

'Our Voices.....will be heard'

`Our voices..... will be heard'

Report of

The Regional Workshop On Women Workers In Informal Work

-- Organizing, Lobbying and Advocacy

**6th-8th November, 2001
Asia Hotel, Bangkok**

Organized by:

**Committee for Asian Women (CAW)
and
HomeNet, Thailand**

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List of Annexures

- Annexure 1: List of participants and their addresses.
- Annexure 2: Concept Note on Issues faced by women workers in informal work-based on research by the Committee for Asian Women (CAW).
- Annexure 3: Presentation by Elisabeth Morris on ILO and the informal economy.
- Annexure 4: List of NGOs which have observer status at the International Labour Conference.

Resolution on Women Workers in the Informal Economy

Adopted at the Asian workshop on: `Issues Facing Women Workers in Informal Work' held in Bangkok on November 6 – 8, 2001, organized by Committee for Asian Women and HomeNet (Thailand)

We are representatives from 11 Asian countries representing women and men workers involved in different types of work situations -- homebased work, street vending, domestic work, agricultural work, handicraft work, scrap and rag-picking, small-scale factory work, part-time work, casual and contract work, construction work, among others. We are from 12 trade unions, 2 membership-based organizations, 8 NGOs and 3 networks.

A large proportion of the workforce is involved in the informal economy. Informal work contributes socially useful services and a significant proportion of global income. Official statistics indicate that the share of informal (non-agricultural) work is 45-85% in Latin America and 45-85% in different parts of Asia. The contribution of the income that comes from informal work to national income amounts to between 30-60% in different countries. Most new jobs are being created in the informal economy. This growth in the informal economy is directly related to the acceleration of the process of globalization. These processes of globalization have affected both the workers in the formal and the informal economy. Workers in the formal economy have been increasingly reduced to the status of workers in the informal economy. This crowding into the informal economy has rendered workers in the informal economy even more vulnerable and with even less resources.

The conditions of workers in the informal economy are characterized by not just abysmal working conditions, but very often also by their appalling living conditions. This is even more true of women. The conditions of work of the workers in the informal economy include: non-recognition of the work and of the workers in informal employment, very low incomes, very long hours of work, insecure work, unsafe and dangerous work, no benefits, no leave or holidays, no accident or any other benefits, sexual and other harassment and no child care.

Apart from invisibility, poor working and living conditions, and the absence of social protection, workers in the informal economy also suffer from a severe lack of access to productive assets and other resources, land, credit, marketing and technological assistance, education and training.

We, the assembled representatives, resolve to:

- **Organize and support each other in our organizing efforts;**
- **Act in solidarity on common issues;**
- **Build public awareness and visibility of the workers we represent;**
- **Lobby public authorities and other institutions in society for our common interests;**
- **Strengthen the capacity of our organizations through appropriate education programs;**
- **Collate and disseminate best practices of strategies of organizations.**

We urge the following organizations and institutions to address the concerns of women workers in informal employment as follows:

LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS:

- **take the initiative to organize directly and to assist in the self-organization of these workers.**

- **work out methods of significant representation of women workers in informal employment in the ILO and other international institutions as well as within the international trade union federations themselves.**

NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: by adopting the following measures and policies:

- **Officially recognize the existence of workers, especially women workers, in informal employment and acknowledge their social and economic contribution;**
- **Extend and strengthen existing social security schemes, including maternity benefits and provide such schemes where they do not as yet exist;**
- **Provide child care services that would enable women and men involved in the informal economy to engage in productive work;**
- **Legislate and implement laws on fair wages and incomes;**
- **Protect workers from harassment by authorities, employers and contractors;**
- **Enact and enforce legislation against sexual harassment, domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and children;**
- **Provide mechanisms by which workers in the informal economy can be provided access to and control over productive assets and resources, such as land, credit, capital, marketing and technological assistance;**
- **Enact and enforce laws and policies which would promote the organization of workers, especially women workers, in the informal economy;**
- **Enact and enforce legislation against child labour and ensure primary education;**
- **Recognize the importance and create opportunities for training, development and capacity building of women in informal work;**
- **Promote, enact and enforce legislation for upgrading the education and training programs in the informal economy to be responsive to globalization;**
- **Create institutional structures to represent issues of the informal economy at local and central government levels;**
- **Ratify and implement through national legislation ILO Conventions relevant to the informal economy;**
- **Support instruments, statements and policies at the International Labour Conference designed to protect the rights of workers in the informal economy.**

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION is invited to:

- **Recognize organizations of workers especially women workers in informal employment as legitimate workers' organizations;**
- **Adopt and implement conventions and recommendations protecting the basic rights of workers in informal employment, particularly freedom of association and collective bargaining rights;**
- **Undertake education programs for workers in the informal economy;**
- **Uphold the rights of women workers in informal work to adequate social security, including maternity benefits, health insurance and old age pensions;**
- **Uphold the right of women in informal work to adequate income and secure work;**
- **Use its influence on governments to secure the ratification of all instruments relevant to the informal economy and child labour.**
- **Ensure representation of organizations of workers in informal employment in ILO decision-making.**

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`We agricultural workers work very hard and produce food for the world. But most definitions of labour and most labour legislations in the world have no place for us', says Somalatha of the Community Education Centre, Sri Lanka.

`Several families especially of the better-off people will come to a halt, stop functioning if domestic workers do not work. But is our work recognized as work? Are we recognized as workers? Why are our organizations and trade unions not recognized as valid organizations?' ask Po Lai Wan, Lee So Chun, Ip Pui Yu and Mok Yau Fun of the Domestic and General Workers Union, affiliated to the HKCTU, an independent federation of unions in Hong Kong.

`Recycling waste is socially useful and necessary, especially with the realization that global resources are limited. Then why are we treated like the waste we pick?' quotes Lakshmi from the Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat, a trade union based in the city of Pune in India.

`Part-time workers, dispatch and contract workers do the same work as regular workers. We should not be denied social security. We also need a stable income and stable work', say Tani Keiko of the Women's Trade Union in Japan and Ju Hwan Lee of the Korean Women Workers' Associations United, South Korea.

`Vendors selling food on the streets, vegetables and other items are doing very important work, especially being accessible to consumers where and when they want goods and at affordable rates. Then why are we hounded out and treated like criminals! Why do we have no space in the city and no space in town planning!?' Eny Junaidah of the Street Vendors' union of Jember, Indonesia asks with indignation.

`Women have always done unpaid work in their homes. They also do paid work. Often they work for multinational corporations, without even knowing it. These are workers who have a right to basic protection as workers', says Ubon from Bangkok, Thailand.

These are some of the concerns that the majority of women workers in Asia and in the world are expressing today.

These questions have plagued them for several decades. But their forum, their platform, their language, their voice is something they are recognizing now.

It is in order for such voices to be able to come together and be heard in unison that organizations, trade unions, networks are organizing workers. They are also organizing events where these concerns are being articulated forcefully. This is happening all over the world. In all the continents. One such important event was held in Asia in the city of Bangkok from the 6th to the 8th of November 2001 organized by Committee for Asian Women and HomeNet Thailand. This document tries to capture some of the proceedings of that event.

The Committee for Asian Women (CAW) organised a regional workshop on the issue of women workers involved in what has been called 'informal work'. This category includes all those women who work and who do not have any legal or social protection. The objectives of the workshop were as follows:-

Objectives of the workshop:

- To understand the situation of different sections of women workers involved in informal work. These include the work-related problems of women like insecurity of work, low and unfair wages, lack of social and legal recognition and protection and lack of organizational protection.
- To share organizing efforts and strategies of women workers' organizations in informal work, especially success stories.
- To attempt to bring out the commonalities and differences between different sections of workers involved in informal work to help understand strategies and organizational forms better.
- To contribute to a process of sharing and solidarity building of women workers' organizations involved in informal and formal work.
- To contribute to the process of campaigning, advocacy and lobbying on issues that concern and are in the interest of women workers, especially those in informal work.

It was hoped that the Regional workshop would have the following outcomes.

Expected outcomes:

- Bringing out material on the situation of women workers involved in informal work in the region.
- Networking among organizations working with women workers in the informal sector.
- Working on a collective Resolution for the ILC 2002 on workers in informal work.
- Contributing to the ILO proceedings on the informal economy.

Participants from 11 Asian countries attended the workshop. This included representatives of women and men workers involved in different types of work situations -- homebased work, street vending, domestic work, agricultural work, handicraft work, scrap and rag-picking, small-scale factory work, part-time work, casual and contract work, construction work, among others. These were from 12 trade unions, 2 membership-based organizations, 8 NGOs and 3 networks.

This workshop would not have been possible without the invisible work of several people, especially women. It may be difficult to acknowledge all of them here. But we cannot forget Paa, Nok, Dow, Doe, Nok, Susie, Mabel and Deepa who worked a great deal in the background, as well as Wanee, Lek, Rakawin, Kratae and all the translators without whom it would have been even more difficult to bridge the language and communication gap that seems insurmountable in a meeting with people from different cultures and countries, especially with people involved in actual organizing work on the ground. We cannot thank them all enough.

Sujata Gothoskar, Program Officer, Committee for Asian Women

**Program for The Regional Workshop on 'Women workers in informal work
– Organizing, Lobbying and Advocacy'**

Arrival: November 5th 2001

Day 1: November 6th 2001

9.00 – 9.30 Registration

9.30- 11.00 am

- a. Introduction to the workshop – purpose of the workshop; the processes before and after the workshop by Committee for Asian Women.
- b. Introduction of participants and their organizations
- c. Key-note address – by Dan Gallin, former Secretary General, IUF and currently works with the Global Labour Institute and WIEGO

11.00 – 11.15: Tea break

11.15 – 12.30

- a. Issues facing women workers in informal work – concept note based on a study by Committee for Asian Women.
- b. Guidelines about group discussions that will follow.

12.30 – 13.30: Lunch

13.30 – 16.00:

Group discussions on issues facing women workers in informal work.

16.00 – 16.30: Tea break

16.30 – 17.30: Plenary – Presentation of group discussions and synthesis

Day 2: November 7th 2001

9.00 – 10.00

- a. Recap of the previous day's discussions and clarifications etc.
- b. Presentation on Strategies of Organizing by Renana Jhabvala, SEWA and WIEGO

10.00 – 11.00: Group discussions on strategies of organizing

11.00 – 11.15: Tea break

11.15 – 12.30: Group discussion continues

12.30 – 13.30: Lunch

13.30 – 14.30: Group presentation and synthesis

14.30 – 16.00

Drawing out the commonalities and specificities in the situation and strategies of different sections of women workers involved in informal work.

16.00 – 16.30: Tea break

16.30 – 18.00: Working Committee meeting to work on the Resolution of the workshop

Other participants who were not in this Committee went to visit street vendors in Sukhumvit Road, Bangkok.

Day 3: November 8th 2001

9 – 10: Presentation and finalization of the Statement and Resolution

10.00 – 11.00:

- a. Presentation on ILO – structure and the process of lobbying and advocacy by Ms. Nelien Haspels, Senior Specialist in Gender and Women Workers Issues.
- b. Presentation on the role of the ICFTU, especially with reference to the ILO and the position of the ICFTU on informal workers – Marieke Koning, Campaign Co-ordinator, Equality Department, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU).

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11.00 – 11.15: Tea Break

11.15 – 12.30: Lobbying and Advocacy in general – with different agencies at national and local levels

12.30 – 13.30: Lunch

13.30 – 15.30: Discussing future work together:

- a. networking
- b. follow-up
- c. national campaigns
- d. lobbying with the ILO – processes and activities

15.30 – 16.00: Tea break

16.00 – 18.00

Official panel discussion – open session where local groups, NGOs and unions will also participate.

The panelists include:

1. Mr. Sathaporn Maneerat, Advisor to Deputy Minister of Labour.
2. Mr. Pratueng Saengsung, President of Labour Congress of Thailand.
3. Dr. Voravidh Cavoenlert, Professor at the University.
4. Ms. Ubol Romphothong, an activist and a retrenched worker.
5. Ms. Elizabeth Morris, Senior Employment Policies Specialist, ILO.
6. Ms. Marieke Koning, ICFTU, Brussels, as a Representative of International Federations.

18.00: Dinner

9th November 2001: Exposure program

1. Visit to home-based workers in Bangkok
2. Meeting women workers of the Thai Durable and sharing experiences of their struggle
3. Meeting with vendors

10th November 2001: Departure

DAY 1- 6th NOVEMBER 2001

The **Agenda** for the day was

- Introduction to the workshop – purpose of the workshop; the processes before and after the workshop by Committee for Asian Women.
- Introduction of participants and their organizations
- Key-note address – by Dan Gallin
- Issues facing women workers in informal work – concept note based on a study by Committee for Asian Women.
- Presentation and explanation of Guidelines about group discussions that will follow.
- Group discussions on issues facing women workers in informal work.
- Presentation of group discussions and synthesis

First Ms. Mabel Au, the coordinator of CAW, welcomed everyone and gave a small introduction to the workshop illustrating the objectives and expected outcomes of the workshop. Ms. Rakawin, the director of Home Net Thailand, the co-organizer of the workshop also welcomed the participants.

Then Ms. Sujata Gothoskar, CAW introduced the agenda of the three days of the workshop. She talked briefly about the history of CAW vis-à-vis women workers in informal work in the context of the process of organizing the workshop.

Ms. Sujata Gothoskar:

Process of the workshop:

CAW was born in the late 1970s – early 1980s as a direct response to the aftermath of the industrialization processes in Asia. Capital, including multinational capital began to come into Asia in a big way in the 1970s after workers in the industrialized economies began to be better organized and their unions became stronger.

The Free Trade Zones in Asia resorted to ruthless exploitation of especially female labour in Asia. This was more pronounced in the East Asian and South East Asian countries. The birth of CAW and its emphasis was also on these sub-regions in the initial years. Then emerged the so-called Asian tigers. Free Trade Zones in different guises erupted in several countries and women workers became a much more pronounced phenomenon than in the earlier period.

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, there was some pressure especially, but not only, from South Asian groups to include women workers in informal work in the work and perspective of CAW. There were several rounds of discussions and in the middle of the 1990s, CAW decided to expand the scope of its work and incorporate the concerns of women workers in informal work in its perspective.

CAW had always worked with women workers' groups, women's groups, trade unions, cells of trade unions, NGOs working with women workers etc. This same process was extended to similar groups and organizations working with women workers in informal work.

CAW has always worked at several levels:

- 1 research

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2. creation and dissemination of information in different forms – the newsletter, books, cartoon and other easy-to-understand material, videos and so on.
3. facilitation of sharing and shared understanding between groups and organizations working with women workers in different countries.
4. campaign and lobbying at different levels.

CAW has taken up issues and campaigns like

1. inclusion of women workers in labour laws,
2. the issue of sexual harassment of women workers in Asia,
3. issues of individual and collective struggles of women workers in different countries.

It was in this vein that CAW decided to participate in the campaign for women workers in informal work and work at all the above levels on this campaign. The ILC 2002, where there is to be a 'general discussion' on the informal economy is one of the pillars of this campaign. CAW is also aware that this has to be preceded as well as succeeded by several other activities and campaigns, both at the level of individual countries as well as at the regional level.

This workshop is one of the stations of this process. This workshop was preceded by several processes. Some of these are:

1. A brief literature survey of the research and information available of women workers' situation and organizational strategies in different countries.
2. In those countries or sections, where information was relatively speaking less, research was conducted by local groups or researchers. Some of the reports are ready and available, while others would come soon.
3. The CAW team prepared a perspective document on women workers in informal work and organizational strategies, which was sent to several activists, unionists and researchers. Several comments were sent to the team and all of these were incorporated in the final draft that is part of the material prepared for this workshop.
4. The CAW team also prepared another document that contains in brief, the situation of women workers and organizational strategies in 20 countries in Asia. Most of these country profiles were also sent to groups, activists and researchers in almost all the countries and the final version as of now contains the comments of these experienced people. There are bound to remain many gaps. There are a great deal of gaps. However, the purpose of the document is to facilitate a dialogue among ourselves and also to lay the foundation for the lobby and advocacy document we would all like to prepare for our own countries and to interact with the ILO.
5. The CAW team also started a dialogue with and sent invitations to all the international federations as well as networks working with workers or women workers.
6. The CAW team has also tried to reach out to more groups working with women workers in informal work and not only its own network groups. These are some of the processes underway.

We are sure that this process will continue. We also hope to follow-up this workshop with campaigns in individual countries that would precede the ILC 2002. It is up to organizations to decide on the nature of the campaign in individual countries or

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cities. This could take the form of research, of dissemination and press meetings, of more public type of meetings, workshops and so on.

This is in brief the history and the possible future of this process. We would all like to work together and see that justice is brought to women workers in informal employment.'

Then, Mr. Dan Gallin gave his keynote address. Dan Gallin was the Secretary General of the IUF, an international federation of unions in the food and allied sector. At present he is the Director of the Organization and Representation Program of Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) and Chair of the Global Labour Institute in Geneva.

Dan Gallin:

WIEGO stands for "Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing". It is a world-wide network of institutions and individuals concerned with advancing the interests of women in the informal economy. It was founded four years ago. Much of the impetus and inspiration of this movement has come from SEWA, the Self Employed Women's Association of India, which has been one of its founders.

Two international networks of informal workers which some of you are also involved in, HomeNet and StreetNet, established in the mid-90s, are also part of WIEGO.

HomeNet was instrumental, together with national and international trade union organizations, to secure the passage of the ILO Convention on Homework (1996). HomeNet brings together existing organizations of home-based workers and encourages the development of new organizations.

StreetNet does the same for street and market vendors. At the first StreetNet meeting in 1995, founding members drafted an international declaration promoting national policies to support and protect the rights of street vendors.

The work program of WIEGO comprises five priority areas:

1/The WIEGO **urban policies program** works to establish the right of street vendors to vend, to improve services for street vendors and helps them to organize themselves and present their concerns to city planners.

2/ The **global markets program** analyses the impact of globalization and trade liberalization on women workers and producers, particularly home based workers, to highlight where threats can be countered and new economic opportunities seized. It maps global commodity chains to see who is doing and getting what at each stage of the chain. The program is working with HomeNet in the areas of garments, food processing and forest products.

3/ **Social Protection:** recognizing that most informal workers have no access to social protection systems, WIEGO's program promotes innovative approaches, such as micro-insurance, to provide social protection to women workers in the informal economy.

4/ The **statistics program** of WIEGO aims at collecting comprehensive and reliable data on workers in the informal economy which so far has been lacking. The lack of

such data has contributed to the lack of visibility of these workers. As Ela Bhatt, the founder of SEWA, has pointed out, statistics have power when they are in the hands of activists.

5/ The fifth program is about **organization and representation** of women in the informal economy. WIEGO works with existing networks such as HomeNet and StreetNet to strengthen organizing capacity and promote mutual support and representation of women in the informal economy. WIEGO also works with national and international trade union organizations to build networks and to influence the agenda of government and international organizations.

There are **several compelling reasons** why we must make **organization a priority** at this time, and they have everything to do with globalization.

In the past twenty years, globalization has profoundly transformed society and in particular the labour market. Globalization is what we call the transformation from a world economy based on strong national economies mutually linked through trade, credit and investment to an integrated global economy where national boundaries are losing economic significance. In this global world economy, capital, through its new mobility, can escape the constraints imposed on it by society within the traditional framework of the nation state.

This has meant a tremendous shift in the balance of power world wide in favor of capital. It has put capital in a position to successfully press for deregulation at all levels, through its lobbies in the international financial institutions and through its influence on the governments which dominate the World Trade Organization, which, in turn, has led to the dismantling of social protection and public services in most parts of the world.

At the same time, **the nature of the modern transnational corporation has been changing**. From a producer it is becoming the coordinator of production carried out on its behalf and under its control by others. Production has become a **cascading process of subcontracting** at the end of which we find the industrial outworkers, the home based workers, with deteriorating conditions as one moves from the center to the periphery of the production process. One of the consequences of globalization has thus been the deconstruction of the formal sector, even while the workers in the informal economy remain integrated into global production chains.

These are the reasons why in the global labor market, the informal and unprotected work force has been growing rapidly, for the first time not only by direct entry but also at the expense of the formal sector, which has been shrinking

Organizing internationally has to be our response to globalization. Workers in the informal economy are workers and they will organize unions, as workers do, given the chance, to defend themselves through their collective strength.

Informal sector workers do not only organize unions: they also organize cooperatives and other associations. We welcome all of these self-help organizations as long as they are democratic membership organizations promoting economic rights and social rights and serving the purpose of self defense.

Through this movement, the labour movement is returning to its roots. After all, the very first international labour organization, the First International founded by Marx and Bakunin, was a federation of every kind of workers' organizations: trade unions, political groups, cooperatives, mutual aid societies, education associations and others.

Today, however, the gender issue is paramount : workers in the informal economy are for the most part women. Organizing in the informal economy therefore means in most cases organizing women workers, which means that it has to be done essentially by women and that women must remain in leading positions at all times.

Organizing in the informal economy is also a human rights issue, not only because its objective is to put power in the hands of the most excluded and oppressed parts of the working class, but because we need a democratic political environment, where the rule of law prevails and where the values of freedom and justice for all are recognized as fundamental values in society.

It is very difficult to establish a domestic workers' union in Saudi Arabia, or a street vendors' union in Rangoon, Hanoi or Canton. Oppression takes many forms. It may range from petty municipal ordinances to the prohibition of any kind of independent workers' organization and we must therefore be part of the struggle for democratic rights at all levels and in every part of the world.

For all these reasons, we need the closest possible alliance with the organizations of the international labour movement, principally the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the International Trade Secretariats (ITSs). Such an alliance implies on our part also a commitment to strengthen the international labour movement. Those of you who have already organized unions, should seriously consider affiliating to the ITSs that most closely cover your field of activity. We need a stronger presence of unions of workers in informal employment in the international trade union organizations, in the interests of all concerned.

Relations between women workers' organizations and trade unions have varied widely from country to country and have sometimes been complicated and difficult, in most cases because of the traditional trade union culture based on the male industrial worker.

But the established trade union movement is also undergoing profound changes. Union perceptions of workers in the informal economy have begun to change. Unions now realize that the informal economy is not going to go away and in a growing number of countries they are now prepared to accept organizations of informal workers on their own terms and to be supportive of their organizing efforts.

We are well aware that we are only at the beginning of a process. In a number of places tensions persist, partly because of bad history and partly because of the inertia of organizations and of bureaucratic mindsets. But the trend is going in the other direction and it is positive.

A related development is the rise of social unionism in different parts of the world and the feminization of the trade union movement, under the impact of the women's movement and of the pressure of the increasing number of women in unions.

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In any event, we are moving worldwide. Three weeks ago, I was in Lusaka, at a meeting on the informal economy in Africa sponsored the Workers' Education Association of Zambia and the Zambia Congress of Trade Unions. An immediate outcome of the meeting was the creation of a National Association of Street Vendors. But we also had very productive exchanges with trade unionists from Ghana, Mozambique, South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe who either themselves represented organizations of informal workers or who represented established trade unions who had opened up to informal workers and fully understood the necessity of organizing in the informal economy. I represented WIEGO as well as the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations, the IFWEA, another international labour network of education institutions that is also committed to supporting the organization of workers in the informal economy.

Shortly afterwards, I attended the second meeting on workers in the informal economy in North America, also with the participation of labour and women NGOs and trade union organizations, who are building a network among themselves.

This is the third region where such a meeting takes place. Others will follow.

One focus of our work in the immediate future is next year's International Labour Conference (ILC). The ILC is the annual meeting of the ILO in which the representatives of workers, employers and governments of all member countries participate, and that is practically every country in the world. It adopts the conventions and recommendations, which are guidelines for national legislation on labour issues. The content of these documents is subject to negotiations between workers and employers, with the governments often arbitrating the issue; so, what is taking place is a kind of collective bargaining about language. Conventions and recommendations are not binding even if ratified, but they carry moral authority and can help put pressure on governments and companies that act in breach of their principles. Next June, conditions of workers in the informal economy are on the agenda of the ILC. The outcome this time will not be a convention but a statement entitled conclusions and recommendations. The content of this statement will also be subject to the same kind of negotiation, and it is in our interest that it should endorse as clearly and strongly as possible our concerns and demands. For this reason it would be helpful if this regional meeting, as others, should formulate your concerns and demands to enable us to introduce them into the ILC discussion.

I wish to conclude: organization is power. For us, it is the only source of power that will enable us to emerge from obscurity, exploitation and oppression.

Following Mr. Gallin's talk, there were some questions. These and the responses given by Mr. Gallin are as follows:

Q. Will there be a parallel, alternative conference to the ILO conference next year?

Response: There cannot be a parallel conference to the ILO conference. The ILO conference is the only one with international recognition. We are trying to have a conference before it, to put final touches to the paper to be presented in the ILO conference.

A comment on Mr. Gallin's response was:

It would be good if some of us can participate in that conference.

Mr. Gallin:

It would be good because for lobbying, numbers would matter. The larger the group to lobby for the informal sector, the better would be the chances for favourable resolutions in the conference.

Then there were queries on the agenda of the ILO conference – whether it had already been set and whether it could be changed.

Mr. Gallin:

The agenda of the International Labor Conference had already been fixed by the governing body well in advance and it could not be changed in the meeting. However if enough pressure was generated or if the group was well organized, then at a future labor conference, the informal sector group could get a convention in the agenda for specific categories like street vendors or for the entire informal sector in general

After Mr. Gallin's presentation and the open discussion, Ms. Sujata Gothoskar from CAW gave a presentation about the informal sector based on a concept note (The entire paper is appended as Annexure 2 to this report). Following were the key points:

Sujata Gothoskar:

- Statistics from the mid-1990s show that in Latin America more than 55 % workers were informal workers. In Asia this percentage was 45%-85% and Africa had 80% informal workers among all workers. These percentages do not include agricultural workers. And one needs to bear in mind that, there is always some underestimation of statistics of informal workers, especially of women workers involved in informal work arrangements. So one realizes the number of informal workers, the group we are talking about is huge in global terms. If these are the statistics in the mid-1990s, with all certainty these numbers would only have increased by now. Among the new jobs being created, 83% are in informal work in Latin America. In Africa 93% of the new jobs have been generated in informal employment.
- In terms of the income from the informal sector, statistics show the following: In several African countries, the income from informal work accounts for 30-40 % of the total income, and over 40% of total urban income. For those countries where estimates exist, the share of informal work in non-agricultural GDP is between 45-60%.
- While in earlier understanding and policies, the assumption was that informal work will gradually disappear and become formal, the direction of transition is not from informal to formal sector but the other way round. This is a worrying aspect. The links between informal and formal economy need to be studied.
- For informal workers there is not a clear distinction between work and leisure – both in paid work and unpaid work- especially for women, both in terms of time and space.
- The work that women do at home and even the paid work of women is often not considered 'work'. This has a serious effect on organization, on society's

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perception as well as women workers' self-perception. This affects the possibilities of organizing for women.

- The needs of women working in informal economy are more all encompassing.
- These include: (for detail explanation see Annexure 2)
 - a. Women workers' need for self-confidence and for an identity as workers.
 - b. Varied levels of economic needs
 - c. Credit needs
 - d. Political needs- political representation- to pass favourable laws
 - e. Need for autonomy- not to be beaten up, sexually harassed, control over their bodies.
 - f. Need for multifaceted organizing
 - g. Need to redefine existing structures
 - h. Solidarity needs
 - i. Need for inclusion in existing frameworks and changing these
 - j. Need for challenging legal frameworks
 - k. Organizing for resistance and changes in policies
 - l. Need for more information and research
 - m. Other support needs

The floor was opened for discussion. Some comments, queries and their responses were as follows:

- It is really a challenge for all of us to understand the entire global economic situation in order to understand why informal sector is rising. The world capitalist system is in crisis and in relation to informal economy, the capitalists need to survive and to do so, they will employ schemes and it is these schemes that have increased the extent of the informal sector. The informal sector has existed for times immemorial. When we talk about strategies, we need to see why informal work has increased and formulate strategies. Informal work is increasing and taking different forms.
- Experience from the Philippines shows that factories which employed large number of formal workers are now going for subcontracting.
- In order to address the issue of “ issues faced by workers in the informal sector”, we need to be clear on our perspective. For this we first need to understand the definition of work. Women workers work to earn money and they do paid work in their own homes.
- Attention was drawn to self-employed workers in India (who are very large in number) and the fact that they are usually not considered workers but as petty capitalists. But the ground reality is that they are the ones who get the least in terms of economic gains. Though they are self-employed, they are subjected to a great deal of controls and they are exploited by many people and agencies in the system like the raw material dealers, moneylenders and so on. So while discussing who informal workers are such self-employed workers should be kept in mind.

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- Definitions of work and workers are essential because in order to protect the rights of informal workers, laws need to be made. For laws to be effective, definition of the different segments and their situations need to be clearly made.
- The Government of India has a National Commission on Labour that is in the process of reviewing labour laws and formulating umbrella legislation for unorganized or informal workers. So the process of making laws has been initiated. We need to look at legal protection of informal workers.
- It was decided that a committee would be formed during the workshop to formulate a resolution of the workshop. The participants would then try to influence their governments to the best of their capacities. Also the International Labour Conference was a meeting to pass conventions and recommendations that could form the basis of legislations in individual countries as well as formulate standards and principles. So the workshop and its outcomes would form the platform to feed into the lobbying work to be done at the International Labour Conference.

Following this discussion, the participants were to discuss the issues raised in the morning in an in-depth manner in smaller groups. The rationale for forming the groups was explained and the participants were asked to put their names on chart papers according to the group they feel they belonged to.

Following was the Rationale of the different groups:

Groups may be divided according to the **section of workers** they are working with: **THE EMPLOYER-EMPLOYEE RELATIONSHIP OR THE LACK OF IT AS THE BASIS.**

Hence the grouping was done in the following manner:

GROUP1	GROUP 2	GROUP 3
Those whose main problems do not relate to the employers, but to the state, local authorities etc. e.g. • Vendors • Rag pickers • Other self employed	Those working with identifiable employers. E.g. • Part-time workers • Contract workers • Workers in small scale industries • Dispatch workers	Those working with Non-Identifiable or shifting employers e.g. • Home based workers • Domestic workers • Agricultural workers • Construction workers

Participants then joined others in their group and shared their experiences of working with women workers in informal work. There were rough guidelines provided to the groups so that they could present the outcome of the discussion of their group on those lines. The **guidelines** were as follows:

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| <p>For each category of informal women workers,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ To first draw out an exhaustive list of issues faced followed by the three most important issues, ➤ Details for different countries and ➤ The strategies/remedies tried out or suggested. |
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