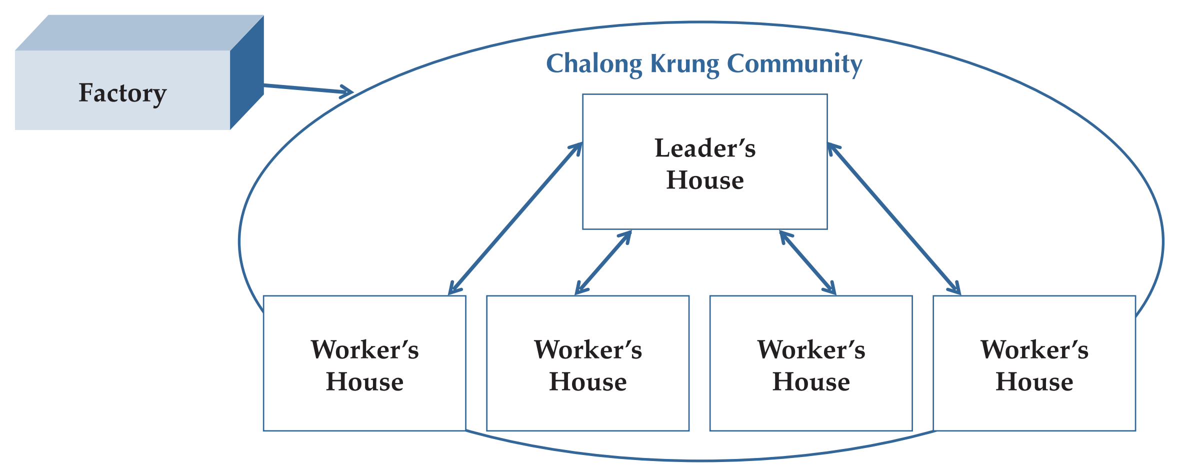
of non-garment workers, and findings suggest that sub-contracted garment work paid slightly better than sub-contracted non-garment work.

1.3 Characteristics of Home-Based Workers' Value Chains

Home-based workers in this study engaged in a variety of different activities related to design, production and marketing of their products. These activities involve a chain of activities between different enterprises, which are themselves linked through networks of governance (Dolan and Humphrey 2000). Survey and focus groups results from the study's garment producers provided a particularly good illustration of the range of these value chains.

During one focus group exercise, groups worked together to draw maps of their production. Figure 2 is a representation of the map created by five garment workers from the Chalong Krung community who produced brand-label shirts under sub-contracted arrangements. The map depicts their homes – and workspaces – within their community. One house, representing the group "leader" was set apart. This individual acts as an intermediary between the workers and a local factory. The factory, where the shirts are eventually sent, was depicted outside the community, with a simple arrow pointing to the leader. Focus group participants explained that the design of the shirts was carried out by a brand-name firm, who then contracted a local factory to produce them. Raw materials and supplies were acquired and organized by the local factory, and the manager of the factory delivered materials and supplied to the home of the lead sub-contractor. The leader then distributed them to other producers and completed piece-work was returned to the leader's house for pick-up.

Figure 2 - Focus Group Spatial Map – Where do you buy materials and sell products?



Source: FG1 with five sub-contracted women, held in Bangkok on 29 June 2012

Across focus groups, sub-contracted home-based workers described the following patterns: top-end processes (designing, patterning) were generally carried out by Bangkok or regional firms, although they were occasionally carried out by international firms or buyers. Raw materials were generally sourced in Bangkok or in close proximity by a firm or agent contracted to manage the production process, and were delivered to a central point (house) within the community. Workers then collected or were given materials. Some sub-contracted workers worked together in one woman's home, or in an available space within the community, while others worked alone in their home. Generally, finished products were collected from a central pick-up point and payment was made through one producer in the group.

In survey responses reported in table 14, 54 per cent of sub-contracted workers identified their buyers – the factories or intermediaries who purchase their production – as "national" while 40 per cent identified them as "local". However, most focus group participants could offer little specificity about what happened to goods once they were collected. The map in Figure 2 was one of only two maps (of 15) that identified a factory or intermediary, and it was represented with no geographic specificity except for its depiction outside the community. The participants explained that they had only a vague sense of the factory's locale ("far away"), as they had been there only once during their training. In light of focus group discussions, it is possible that sub-contracted workers' survey responses represent a "best guess". Sub-contracted home-based workers also had little or no access to the markets for the goods they produce.

Table 14 - Locale of Buyers for Products, by Employment Status (%)			
	Sub-contracted	Self-employed	Total
Local customers	39.78	50.88	44.00
Buyers from Thailand	53.76	17.54	40.00
Local community buyers	2.15	15.79	7.33
International buyers	2.15	14.04	6.67
Local markets	2.15	1.75	2.00
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00
N	**93**	**57**	**150**

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Figure 3 depicts the self-described work of five self-employed women who produce shirts in a cooperative.[11] Most women in the group engage in a range of production activities, with different members managing or carrying-out different aspects of the production and marketing process.

Figure 3 - Focus Group Exercise – What type of work do you do as a home-based worker?

- Contact customers
- Buy material/fabric
- Iron before packing
- Deliver orders

- Trim thread
- Cut sleeve edges
- Stretch out & cut fabric
- Mark sewing points
- Fold finished cloth before packing

- Make button holes front coat
- Bind curved neckline
- Attach label

- Trim collar
- Hem sleeve edges
- Trim front coat

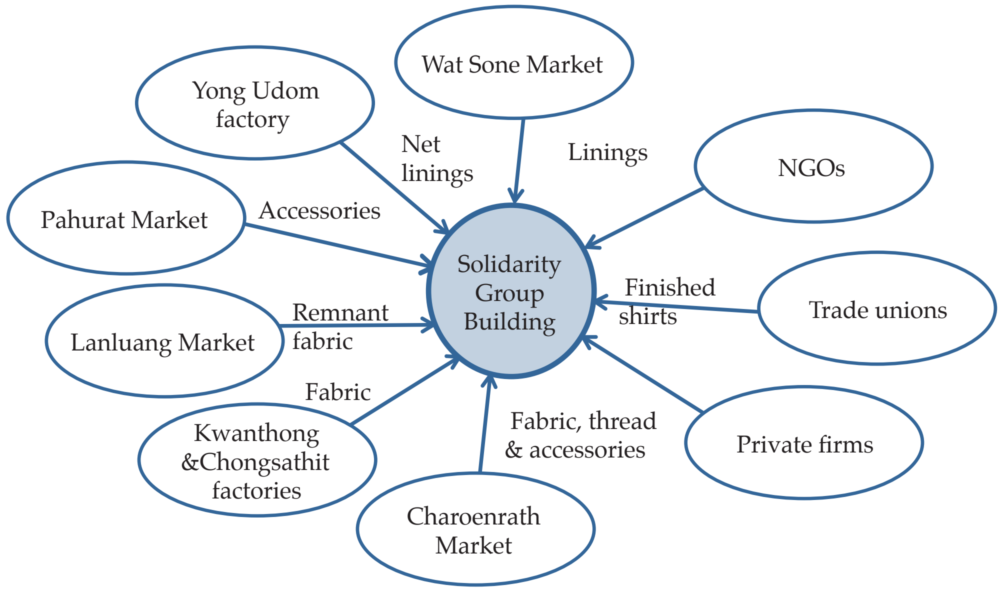
- Stretch cloth/garment
- Stitch edges
- Finish edges

Source: Focus Group 2 with five self-employed women, held in Bangkok on 11 September 2012

Figure 4 represents a causal flow diagram drawn by this cooperative (FG2). During this exercise, focus group participants were asked to visually represent their economic linkages. The group identified four markets where they purchased raw materials. Arrows depicted the flow of materials into their community production centre, including bulk fabric, thread, accessories, linings, and remnant fabric. Participants also depicted several factories with which they placed direct orders for finer fabrics. Group members explained that they researched wholesale prices and sourcing locales before purchasing, aiming to pay no more than 250 THB per kg. A typical order is 500 kg of fabric, or enough to produce about 2,000 t-shirts (FG2).

[11] The Solidarity Factory is a 15-member garment production cooperative founded in 2003 by former sweatshop workers. The group produces t-shirts for their own label, and also produces for several local factories. All factory duties and decisions are shared between the members of the cooperative, including production, marketing and management.

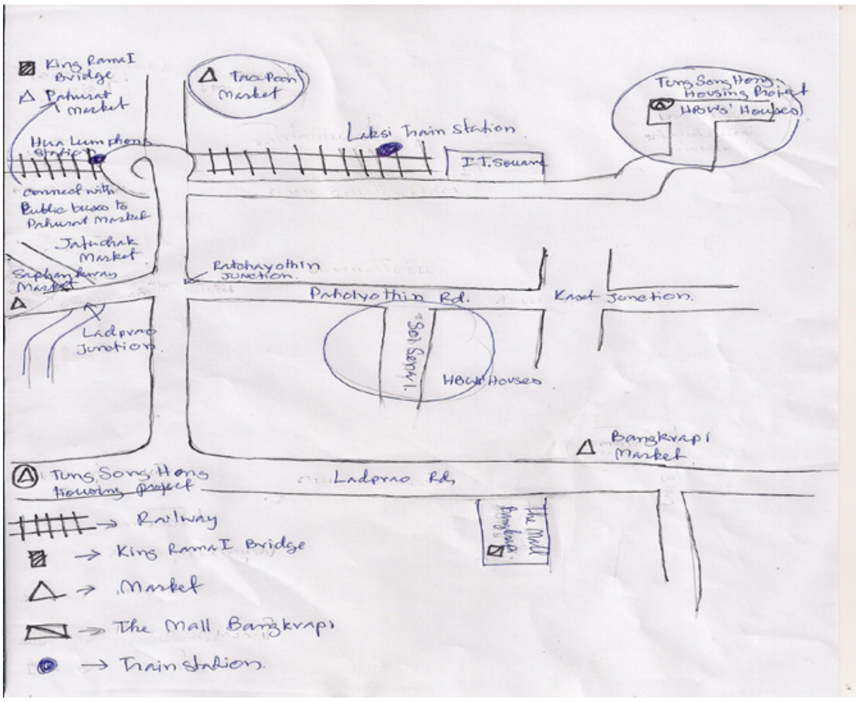
Figure 4 - FG Causal Flow Diagram – What materials are purchased, and from whom? What products are made and sold, and to whom?



Source: FG2 with five self-employed women, held in Bangkok on 11 September 2012

In table 14 just over half of self-employed producers reported that they sold their goods and services to local customers while16 per cent sold their goods to local community buyers. Some self-employed producers also sold their goods to national and international buyers – 18 per cent and 14 per cent respectively. The diversity in locale of buyers among self-employed workers was much greater and also somewhat surprising. It suggests that some self-employed workers operated beyond the local context and were capable of reaching distant markets under certain circumstances. For example, in figure 4, workers identified the main buyers of their goods – NGOs, trade unions and private firms. Group members explained that most of their orders are not for onward sale – the shirts and uniforms are worn by members of the organizations who order them. They met these buyers at producer fairs, exhibitions and related social events.

Figure 5 - Focus Group Spatial Map – Where do you buy materials and sell products?



Source: FG12 with five self-employed women, held in Bangkok on 13 October 2012

Focus group discussions suggested that sub-contracted participants operated at the bottom of medium to long value chains extending from retailers, middlemen, wholesale markets, factories, contractors and sub-contractors, on down to the home-based workers in this study. Sub-contracted workers tended to process raw materials or produce inputs for one or more stages of production. Sub-contracted workers typically operated without written contracts (Wongprom et al. 2004), and there was often ambiguity with regard to who set and controlled the terms and conditions of production, as workers usually operated in relative isolation from the lead firm. Typically, sub-contracted workers in this study knew very little about activities and actors above or below them in their value chains. They offered descriptions of a relatively short, narrow section of the value chain in which they likely produce, and had little information about the final markets for their goods. Evidence suggests that most of Thailand's manufactured goods tend to go toward Thai, regional Asia, or relatively low-priced international markets. The garment industry is Thailand's largest export industry, accounting for 60 per cent of total exports (NSO 2011).

In contrast to sub-contracted workers, self-employed workers in this study frequently engage in the whole process of production – designing, producing and marketing their goods and services. Self-employed workers, therefore, tended to provide detailed accounts of their production activities and points of engagement with other firms and actors. When compared to those of sub-contracted workers, the spatial maps of self-employed participants generally include considerable detail. For example, the map in figure 5 was drawn by five self-employed garment producers who worked as own account operators (FG12). Their map includes physical representation of their communities and other urban features such as streets, transportation hubs and markets. Members of this group reported that they travel by car, bus, mini-truck (*songtaew*) and train in order to meet with buyers, purchase raw materials or deliver their finished products. Orders often require several trips to the market – to survey prices and availability of raw materials, make samples and to fill orders once they have been confirmed.

So, while self-employed home-based workers generally have a great deal of control over their working conditions and direct engagement with markets, they also contribute great investments of time and money for product development, raw materials, travel and marketing within the city and sometimes further afield. Their maps show their engagement with the physical city, as well as their spatial relationships, reflecting these investments of time and money across the city.

Part 2: Changes in Bangkok's Home-Based Work

Bangkok's home-based workers live and work at the nexus of a number of key driving forces in the wider environment – notably those of the economy, the city/state, and value chain dynamics – that have either positive or negative impacts on their working conditions and lives. Study results in this report section are based on survey responses as well as focus group exercises designed to identify and rank the major supports and hindrances to participants' work, to diagram the impacts of these forces, and also to specify and discuss responses to these forces. This section also examines the way participants' responses are helped or hindered by institutions and actors in the wider environment, as well as the degree of organization among home-based workers.

2.1 Driving Forces in Bangkok

Table 15 provides a summary of survey responses to perceived work problems across employment status. Nearly three quarters of the self-employed workers said that inconsistent demand and high input prices were a problem, while a third said they experienced difficulties bargaining with customers, were paid too little for their products or had difficulty getting their goods to market. Just over half of sub-contracted workers faced a problem with inconsistent work orders and nearly as many faced problems because they were not able to bargain with their contractor. Nearly half also said that the price of inputs was too high. Less than a quarter of sub-contracted workers said the price paid for their products was too low or that they lacked training or skills development opportunities. Although the findings reported in this table provide one picture of workers' perceived problems and comparative difficulties, they do not suggest what forces may be driving these problems among Bangkok's home-based workers. The findings from the focus group discussions help to identify and illustrate these forces.

Table 15 - Work Related Problems, by Employment Status (%)

	Sub-contracted	Self-employed	Total
Inconsistent customer demand	54.84	73.68	62.00
Inconsistent work orders	54.84	54.39	54.67
Inability to bargain	50.54	35.09	44.67
Materials costs too high	45.16	73.68	56.00
Product prices too low	22.58	33.33	26.67
Lack of training or skills development	20.43	22.81	21.33
Difficulty getting goods to markets	12.90	31.58	20.00
Poor access to basic infrastructure at home (e.g. water, electricity, etc.)	6.45	8.77	7.33
Other	3.23	5.26	4.00
N	**93**	**57**	**150**

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

2.1.1 The Economy

Broader economic trends can have significant impacts on urban informal enterprises and workers, not just formal enterprises and workers. Findings from this study suggest that Bangkok's home-based workers recently experienced strong positive and negative impacts from a number of macroeconomic trends – those of economic downturn and recovery – as well as micro economic trends related to prices/cost of investment.

Problems of inconsistent demand, reported in table 15, are further clarified by table 16, which reports perceptions of change in local home-based work over the preceding 12 months. Most workers have seen their customer number, purchase volumes and/or order numbers rise or fall in the previous year – fewer than half (47 per cent) reported stability in their *customer numbers*, 36 per cent said their *purchase volumes* were stable and less than a third said their *order numbers* were the same as the year before. Both rising and declining trends were observable among home-based workers, suggesting that one or more forces were at work stimulating and/or depressing demand over the previous year.

Table 16 - Perception of Change in Home-Based Work over the Past Year (%)					
	More	Same	Less	Don't Know	N/A
Number of customers	24.67	47.33	20.67	6.67	0.67
Purchase volumes	35.33	36.00	22.67	4.00	2.00
Number of orders	38.00	30.00	27.33	3.33	1.33
Numbers of workers	36.67	44.00	10.00	5.33	4.00
Input costs	54.67	18.67	1.33	6.67	18.67

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Focus group exercise results suggested much of the volatility was driven by instability in the national economy. Each group produced a list of the top three positive and negative forces in their work. Table 17 provides a summary of findings from all focus groups rankings, depicting a matrix of the key negative and positive economic driving forces identified by these groups as well as the frequency of their ranking.

More than half of all focus groups cited the national economic downturn as the key difficulty in their work, with four groups out of 15 identifying national downturn as their most significant difficulty (Rank 1). On the other hand, 10 groups cited a strong national economy as a key support, and a third of all focus groups (five) reported it was the most significant support. Four groups also cited a poor global economic situation as a major difficulty, while two groups cited a strong global economy as a support.

Table 17 - Driving Force – The Economy, by Frequency of Citation				
Difficulty / Obstacle	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Total
National economic downturn/lower demand	4	3	1	**8**
Global economic downturn	2	1	1	**4**
Rising costs	2	1	1	**4**
Support				
Strong national economy/rising demand	5	3	2	**10**
Strong global economy	1	1		**2**
Affordable inputs			1	**1**

Source: Focus groups 1-15, summarized from focus group exercise ranking results

Home-based workers in this study were strongly impacted by the national economic volatility resulting from the destruction and recovery associated with flooding in 2011. According to World Bank estimates, from mid 2011–early 2012 Thailand suffered 1,425 billion baht (US $45.7 billion) in economic damages and losses as a result of devastating monsoon floods which inundated northern provinces and parts of Bangkok (Bhaopichitr et al. 2012). During this period, manufacturing was severely disrupted and there was a strong contraction in household consumption. Self-employed workers reported that during the floods and in the aftermath, customers had less disposable income, depressing demand for local goods. Some producers reported that local customers bought less or less often, or even stopped buying entirely. One self-employed producer said, "If the national economy is good and smooth, our sales are consistent. Last year, the economy was not good because of political conflicts and floods, and we hardly sold at all" (FG12). Another woman explained, "During bad economic times, nobody wants a new dress" (FG9).

In 2012 Thailand's economy also continued to be affected by slowdown in the global economy (Bhaopichitr et al. 2012). Three out of four groups that produced for export or made tourist-oriented goods identified a problematic global economy. They cited lower orders from factories or buyers, not just over the past year but over the past several years. One sub-contracted garment worker clarified, "No orders from abroad means the factories can't export" (FG9). In another group, a participant explained that when export demand dropped at her factory, home-based workers were first in line to have their orders cut. "The factory only has enough orders for the factory workers, or home-based workers who live close-by… they don't always have enough work to send us" (FG13). Similar findings were reported in the aftermath of the economic crises of the 1990s and late 2000s. A 2002 HomeNet Thailand found that added impacts of the Asian Financial Crisis included plummeting job orders and piece-rate wages for Thailand's sub-contracted home-based workers (HomeNet 2002). In 2009, a study on the impacts of the Global Economic Crisis on informal workers also revealed that many home-based workers who produced for global value chains experienced a decrease in their work orders (Horn 2009, 2010). During the flooding, lower demand and fewer orders resulted in loss of earnings and available income for employment activities or household contributions. One group of self-employed garment producers hadn't received new orders in a year (FG2). As one participant simply put it, "No work, no money" (FG11).

Several groups reported that during this period, their debt had increased as they borrowed or failed to repay a loan. One group said that this problem was exacerbated because, during periods of economic turmoil, there were fewer available low-interest loans or revolving funds. In fact this was ranked as their most pressing problem in table 17. Household vulnerability was further deepened by the unemployment and underemployment of other members of the respondent households.

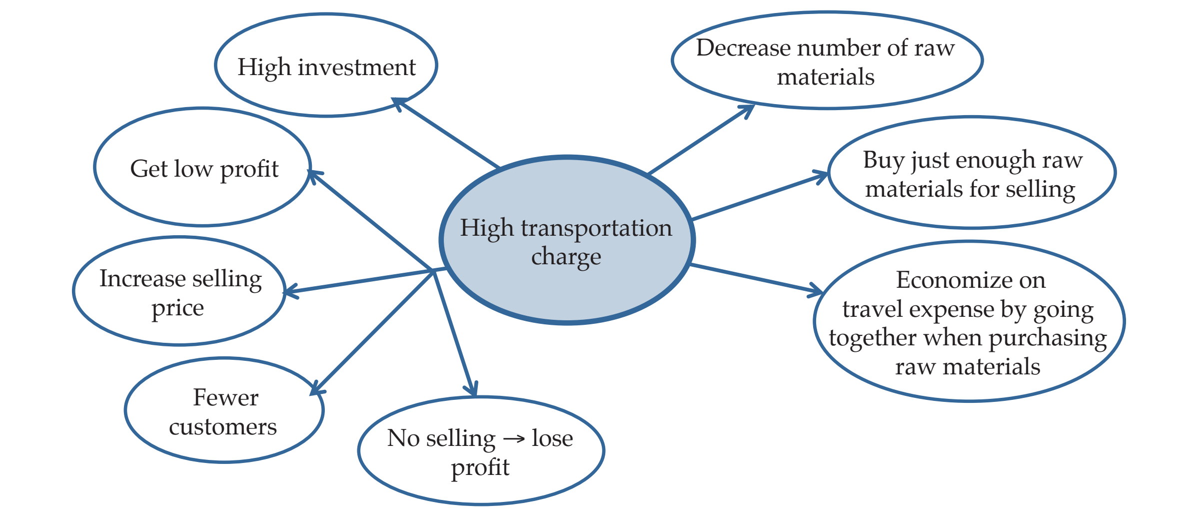
By mid-late 2012 – the time of study interviews – Thailand was in the process of recovering. Manufacturing was nearly at pre-flood levels and the government had undertaken a number of rehabilitation and consumption-stimulating measures.[12] From focus group discussions, it would appear that many participants had seen their order and purchase volumes rise from the lows of the previous year. This may also help explain the distribution of responses in table 16, and the timing of the study (mid-2012) likely captured this swing. Several focus groups reported that factory orders had rebounded and in some cases were higher than usual as employers tried to catch-up on delayed orders. Some self-employed workers also felt that recent government policies – such as the increase in the minimum wage[13] – increased purchasing power of local customers and boosted the national economy (FG10). This could also help explain why, in table 16, more respondents reported higher purchase volumes (35 per cent) than higher customer numbers (25 per cent). The recovery may also help explain why participants have not observed a sharp rise in local home-based workers, which might be expected with longer periods of economic depression. When asked about the future, half (51 per cent) of sub-contracted workers expected order volumes to rise over the next year, while 29 per cent felt the volume would stay the same and only 6 per cent felt they would be lower. Self-employed workers were slightly less optimistic – 38 per cent believed there would be more orders/buyers for their goods, 42 per cent felt they would stay the same and 6 per cent felt there would be fewer.

Aside from fluctuating demand, the cost of work inputs – particularly raw materials – also has strong impacts on home-based work. Nearly three quarters of self-employed producers and nearly half of sub-contracted producers reported that high prices for inputs was a problem for their work (table 15). In the previous 12 months, more than half (55 per cent) of all survey participants reported that the price of their work inputs had risen (table 16). In focus group work, four groups identified high prices as a key problem, and two out of 15 identified this as their main problem. One group also identified affordable inputs as a key support. Figure 6 represents the impacts of rising transportation costs on one group of home-based producers, as well as their responses (right-hand side of diagram.) They explained that higher fuel charges have lowered their profit margins, necessitating an increase in their selling price. However, this has driven away customers and so the overall impact is a further decline in profit.

[12] Measures included tax exemption for first house buyers, tax rebates for first car and pick-up truck buyers, increased incomes for civil servants entering public service with Bachelor degrees, a 3-year debt moratorium programme (eligibility-dependent) as well as a corporate income tax cut and excise rate cut on diesel. In January 2011, the Bank of Thailand also eased interest rates from 3.25 to 3.00 per cent to promote domestic demand growth.

[13] The minimum wage hike was a major campaign pledge of the ruling Pheu Thai Party during the 2011 federal election – the hike took effect in Bangkok on April 1, 2012.

Figure 6 - FG Flow Diagram – High Transportation Costs



Source: FG7 with five mixed-status women, held in Bangkok on 20 September 2012

As reported previously, home-based workers in this study have narrow earnings margins. This makes them very vulnerable to even the slightest increase in input prices. For example, one group reported losing 100,000 THB on a contract after the price of raw materials unexpectedly rose between the time they agreed to a price and the moment when they purchased the materials (FG2). In focus group discussions, participants suggested that the national government's decision to increase the daily minimum wage for formal workers by 40 per cent – to 300 baht – was driving up consumer prices in the city while informal workers' wages saw no increase. Several groups also identified rising oil prices and a cut in government fuel subsidies as contributing to increased work input costs. Optimism regarding future pricing trends was low. When survey participants were asked about their expectations regarding their work expenses, 55 per cent expected costs to rise over the next year, while 15 per cent thought they would remain the same and only 1 per cent expected them to fall.

2.1.2 Government Policies & Practices and Urban Planning

Study participants in both the survey and focus groups reported that urban planning, policies, and practices ("the city") have significant positive and negative impacts for their home-based work. Among problems of infrastructure and local institutional obstacles, table 18 indicates that the most frequently cited problem was a hazardous work environment – which 47 per cent of both sub-contracted and self-employed workers experience. Relatively few sub-contracted workers reported infrastructure or local institutional concerns, though 17 per cent said that the cost of utilities was problematic and 10 per cent reported poor access to business support centres. Self-employed workers, on the other hand, were more likely to report additional problems. Nearly a third of self-employed workers cited the cost of utilities as a concern, followed in frequency by high rent (19 per cent) and inadequate business space (16 per cent). Comparatively few self-employed workers identified concerns with business licensing or business support services. Generally speaking, fewer than 10 per cent of workers reported concerns with storage space, toilet access/rubbish removal, poor treatment by authorities or access to utilities.

Table 18 - Reported Problems with Local Infrastructure and Institutions, by Employment Status (%)			
	Sub-contracted	**Self-employed**	**Total**
Work environment			
Occupational hazards to safety of workers/self	47.31	47.37	47.34
Inadequate business space	7.53	15.79	10.66
Inadequate/lack of storage space	5.38	5.26	5.33
Inadequate access to toilets or rubbish removal	1.08	1.75	1.34
Utilities and rent			
Cost of utilities (electricity, water, telephone)	16.21	31.58	22.66
Access to utilities (electricity, water, lights)	7.53	8.77	8.00
High rent	2.15	19.30	8.67
Business services and administration			
Access to small business support centres	9.68	10.52	10.00
No business license	5.38	12.28	8.00
Treatment by local authorities	6.45	5.26	6.00
N	**93**	**57**	**150**

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

Working, eating, sleeping and carrying out household activities in the same cramped environment has deleterious effects on workers' productivity, health and household well-being. For example, chilli paste producers, their families and community experience stinging eyes and skin because they produce a strong, noxious smell burning chilli in close confines (FG10). Home-based workers who process waste plastic reported that the waste produces a terrible odour when wet, and worried that it was harmful to their families (FG6). This group also lacked space for sorting and storing the bulky material, although storage was only a concern to 5 per cent of survey respondents. On the other hand, a general lack of space to conduct business was problematic for 16 per cent of self-employed workers, and 8 per cent of sub-contacted workers. In focus groups, self-employed producers explained that without designated retail space or market stalls, producers spend additional time and money marketing and travelling to find customers and deliver goods, which also takes away time from production. One respondent worried that she could be pushed into sub-contracting by this situation. She explained, "Without a market place, we lose our working capital, which could force us to become sub-contracted workers" (FG4). Without a retail space, she is forced to sell wholesale for lower per-unit prices.

It is interesting to note that although safety and poor worksite conditions were frequently raised in conversation by focus groups, these issues did not appear in focus group ranking exercises. Instead, in the prioritization of "city" problems and supports, the most frequently cited issues were related to basic infrastructure and utilities – they were cited six times by five focus groups in the study (table 19). Additionally, three groups also cited infrastructure and utilities as a support to their work. In addition to good infrastructure, four groups cited key problems in accessing locally administered funds – government loans intended for enterprise development in the community, while three groups reported that good access to these loans was a positive force in their work. Public transportation was also a key driver – for good and bad. Cheap reliable public transportation was cited as a key support to five of fifteen focus groups, while barriers to public transportation were cited as a problem by two groups. Four groups in this study also identified local administration and policy as a key positive force in their work.

Table 19 - FG Driving Forces – Government Policies & Practices at the City Level, by Frequency of Citation				
Difficulty / Obstacle	**Rank 1**	**Rank 2**	**Rank 3**	**Total**
Infrastructure and utilities	1	2	3	**6**
Access to loans/village funds	1	2	1	**4**
Public transportation			2	**2**
Support				
Public transportation	2	3		**5**
Local administration and policy	1	1	2	**4**
Infrastructure and utilities	1	1	2	**4**
Access to loans/village funds		3		**3**

Source: Focus groups 1-15, summarized from focus group exercise ranking results

The majority of problems identified as infrastructure issues by focus groups were related to poorly maintained or damaged roads, as well as waterways. This reflects survey findings – nearly a third of self-employed producers said they had difficulty getting goods to market (table 15). Generally, participants were concerned with the slow response of local governments in identifying and repairing damaged roads after the flooding of 2011. Home-based workers explained that poor conditions on roads made it unsafe and inconvenient to transport raw materials and products to and from communities, as well as visit markets and customers. One focus group reported that the local roads went unfixed for several months, impacting not only work, but also their whole community (FG6).

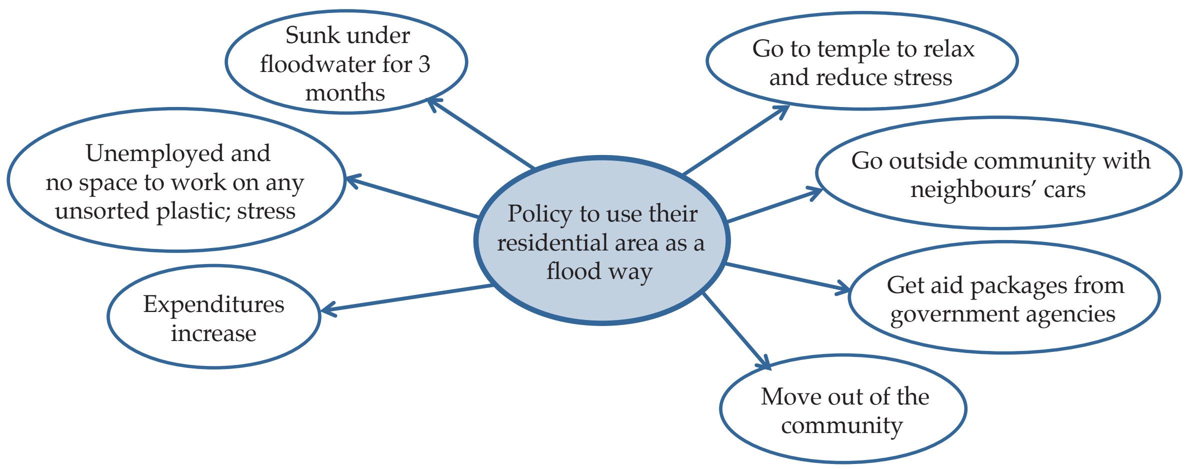
The home-based workers in this study tend to work and live in low-income communities established in large housing developments outside the urban core. Respondents reported that, even before the flooding, many of these areas were underserviced. Local waterways, for instance, were regularly clogged with garbage, which actually exacerbated flooding in some areas. Several groups also reported that their communities were located in isolated housing development areas with no road access either before or after the floods. This severely limited mobility, whereas being close to a network of roads enabled pick-up and delivery of raw materials and goods, and gave some producers contact with buyers. For those who had good road access, this infrastructure was a boon. Explained one woman, “Many people pass by my house and drop in to get information about the cost of tailoring… I find my customers because they pass by my house” (FG3). Density and mixed-zoning also produce opportunities for one group, in which it was reported, “There are many schools, apartments and a post office in this area… we have a good sales especially in the morning and evening” (FG4).

Cheap and reliable electricity is particularly valuable to home-based work. Most study participants said they have no problems with reliability or access to electricity and other basic infrastructure services, and it was clear that home-based workers placed a high importance on their reliability and affordability. One woman noted, “It is very seldom that power is cut, but without electricity we cannot do our work. We need light for this” (FG15). But nearly a quarter of all survey respondents and a third of self-employed respondents reported that the cost of utilities was a problem for their work (table 18). Some producers worked on industrial machines at home, and 100 per cent of participants relied on electrical power for the home/work lighting and heating.

In addition to good road service and affordable and reliable utilities, access to cheap reliable public transportation was a key concern for study respondents. In survey responses, 32 per cent of self-employed respondents felt the distance between their home and markets is problematic, compared to 12 per cent of sub-contracted workers. The problems of distance, however, were alleviated by fast reliable public transport and a third of the study’s focus groups identified this as a key support to their work. One group with easy access to Bangkok’s SkyTrain reported that even though they live far from markets, they are able to save time contacting customers, buying raw materials and delivering their finished product because the Sky Train is “convenient and fast” (FG2). On the other hand, some groups have no convenient public transportation and this is a major hindrance. One group reported that their local bus only operates weekdays at 5 and 7 a.m. and returned only at 5 or 6 p.m. One woman explained, "I would like to go to markets on the weekend, but there is no bus. Sometimes I have no choice but to use the taxi" (FG9).

Focus group discussions also revealed other important examples of the impacts of major urban planning and policy decisions. Figure 7 represents a causal flow diagram created by members of one focus group whose residential area will be used as a floodway in conjunction with the city's new flood management strategy. During the floods of 2011, the community was isolated for three months. No employers could reach their homes to deliver materials, and workers had no space to operate even if they did. Clean up efforts and expensive transportation alternatives compounded expense during their months without work. If their land is used as a floodway, the group will likely face similar conditions on an annual basis during monsoon season. The group believed they were powerless to stop this policy and did not know what would happen to them.

Figure 7 - Focus Group Causal Flow Diagram – Policy to Use Residential Area as a Floodway



Source: FG6 with five sub-contracted women, held in Bangkok on 19 September 2012

Other focus groups also provided examples of planning policies enacted without consultation but with great impact on workers' lives, particularly relocation. Relocations had not taken place in the past few years, but the consequences of these past decisions continued to impact workers in ways detailed above. The group sorting plastic, for example, took up this activity only after they had few other alternatives following the expropriation of their land during the building of the Bangkok International Airport (1995/6). The community of 300 households now lives further from the city centre, on rented land that costs each family roughly 40-50 baht per month, which many families have trouble paying (FG6). Another group – chilli paste producers – were relocated by the National Housing Authority (NHA) almost 10 times before finally being settled in their current locale. At one point, the community purchased a piece of land from the NHA but this site was then developed into a Convention Centre and they were asked to relocate to their current housing project (FG10). The land is prone to flooding, and there is only one public transportation option (a mini truck or *Songtaew*). In the beginning, the families lived in squalor. The NHA eventually provided the community with housing loans and the community successfully petitioned for new roads and better public transport options. However, prior to these successes many community members gave up and sold their land to return to the downtown area (FG10).

Although these are not strictly "urban" institutions, participants in this study also identified local financial institutions – such as banks, informal lenders, and Village Fund Committees – to be matters of the city, as were problems and opportunities associated with accessing loans or funds. Locally-administered loan programs such as the Village and Urban Revolving Fund were generally the most accessible loan programs. The village funds provided 1 million baht to designated communities to be used as a revolving credit facility managed by a local committee. Three groups of self-employed workers and one group with mixed-status reported difficulty accessing these funds and the same self-employed groups reported that having access would provide a major support to their work. Workers in this study explained that there was a strong negative impact for producers who did not have access to such schemes. These funds were considered key assets to assist in enterprise development and providing some economic security in light of difficulty securing bank loans as informal enterprises. These funds were seen to reduce reliance on informal lenders and to help break the debt cycle. Respondents reported that it was sometimes difficult to meet the conditions for loans set by institutions outside the community. For example, loans often required that individual applicants were registered for taxation purposes with the local District Office. One study participant attempted to register herself, but was told she would have to register as a home-based "trader" because she was not sub-contracted. This would have made her place of work (her home) subject to property taxes,[14] which she could not afford and so she did not pursue registration further (FG14). Other workers reported ineligibility for loans based on (variously) their employment status, their production group composition, not having a guarantor, not having sufficient group savings, etc. Several producers (who belonged to production groups) did report some success securing loans from the Government Saving Bank and Islamic bank of Thailand and these particular banks were generally well regarded in the study (see section 2.2.1). Respondents were also aware of several government programs designed to give financial aid to rural workers and their families – such as financial aid for agricultural workers, but urban workers were not eligible. In one focus group (FG5), a participant mentioned that, "in the rural areas, the local administration provides loans of 10,000 baht per each family so why not in Bangkok?".

2.1.3 Value Chain Dynamics

The focus groups also discussed dynamics within the value chains in which they work. These dynamics tend to be different for self-employment and for sub-contracted home-based workers. In the survey, 51 per cent of sub-contracted workers had reported little or no capacity to bargain with their contractor yet contractors set wages for 60 per cent of sub-contracted workers in the study. By contrast, bargaining was a problem for 35 per cent of self-employed workers (table 15). Only 13 per cent of sub-contracted respondents determined the prices for their production, while this was true for 80 per cent of self-employed workers.

Table 20 - Party that Determines Prices, by Employment Status (%)

	Sub-Contracted	Self-Employed	Combined total
Sub-contractor	60.22	12.28	42.00
Home-based worker (respondent)	12.90	80.70	38.67
Other	18.28	5.26	13.33
Direct buyer	8.60	1.75	6.00
N	**93**	**57**	**150**

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

In addition to their wages, sub-contracted workers also have little control over their own working conditions, often working long hours, in cramped conditions, to meet short deadlines. Workers reported that if they did not meet deadlines they would lose orders, but that the deadlines often left them working late and interfered with household responsibilities and social time with families. Respondents expressed fear of reprisals if they protested these conditions of work, and explained that it was better to avoid the risk. The sub-contracted workers were also vulnerable because they often did not know who along the value chain was ultimately responsible for their wages and the conditions of their work. The ability to negotiate for better wages, for example, might be constrained by the fact that the piece-rate payment reflected the outcome of underbidding by contractors and intermediaries for orders from manufacturers, who in turn may have underbid for orders from large retailers. As a result, sub-contractors had limited or no capacity to offer higher wages and were sometimes themselves left unpaid by firms higher up the value chain. One producer, for example, waited a year for payment on a contract. She later found out that her employer was actually an intermediary who was waiting to be paid (FG9). It is interesting that of the six focus groups that expressed challenges related to dependency, none ranked this problem their greatest challenge. It is possible that many of the issues identified in focus group discussions – the frustrations related to late or unpaid wages, distribution of contracts and issues related to quality control – were taken as a matter of course.

[14] House and Land Tax is imposed on owners of a house, building, structure or land that is rented or otherwise put to commercial use. The tax rate is 12.5 per cent of the assessed annual rental value of the property.

Focus group rankings reflected this high degree of dependency among sub-contracted workers (table 21). Seven out of 15 groups identified problems related to workers' dependency in relation to their employers/sub-contractors. Under these conditions, it is not surprising that positive or improved relations with sub-contractors were a major support identified by six focus groups, three ranked it the most important support to their work. Groups highlighted benefits such as minimized travel time and cost through delivery of raw materials and pick-up of finished goods, access to training, support with marketing, and also additional dividends such as financial and emotional support. One group explained, "In the beginning, the trainer complained about our work, but now they are very happy with us. He told us that he would always get us work, even from other factories" (FG1).

Table 21 - Driving Forces – Value Chain Dynamics, by Frequency of Citation in Focus Groups

Difficulty / Obstacle	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 3	Total
High dependency		3	4	**7**
Competition	2	1	1	**4**
Poor working conditions	1			**1**
No capital/investment	1			**1**
Support				
High productivity	4	2	4	**10**
Improved relations with sub-contractor	3	2	1	**6**
Group solidarity		1	1	**2**
Good pricing schemes		1		**1**

Source: Focus groups 1-15, summarized from focus group exercise ranking results

Competition was also mentioned with relatively high frequency among focus group respondents – four groups cited competition as a key problem. Survey responses suggest that competition is a more pressing issue for self-employed workers than sub-contracted workers, of whom two thirds felt that competition did not pose a problem. In table 22, 44 per cent of self-employed respondents felt that competition was either a major or moderate problem in their work. Among the four focus groups that identified competition as a major negative work force, the major impacts identified were lost income as a result of pricing wars, and fewer customers as a result of diluted demand.

Other major hindrances identified by groups include poor working conditions and lack of capital and investments for enterprise development. Among work supports, the capacity/productivity of groups was ranked 10 times as major support, while two groups mentioned group solidarity and good pricing scheme as other major supports. It is interesting to note that, with respect to negative forces, participants generally identified external forces while their prioritization of positive forces tended to focus on their own capacity or decision-making processes.

Table 22 - Attitudes Towards Local Competition, by Employment Status (%)

	Sub-Contracted	Self-Employed	Combined total
Sub-contractor	60.22	12.28	42.00
Home-based worker (self)	12.90	80.70	38.67
Other	18.28	5.26	13.33
Direct buyer	8.60	1.75	6.00
N	93	57	150

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

When asked about their expectations for the future, 46 per cent of workers believed there would be more home-based workers in Bangkok over the next year, whereas 11 per cent felt that there would be fewer producers and 29 per cent felt the number would remain stable. Interestingly, in discussions related to existing competition, home-based workers often identified formal firms as their major concern. For example, one cooperative member told her focus group, “Even with nine years of experience, we’re always competing with big factories and small producers alike. The big factories produce at a lower unit price because of high volume while small producers often underbid us” (FG2). A home-based grocer also expressed concern regarding the expansion of chain retailers like 7-Eleven and Tesco Lotus across Bangkok, “[They] offer a lot of promotions that small grocers like us cannot match. People like to walk and do their shopping in air conditioning which is more comfortable and makes them feel very modern and trendy” (FG4).

In light of competition from larger formal firms and other small producers, productivity – specifically factors related to skill and speed – was a major concern for study participants. In survey responses, 21 per cent of home-based workers said that their lack of training or skills development is a problem in their work (table 15). On the other hand, skilfulness/high productivity was cited 10 times by eight focus groups (more than half) as a positive factor supporting participants’ work. Low skill arose from lack of training, or technological limitations. Many respondents had little capacity to invest in new machinery or opportunity to get training. Demonstrating high skill and productivity levels, on the other hand, helped secure more contracts for sub-contracted workers. One producer said, “In the beginning the factories might not have trusted us, but we have proven ourselves by the quality of work and our responsibility” (FG13).

Home-based workers with lower skill levels face limited mobility across industries and higher risk in their current work. Sub-contracted workers, for example, face penalties for sub-standard production. One woman explained, “We get no wages for repairing our work, and we lose time instead of working on new products that will earn wages” (FG13). They may also lose orders with the factory. Self-employed workers were also conscious that their livelihoods were tied to their skill and speed. “If we can’t finish the dresses on time, the customers won’t come back again,” said one dressmaker (FG3). Skilfulness also helps self-employed workers compete for customers and promote return sales. For example, one woman reported, “My regular customers know about the quality of my products so they buy from me even if the price is a little higher than others” (FG7). She also linked her skill with product diversity – after 30 years she was able to produce new designs, for men and women, and had 9-10 regular designs choices for customers (FG14).

Respondents’ productivity was also limited by their lack of access to capital for enterprise development, as well as technical and marketing assistance. In focus group rankings, one group identified lack of capital as the most significant negative force in their work, because it limited their capacity to take advantage of opportunities and/or expand and develop their production. One producer explained, “With no capital we lose the opportunity to get more profit and add value to our production. We also lose customers who will not wait until we find capital to invest” (FG14). In this study, several sub-contracted workers also reported that a lack of capital and access to loans leaves them stranded as dependent workers, unable to develop their own enterprises and transition into own account work.

2.1.4 Other Forces

In addition to the economy, the city and value chain dynamics, home-based workers in this study identified two other significant forces impacting their work – extreme weather and seasonality, including major festival periods. In table 23, three focus groups identified extreme weather-related problems as the most pressing problem impacting their work. Specifically, respondents discussed the impacts of the catastrophic flooding that hit Bangkok in 2011. These discussions differed from those related to the economic impacts of the floods, as those focused generally on the physical conditions created by the flooding.

Table 23 - Driving Forces – Other, by Frequency of Citation in Focus Groups				
Difficulty / Obstacle	**Rank 1**	**Rank 2**	**Rank 3**	**Total**
Extreme weather	3			**3**
Rainy season	1		1	**2**
Support				
Major festivals		1		**1**

Source: Focus groups 1-15, summarized from focus group exercise ranking results

Among one group of sub-contractors (FG4), floodwaters damaged factories and destroyed community roads and transportation routes, making it impossible to deliver and pick-up raw materials and finished goods. For some sub-contracted workers, this resulted in a reduction or cessation of work for a two-three month period. The decrease in income, damage to homes, isolation and shortages of food and water led to great mental anguish. Once floodwaters receded, there was backlogged work but poor road access and factory damage slowed recovery. One woman explained, "We had no money to repair the flood damage and no money to restart our business and had to borrow from the money lender by using our house as collateral" (FG4). While the flooding of 2011 was a particularly destructive weather-related event, these extraordinary weather events may become more frequent over time as a result of global climate change. One producer worried, "If it happens again this year, instead of buying chicken, we will only be able to buy chicken bones." Another woman shared, "We are scared of flooding all the time… It is a big problem for our work" (FG1).

The annual fluctuation of seasons was also cited as an important force impacting work and income because it was associated with wide variations in demand across the year and also brought difficult physical conditions for production. The rainy season, in particular, is associated with lower sales and fewer orders for certain items. One producer said, "I get less work to sew clothes during the rainy season because the factories can't sell them. And in the rainy season, my vegetables are affected too" (FG10). The rain also posed a physical threat to delicate production, particularly during transportation. One group of producers producing 3 x 4 ft cardboard sheets explained that they can only travel with goods when the rain stops, or when they use plastic bags for protection. A producer explained, "If the rain destroys my work, I have to pay 50 baht per piece for the damage on top of losing 50 baht for my wages. So I lose 100 baht per piece!" (FG10). It might be assumed that individuals who work at home would be protected from weather-related problems. Yet, home-based workers tend to face the same realities as others living in low-income housing – housing projects are more likely to be located in vulnerable and underserviced areas of the city, while poor housing conditions leave them more exposed to the elements.

Finally, the changing of the seasons also brings about positive forces for workers – major festival periods. Festivals such as Songkran,[15] New Years and Ramadan usher in periods of higher household expenditure, providing a big boost to self-employed home-based workers, particularly those who make targeted products, such as Islamic dresses.

2.2 Responses

Survey responses and focus group discussions reveal that home-based workers in Bangkok have faced a series of economic and environmental shocks over the past few years, in addition to more persistent conditions of vulnerability and neglect. By their inclusion in this study, participants represent those who did not abandon their occupation, or depart their urban communities in search of alternative opportunities. Rather, to cope, participants engaged in numerous individual, collective and household responses that provide further evidence of the scale and impact of these forces.

The most commonly cited impact of negative forces on participants' work was a loss of earnings and/or fallen revenue. In survey responses, participants most commonly responded to fallen income in one of two ways – cutting personal expenses or increasing their workloads (table 24). Of the 57 survey respondents (38 per cent of the total sample) who reported fallen revenue over the preceding 12 months, 39 per cent (both sub-contracted and self-employed workers) made cutbacks to household and/or personal spending. More than a third of self-employed workers reported that

[15] Songkran is the traditional Thai solar New Year festival celebrated each year from April 13-15.

they sought additional work to make up for lost income, followed in frequency by longer workdays, late payments to suppliers or lenders, and the substitution of family for paid labour. Sub-contracted workers, on the other hand, were somewhat less likely than self-employed workers to identify coping mechanisms. Among the more frequently cited strategies were to seek additional work, increase the workload of another household member, or do nothing.

Table 24 - Main Ways of Coping with Fallen Revenues, by Employment Status (%)

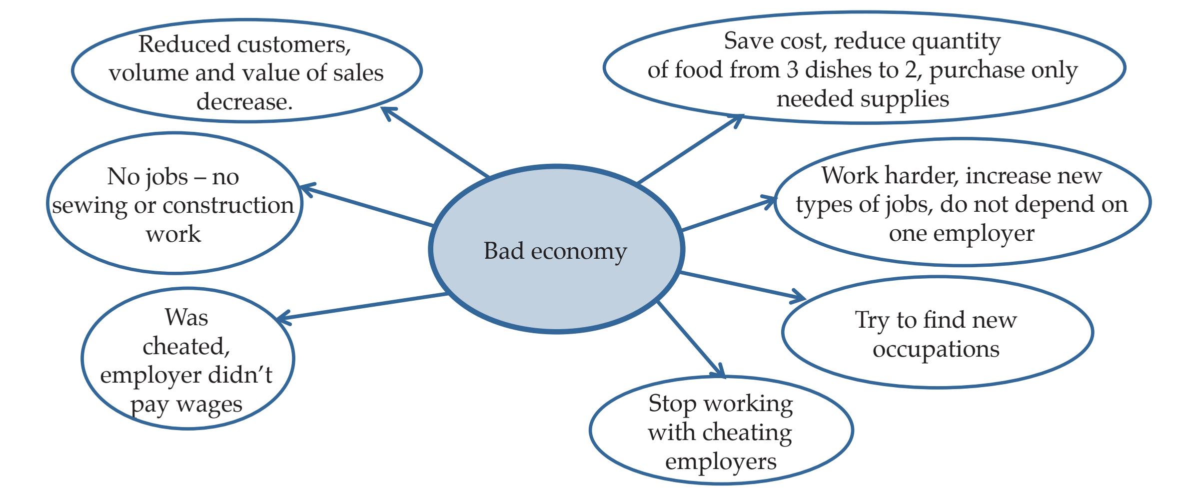
	Sub-Contracted	Self-Employed	Combined total
Cut personal expenses	38.24	39.13	38.60
Took additional work	26.47	34.78	29.82
Substituted family workers for paid workers	11.76	13.04	12.28
Increased workload – household member	11.76	8.70	10.53
Did nothing	11.76	4.35	8.77
Borrowed money	8.82	8.70	8.77
Lengthened work day	2.94	17.39	8.77
Other	3	13	7
Delayed paying suppliers or loan payments	2.94	13.04	7.02
N	**35**	**22**	**57**

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

The precise form and nature of participants' coping strategies were elaborated on in focus group exercises and discussions. Participants produced causal flow diagrams that depicted both the impacts of negative forces as well as the responses to the impacts. In accordance with survey results, the most commonly depicted response across diagrams were those related to cutbacks of personal and household expenses. Participants cut back on unnecessary goods, bought cheaper food, and economized on portions. One respondent served two dishes instead of three, "and purchased only badly needed items" (FG9). Another woman ate less in order to sustain the volume of food she served her children. Some individuals also supplemented food by growing vegetables and caught fish in the canals near their homes. Respondents generally did their best to insulate their children from the effects of cutbacks, but in a few cases children's schooling was affected. A few children were withdrawn from private schools and sent to public institutions, and others were withdrawn from some or all of their schooling in order to assist in work.

Figure 8 presents one focus group's depiction of the impacts of – and responses – to a "bad economy". In addition to cutting back on household expenditures, participants worked harder, sought new work and pursued different ways of decreasing their dependency in employment arrangements. Group members said that they stopped working with cheating employers, and looked to avoid depending on just one employer. These strategies were echoed in other focus groups that identified economic downturn as a major negative force. Participants explained that they looked for supplementary work, either in another informal sector (such as casual day labouring), or in the same sector (a different production). One woman explained, "I worked harder by taking on new types of jobs – resizing dresses, zipper replacement, crocheting bags and hats and not depending on only one employer" (FG9).

Figure 8 - FG Flow Diagram – Work Impacts and Responses to a Bad Economy



Source: FG9 with five mixed-status workers, held in Bangkok on 24 September 2012

In survey responses, self-employed workers were more likely to look for additional or alternative work than sub-contracted workers (35 per cent and 27 per cent, respectively; table 24). This also helps explain why mostly self-employed workers reported working longer work days in response to fallen revenue. Self-employed workers had control over their work arrangements and were able to seek new markets or take on new work activities, while sub-contracted workers are generally dependent on their sub-contractors for orders – and during periods of downturn, these orders are often reduced.

Decreased revenue was also associated with rising inputs costs. Focus group discussions captured a number of enterprise cost-cutting strategies not identified in survey responses. Some self-employed producers bought materials in bulk at wholesale prices while others bought cheaper quality raw materials, or reduced the quality and/or quantity of their products (like snack packages). These strategies also brought risk as they sometimes impacted demand. One snack maker explained, "I have to prioritize quality over price. If I use poor quality materials, customers will not come again" (FG4). Producers explained that they also tried to reduce travel expenses by sharing transportation. One woman said, "Sometimes we go together to buy raw materials" (FG7).

In some instances, it is the infrequency or the absence of response to certain problems that seems striking. In spite of higher input costs, most participants in this study did not report higher selling prices for their goods. Table 25 shows that more than three quarters of all respondents – 77 per cent of both sub-contracted and self-employed workers – were receiving the same prices for their goods as the previous year and only 13 per cent reported that prices were higher. This suggests that self-employed workers, who set the prices for their goods, have not adjusted their prices upward to reflect higher costs. Several self-employed participants explained that they are not able to pass on their costs to consumers or buyers because they would lose customers. For example, one shoe maker told her focus group that she sold her shoes to a shop for 200 baht a pair but the shop sold them for 500 baht (FG3). After deducting materials, she made almost no profit, but could not ask for more money because she would be outbid by other shoe producers.

Table 25 - Prices Received for Main Good Compared with Last Year, by Employment Status (%)

	Sub-Contracted	Self-Employed	Total
Higher	12.90	12.28	12.67
Same	77.42	77.19	77.33
Lower	5.38	3.51	4.67
Don't Know/Not applicable	4.31	6.02	5.33

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

In response to issues of poor working conditions or exploitation by employers, sub-contracted workers generally do not engage in bargaining with employers or seek outside support in dispute resolution, largely because they fear reprisals over conflicts. One group had asked their factory to increase their piece rates, but had never been successful, despite support from the local employment office. Another group had petitioned their factory for a separate work space. They were told that they were too few to warrant purchasing land for a community workspace. Sub-contractors generally did not pursue these issues much further. They explained, “We are afraid of bargaining because if we squeeze the employer, the employer will do the same to us” (FG1). Instead, in response to poor working conditions or occupational hazards, sub-contracted workers generally develop personal strategies at their own cost. For instance, workers took occasional rests breaks during the day. Some workers were more aware of occupational health and safety issues because of campaigns by HomeNet Thailand, and they were more proactive.

In a bid to improve their conditions of work, some participants sought to move from sub-contracted work to self-employment. However, the necessary investments were a significant barrier for many, and workers generally lacked know-how. One bronze worker said, “I decided to produce and sell by myself. But my products are high quality with high prices and I have no knowledge about the market and who might be interested and can afford my product” (FG13). In response to this problem, some home-based workers sought out skill development opportunities and business training. For self-employed workers, this helped develop and manage existing employment activities. Among sub-contracted workers, training helped secure contracts and attract new orders. One sub-contracted worker explained that factories provided work to those they knew and trusted. She told her focus group, “We have to help each other to improve our work skills so factories will appreciate our work” (FG13). However, training opportunities appear to be rare.

In addition to training, self-employed home-based workers tried to become more competitive in markets and access financial and enterprise resources. Some producers tried upgrading or diversifying their production. Basket makers in the study kept up with changing fashions and created new products and designs to suit trends and attract customers. Another producer made goods at different price points, in order to give customers choice. Developing communications and marketing strategies also improved business opportunities. One cooperative member said, “We plan to set up a showroom and produce advertising materials for the US, Europe, Singapore and Australia” (FG2). Another woman developed a logo for her snacks, which helped her advertise and also acted as a guarantee of the product quality (FG14). But many of these strategies required substantial time and money and without solid business knowledge they could be risky. One flower garland producer explained, “I tried to improve my products by making several new styles, but I spent too much money on investment” (FG5).

Just under 10 per cent of all workers – both self-employed and sub-contracted – reported that they borrowed money in response to fallen revenue (table 23). Given the associated challenges and risks, borrowing was not a primary strategy for many study participants. Focus group discussions suggest that, facing difficulties borrowing from banks or government schemes, participants were often forced to borrow money from friends, family, informal money lenders, and even their own customers in times of difficulty. One worker said, “I had to borrow from the informal money lenders because I did not know where else I could get a loan… even if I had to pay 20 per cent interest per day” (FG5). While most family loans do not incur interest, they spread burden within the family. One woman, who had fallen behind on payment towards a 20,000 baht informal loan, explained that she had borrowed money from her relatives to pay the lenders, who in turn had borrowed from a bank that charged 12 per cent per annum (FG13). A basket weaver explained, “I never take loans from anyone, since I know I will never have money to repay them” (FG4).

2.2.1 Intermediary Institutions and Actors

In this study, intermediary institutions and actors are those that mediate the impacts of driving forces on home-based workers in Bangkok, either as supportive, negative or more ambiguous entities. Table 26 reveals that respondents believed few types of organizations to be helpful. A majority of self-employed workers found membership-based organizations (MBOs) to be helpful, and nearly half identified other workers as helpful. A strong majority of self-employed workers identified non-governmental organizations (NGOs), worker’s cooperatives, and trade unions, as well as government, local and national, the police, and large retailers to be unhelpful. Sub-contracted workers were even more likely to find these institutions unhelpful, though a plurality of sub-contracted workers identified other workers as helpful. Previously, it was seen that sub-contracted workers rely on only a few actors for their production activities – typically their sub-contractor, a group leader and sometimes other producers. The findings in table 26 indicate that sub-contracted workers generally perceive helpful organizations to be those that directly assist or support their production activities. Self-employed workers, on the other hand, typically engage in more stages of the production and with more external actors during this process. Results reflect this – self-employed workers were more likely to call different types of organizations helpful at higher frequencies, although it seems they still perceived support from local organizations at relatively low levels.

Table 26 - Perceptions of Types of Organizations, by Employment Status (%)

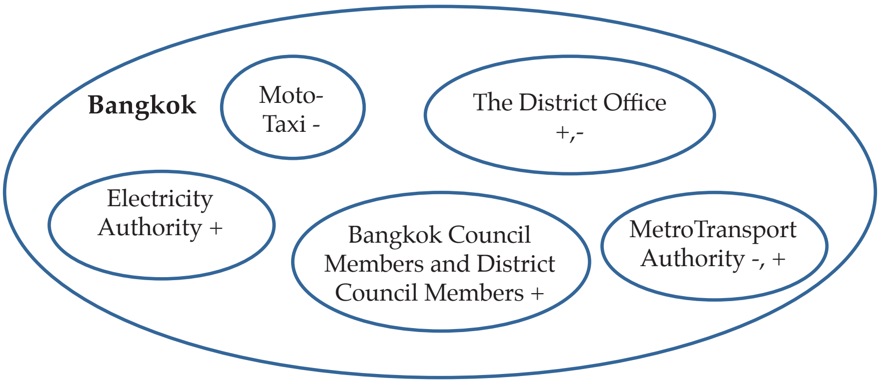
	Self-employed		Sub-contracted		Combined total	
	Helpful	*Unhelpful*	*Helpful*	*Unhelpful*	*Helpful*	*Unhelpful*
Other workers	49.12	42.11	52.69	27.96	51.33	33.33
MBOs	54.39	21.05	32.26	30.11	40.67	26.67
NGOs	22.81	66.67	10.75	79.57	15.33	74.67
National government	21.05	70.18	1.08	93.55	8.67	84.67
Worker's co-op	15.79	71.93	4.30	77.42	8.67	75.33
Police	8.77	78.95	4.30	89.25	6.00	85.33
Local government	1.75	84.21	4.30	88.17	3.33	86.67
Trade union	3.51	89.47	1.08	88.17	2.00	88.67
Large retailers	0.00	91.23	0.00	87.10	0.00	88.67

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

In generating causal flow diagrams of negative forces, a number of focus groups included institutional actors among their depictions of responses. In discussions, it was clear that in many instances, these actors or institutions were sought out because they were perceived to be helpful in coping with a particular issue. In order to further explore the role and importance of these institutions, participants carried out focus group exercises during which they created maps depicting the institutions relevant to their work and lives, as well their perceptions of these institutions as positive, negative or both (as indicated by plus and minus signs.) Initially, some groups had considerable difficulty identifying key institutions. Reflecting survey responses, some workers felt that they often worked "alone". One woman expressed her frustration, "I have never asked for anything. No one is interested in us. There is no organization that provides us help" (FG13). However, maps produced by focus groups suggest that institutional relationships were somewhat more complex than suggested in table 26. Both sub-contracted and self-employed home-based workers engage with a number of different institutions around a range of issues, to positive and negative effect.

Figure 9 represents an institutional map produced by a focus group of mixed-status garment workers. This group explained that many of their work problems concerned transportation and infrastructure issues, as a consequence of flooding in 2011. Consequently, most of the institutions identified by this group were concerned with local administration and service provision – institutions that had been helpful or obstructive during the community's recovery. For example, the Bangkok Council and District Council had been responsive to the community, and had intervened with the district office in order to push for road repairs. For this reason, the councils had a large importance and were seen positively. It was the District Office which finally took action on public works, but their slow response and lack of engagement with the community made them both negative and positive institutions. The diagram also reflects the group's evaluation of local service providers – they were happy with the city's cheap electricity but felt that public buses were not reliable. They often have few choices other than moto-taxis, which they felt were expensive and unsafe.

Figure 9 - Focus Group Institutional Map – Mixed-Status Garment Workers



Source: FG9 with five mixed-status workers, held in Bangkok on 24 September 2012

Table 27 presents a summary of the institutional maps prepared by all 15 focus groups, including the frequency of citation, importance, and perceived character of institutions. Local authorities, which appeared 23 times in the institutional maps and were cited by 12 of 15 focus groups, were seen to be of large or medium importance in mitigating impacts of major driving forces. Although they were identified as having both a positive and negative effect on home-based workers, they were more often considered positive than negative. In the survey, however, more than 80 per cent of the home-based workers found local government to be unhelpful. The most frequently cited local authority was the District Office, the local administrative office of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration and the access point for key public services and programs. Specifically, the District Offices are charged with delivering local governance, community development, occupational training and promotion, registration, public works, health care, revenue collection, and education (IDS 2007). Many respondents reported mixed outcomes in their dealings with District Offices. Responsiveness was generally low, notably during the 2011 floods. One woman explained, "I only received flooding compensation a few months ago. It took such a long time to get the financial support from the District" (FG11). One group was forced to demonstrate outside the district office (FG 9) before action was taken to repair community roads.

Table 23 - Matrix of Institutions Showing Frequency of Mention and Perception

	Maps	Importance			Positive or negative		
Institutions		**Large**	**Med**	**Small**	**+/-**	**-**	**+**
Local administrators	23	14	9		12	3	**8**
Local service providers	9	2	4	2	2	2	**5**
National policymakers	6	1	3	2	5		**1**
Formal lenders	6	3	3		1		**5**
Civil society	5	3	2		1		**4**
HomeNet Thailand	5	2	3		1		**4**
Value chain actors	4	3	1		3		**1**
Police	2		1	1	1	1	

Source: FGs 1-15, summarized from focus group institutional mapping result

Participants explained that their primary difficulties with the District Office were those related to responsiveness, communication and personnel. Each office typically oversaw more than a 100,000 people. Working in relative isolation created a number of physical and social barriers to engagement, and most participants relied on their community leaders to engage with the District Office. In interviews with social development officers from the District Office of Nong Chok, it was clear that officers engaged in consultative field visits and encouraged group formation and registration, but otherwise had limited resources to support workers. "We have no budget to support any groups; we can only provide them with information or introduce them to funding agencies," said one official.[16] Workers also reported that the visits were infrequent and workers often missed out on community development schemes and training opportunities organized as a result of poor coordination by these offices.

Some participants were also frustrated by the administrative confusion that existed between the District Office and the National Housing Authority (NHA), which transferred many of its responsibilities to the district. Some of these problems reflect problems of capacity at the local level. In Thailand, implementation of the decentralization process has been slow and faltering at times, in part reflecting considerable constraints at the local administration level, including unclear divisions of roles and responsibilities and weak systems of coordination (Haque 2010). Still, the purview of the District Offices makes them important institutions with links to other important institutions. "The district officers have a lot of information; they know what organizations/agencies can help us" (FG13). The ambivalence of the home-based workers to institutions is reflected in tables 26 and 27: the strong negative perceptions of many institutions in table 26 reflects the past interactions and experiences of the home-based workers with these institutions, while the more positive views expressed in table 27 reflect both past experience and the perceived potential for support represented by each institution.

The Bangkok Metropolitan and District Councils[17] were also seen to have a medium to large role supporting home-based workers. Because they are elected, focus group participants felt they were more responsive than the District Office. However, their principle supporting role is to exert pressure back toward the District Office on pending matters. During crises, in particular, workers reported that these representatives could intercede with the District Offices on their behalf. They also helped organize some community projects, like markets. Despite some successful outcomes, participants noted that communication was often slow and indirect.

The Community Committee and Leaders were important positive institutions for the focus group participants, largely because of their roles as community representatives. They serve as key intermediaries with the district offices, voicing issues of concern and informing the community about new developments, resources and programs. For some respondents, they have also furnished advice and support to workers, helping to develop livelihood strategies, secure loans and connect them with employers or customers. The great reliance of the home-based workers on these representatives, however, further underscores their dependence. One woman shared, "Our leader is the only one who knows what to do and how to cooperate with the District Office" (FG15). However, some focus groups reported that the Community Committees and Leaders can exhibit discriminatory behaviour and create barriers to accessing services from outside the community.

Local service providers – related to education, utilities, transportation and health – appeared nine times in institutional maps and were reported with varying importance and perceived impact, though they were generally seen more positively than negatively. The Office of Non-Formal Education (ONFE) facilitates the establishment of community education centres that conduct literacy and post-literacy classes as well as vocational skills training across Thailand (Leowarin 2010). Personnel at the ONFE were seen to have a strong impact on the effectiveness of the programmes. While some ONFE staff had been sincere and encouraging in their outreach, respondents recounted that other efforts had been lacklustre. One woman explained, "[The current staff] seems disinterested and wants to finish as fast as possible, with no evaluation and no follow-up" (FG4). The group also reported that trainers have claimed to provide training activities that never took place (FG4).

Generally speaking, respondents felt that electricity and water rates were not overly burdensome, and that Metro Electricity and Water had a good record with respect to supply, maintenance and communication. The service was considered vital for their livelihoods – as one respondent put it, "Our sewing jobs exist only because there is a regular power supply" (FG9).

---

16 Interview with a Social Development Specialist and Social Development Officer, Social Development Sector, Nong Chok District Office on February 20, 2013.

17 The Bangkok Metropolitan Council (BMC) is the legislative branch of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. There are 61 members elected to the BMC from the 50 Bangkok districts. The Council is governed by the Chairman of the Bangkok Metropolitan Council. District Councils are composed of seven or more elected members from the local district. Each district is managed by a District Director, appointed by the governor. The District Councils, elected to four-year terms, are advisory bodies serving their respective District Directors.

On the other hand, the Bangkok Metropolitan Transit Authority (BMTA) was viewed somewhat negatively by the two groups who identified it. While some groups had quick service though SkyTrain, other groups relied on uncomfortable and infrequent BMTA buses. The alternative – motorcycle taxis (moto-taxis) – were regarded as unsafe and costly but have a monopoly on private city transport. This was a costly situation, particularly for self-employed workers. One woman said, "Our income is disappearing into transportation expense" (FG9). Workers hoped for an upgraded bus system.

National policymakers were depicted six times across institutional maps. National policymakers were identified as having medium to small importance, and were seen as positive or neutral for their role in determining policy and delivering services related to wages, social security, universal healthcare and support for the elderly, disabled and poor. Although many participants recognized that the government was working to extend better services to more people, including home-based workers, it was generally felt that access and information remain a barrier to these services. For example, although Thailand has universal healthcare, coverage is not necessarily equal or accessible for home-based workers. One producer explained she could only visit the doctor after hours, because she could not take time away from her production. However, these visits were not covered by her health card because they were not considered emergencies (FG13). Workers also felt that informal workers should be covered under the same social security schemes as formal workers, as well as have parity in minimum wage standards. Although there have been strides made to extend social security coverage to Thailand's informal workers (under Article 40 of the Social Security Act), there has been slow uptake on the voluntary package, partly subsidized by the government, which covers sickness, invalidity, death, and an optional old-age benefit in the form of a lump sum.

Even targeted programs can be inaccessible. The Ministry of Labour's Homeworkers Fund, for example, was created in 2005 to provide loans specifically to sub-contracted home-based workers. One participant explained, "The loan policy for [sub-contracted home-based workers] is good but access to the loans is quite complicated and the loan ceiling is only 200,000 baht" (FG2). An interview with a representative of the issuing department confirmed that only 11 groups have been granted loans in Bangkok since 2005 (out of 139 groups nationwide), with loan averages of 84,545 baht.[18] The official acknowledged that the eligibility requirements[19] for these loans were actually more stringent than for bank loans, as they required prior registration with the department and were highly scrutinized to minimize risk to the government against repayment. Other formal lenders were generally regarded as important positive institutions, providing loans and capital for enterprise investment.

Some financial institutions also provided market information and assistance coordinating support organizations. The Islamic Bank was particularly well regarded. Three groups had received loans of between 10,000 – 50,000 baht for investment. In one case, a worker who contacted the Islamic Bank was connected with her community leader, who helped her secure a loan and also linked her to HomeNet Thailand (FG14). It was felt that, "this bank does not take advantage of people" (FG11).

The Government Savings Bank was regarded with somewhat more skepticism. Although loans were provided to the poor, participants said that loans were highly conditioned and were only granted after a complicated application process. One garment worker explained they can generally borrow no more than 35,000 baht from the Government Savings Bank, but their investment needs are considerably higher if they are to build a workspace, purchase sewing machines, and buy raw materials in bulk. Participants also felt that interest rates were too high – at the time of research in mid-2012, the Government Savings Bank interest rate was 13 per cent (FG14). One institution, the Community Credit Union Coop, assisted members with emergency and long term loans. Besides credit, the cooperative also developed social welfare funds to help members facing different social problems – such as the funeral fund (FG12). The Village Fund was viewed positively – workers mentioned that profits are distributed to welfare programs for children. However, as previously reported, access to these funds can be quite limited, and lending amounts can be low, therefore this institution was given smaller importance as a result of its scope (FG12).

---

[18] Interview with Labour Management Specialist at the Employment Promotion Division, Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, Ministry of Labour conducted on February 15, 2013.

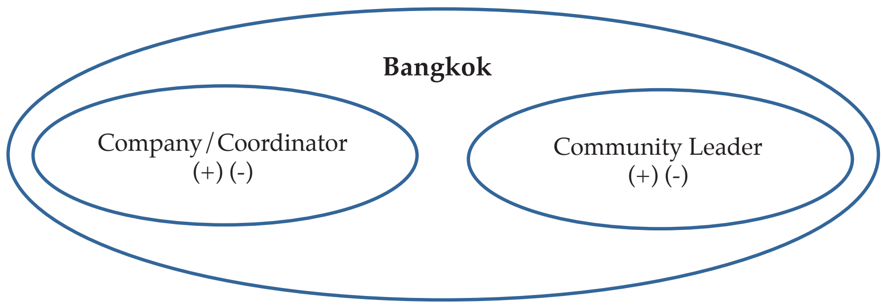
[19] Applications for loans were considered for groups of five or more homeworkers, registered with the Department of Employment for at least three months prior, stating clear group objectives and governance, and with assets of 10,000 baht (or 10,000 baht in their savings fund). In addition to these requirements, groups were required to have a government officer or state enterprise worker act as guarantor.

Civil society actors were also regarded positively. Members of their own communities were identified as potential sources of support not only to the social and emotional well-being of the respondents, but also to their livelihoods. They help in production and contribute to community savings groups and cooperatives. NGOs were also identified for their help developing skills and marketing, and providing revolving funds for work, as well as bursaries for local children. In one instance, an NGO provided a vending cart to a snack producer, allowing her to sell around the community (FG4). Two groups also worked with local universities. In one case, this collaboration assisted a group gain access to new markets and even supported the group by providing tools and equipment for their chilli paste production (FG10). Also, volunteers constituted a large support for one group. Recruited through exhibitions and fairs, international volunteers helped coordinate foreign buyers and brought skills and technical support to the group, for example, helping to set up their website (FG2).

Only four focus groups of sub-contracted and mixed-status home-based workers identified value-chain actors in their institutional maps. Companies, factory owners and their agents, as well as middlemen and production coordinators, were all identified as significant institutions with respect to livelihood activities, though their impact was viewed as both positive and negative. Participants identified companies and factories positively as the source of their training and employment. One woman explained, "Without the factory owners, we have no work" (FG13). However, owners were also seen in a negative light because they were associated with low pay and late payments. Factory agents and intermediaries played a positive role through their direct link to workers' livelihood activities, as well as their role transporting materials and finished goods, but were also viewed negatively because of their role as company enforcers who, for instance, carry out quality control and house/workspace inspections on behalf of the contractor.

Figure 10 depicts the institutional map of one group of sub-contracted workers that identified two institutions/actors within the city related to their work: the company through its agent ("coordinator") and their local representative in the community. This pattern was typical of maps created by sub-contracted workers – they generally included fewer institutions than those of self-employed workers, and tended to include a local administrator and a value chain actor. They rarely included transportation actors. It is notable that no groups – either self-employed or sub-contracted – identified customers as an important institution, even though their importance was frequently cited during other focus group exercises. This likely relates to the respondents' understanding of the concept of "institution."

Figure 10 - Focus Group Institutional Map – Sub-Contracted Non-Garment Workers



Source: FG15 with five sub-contracted workers, held in Bangkok on 24 October 2012

Police were generally not a significant institution for most study participants. In survey responses, only two workers reported police harassment. However, two focus groups did identify police and discussed their uneasy relationship with the police. One group recounted that each year, local police inspected fire extinguishers in their homes, and often forced home-based workers to replace units that were not yet due for replacement. Allegedly, the police received a commission from these sales (FG2). Another group explained that the police often enforced regulations arbitrarily and unreasonably: for instance, when home-based workers bring children with them to the markets, the police may harass them, citing child labour laws.

2.2.2 HomeNet Thailand

All participants in this study had one institutional link in common – their affiliation with the membership-based organization (MBO) HomeNet Thailand. Participants in this study represented a range of organizational arrangements – from a production cooperative with a long, active history of membership within HomeNet to semi-independent, self-employed producers only recently introduced to the organization. This study aimed to better understand HomeNet's role and its impact on home-based workers' livelihoods, as well as the impact of organization on workers' visibility and voice within the city. In survey responses, only 41 per cent of workers identified their MBO as a positive institution (table 26), while 27 per cent felt the institution was unhelpful. Although this was the second most favourably regarded institution reported by participants (after "other workers"), results suggest that the majority of workers did not find HomeNet to be helpful. In institutional maps, a third of focus groups (five) included HomeNet Thailand in their map, with four groups identifying HomeNet Thailand as important and positive, and one group reporting both a positive and negative attitude towards the organization (table 27.)

Focus group discussions suggest that positive attitudes towards HomeNet were not necessarily related to length of affiliation with HomeNet, as nearly all participants (140 of 148[20]) had been members of HomeNet Thailand for a similar period of time (5 to 10 years). Focus group discussions also suggest that a participant's intensity of engagement with HomeNet was not a predictor of positive perception. For example, some very active HomeNet members, or those who have been members for many years, may have greater awareness of their individual and collective challenges; however, it seems this may result in greater dissatisfaction when changes are perceived to be very slow. Additionally, group characteristics prevent some groups from taking advantage of membership opportunities. Members of one focus group that included a bronze-work group affiliated with HomeNet since its foundation provided an example. This group had very low literacy, which limited their capacity to benefit from certain schemes designed for them by HomeNet and by NGOs and other supportive institutions (FG4).

On the other hand, groups often had a positive regard for HomeNet Thailand when internal organization and group cohesion were forged in response to major shocks. During these periods, groups explained that they engaged in more problem-solving and became more aware of the need to be heard by local institutions related to their well-being (FG10). For some in this study, membership with HomeNet was itself a direct response to one or more negative forces. During the flooding of 2011, for example, HomeNet quickly distributed food, drinking water and other aid though its network, while government aid came much more slowly. One focus group of sub-contracted workers explained that they joined HomeNet only after learning of this response (FG9). Other groups said that their communities organized and affiliated with HomeNet only after developing greater internal cohesion through experience with relocation. When they were evicted, one group set up a cooperative and bought land collectively on the outskirts of Bangkok. This group exhibited a high degree of cohesion and had frequently acted collectively to overcome obstacles (FG5). A high degree of internal cohesion and organizational strength within production groups provided social and economic opportunities for members and enabled some participants to engage more actively with HomeNet. In contrast, another focus group was composed of individuals from a new production group that had only joined HomeNet in January 2012. Participation in this study was the group's first HomeNet activity, and in focus group exercises, the participants had great difficulty identifying the forces and institutions impacting their work. They also had little conception of the forces beyond their immediate community. Taken together, these focus group discussions suggest that greater internal organization was both a precipitating factor for HomeNet membership as well as an outcome.

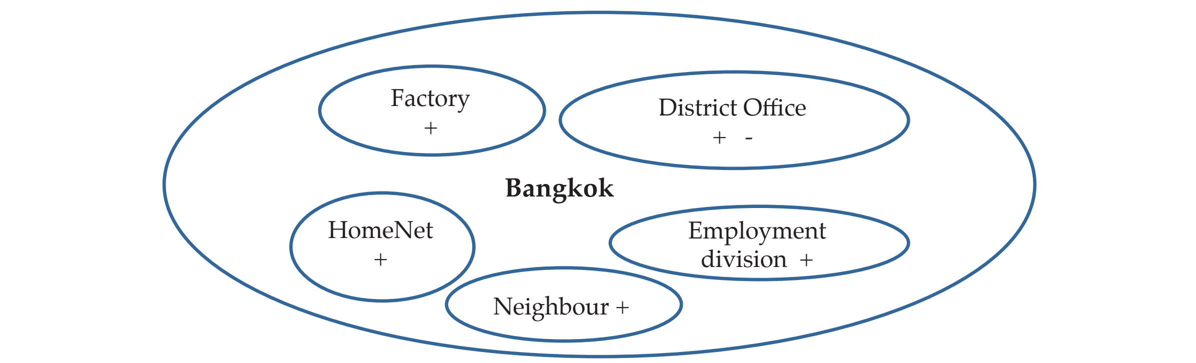
Study findings did not permit correlations between earnings by length of HomeNet Thailand membership; however, focus group evidence suggests that there were a number of benefits directly associated with higher levels of internal organization. Organized producers, for example, can co-invest in their own work-based equipment fund, can more easily secure loans from local government, have better information regarding local services, have successfully lobbied for training from employers, and can make collective contributions to social insurance funds. The importance of organization was underscored by participants who pointed out that independent producers incur considerably more risk investing in raw materials and engaging in marketing activities. Overall, findings indicate that organized workers have more security, better support networks and more awareness of occupational safety and health issues.

[20] Two respondents were not members because they were too young to meet eligibility, though they worked with other members.

Participants in this study felt that membership in HomeNet offered an opportunity to identify and engage on shared issues and transfer knowledge. One group of self-employed workers from a community whose members were very inactive with HomeNet said they believed their re-engagement with HomeNet – for purposes of this study – had already been a valuable learning opportunity by sharing their problems and coping mechanisms, and developing clearer ideas about their needs (FG14). A participant in another group explained that she saw HomeNet as a problem-solving institution: "I want to open myself up, get more information about how to solve problems related to home-based work, and better understand how the organization can help me" (FG13).

It is interesting to note that, in terms of workers' perceptions about HomeNet, there were strong differences between the two statuses in employment. More than half (54 per cent) of self-employed workers felt that HomeNet was helpful while just a third (32 per cent) of sub-contracted workers felt the same way. Additionally, while 21 per cent of self-employed workers felt that HomeNet was *unhelpful*, 30 per cent of sub-contracted workers felt it was *unhelpful*. One reason for this divergence may be that many of HomeNet's activities were geared towards capacity building, and this may have provided more direct or immediate development opportunities for self-employed workers. They have run skills development seminars, engaged in education campaigns and acted as a business resource centre for their membership. In another focus group, a participant happily reported, "I am having more success selling my congee after attending skill training arranged by HomeNet Thailand. I brought my knowledge into practice" (FG7). In another group, HomeNet was assisting self-employed flower garland producers organize and extend their car and petrol sharing network, which provided some members quick, easy access to the city's main flower market. The benefits of such activities were summarized by a self-employed worker: "As an institution, HomeNet helped us find more income opportunities, provided information on occupational safety and health, and also taught us about saving and business development" (FG10).

Figure 11 - Focus Group Institutional Map – Sub-Contracted Garment Workers



Source: FG1 with five sub-contracted workers, held in Bangkok on 29 June 2012

It should be noted that HomeNet has also engaged in many activities to support sub-contracted workers. One group explained that HomeNet helped them with the process to become a registered production cooperative. The group's leader elaborated, "The group's strength and cohesion is key to our survival. Organizing as a formal cooperative will help us get more orders" (FG2). HomeNet also introduced one group of industrial outworkers to the local factory, for which they now produce export-bound garments. HomeNet facilitated the meeting with the factory and helped negotiate highly-sought terms of employment (FG1). This group listed HomeNet as a key institution in their institutional map (see figure 11, above) and reported that HomeNet had helped them harness their collective strength and improve their economic conditions. In addition to capacity building, several participants also acknowledged HomeNet's advocacy work to promote home-based workers' rights in local, national and international policy environments. HomeNet Thailand has played an essential role in winning legislative protection for home-based workers, including the passage of the Homeworkers Protection Act. To ensure homeworkers knew of their new rights, HomeNet Thailand, in collaboration with the Formal Sector Group and Health Promotion Foundation, organized public seminars to discuss the contents of the law. They had the Act translated into English and disseminated through the website and newsletters. In addition, 3,000 booklets were published to get this vital information to home-based workers, and also offered training on the new law. Although these initiatives are expected to increase the representative voice and bargaining power of sub-contracted workers vis-à-vis employers, the impacts may be slower to take effect.

Part 3: Linkages & Contributions

3.1 Linkages to Formal Economy

Study responses suggest that home-based workers' production, distribution and employment took place within a network of dynamic linkages between formal and informal aspects of Bangkok's economy. For example, table 28 shows that workers' patterns of distribution took place across a continuum of formal-informal relations. Two thirds of self-employed producers mainly sold their goods or services to the general public, but 21 per cent self-employed workers mainly sold their goods to formal businesses – nearly twice as many as those that sold to informal businesses. The value chain relationships of sub-contracted workers were even more varied. A number of them identified more than one category of buyer as a "main buyer" for their goods, which suggests that at least some home-based workers may be engaging with both formal and informal buyers. Over half of the sub-contracted workers identified informal businesses (53 per cent) as their main buyers, while 51 per cent identified private individuals and 29 per cent said their main buyers were formal businesses.

Table 28 - Main Buyers of Home-Based Workers' Products, by Employment Status (%)

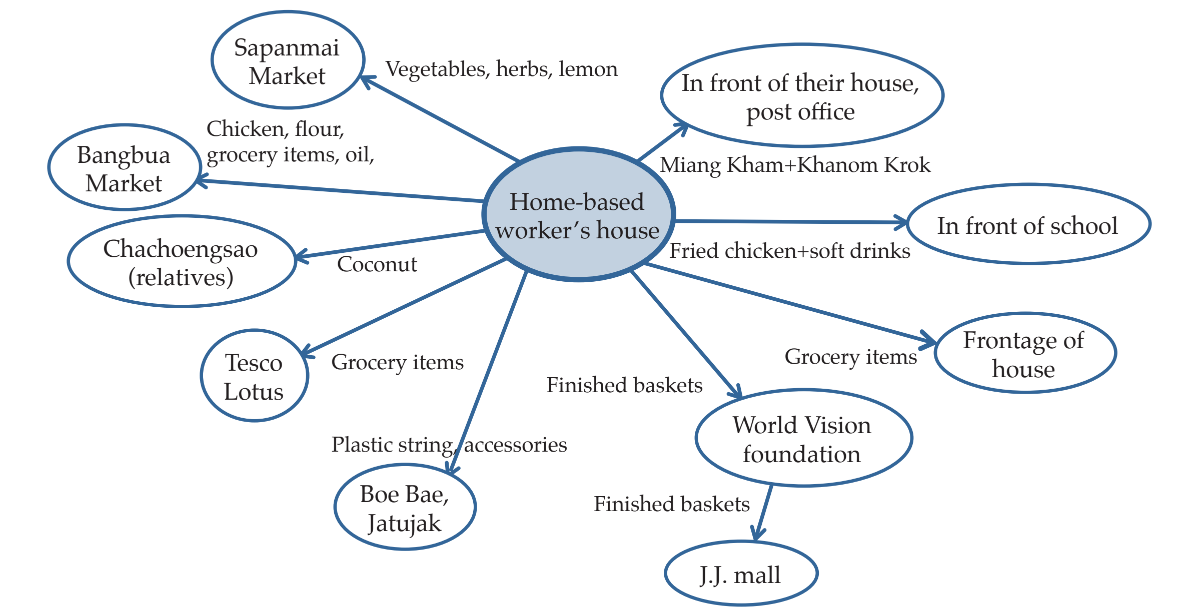
	Sub-Contracted	Self-Employed	Combined total
General public	66.67	24.73	40.67
Private individuals	17.54	50.54	38.00
Informal businesses	12.28	52.69	37.33
Formal businesses	21.05	29.03	26.00
Other informal workers	3.51	16.13	11.33
Personal family/Friends	14.04	3.23	7.33
Other	15.79	2.15	7.33
N	**93**	**57**	**150**

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

The figures in table 28 provide a picture of *direct* linkages reported by home-based workers, but many workers had formal linkages through indirect exchanges. Sub-contracted workers, for instance, often exchanged goods and services with formal firms when they engaged in production and distribution for formal enterprises, either directly or through intermediaries. Those engaged in Thailand's export-oriented garment and apparel industries, for example, may have been linked to formal value chain actors in global markets (Dickerson 1995). The lead firm (multi-national or national) may have sub-contracted work to a major supplier – also likely to be a formal firm – who in turn sub-contracted work to another supplier – formal or informal – and so on down the chain, with informal sub-contracted home-based workers typically occupying the bottom rung. In this study, most groups of sub-contracted workers could only identify the nature of most proximate firm. While many producers were not always directly adjacent to formal firms or actors, it is likely that many were frequently engaged on their behalf. For instance, one focus group produced for an informal factory that they knew to be linked to a large national export-oriented firm, although they knew little else about this firm, or any other intermediary firms along the value chain.

In focus group exercises, participants created causal flow diagrams that depicted the inputs of their production, where they were acquired and from whom. They also identified the buyers of their goods. These diagrams show that, in addition to linkages through their selling activities, many producers routinely exchanged goods and services with multiple formal firms through individual market exchanges during the production process. Many producers acquired materials from formal businesses or shops in formal markets, and in exercises, focus groups of self-employed workers typically identified two to four different purchase points for their inputs – from large factories to market stalls, international retailers to their own friends and family. Figure 12 represents a causal flow diagram created by five self-employed workers working with non-garment products. This diagram depicts a range of backward and forward linkages between informal and operators. A basket weaver, for instance, bought plastic strips from Boe Bae market, decorating and finishing materials from Sampeng and Jatujak Markets, and glue from a local stationery shop. Her baskets were sold wholesale to the World Vision Foundation, and these were then sold in a retail shop at a local mall. The grocer, on the other hand, bought her inputs (food staples) from formal businesses like Tesco Lotus. Other food workers, at times, bought most of their ingredients from other informal vendors or relatives and then sold directly to consumers. In other focus groups, some workers had fewer linkages. From diagrams and focus group discussions, it was evident that those least likely to have "thick" linkages were self-employed workers who provided local services, such as launderers. These home-based workers purchased relatively few work inputs and sold their services directly to local customers.

Figure 12 - Causal Flow Diagram –
What inputs are bought and from whom, and what products are sold and to whom?



Source: Focus Group 4 with five self-employed workers, held in Bangkok on 13 September 2012

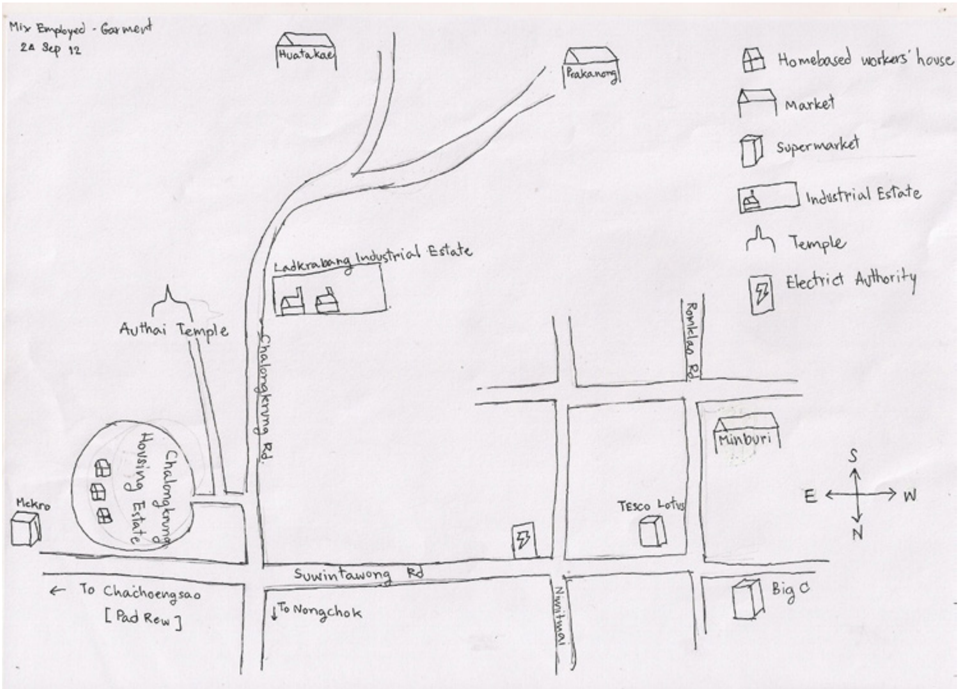
Findings make it clear that a number of participants in this study are also linked to the formal aspects of Bangkok's economy through their supplementary employment. For example, survey responses suggest at least three respondents earned as much income from formal employment as informal employment (table 4). Additionally, all producers in this study routinely made personal and household purchases at both formal and informal retail businesses using earnings from their informal employment. As well, informal producers had little capacity to save as their incomes are quickly absorbed back into the local economy.

3.2 Linkages to the City/Planning/Regulatory Environment

Home-based workers were directly linked to the city by their worksite, the infrastructure they utilize and the transportation they relied on across Bangkok. Home-based workers have a high dependency on urban infrastructure and services, which make participants' linkages with the city an integral aspect of their livelihoods. Cheap, reliable utilities are widely available and are critical to workers because they help to keep costs lower while providing basic working conditions such as 24-hour light and access to running water. Public transportation access also has strong impacts on workers' time use and costs, and it reduces isolation and dependency on intermediaries. Access to quick, easy transportation, for example, enabled some producers to save time and/or money, and also gave them more opportunities to connect with other actors in the value chain. The Bangkok Metropolitan Transit Authority has undertaken a number of upgrading measures in the past several years, however, these measures have targeted routes in the most trafficked areas of the city. The benefits of these policies were largely felt by those with good existing links to public transportation, such as Bangkok's Sky Train.

Figure 13 represents a spatial map created by five mixed-status garment producers. The map helps illustrate the relationship between the urban context and their livelihoods. The group's housing project was located quite far away from the main road. The public bus ran only four times a day, so producers noted they generally had to rely on private transportation, starting with moto-taxi trip (25 baht) to the main road, switching to a pick-up ride (Songtaew) to reach Nongjok junction (7 baht) and then taking a minivan to Minburi Market (20 Baht). The roundtrip cost (104 baht) and travel time (two hours) forced most members of the group to rely on delivery and pick up of materials and finished goods from their employers or buyers. The next closest market was nearly as expensive to reach, but took twice as long. One participant said, "I spend almost a full day to buy materials if I go to Prakanong Market" (FG9).

Figure 13 - Focus Group Spatial Map – Visual Representation of Where Materials Are Bought and Products Are Sold



Source: FG9 with five mixed-status workers, held in Bangkok on 24 September 2012

Location within the city had important implications for work. In one focus group discussion, workers noted that downtown rents were unaffordable but living at the outskirts of Bangkok generally meant less convenient and more costly transportation options. These areas are also more likely to have underserviced infrastructure and are more vulnerable to flooding, which heightens insecurity. Housing security is a pressing issue for the urban poor, and even more so for those whose homes double as their workplaces. At least three focus groups were composed of communities known to be have been resettled by the National Housing Authority. Those relocated were generally moved to housing developments in geographically more remote districts of Bangkok, with fewer transportation links and services, and sparser road infrastructure. This increased their isolation and dependency on intermediaries (FG1).

Living in mixed-use areas, with proximity to markets and commercial areas, also has important implications for livelihoods. Self-employed workers reported that they have a much easier time finding customers in denser, mixed-use areas. Participants living close to markets and/or shops also spend less time on transportation when they source inputs and can dedicate more time to production and sales. In one focus group, producers said they were able to walk or use bicycles to travel to buy raw materials. One explained, "The market is just next door and we can get there and back in only 10 minutes" (FG4). In contrast, participants in a large housing development in a remote part of the city reported spending up to six hours for round trip travel to the markets. The frequency of city congestion and traffic jams sometimes forced producers to leave home at 6 a.m. or 7 a.m. in order to ensure they arrive at the markets in the morning. One of them said, "It takes me about three hours from home to Wongvienyai Market during rush hour" (FG3).

Although planning and zoning policies had direct bearing on participants' lives, participants had few opportunities for direct consultation with the local administrative office – the District Office. Evidence from focus group discussions suggest that operations are predominantly top-down and local plans are designed and carried out with little adherence to participatory processes at the local administrative level. There is little information dissemination regarding services, programs, regulations and policy matters from offices to workers' communities. As a result, workers have little voice in decisions that greatly impact on their livelihoods and well-being. Unfortunately, respondents report that government cutbacks over the last few years have actually led to reductions in the number of community development officers at the District Office over the past 10 years – further reducing the communities' links with those best situated to provide them with support and hear their concerns.

At the local and national level, home-based workers work and lives are also strongly impacted by their linkages to – or exclusion from – different aspect of the formal regulatory environment. Home-based workers in this study identified a number of different factors contributing to their exclusion, including their registration status with local government, their economic condition and social position, as well as the poor-fit or harmful design and application of various government policies, laws and regulations. Most participants in this study were not registered with the local District Office either for taxation or business purposes. Production groups were also generally not registered with the relevant local District Office. Responses suggest that workers had little familiarity with the local taxation system. Participants expressed fear that registration could result in a further reduction to their income as a consequence of additional levies, even though their incomes would almost certainly have fallen below a taxable rate.[21] Yet, without registration, participants have no legal status and were not entitled to claim rebates on any value-added tax (VAT) paid in the acquisition of raw materials, stock, or other goods and services used in their enterprises, increasing their relative input costs compared to registered operators.[22] Without registration, many producers were also prevented from accessing certain financial services and supports, such as government loans. But exclusion and access are determined by more than registration. Respondents explained that even registered groups often had great difficulty accessing these programs as a result of unrealistic conditions and confusing or difficult administrative processes. Being poor, having low levels of education, running invisible home-based operations are all significant factors determining barriers to accessing the benefits tied to registration. Taking into account these experiences and attitudes, it is likely that low registration rates among participants were not merely a consequence of tax avoidance. Rather, participants were aware of few tangible incentives for registration as services and programs remained largely inaccessible even to registered home-based workers.

Existing regulations often do not "match" or are insensitive to the realities of home-based production or are inconsistently enforced. Many respondents stated that one of the benefits of home-based work is the ability to manage childcare and other family responsibilities while working; yet a number of respondents reported that combining paid work with childcare activities made them vulnerable to anti-child labour laws. Several focus groups cited several cases where home-based workers had been arrested. Other workers reported that they were asked to pay taxes or duties on their worksite. Home-based workers engaged in commercial activities in their home are subject to Thailand's Housing and Land Tax. This tax is collected annually by the local government, following property assessment visits by District Officers. Respondents reported that most officers never enforce the tax, recognizing that home-based workers have little means to pay. Still, several respondents expressed great anxiety that this tax would suddenly be enforced: that they could be told at any time that they owed these taxes. As a case in point, one respondent had recently been notified that she was subject to the tax and was expected to pay for 10 years of arrears, which she could not afford. Similarly, businesses in Thailand are subject to an advertising and signage tax.[23] Home-based workers who displayed any sign or advertisement on their home are also subject to this tax. In spite of existing guidelines, the tax to be paid is at the discretion of the District Officer. A HomeNet organizer reported that the taxes imposed varied widely.[24]

---

[21] After all expenses and allowances have been deducted, individuals with net assessable income of 0-100,000 baht have a 0 per cent tax rate, and incomes of 100,000 – 500,000 baht are taxable at a 10 per cent tax rate.

[22] Generally, the operator charges VAT on the sale of goods or provision of services to the consumer ("Output Tax"). The VAT paid by the operator to other operators for the purchase of goods or services ("Input Tax") is then deducted and the balance remitted to the Revenue Department. Thus, tax will accrue at each stage only on the "value added" to the goods or services at that stage. Under the VAT system, the tax will ultimately be borne by the consumer. Unregistered operators are treated as consumers, and are not able to recoup their input tax.

[23] This tax is levied on signboards which show names, symbols or marks of business or advertisements. The rates specified in the Signboard Tax Act are computed on signboard size, ranging from 3 baht to 40 baht per 500 square centimetres, but not less than 200 baht per signboard.

[24] Interview with an organizer at the Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (FLEP - HomeNet Thailand) on February 7, 2013.

Home-based workers are also often excluded from important policies – even those designed to support vulnerable workers. The national policy to increase the minimum wage, for example, does not cover informal workers and will not therefore address the earnings gap of the poorest and most vulnerable workers. Without commensurate adjustments for informal workers, the policy threatens to exacerbate inequality. In addition, there is evidence to suggest that the increase of the minimum wage – by 40 per cent – will actually push more workers into informal employment arrangements as employers seek to avoid higher labour costs (Bhaopichitr et al. 2012); or will push consumer prices up. Without better enforcement of existing labour laws and stricter controls on employers, these measures may actually do more harm than good to those they are intended to support.

Further, targeted efforts to extend legal and social protection to informal workers have had mixed results to date. The adoption of the Homeworkers Protection Act and the latest extension of social security represent important steps towards improving the legal status and protection of home-based workers in Thailand. However, the Homeworker Protection Act was not mentioned by name or substance in any focus group discussions. It is possible that the Act – passed a year prior to the research period – was not known to many participants. Participants in this study explained that they frequently had little information concerning policy matters that affected them, and usually depended on community leaders, and in some cases HomeNet, to inform them of developments. Also, where it has been implemented, it is too soon for the provision of the Act to have made tangible improvements in the working conditions of home-based workers. The language of the Act is at times ambiguous; and it is also not clear whether the government has appointed an appropriate number of labour inspectors or other resources necessary to adequately implement the Act.

Although extensions to social security now cover informal workers under a voluntary package, many participants expressed concern that they had little or no protection under conditions of lost earnings related to sickness, invalidity, death or old-age. The study survey did not address participants' uptake of the voluntary scheme, but according to focus group responses, some participants in this study were aware of its existence. In several focus groups, participants expressed skepticism about the schemes – they were not confident that the government would pay its share of contributions. Interviews with HomeNet Thailand representatives confirmed that members had generally not yet subscribed to the scheme, attributable in part to lack of familiarity and a high degree of wariness. An official from the department of Department of Labour Protection and Welfare confirmed that subscription rates were lower than expected and speculated that this was because the benefits were relatively small. She agreed that home-based workers generally still received few benefits or services from government, and felt that it was best if workers relied on other means of support. "They have to help themselves," she explained.[25] These responses mirrored attitudes of other local officials interviewed for this study, and spoke strongly to the misperceptions and attitudes encountered by home-based workers with respect to their participation and engagement with local frameworks, as well as their reluctance to participate in new schemes designed to benefit them.

3.3 Contributions

In focus group exercises, study participants considered their contributions to Bangkok and the urban sphere, recorded these contributions on cue cards and then arranged them according to common theme. Initially, many participants had difficulty identifying their contributions – they felt that their isolation, poverty and social position restricted their capacity to contribute to the city. Sub-contracted workers had a particularly hard time in this respect. With reflection and discussion, however, participants identified 100 contributions across 15 focus groups, and three key areas of contribution emerged – those to the local economy, to society, and to the environment.

3.3.1 Economic Contributions

In focus group discussions, nearly half of all responses – 48 out of 100 – identified the economic contributions of home-based workers to their community, city and country. Chiefly, sub-contracted and self-employed workers identified their economic self-sufficiency as a vital economic contribution. Through their informal employment and income generating activities, producers felt they could remain active in the economic system without relying on formal job opportunities or becoming "burdens" on society. Producers also pointed out that their contributions to household incomes

[25] Interview with Labour Management Specialist at the Employment Promotion Division, Department of Labour Protection and Welfare, Ministry of Labour conducted on February 15, 2013.

supported the economic status of their household members and their family within society; in survey responses, 67 per cent of the self-employed and 32 per cent of the sub-contracted home-based workers were the principle earners in their household. Additionally, their work at home enabled them to perform economic and household activities side-by-side, which reduced dependence on childcare and elder care services. One respondent pointed out that if she did not care for her family elders, the burden would fall on the government (FG11).

Groups also felt their work supported employment opportunities for others. One group explained that, by operating informally, home-based workers reduced pressure in the formal job market because they were not competing for the limited number of formal jobs. They also noted that they added jobs back into the economy – just under 10 per cent of survey respondents were employers (table 6). "I create jobs for other people in the community – I give them jobs when I have work," (FG14) said one woman. Home-based workers acted as knowledge networks for one another and often provided moral and economic support to another when they or family members faced unemployment. A number of participants also felt that they created new employment opportunities – both skilled and unskilled – for community members by training them and introducing them to new occupations after retrenchments. In three focus groups, this type of activity was identified as a significant contribution to the state, because they felt their work provided a form of informal safety net for community members who became unemployed, thus relieving the burden of care on the state.

Across focus groups, self-employed producers identified their support to local formal and informal actors when they purchased their raw materials, paid for private transportation and when they provided good quality products at low prices to members of their community. Figure 14 depicts the contributions of home-based workers identified in one focus group. This group put a strong emphasis on their economic contributions to their community, supporting not only their immediate families but also local customers and other producers. In addition to identifying their self-sufficiency and the economic support provided for their families, these women noted that they provided affordable goods to local consumers and also cheap inputs to other producers. One informal grocer explained that she sold her grocery items below supermarket prices, which allowed local food producers to rely on her for their work inputs and minimize their production costs.

Figure 14 - What is your contribution to the city?

Have our own incomes (not being a burden to our family)	Help the family to improve their status (more income to family)	
Sell product at low prices	Help customers to pay less	Help other producers reduce cost (e.g. sell grocery items at low prices)
Saving the planet (reduced travelling, fuel use and pollution)		

Source: FG4 with five self-employed workers, held in Bangkok on 13 September 2012

In one focus group, self-employed workers noted that their economic impact was strongly local and that those who benefitted most from their work were others in their community and "not those far away." The tendency of self-employed workers to focus on the positive economic impact in their communities reflected a number of factors, in particular the physical and economic realities outlined by many focus group participants. Respondents preferred to avoid unnecessary expense of time and money. Travelling to reach distant clients, or purchasing raw materials in far-away markets are often costly exercises (FG9). Staying "local" is advantageous to both home-based producers and local consumers; by providing goods and services in their own communities, participants also reduce the cost and travel time of their neighbours.

In survey responses, only 2 per cent of sub-contracted workers identified their buyer as an international actor, yet in focus group discussions sub-contracted workers recognized that their production supported a chain of other, more distant economic actors across the city, the country and in the global economy. "We are part of the big economic chain," said one sub-contracted producer (FG1). In three focus groups, sub-contracted workers identified their contribution to the national economy. They felt their work boosted Thailand's global manufacturing reputation, since their products are of good quality and exported to other countries. One participant explained, "Our work contributes to the economic growth of the whole country" (FG12).

Finally, a number of self-employed participants specifically identified their tax payments as a significant contribution to the city and state's economic welfare and development (FG14). Four producers identified their economic contributions through the payment of the VAT, while one woman cited her property taxes. Respondents explained that, although they paid no income tax, some workers paid property tax and all paid consumption taxes on most work and household inputs through the country's value-added tax (VAT) system. The current VAT rate of 7 per cent is comprised of the 6.3 per cent VAT rate plus a 0.63 per cent rate for municipal VAT. Stated otherwise, 10 per cent of the VAT paid by home-based worker is paid toward the city. Home-based workers also paid consumption tax on the fuel they purchased (5.3 baht per litre).

3.3.2 Societal Contributions

More than a third of the contributions identified in focus groups (36 of 100) were those associated with the health and well-being of urban communities. Many participants felt that their family caretaking activities – made possible by their home-based work – were of great social significance. Childcare provision was cited 12 times, while 10 responses were linked to the maintenance of security and happiness within the household. Participants' felt that working from home allowed them to take care of their children, thus help to raise good people, good neighbours, good citizens, and good communities (FG9). This issue was articulated by a participant who said, "I believe that family is a first unit of the society. If we are able to build a 'warm family' it will decrease societal problems" (FG3).

Women in this study placed great importance on promoting good values in their community and reducing social ills – particularly drug and alcohol abuse – in their communities. Producers felt their presence in the communities helps reduce stress and promotes a sense of common good. As such, some participants also said that they promote community values and help combat drug abuse and teenage delinquency. Participants in one group also said they were active in campaigns to promote principles of fair trade and decent employment, which benefited the community and society at large. Several respondents also mentioned their contributions to the religious, spiritual and emotional life of their communities. The Buddhist flower garland makers felt their goods were a sign of worship and joy within the city. Another producer, who made traditional Islamic clothing, explained that through her work, "I help to preserve Islamic culture" (FG14).

Physical security was another major issue for many participants. One woman explained that communities are safer and have fewer problems when some individuals work from home. She said, "I have been robbed of all my valuables after leaving the house. Now, being based at home, I can act as a guard for my home and for my neighbours' houses nearby" (FG5). Working within the community drew neighbours together. Participants watched over one another's houses, and shared information regarding community developments. Some women took in the washing for their neighbours when it began to rain. Others received deliveries for community members, and relayed important news from the community radio when they received government transmissions or other important messages (FG9).

3.3.3 Environmental Contributions

In addition to contributing to the economic and social fabric of the city, workers also cited numerous environmental benefits of their work. The most frequently cited (10 of 16 responses) environmental contribution related to the relatively low transportation demands of home-based workers. By working from home, participants felt that they did not regularly contribute to local traffic congestions and pollution. Although many self-employed workers did travel to markets by bus or private motorized transport, they did so on an as-needed basis and many travelled on foot or by bicycle.

In addition to reducing congestion and air pollution, four focus groups also felt their work reduced solid waste as a result of their low-tech production processes. A number of producers made their goods by hand (embroiderers, buffalo-horn carvers and food-producers), and they identified their production as having few environmental costs when compared to industrialized production. They also felt this made their products better for consumers. "I produce healthy food for society," (FG14) explained one snack maker. In a fourth group, workers were directly engaged in recycling activities as they sorted and recovered waste plastic for a local company (FG6). Generally speaking, workers felt that their production was "healthier" for society than that which occurred in factories, and that they helped to save the planet through their work.

Part 4: Conclusion: Key Findings & Policy Implications

The IEMS was designed to investigate how three categories of driving forces – those of the economy, government policies and practices, especially at the city level, and value chain dynamics – impact home-based workers, street vendors, and waste pickers across 10 cities, including home-based workers in Bangkok. The study methods allowed for the identification of additional driving forces that had significant impact in a particular sector or city. The IEMS also probed workers' responses to these forces, and examined the mediating effects of specific institutions and actors, including government institutions, civil society actors as well as the MBOs of informal workers. The study further examined the economic, political, and spatial linkages of informal workers within their city. Finally, through its sampling design, the study allows for comparisons at the individual level using variables such as status in employment, place of work, type of good or service sold. Study findings in Bangkok, and across all study sites, enabled the IEMS to "test" a set of underlying assumptions – hypotheses – related to these driving forces and their impacts on working conditions in the informal economy. In each city, the study offers key findings with respect to these hypotheses, as well as unexpected findings.

The first driving force, **the economy**, concerned the macroeconomic conditions impacting workers, such as inflation, recession, and patterns of growth that influenced working conditions among Bangkok's home-based workers. Workers largely identified volatility in the national and global economies as the primary drivers of instability in demand for their work. This was identified as a problem by 74 per cent of self-employed workers and 55 per cent of sub-contracted workers. Most recently, Thailand has faced economic shocks resulting from the destruction and recovery associated with historic flooding, during which manufacturing was severely disrupted and there was a strong contraction in household consumption, weakening demand for local consumer goods and halting or depressing factory orders to some sub-contracted workers. The slowdown in the global economy also continued to impact export demand, which depressed orders and sales among workers producing for export, such as garment workers or those who made tourist-oriented goods. Evidence suggests that sub-contracted workers were the first to lose their contracts, as factories preserved work for their core factory workers for as long as possible. When orders returned, sub-contracted workers were given tight deadlines and higher-than-usual order volumes as a result of the backlog.

Central government policies also had mixed results for workers. The minimum wage increase for formal workers increased the purchasing power of some local customers, but may also have driven up input prices and the cost of living without commensurate wage increases for informal workers. Sales volumes rebounded for some self-employed workers, but 55 per cent of respondents reported that the price of their work inputs had risen over the previous 12 months. Narrow earnings margins make home-based workers very vulnerable to even the slightest increases in input prices – 74 per cent of self-employed and 45 per cent of sub-contracted workers reported that high input prices were a problem. The decrease and rebound of orders for sub-contracted workers, and the depression and slight recovery of purchase volumes and higher input prices for self-employed workers were important factors driving earnings patterns for workers – 47 per cent of self-employed workers and 33 per cent of sub-contracted workers had seen their revenue fall in the previous 12 months.

Calculations illustrating take-home earnings for sub-contracted workers and self-employed workers (4212 baht and 4550 baht, respectively[26]) suggest that respondents earned, on average, significantly less than the minimum wage rate. Moreover, the instability of earnings further undermined the economic condition of the workers and their households. Households were relatively large, undereducated and very dependent on informal earnings, especially home-based workers' earnings. Workers identified few institutions that help them cope with these conditions of volatility. When demand was depressed, sub-contracted workers, dependent on their contractors, generally waited for the orders to rebound. Self-employed workers tried to work harder – take on additional work or work longer hours –and tried to minimize their work costs, which sometimes impacted quality and further jeopardized demand for their goods. Both self-employed and sub-contracted workers reported that their principle coping mechanisms with respect to decreasing income were related to reducing expenditures. Respondents made cutbacks to household spending, particularly food. Very

[26] Take-home earnings figures represent respondents' reported average monthly income less reported average monthly expenditure on business expenses. However, as previously noted, the literature on income reveals it is very difficult to capture distinctions between turnover, gross earnings, and net earnings reliably. These data should be interpreted with caution.

few respondents were able to secure financial aid during these periods – workers tended to rely on extended family or neighbours, and informal lenders, for financial assistance. Government stimulus measures had mixed results for workers, and although many participants recognized the effort to extend better social protection to home-based workers, it was generally felt that access and information remained a barrier to subscription.

The IEMS also considered sector-specific **value chain dynamics**, including the power relations between informal workers and their suppliers and buyers, and the role of intermediaries in the value chain. Working without enforceable contracts and at the bottom of medium to long value chains are key driving forces that weaken the capacity of sub-contracted home-based workers to exert control over the terms and conditions of their work. Sub-contracted workers are often uncertain as to the origin point of their orders and have little information about the firm that will receive their finished goods; many rarely come into contact with their sub-contractor, as exchange of materials and finished goods take place through a production group leader. Although 60 per cent of sub-contracted workers reported that their wages were set by their sub-contractor, 51 per cent said they are not able to bargain with this person. This was of particular concern to workers because contractors are seen as gatekeepers with respect to order volumes, wage payments and quality control issues. This creates a dependence that translates to a strong concern for maintaining positive relations with their sub-contractors. Workers feared reprisals for doing poor or slow work, or for undertaking efforts to effect change in their working conditions. They could face losses of wages or time, and of greatest concern, cancellations of future orders. On the other hand, positive or improved relations with sub-contractors could minimize travel time and cost (delivery of raw materials and pick up of finished goods), improve access to training, or even financial and emotional support. Under these circumstances, many sub-contracted workers had few responses to increase their bargaining power. Some left bad employers or made efforts to negotiate, but many responded by honing their skills and working faster – and by working harder to improve their relationship with the contractor.

Among self-employed workers, higher input costs were compounded by competitive pressures that served to restrict their price-setting ability and to lower their bargaining power with customers. One third of self-employed workers felt they were paid too little for their production, while a third also could not bargain with their customers. Self-employed producers could spend more than 80 per cent of their earnings on work inputs, but had difficulty passing on these costs to consumers. Also, 44 per cent faced problematic competition, particularly from the large, often international, retailers ubiquitous in Bangkok. Other informal producers were mostly perceived as helpful by self-employed workers, while large retailers could access cheap imports or buy in larger quantities to lower cost. This put considerable downward pressure on producers' pricing schemes, even though they often struggled to find capital to purchase at wholesale prices and did not have VAT exemptions to help reduce costs. Producers do their best to respond by making adjustments to their prices and product ranges in order to cut costs and attract more customers, but they have few means to compete against large retailers and generally reported that they had little latitude in the prices they charged, which in turn helped suppress earnings among Bangkok's self-employed home-based workers.

Sub-contracted workers also took on great risk, in terms of investments of time and money, at multiple stages of production and marketing. Neither self-employed nor sub-contracted workers indicated that many institutions were capable of providing support and reducing challenges faced in their value chains. Among those identified were institutions which provide assistance with training or market access (HomeNet, other NGOs, the Office of Non-Formal Education) and actors who provide immediate assistance with production activities or financial assistance (other workers, unpaid family worker, neighbours).

Driving forces government policies and practices at the city level encompassed the various that impacted workers at the city level, including urban planning and policies, urban infrastructure and service delivery, and regulatory norms. Lack of responsiveness among local government offices was a key driver impacting respondents' working conditions, including their investments of time and money, as well as their security. While few respondents reported problems with access to basic utilities, poorly maintained roads and inefficient public transportation outside the city core make it unsafe, costly and inconvenient to travel outside their communities; furthermore, these deficiencies make it difficult for customers to reach them. Together, this limits economic opportunities for self-employed workers and increases the dependency of sub-contracted workers on their contractors. Non-consultative planning decisions – such as evictions and land-use designations – also have major impacts for workers' livelihoods and well-being, dislocating communities and disrupting workers' spatial relationships with the city and its economic features, such as markets, usually in a fashion that increases isolation and inconvenience.

The process of decentralization has also confused roles and responsibilities for workers who had little information about these offices to begin with. Respondents had few opportunities to express their concerns and little power to demand action, as workers reported infrequent and indirect contact with the local administrators at the District Office. These offices also were found to have limited financial and human resources to address workers' needs, and often held considerable misconceptions about the realities and challenges facing home-based workers. Locally elected officials seemed somewhat more responsive to the needs of home-based workers, but were not reliable as a long-term solution because of the limited or uncertain tenure of their office. Workers generally relied on one another for information and action on community developments, particularly their community leaders. Most workers had few strategies for decreasing this "distance" from local authorities – a distance that is exacerbated by the attitudes and actions of local officials.

These difficulties also help explain factors driving home-based workers' participation and engagement with local regulatory frameworks. While registration status is one factor leading to exclusion from government policies, laws and regulations, workers also generally encounter a regulatory environment that is unresponsive to their needs and realities. Without reliable enforcement measures, for example, new labour protections can do little to guarantee better working conditions for home-based workers. Evidence from this study suggests that workers continue to adapt and adjust to the needs of their employers and contractors, and continue to face reprisals when they seek conditions of greater employment security and stability. New schemes to extend social security to informal workers and provide loans to sub-contracted workers are also undersubscribed. The Homeworker loan programme, though viewed favourably, presents barriers too high for most sub-contracted workers; self-employed workers are not eligible for the programme. Participants were also skeptical about the new social security coverage and worried that the government would not pay its contributions. Workers continue to rely on informal community schemes – such as community savings funds – for emergency situations such as illness or death.

During the course of study, an additional driving force – **the climate** – emerged as an important factor impacting work for Bangkok's home-based workers. Home-based workers face the same realities as others living in low-income housing – they live in large housing projects located in more remote and underserviced areas of the city. Poor housing conditions and under-maintained roads and local infrastructure leave home-based workers extremely vulnerable to seasonal and extreme weather conditions and their longer-term impacts. Changing seasons also drive sales patterns, with fewer sales during rainy periods. The flooding of 2011 was a particularly destructive event, but these conditions are expected to become more frequent as a result of global climate change.

These findings provide considerable supporting evidence with regard to the assumptions underpinning the IEMS. Firstly, the findings support the notion *that informal workers are closely linked to the formal economy* (Hypothesis 1). Home-based workers in this study provide a range of products and services integral to urban economies including affordable food and clothing. Through their production activities, home-based workers also engage with and support a network of firms and actors with varying degrees of integration and protection within the legal and regulatory system – from other home-based producers to large, international export manufacturers. Home-based workers are also a source of employment for the urban poor and contribute taxes to local and central governments.

These findings suggest that home-based workers do not work in formal and informal "economies" but rather in an economic system that provides for many forwards and backwards linkages with firms and actors on an informal-formal continuum. The nature of their linkages, along with the size and economic contribution of home-based workers to Thailand's economy, emphasize the need for Thailand's central and local governments to pursue greater knowledge and understanding of these workers. This can happen through statistics and research, but should also occur via direct engagement through participatory processes and community visitation and allocation of greater resources to community development offices at the District level in Bangkok. Additional resources should be allocated to hire and build the capacity of dedicated community officers who can work with home-based workers to develop specific strategies and programmes to support their livelihoods, organization, local government engagement and registration. Additional resources should also expand programs to boost workers' employment and entrepreneurial activities through support for skills training, marketing and financial support.

Secondly, these linkages highlight the fact that *informal workers are part of modern chains of production, distribution and services and that risks and costs are often downloaded to informal workers* (Hypothesis 2). Sub-contracted home-based workers in particular were integral to modern, industrial chains of production central to Thailand's industrial growth. Sub-contracted workers in this study, particularly in Thailand's garment industry, tend to work at the bottom of medium to long value chains, where they are engaged by industrial manufacturers to produce goods for domestic and regional consumption, as well as for export. Informal employment relations are driven by firms higher up the chain – likely formal firms – who benefit from the flexibility and low labour costs while passing on many risks and non-wage costs to home-based workers. New labour protections have been put in place to increase security for sub-contracted workers, but it is not clear if the government will commit adequate resources and attention to enforcing these laws. Careful monitoring, evaluation and intervention should be emphasized in the implementation process in order to hold employers to their obligations and protect workers from reprisals. Furthermore, a basic pre-condition for livelihood security should be the broadening of the legal definition of "worker" to include those working informally. This would provide both the opportunity to establish greater equity within current labour law and expand coverage of existing social security schemes. Crucially, this move would also bolster the legitimacy of informal workers in their dealings with district offices and local government and help counteract the discrimination they face by public, private and community actors.

In spite of their contributions to local and national economies, home-based workers continue to *operate in a regulatory environment that is largely unknown, inappropriate and sometimes hostile to them* (Hypothesis 3). Although there have been recent gains with respect to inclusions and protection of informal workers in Thailand's regulatory environment, many workers are confused about how they "fit" into the regulatory environment, particularly with respect to taxation, social security access and roles and responsibilities of local authorities relating to the administration of certain programs and policies. Bangkok's home-based workers are generally more aware of policies they felt were inappropriate and hostile to their work. Contrary to common perception, however, workers did not try to avoid regulation but could not yet see how to engage with the frameworks or see how they might benefit from them. This speaks to another study assumption – *that informal workers pay taxes and fees but do not get the benefits thereof* (Hypothesis 5). In Bangkok, home-based workers pay a range of taxes to local and state authorities. Thailand's government has gone a long way to create opportunities for workers to benefit from their contributions – universal education and health care, non-formal education centres, community development schemes, extended social protection – but workers are often not able to *access* some of these important benefits.

Policymakers cannot merely expect informal enterprises to obtain a license, register their accounts, and pay taxes. Policymakers and administrators should encourage greater awareness and engagement with the regulatory environment, but they must also work to ensure that the regulatory environment is appropriate and responsive to workers' realities. Policy and regulation have a role in ensuring that self-employed home-based workers are protected by enforceable commercial contracts; have legal ownership of their place of business and means of production; receive tax breaks and incentive packages to increase their competitiveness; recognize membership in trade associations; and provide statutory social protection. Sub-contracted and home-based wage workers require secure contracts, workers benefits and appropriate social protection. More should be done to educate informal workers about the advantages of engagement with the regulatory environment and more should be done to ensure these benefits reach those they are intended to target. The District Office can play a vital role in helping to establish this enabling environment by facilitating workers' access to public services and also by increasing their visibility in the policy making process. This will help prevent the implementation of policies that are harmful to home-based workers.

Findings from this study also support the assumption *that economic and urban policies are not supportive of informal livelihoods* (Hypothesis 4). This study provides several examples of policies enacted without consultation and little regard for their impact on home-based workers well-being and livelihoods. For example, the minimum wage increase for the formal economy appears to have exacerbated the iniquitous position of home-based workers in the absence of commensurate wage increases for informal workers. Relocation and land-use decisions have also increased workers' isolation and economic dependency. When households were uprooted, so were workplaces. Location is strongly tied to access to customers and employers as well as markets. Greater distances increase the time and cost associated with transportation, while more remote communities are also served by fewer roads and public transportation options. Participants report that they had few opportunities to influence local authorities or local policies, had only "narrow" channels to voice their concerns and had little information regarding which local and federal departments were responsible for relevant policies or programmes. Greater transparency in planning processes and improved communication and consultation between agencies and home-based workers or their representatives – such as HomeNet Thailand – will help ensure future policy decisions benefit rather than further undermine vulnerable workers. For example, HomeNet Thailand representatives and local government officials in Chiang Rai and Khon Kaen participate in annual forums in order to engage in dialogue on matters concerning home-based workers' livelihoods, urban planning matters, etc. This model of inclusiveness should be replicated in Bangkok through greater engagement between home-based workers' representatives and the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration. In the past, HomeNet has worked successfully with the BMA to secure contracts for their members to produce student uniforms. Regular dialogue forums would provide workers and city officials an opportunity to consult on important issues affecting home-based workers' work and lives and promote an appropriate policy and regulatory environment within and beyond the city.

The importance of supportive urban policies to informal workers livelihoods is further evidenced by the fact that findings clearly show that *informal workers are critically dependent on urban infrastructure, but deficits in the quality and appropriateness of infrastructure often undermine their livelihoods* (Hypothesis 7). It is commonly assumed that working at home means few linkages to the city exist. On the contrary, without employers to provide workspaces and infrastructure, home-based workers are highly dependent on city surrogates as well as services such as public transportation. Study results suggest that participants are particularly dependent on road maintenance and drainage and canal waste removal, and depend on cheap, reliable electricity and water. Their incomes are also strongly impacted by access to affordable and convenient public transportation.

While Bangkok, its infrastructure and services are of vital importance to home-based workers, findings support the assumption that *informal workers also make various contributions to the city* (Hypothesis 6). Bangkok's home-based workers make important contributions to the city's economic, social and environmental well-being. Participants support local business when they purchase their inputs, and also provide affordable goods to their communities. Their work also increases local employment and acts as an informal safety net for their families and communities. Many groups expressed great pride in their work. They are proud to have an income, to contribute to the welfare of their families, and to be relatively self-sufficient but able to contribute to their community. In addition to their economic and social contributions, home-based work also limited urban congestion and had a low environmental footprint. Over the course of study, many participants became aware of their contributions to the city for the first time, increasing their notion of their value to society and promoting their sense of self-worth.

Bangkok will need to focus on disaster risk reduction measures and waterways management in order to address some of the most urgent matters facing Bangkok's home-based workers. Local government should also promote policies that help home-based workers (appropriate zoning, improvements to infrastructure, better public transportation) in order to ensure these contributions continue and that their local input matches the strong local impact. Governments must empower home-based workers and other urban informal workers through well-coordinated targets of technical, socio-economic and political resources at the local level. Failure to do so will increase urban vulnerabilities but also result in lost opportunities to build strong cities and, in turn, an economically strong Thailand.

References

Antonopoulos, Rania. 2009. *The Unpaid Care Work - Paid Work Connection.* ILO Policy Integration and Statistics Department Working Paper No. 86.

Bhaopichitr, Kirida, Amornsak Mala and Nattaporn Triratanasirikul. 2012. *Thailand Economic Monitor: December 2012*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available online at: http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2012/12/17156017/thailand-economic-monitor-december-2012 (accessed 20 February 2013).

Chambers, Robert, 1994. "The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal," *World Development*, Vol. 22(7), July, pp. 953-969.

Charmes, Jacques. 1998. "Informal Sector, Poverty and Gender: A Review of Empirical Evidence." World Bank Research Paper.

Chen, Martha, Renana Jhabvala, Ravi Kanbur, Carol Richards. 2007. *Membership Based Organizations of the Poor*. Routledge Studies in Development Economics.

Chen, Martha Alter, Jennifer Sebstad and Lesley O'Connell. 1999. "Counting the Invisible Workforce: The Case of Home-Based Workers." *World Development,* Vol. 27, No. 3.

Dangler, J.F. 1994. *Hidden in the Home: The Role of Waged Homework in the Modern World Economy.* Albany, USA: State University of New York Press.

Dickerson, Kitty. 1995. *Textiles and Apparel in the Global Economy*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Doane, Donna. 2007. *Living in the Background: Home-Based Women Workers and Poverty Persistence*. Chronic Poverty Research Centre Working Paper 97.

Dolan, Catherine, and John Humphrey. 2000. "Governance and Trade in Fresh Vegetables: the Impact of UK Supermarkets on the African Horticulture Industry." *Journal of Development Studies*, Vol. 37, Issue 2, pp. 147-176.

Esara, Pilapa. 2004. "Women Will Keep the Household: The Mediation of Work and Family by Female Labor Migrants in Bangkok." *Critical Asian Studies* Vol. 36, No. 2.

Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion. 2010. *Study Report on Situation of Home-based Workers' Groups in Urban Areas and Target Groups under the Inclusive Urban Planning Project*. HomeNet South Asia. Accessed online at: http://homenetsouthasia.net/pdf/Study_onHBW_Groups_in-3_cities-of-Thailand.pdf.

Ghosh, Jayati. 2002. "Globalization, Export-Oriented Employment for Women and Social Policy: A Case Study of India." *Social Scientist*. Vol. 30, No. 11/12, pp. 17-60.

Haddad, Lawrence, John Hoddinott, and Harold Alderman, eds. 1997, *Intrahousehold Resource Allocation in Developing Countries: Models, Methods, and Policy*. Baltimore, USA: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Haque, Shamsui M. 2010. "Decentralizing Local Governance in Thailand: Contemporary Trends and Challenges." *International Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 33, Issue 12.

HomeNet South East Asia. 2006. *Social Protection for Home-based Workers in Thailand and the Philippines*. Quezon City, Philippines: Regan.

HomeNet Thailand. 2002. *Impact of the Economic Crisis on Home-based Workers in Thailand*. Report produced in association with the ILO, Bangkok Area Office, and the East Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team.

Horn, Zoe. 2009. *No Cushion to Fall Back On: The Global Economic Crisis and Informal Workers*. Inclusive Cities. Available at: http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Horn-Global-Economic-Crisis-1.pdf (accessed 28 February 2013).

Horn, Zoe. 2010. *Coping with Crises: Lingering Recessing, Rising Inflation, and the Informal Workforce*. Inclusive Cities. Available at: http://wiego.org/sites/wiego.org/files/publications/files/Horn-Global-Economic-Crisis-2.pdf (accessed 12 July 2013).

Institute of Development Studies (IDS). 2007. *Governance Screening for Urban Climate Change Resilience-Building and Adaptation Strategies in Asia: Assessment of Bangkok City, Thailand*. IDS Climate Change and Disasters Group. Accessed online at: http://www.ids.ac.uk/files/dmfile/Bangkok.pdf (accessed 20 February 2013).

International Labour Organizations (ILO). 2002. *Decent Work and the Informal Economy*. International Labour Office, Geneva.

International Labour Organizations (ILO). 2012. *Statistical Update on Employment in the Informal Economy*. ILO, Department of Statistics. Accesses online at: http://laborsta.ilo.org/applv8/data/INFORMAL_ECONOMY/2012-06-Statistical%20update%20-%20v2.pdf (accessed 20 February 2013).

Krongkaew, Medhi. 1999. "The Changing Urban System in a Fast-Growing City and Economy: The Case of Bangkok and Thailand." In Fu-chen Lo and Yue-man Yeung (eds.) *Emerging World Cities in Pacific Asia*. Hong Kong: United Nations University.

Leowarin, Srisawang. 2010. "Community Learning Centres in Thailand." *Adult Education and Development*. No. 74. DVV International. Available at http://www.iiz-dvv.de/index.php?article_id=1063&clang=1 (accessed 5 February 2013).

Mehrotra, Santosh and Mario Biggeri. 2002. "Social Protection in the Informal Economy: Home Based Women Workers and Outsourced Manufacturing in Asia." Innocenti Working Paper No. 97. Florence, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

Moser, Caroline and Jeremy Holland. 1997. *Urban Poverty and Violence in Jamaica*. Washington DC: IBRD/World Bank Latin American and Caribbean Studies.

Moser, Caroline and Cathy McIlwaine. 1999. "Participatory Urban Appraisal and Its Application for Research on Violence." *Environment and Urbanization*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 203–226.

Moser, Caroline and Cathy McIlwaine. 2004. *Encounters with Violence in Latin America. Urban Poor Perceptions from Colombia and Guatemala*. New York and London: Routledge.

Moser, Caroline, Angélica Acosta and María Eugenia Vásquez. 2006. *Mujeres y paz. Construcción de consensos*. Bogota: Social Policy International.

Namsomboon, Boonsom and Poonsap Tulaphan. 2009. *Advocacy for Homeworker Protection Act in Thailand, Social Protection in Asia Research Paper.* Social Protection in Asia (SPA).

National Statistics Office (NSO). 2007. National Homework Survey. Figures available at: http://web.nso.go.th/survey/homework/hw07_tab.pdf (accessed 5 February 2013).

National Statistics Office (NSO). 2010. Population and Household Survey – 2010. Figures available at http://popcensus.nso.go.th/upload/census-report-6-4-54-en.pdf (accessed 5 February 2013).

National Statistics Office (NSO). 2011. Survey on Formal and Informal Employment. Figures available at http://web.nso.go.th/en/survey/lfs/data_lfs/2011_Statistical%20Tables.pdf (accessed 5 February 2013).

Pradit, Chasombat. 1999. *The Study to Improve a Developmental Model for Homeworkers*. Bangkok: Faculty of Social Sciences, Kasetsart University.

Sakunphanit, Thaworn and Worawet Suwanrada. 2011. "500 Baht Universal Pension Scheme." In *Successful Social Protection Floor Experiences*, Vol. 18 of the Sharing Innovative Experiences series. UNDP. Available online at: http://tcdc2.undp.org/GSSDAcademy/SIE/Docs/Vol18/SIE_v18_ch18.pdf (accessed 20 February 2013).

Saptari, Ratna. 2000. "Production Processes and the Gendering of Industrial Work in Asia." *Asian Studies Review*, Vol. 24, No 2.

Sethuraman, S.V. 1998. *Gender, Informality and Poverty*. World Bank Research Paper.

Siriprachai, Samboon. 2007. "Inconsistencies and Inequalities in Thai Industrialisation." In Johannes D. Schmidt, Jacques Hersh and Niels Fold (eds.) *Social Changes in Southeast Asia*. London: Longman.

WIEGO website. 2013. "Statistical Picture." Available at http://wiego.org/informal-economy/statistical-picture (accessed 08 February 2013)

Wongprom et al. 2004. “Home-based workers: data and situation in four regions.” Research and Developing Institute Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen.

World Bank. 2012. *Thailand: Employment, Wage, and Distributional Impacts*, Washington, DC: World Bank.

Appendix

Summary of Application of Sampling Approach for Focus Groups						
Focus Group No.	Date	No.	Sex	Residential Location	Employment Status	Primary Production
1	29 June 2012	Five	Women	Nong Chok District	Sub-contracted	Garments
2	11 September 2012	Five	Women	Bang Bon District	Self-employed	Garments
3	12 September 2012	Five	Women	Bang Khae District	Mixed	Mixed
4	13 September 2012	Five	Women	Chatuchak District	Self-employed	Non-garments
5	14 September 2012	Five	Women	Nong Chok District	Mixed	Non-garments
6	19 September 2012	Five	Women	Nong Chok District	Sub-contracted	Non-garments
7	20 September 2012	Five	Women	Bang Khae District	Mixed	Mixed
8	21 September 2012	Five	Women	Nong Chok District	Mixed	Garments
9	24 September 2012	Five	Women	Nong Chok District	Mixed	Garments
10	10 October 2012	Five	Women	Lat Krabang District	Self-employed	Non-garments
11	11 October 2012	Five	Women	Nong Chok District	Sub-contracted	Garments
12	13 October 2012	Five	Women	Laksi District	Self-employed	Garments
13	15 October 2012	Five	Women	Lat Krabang District	Sub-contracted	Garments
14	24 October 2012	Five	Women	Nong Chok District	Self-employed	Mixed
15	24 October 2012	Five	Women	Lat Krabang District	Sub-contracted	Non-garments

Source: Bangkok IEMS survey data (2012)

The Informal Economy Monitoring Study (IEMS) is a part of the Inclusive Cities project. Inclusive Cities is a collaboration of membership-based organizations (MBOs) of the working poor, international alliances of MBOs and support organizations working together as partners to improve the situation of the working poor. Launched in late 2008, Inclusive Cities aims to strengthen MBOs in the areas of organizing, policy analysis and advocacy in order to ensure that urban informal workers have the tools necessary to make themselves heard within urban planning processes.

The Informal Economy Monitoring Study is being led by Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing – WIEGO (see www.wiego.org) – a global action-research-policy network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor in the informal economy, especially women. WIEGO has convened a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to guide the project.

Core Members of the TAC are:

Imraan Valodia (University of KwaZulu-Natal), IEMS Director

Martha Chen (Harvard University), TAC Chair

Sally Roever (WIEGO), IEMS Qualitative Research Coordinator

Michael Rogan (University of KwaZulu-Natal), IEMS Quantitative Research Coordinator

Additional Members of the TAC:

Sonia Dias (WIEGO Waste Sector Specialist and Federal University of Minas Gerais)

Rhonda Douglas (WIEGO Global Projects Director)

Zoe Horn (WIEGO Research Officer, IEMS)

Francie Lund (University of KwaZulu-Natal)

Melanie Samson (WIEGO Africa Waste Picker Programme Coordinator and PARI)

Shalini Sinha (WIEGO Home-based Work Sector Specialist)

Caroline Skinner (WIEGO Urban Policies Programme Director, African Centre for Cities and University of Cape Town)

Caroline Moser, Angélica Acosta and Irene Vance led the development of, and training for, the qualitative modules of the study.

Homenet Thailand

WIEGO

Women in Informal Employment
Globalizing and Organizing