

# **Home-based workers: Decent work and social protection through organization and empowerment**

Experiences, good practices and lessons from  
home-based workers and their organizations

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International Labour Organization (ILO) Office for Indonesia and East Timor

ILO/MAMPU project: Maju Perempuan Indonesia untuk Penanggulangan Kemiskinan  
or Programme on Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction

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Nelien Haspels; Aya Matsuura

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## List of abbreviations

AnaClara	Women Labour Rights Organization, Santiago, Chile, later renamed CECAM
APINDO	Indonesia Employers Association
Barangay	Community or neighbourhood, Philippines
BITRA	Yayasan Bina Ketrampilan Pedesaan Indonesia
CBO	Community Based Organization
CITU	Centre of Indian Trade Unions
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CECAM	Centro de Capacitation para la Mujer Trabajadora, or Training Centre for Working Women, Chile
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DO	Department Order, Philippines
DOLE	Department of Labor and Employment, Philippines
ETI	Ethical Trade Initiative
FLEP	Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion, Thailand
FNV	Federation of Dutch Trade Unions, Netherlands
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HBWs	Home-based workers
HNSA	HomeNet South Asia
HWW	HomeWorkers Worldwide
HomeNet	Networks of home-based workers and their support organizations within countries or at regional or international levels
HNT	HomeNet Thailand, network of home-based and informal workers and FLEP
HNTA	HomeNet Thailand Association, membership-based organization of home-based and informal economy workers in Thailand
IASEW, India	Indian Academy of Self Employed Women, India
ICLS	International Conference of Labour Statisticians
IE	Informal Economy
ILO	International Labour Organization, International Labour Office
IDR	Indonesian rupiah
INR	Indian rupee
IT	Information Technology
KABAPA	Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina or Association of New Filipina
LGU	Local Government Unit, Philippines
MACWIE	Magna Carta for Workers in the Informal Economy, Philippines
MAGCAISA	Magna Carta for Workers in the Informal Sector Alliance, Philippines

MCW	Magna Carta of Women, Philippines
MAMPU	Maju Perempuan Indonesia Untuk Penanggulangan Kemiskinan or Programme on Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction, Indonesia
MBO	Membership-Based Organization
MWPRI	Mitra Wanita Pekerja Rumahan Indonesia or NGO network for homeworkers in the putting out system and those in own account work or self-employment, East Java, Indonesia
MOL	Ministry of Labour, Thailand
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NHSO	National Health Security Office, Thailand
NSO	National Statistical Office
OSH	Occupational safety and health
PATAMABA	Pambansang Kalipunan ng mga Manggagawang Impormal sa Pilipinas or National Network of Informal Workers, Philippines since May 2003, formerly Pambansang Tagapag-ugnay ng Manggagawa sa Bahay or the National Network of Home-based Workers, Philippines
PhilHealth	Philippine Health Insurance Corporation, Philippines
PHP	Philippine peso
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SEWA	Self Employed Women's Association, India
SHGs	Self Help Groups
SNC	SEWA National Council, India
SSS	Social Security Scheme/System
THB	Thai baht
TOT	Training of Trainers
TURC	Trade Union Rights Centre, Indonesia
WIE	Workers in Informal Economy, Philippines
WISC	Workers in the Informal Sector Council, Philippines
UN	United Nations
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UK	United Kingdom
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing
YASANTI	Yayasan Annisa Swasti, Indonesia

## Foreword

Worldwide, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has seen an increase in informal employment and growing numbers of women in remunerated work, many of them combining work and family responsibilities. Home-based workers form a significant proportion of the informal workforce in manufacturing, services and agriculture, and the overall majority are women who live and work in poverty. They are self-employed or subcontracted homeworkers, often with little education who spend many working hours in labour intensive, low productivity occupations and trades, earning a pittance. Home-based work can provide a valuable opportunity to earn income but home-based work is not decent work for the majority of women and men who perform it. Without legal protection, home-based workers are vulnerable to exploitation, since they work through informal arrangements and in isolation. Their work is invisible to the public eye, as it is considered a typical women's occupation, not 'real' work, even if it is vital to family income security.

While there is no official data on the prevalence of home-based workers and their working conditions in Indonesia, the incidence of self-employment and piece rate work is considered to be increasing due to the increase in the flexibilization of the labour market, the externalization of production processes and the high rates of underemployment and informal work. Women have less access to formal employment than men, and they are more likely to be working informally. A majority of women work without sufficient income and they have limited access to decent work. This has negative impacts on their welfare, despite their active contribution to the national and household economy in Indonesia.

In order to help increase women's access to decent work in Indonesia, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and its constituents in Indonesia partnered with the Programme Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction (Maju Perempuan Indonesia untuk Penanggulangan Kemiskinan – MAMPU) of the Government of Indonesia's Ministry of National Development Planning (Bappenas) and the Government of Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) from 2012 to 2015. The ILO/MAMPU project aimed at increasing the quantity and quality of women's employment in Indonesia and providing decent work to women in vulnerable employment conditions in home-based and piece rate work.

As part of its strategy to promote better working conditions and social protection for home-based workers in a sustainable manner, the ILO/MAMPU project cooperated with civil society organizations and trade unions in Indonesia to organize home-based workers. In order to support these workers and their support organizations in Indonesia and beyond, this report synthesizes the experiences, good practices and lessons learned of organizing home-based workers based on case studies prepared for the ILO/MAMPU project by home-based workers' organizations in Chile, India, Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand. The report highlights important organizing principles, approaches and strategies, developed by home-based workers' organizations for working at the local, organizational and policy levels to develop, empower and organize HBWs, improve their working and living conditions, and establish sustainable HBWs' organizations.

The ILO Jakarta Office would like to thank the many colleagues and organizations who provided valuable contributions to this report by generously sharing their knowledge and expertise in organizing and promoting decent work for home-based workers. Our deep appreciation goes to Namrata Bali and colleagues from the Indian Academy of Self Employed Women, Yasasipa Suksai and Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan from Homenet Thailand, including HomeNet Thailand Association and the Foundation of Labour and Employment Promotion, Jane Tate and Annie Delaney from HomeWorkers Worldwide, Mylene Hega and colleagues from PATAMABA or the National Network of Informal Workers, Philippines, and Agnes Gurning, Lilis Suryani and Novita Hendria from Indonesia for contributing to the case studies. A special word of thanks goes to Nelien Haspels and Aya Matsuura who prepared this synthesis report.

Many thanks also go to the ILO colleagues from the Cooperative Branch, the Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch and the field gender structure, and the International Labour Standards Department for participating in the peer review for this report, and to Tolhas Damanik and Maya Iskarini for helping to publish the report.

Our sincere appreciation also goes to the ILO constituents in Indonesia, the Ministry of Manpower; employers' and workers' organizations; as well as to the Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS), BITRA, MWPRI, TURC, and Yasanti who contributed to the ILO/MAMPU project, as well as to DFAT and Cowater.

We hope that this report will be useful for home-based workers and their organizations, as well as ILO constituents in their work to promote respect, rights and decent working and living conditions for home-based workers around the globe.



**Francesco d'Ovidio**

Director

ILO Office for Indonesia and East Timor

## Summary

Home-based workers (HBWs) are workers who are self-employed and/or subcontracted piece rate workers, and most of them are women. This report shares experiences, good practices and lessons from home-based workers, their organizations and support agencies on how to:

- Develop, empower and organize HBWs.
- Improve working and living conditions of HBWs.
- Build sustainable membership-based organizations of HBWs.

HBWs have been organizing for over 30 years and this report synthesizes the knowledge and learnings provided by HomeNet Thailand, including the HomeNet Thailand Association and the Foundation of Labour and Employment Promotion; by HomeWorkers Worldwide on the Training Centre for the Working Woman (CECAM) in Chile; by the Indian Academy of Self Employed Women; by PATAMABA or the National Network of Informal Workers, Philippines, and by BITRA, MWPRI, TURC and Yasanti and the ILO/MAMPU project in Indonesia. These organizations have been working with mainly women workers who earn incomes for their families under extremely precarious and vulnerable working and living conditions in or around their home.

Over the past 25 to 40 years, SEWA in India, PATAMABA in the Philippines, and HNTA and FLEP in Thailand managed to develop HBWs' human resources and social capital, and attract local, national and international financial resources to successfully:

- Organize HBWs at the primary level in occupational or trade groups, or as cooperatives or associations in communities.
- Establish a membership-based organizational structure of HBWs with elected leaders from the local up to the national levels.
- And in the case of SEWA, set up a range of sister institutions run by members to provide economic, financial, research and capacity building support functions to members.

SEWA registered as a trade union from the start and later developed many other types of membership-directed support organizations, many of them in the economic sphere. PATAMABA registered as an NGO but later also as a workers' organization. It also registered with government departments in charge of cooperatives, women's development, and trade and industry at the national level and with Local Government Units at the decentralized levels. In Chile, CECAM's women trade union leaders had the explicit vision of establishing an MBO directed by the HBWs themselves, but in the end could not successfully reach this goal within the limited available timespan of three to four years. HomeNet Thailand started and operated as a HBWs and NGO network for many years. The HomeNet Thailand

Association (HNTA) was established as an MBO only in 2013 while FLEP, the 'parent' NGO continues to carry out major support functions for the HNTA.

In Indonesia, the ILO/MAMPU project worked with existing and new support organizations to organize HBWs with a focus on homeworkers. The MWPRI which has operated as a network of CSOs supporting HBWs and HBWs' leaders for around 20 years remains predominantly active in East Java province with its outreach waxing and waning depending on the provision of external support. The new CSO partners engaged in the ILO/MAMPU project just started work since mid-2014. Setting up a vertical structure of HBW's organizations with elected HBWs' leaders representing the community at the district up to the provincial and the national level remains a priority for future action in Indonesia.

The reports highlights many lessons and good practices of the HBWs and their organizations. Collective organizing for rights and representation, achieving labour and social protection under the law and economic empowerment are crucial to enable HBWs to earn adequate income through decent work and ensure that they and their families can escape poverty and live a decent life. In summary, main suggestions for future action are as follows.

### **The start of action: Develop, empower and organize HBWs**

- Build in the principle of self-reliance from the start, avoid doing things for HBWs which they can learn to do for themselves, by themselves.
- Ensure that both social and economic goals and objectives are set by HBWs for their organizations at the different levels which are clear and agreed upon among the members and leaders.
- Address the economic need of HBWs which is often the main driver for HBWs to seek help and work with others with an emphasis on capacity development and collective action. Do not provide financial services or facilitate orders or marketing only, as it creates dependency.
- Organize regular meetings around, for example, a savings groups and make use of an easy accessible local gathering place. Invest time, energy and support to enable learning-by-doing and collective decision-making processes.
- Educate and train people on how to operate viable MBOs with economic, social and gender equality goals, including fair incomes and workloads, and shared decision-making between women and men. Build self-confidence, leadership and negotiation skills so that HBWs can engage in policy advocacy.
- Broaden perspectives of HBWs to understand that individual problems often relate to larger inequalities. Address HBWs' practical and strategic needs as women and as workers from population groups in poverty, and invest in equality and non-discrimination training for HBWs, their families, and their leaders.

### **Decent work and social protection: Improve HBWs working and living conditions**

- Develop and design a holistic and phased approach with integrated strategies to address the multiple needs of low-income women HBWs and their families. The agenda for the social and economic empowerment of HBWs depends on each local situation, but strategies usually include a combination of ensuring respect for HBWs rights and increasing access to income and assets, safe work, social security and representation in decision-making.
- Develop an agenda for legal and policy reform, and law enforcement at the decentralized and national levels.

- Set priorities and objectives within specific timeframes.
- Identify, take into account and address the intertwined vulnerabilities and disadvantages of specific groups of HBWs.
- Promote work-life balance for HBWs.
- Carry out extensive awareness raising on gender and HBW among the authorities and other important stakeholders.
- Call for and facilitate evidence-based surveys for quantitative data and/or qualitative in-depth research.

### **Building sustainable membership-based HBWs' organizations**

- The development of HBWs' organizations starts with jointly developing an internal vision and goals, and scanning the environment to identify opportunities, entry points, and priority action.
- Draw up and implement an organizing strategy and campaign to recruit and retain members.
- Build in decision-making processes for the HBWs members to decide on the main directions of the organization and hold elected leaders and staff accountable.
- Clearly define and decide on the division of duties and responsibilities of both members and leaders within HBWs' organizations.
- Establish clear programming, implementation, monitoring, evaluating, auditing and recording procedures.

### **Networking and alliances**

- Cultivate relationships and engage with the government, employers', workers' and other relevant organizations to identify areas and measures to contribute to improving the living and working conditions of HBWs.
- Identify available support programmes or schemes by the government or enterprises so that HBWs can access and benefit from them.
- Maintain contacts with HBWs' organizations, other membership-based organizations of informal workers and their support agencies at all levels to share knowledge and develop HBWs' agenda for action.
- Call on the ILO, UN Women and other relevant UN agencies in charge of developing, promoting and supervising international labour and human rights standards to ensure that HBWs are covered by these labour and human rights standards.
- Call on external donors to provide reliable financial support over longer timeframes.
- Call on multinational, national and local companies, international and other buyers, retailers and others to subscribe and adhere to the ETI Homeworker guidelines.
- Celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Home Work Convention No. 177 and Recommendation No. 184 in 2016.

It is hoped that the wealth of knowledge shared by the HBWs' organizations in this report will be useful for HBWs' organizations, trade unions, women's human rights and other organizations to promote respect, rights and decent working and living conditions for HBWs around the world.



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Aims, rationale, users and sources

Home-based workers (HBWs) carry out paid work in or around their home. They are self-employed or subcontracted homeworkers, and most of them are women. Home-based workers have been organizing for over 30 years, inspired by the women's, trade union and cooperative movements. This report shares experiences, good practices and lessons from home-based workers, their organizations and support agencies on how to:

- Develop, empower and organize HBWs.
- Improve decent work and social protection of HBWs.
- Build sustainable membership-based organizations of HBWs.

The report is based on an analysis of case studies on HBWs' organizations and their support agencies in Chile, India, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. It reviews the strategies used by these organizations over the past 30 to 40 years to organize and empower home-based workers. It shares the extensive knowledge and experience of HBWs' organizations in making home-based work visible, organizing and representing their members, and improving their working and living conditions. The report aims to highlight what has worked and what has not and why – to inspire discussion and action to strengthen the HBWs' movement worldwide.

Decent work, fair incomes and social protection for HBWs and other informal economy workers continue to be one of the major challenges of our times. Productive work for HBWs is essential for effective poverty reduction, as is a fair distribution of the wealth these workers help generate. HBWs and their organizations have raised their voice on the fragile socio-economic position of the majority of HBWs and other informal economy workers, and this concern is a recurring subject of debate among local, national and international organizations engaged in international cooperation on development and the promotion of social justice and a fair globalization.

Several international labour standards that are especially relevant for HBWs have been adopted by the member States of the International Labour Organization (ILO). Most recently, in mid 2015, the International Labour Conference adopted Recommendation No. 204 to guide the transition from the informal to the formal economy. Next year, 2016, marks the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Home Work Convention No. 177 and Home Work Recommendation No. 184, which were adopted in 1996 to protect and support the development of subcontracted homeworkers. Convention No. 177 has been ratified by 10 countries to date, and continues to serve as guidance for national policies on home

work.<sup>1</sup> A general discussion on decent work in global supply chains – where many subcontracted homeworkers are found – will also be held at the International Labour Conference in 2016.

The report was commissioned by the ILO/MAMPU project in Indonesia. MAMPU is the Programme on Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction or *Maju Perempuan Indonesia untuk Penanggulangan Kemiskinan*. MAMPU is implemented by the Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS) with funding provided by the Government of Australia. The ILO/MAMPU project aims to improve access to employment and decent work for women homeworkers and women with disabilities in home-based work and promote equality for these groups of women workers in Indonesia.

The ILO/MAMPU project's strategy consists of knowledge and capacity development of the ILO tripartite constituents in Indonesia – the government, employers' and workers' organizations – and other relevant partners on improving the working conditions and social protection of HBWs. As part of this strategy, the ILO/MAMPU project partnered with selected civil society organizations (CSOs) and trade unions to encourage the organization of HBWs, especially homeworkers. In order to support these partner organizations in organizing and developing practical and strategic initiatives to respond to the challenges faced by these workers, the project commissioned four case studies to capture the experiences in organizing and promoting better working conditions for HBWs in Chile, India, the Philippines, and Thailand in 2014.

The four case studies were prepared by researchers and/or leaders from HomeWorkers Worldwide for Chile, PATAMABA (the National Network of Informal Workers) for the Philippines, the Indian Academy of Self Employed Women (IASEW) for India and HomeNet Thailand, including the HomeNet Thailand Association and the Foundation of Labour and Employment Promotion for Thailand.

The report on good practices is intended for use in Indonesia and beyond by:

- Leaders and members of groups of HBWs and membership-based organizations (MBOs) of HBWs.
- CSOs, NGOs, trade unions and other workers' organizations, regional and international agencies and networks supporting the promotion of decent work for HBWs and other informal economy workers.
- Employers, companies and their intermediaries and associations, buyers, retailers and suppliers, including agents, exporters, contractors and subcontractors, cooperatives and other organizations, supporting socially responsible and ethical employment practices.
- Government officials working on the promotion of decent work for workers from the local to the national levels.

It is hoped that the experiences and recommendations from the HBW organizations reviewed in this report will help HBWs and their organizations in Indonesia and other countries to decide what steps to take to grow and professionalize their organizations and the HBWs' movement for the advancement of their members.

## 1.2. Key terms, definitions, scope and context

### Home-based work: Home work and own-account work

There have been many discussions about the nature of informal work done mostly by women, and the definitions of home-based work and home work. In this report the term home-based workers refers to two types of workers who carry out paid work in or around their homes:

- Homeworkers: Dependent, subcontracted workers who work directly or indirectly for employers or their intermediaries, usually on a piece rate basis – also known as piece rate workers, outworkers or workers in the putting-out system.
- Self-employed, own-account workers: Independent workers who design, produce and market their own products but cannot be considered to be running small businesses.

The terms home-based work and home work do not include:

- Unpaid care work in one's own home.
- Paid domestic work and care work in the households of others.
- Subsistence production for household consumption.

Both home work and own-account work involve production for the market, but there is a fundamental difference. Homeworkers are in an – often complex, hidden and unrecognized – employment relationship with an employer, usually through one or more intermediaries, while self-employed own-account workers need to identify their own marketing outlets.

Both groups, especially own-account workers but also subcontracted workers are usually defined and treated as micro-entrepreneurs, even if homeworkers are dependent subcontracted workers and own-account workers are not fully-fledged entrepreneurs. Women working at home, producing goods for subcontractors or selling their products or services in their local communities, are usually only able to earn a survival income. Yet in policy terms, they are perceived as potential small business people who with appropriate support, can take care of their own business and social protection needs, the latter through private provision of health care and pensions from their profits and savings. The reality for the majority of these workers, however, is that they have no capital to invest, have no access to loans and no potential or prospect to develop into a viable business. They have no or little access to the necessary business development infrastructure and services and they are often excluded from the most basic labour and social protection legislation.

HBWs usually involve unpaid family workers, such as spouses, children or other household members, on a regular or irregular basis, e.g. during peak-times. Groups of women may also work together in or around their houses, and the informal arrangements between them may vary considerably. In some cases, women who act as intermediary in obtaining work orders, share the work and payment equally with the others. In other cases, the intermediary becomes a subcontractor or employer, taking a commission from the payments.

As mentioned in the case studies, it is important to keep the difference between dependent home workers and independent own-account workers in mind for statistical, legal and policy purposes. However, in practice, many HBWs fall in a grey, intermediate zone between being fully independent and being fully dependent:

- Subcontracted HBWs are neither fully independent self-employed nor fully dependent employees. They typically have to absorb many of the costs and risks of production, including: buying or renting and maintaining equipment; providing workspace and paying for utility costs; buying materials or other inputs; and paying for transport. They lack legal protection and work without help and direct supervision from those who contract work to them.
- Self-employed home-based workers are not fully independent because they have limited access to capital, limited knowledge of markets, limited bargaining power, and limited control in commercial transactions.

Homeworkers and own-account workers share many common features, such as irregularity of work, low incomes, poor working and living conditions often in substandard housing and lack of access to public or private support services. Both groups also have little voice in decision-making about public policies and services that are crucial to their productivity, such as land allocation and housing policies, as well as basic infrastructure and transport services.

In practice, both groups do both kinds of work depending on what is available at any point in time, completing orders when available, seeking market outlets when orders dry up or earning income through street vending or domestic work, because they can not afford not to work. They are predominantly women, many of whom can only carry out remunerative work from home because of household or family care duties and/or because of cultural, religious or societal gender norms which confine women to their homes. For organizing purposes, therefore, the needs of both groups are usually addressed jointly.

The HBWs in this report are engaged in survival strategies, eking out a living in the margins. Other HBWs' groups, such as business people and well-paid professionals working from home, as well as teleworkers are not included in this report as they are generally better protected under the law, and better educated and remunerated.

Worldwide, since the 1980-90s, due to globalization, economic liberalization and flexibilization in employment, there has been a trend to increase subcontracting and self-employment. As a result the numbers of HBWs and other informal workers have been growing rapidly at different points in the supply chain, with homeworkers at the end of these chains. It is, however, difficult to give precise estimates of the number of HBWs within countries and globally, and, for this reason, it is useful to look at the larger population of which they form a part, namely informal economy workers.

## Informal economy

Millions of people, including HBWs, earn a living in the informal economy. ILO estimates<sup>2</sup> that, globally, between 45 to 90 per cent of workers are situated in the informal economy. The share of women in the informal economy is higher than men in most countries. Population groups, such as children, young and older people, ethnic minorities, migrants and people with health conditions, such as disability or HIV, are also disproportionately present in the informal economy.

The informal economy<sup>3</sup> refers to all economic activities that are, in law or in practice, not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements. It comprises workers and entrepreneurs who are often not recognized or protected under national legal and regulatory frameworks. Difficulties faced by informal economy workers include lack of access to infrastructure, services and markets, denial of labour rights, and lack of social protection.

Economic units – including enterprises, entrepreneurs and households – in the informal economy consist of:

- Units that employ hired labour.
- Units that are owned by individuals working on their own account, either alone or with the help of contributing family workers.
- Cooperatives and social and solidarity economy units.

Workers in the informal economy, include in particular:

- Those in the informal economy who own and operate economic units:
  - ◆ own-account workers;
  - ◆ employers; and
  - ◆ members of cooperatives and of social and solidarity economy units.
- Contributing family workers, irrespective of whether they work in economic units in the formal or informal economy.
- Employees holding informal jobs in or for formal enterprises, or in or for economic units in the informal economy, including but not limited to those in subcontracting and in supply chains, or as paid domestic workers employed by households.
- Workers in unrecognized or unregulated employment relationships.

The informal economy is universal and very diverse. Informal enterprises and jobs persist in both high- and low-income countries, and indications are that it is growing in many countries. Defining and measuring the informal economy is a challenging work in process. In 1993, the 15<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Labour Statisticians (ICLS) adopted an enterprise-based definition of the **informal sector** covering employment and production in unincorporated small or unregistered enterprises. In 2003, 10 years later, the 17<sup>th</sup> ICLS defined **informal work or informal employment** as “all employment arrangements that do not provide individuals with legal or social protection through their work, thereby leaving them more exposed to economic risk than others, whether or not the economic units they work for or operate in are formal enterprises, informal enterprises or households.”<sup>4</sup>

Important gender dimensions of the informal sector are<sup>5</sup>:

- A higher percentage of economically active women, than men, are in the informal sector.
- The majority of women in this sector are self-employed traders and producers, casual workers, or subcontracted workers, and relatively few are employer-owners who hire others to work for them.
- The types and scale of activities between men and women tend to be different: In many countries, female traders tend to have smaller-scale operations and to deal in food items while male traders tend to have larger-scale operations and to deal in non-food items.
- While the average incomes of both women and men are lower in the informal than in the formal sector, the gender gap in wages and earnings appears higher in the informal sector. This is largely because informal incomes tend to decline as one moves across the following types of employment: employer – self-employed – casual worker – subcontracted worker. Women are under-represented in high-income activities and over-represented in low-income activities. The vast majority of subcontracted homeworkers, who earn some of the lowest

wages worldwide, are women. Even when they are self-employed in petty trade or production, women tend to earn less than men.

## Employment and gender dimensions of home-based work

The majority of home-based workers are found in manufacturing and trade, but they are also engaged in services and in producing/collecting and processing agricultural, forest and sea resources.

While progress is being made in measuring informal employment in and outside the informal economy, home-based work is not captured adequately in local, national and international data collection systems. The work and contribution of HBWs to their family, community and the economy, therefore, remain largely unrecognized and invisible in official statistics. This is because statistical surveys may not include all relevant questions which are necessary for identifying this group, such as precise questions on the 'place of work'. The full range of informal work arrangements today is also not easily captured in existing classifications, and international and national classification systems are not sufficiently detailed to cover all types of informal employment, especially informal employment of women.<sup>6</sup>

Available evidence suggests three basic facts about the employment dimensions of HBW:

- HBW is an important source of employment in many parts of the world, often carried out by migrants in some parts.
- HBW is an especially important source of employment for women, particularly for economically and socially disadvantaged women.
- HBWs comprise a significant share of the workforce in key industries, such as the textile and garment industries, the leather industry, carpet making and electronics.

## Decent work

Decent work refers to productive work performed in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity to which women and men have access on equal terms. Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

Productive and decent work is key to achieving a fair globalization and poverty reduction. The ILO's decent work agenda aims at creating more and better jobs, upholding rights at work, providing social protection, including safe work and social security and ensuring fair representation of all women and men in achieving these goals through social dialogue.

## Empowerment

Due to its widespread usage there are a variety of understandings of the term empowerment. It is also used in many different contexts and by many different organizations. Although the term is often used in development work, it is rarely defined.<sup>7</sup> This may lead to unclear outcomes or unintended negative effects.

The following definition<sup>8</sup> captures the term as follows: Empowerment is about people – both women and men – taking control over their lives: setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems and developing self-reliance. No one can empower another: only individuals can empower themselves to make choices and to speak out. However, institutions can support processes that can nurture the self-empowerment of individuals or groups.

Empowerment is a process in which individuals gain power, with power to be understood not in terms of domination ('power over'), but rather as creative power ('power to'), shared power ('power with') and personal power ('power from within'). Women's movements have, since long, emphasized the importance of increasing women's 'power to, with and within'. Thus, while achieving gender equality is about reversing men's undue domination over women, the goal is not more domination of women over men. The goal is about equal opportunities, incomes and treatment for both men and women, resulting in 'more power to, with and within' for both sexes and a win-win situation for all.

More instrumental definitions of empowerment can be found, among others, at the World Bank<sup>9</sup> which defines empowerment as "the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives" and "empowerment is the process of increasing the assets and capabilities of individuals or groups to make purposive choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes."

However, empowerment in the sense of having more choices does not automatically mean achieving autonomy, gender equality, and respect for human, women's and workers' rights. Empowerment is both a goal and a process. Hence, it is important to understand that empowerment is a bottom-up process and cannot be bestowed from the top down. Empowerment is best defined as an expansion of 'agency' and 'autonomy' throughout women's and men's life-cycles, and successful empowerment initiatives truly enable them to make informed choices in the psychological, social, economic and political spheres by themselves.

## Good practices<sup>10</sup>

In this report a good practice is defined as anything that has worked in some way in organizing and empowering HBWs, achieving decent work and social protection for HBWs, and building sustainable organizations of HBWs. Documenting good practices on how HBWs have organized themselves and how they managed to improve their position means documenting and recording positive outcomes and the steps made towards achieving these goals:

- A good practice is something that actually has been tried and shown to work. It is different from what may be a good idea but has not been tested. It can represent work in progress, such as preliminary findings, or a final outcome.
- An important criterium for selecting a good practice is its potential usefulness to others in stimulating new ideas or providing guidance on how one can be more effective.

- There should be some evidence that the practice is indeed effective, although definite or hard ‘proof’ may not be essential.
- A good practice can represent any type of practice, small or large and can be at any level. Good practices can range from broad policy-level activities to workplace practices. It can include a transformational shift in law, policy and strategy or involve a specific nitty-gritty process, activity or procedure that ‘makes things work’.
- Although a law, policy, programme, measure or practice (old or new) may not yet be perfect, it is important to record small and large successes, that is, substantive changes or positive steps in the right direction, that are useful to share with other persons and organizations.
- It is not expected that good practices should be copied from one setting to another as what works in one place may not work elsewhere. However, successful interventions can provide ‘food for thought’ and inspire ideas for possible adaptations and new ways of looking at things.
- Criteria for determining what makes a practice ‘good’ are: relevance and responsiveness in addressing the needs of HBWs; impact, effectiveness and efficiency; creativity and innovation; sustainability and possible replicability.
- Information about ‘bad practice’, ‘issues to avoid’ or ‘measures to prevent unintended negative effects’ can also be included. This is because learning from mistakes and how to overcome obstacles or inhibiting factors can be more useful to others than perfect ‘success stories’.

### 1.3 Report content in brief

Chapter 2 introduces the HBWs’ organizations that are covered in the case studies, and gives a brief overview of the larger environment in which HBWs and their support organizations operate in the concerned countries as relevant. Chapter 3 explains and analyzes the experiences and learnings of HBWs and their organizations. It highlights good practices and draws lessons from the HBWs’ organizations described in the case studies. It sets out key principles and strategies, as well as some of the main steps in organizing, developing and empowering HBWs, promoting decent working and living conditions for HBWs, and setting up sustainable HBW organizations. Chapter 4 draws conclusions, summarizes key lessons and sets out suggestions for future action by HBWs and their support organizations.

## 2. Home-based workers' organizations and their environment

This chapter gives a brief overview of the origins and key characteristics of four main HBWs' organizations, the Centro de Capacitacion para la Mujer Trabajado (CECAM) in Chile, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, the National Network of Informal Workers in the Philippines (PATAMABA) and the organizations supporting HBWs in Thailand, respectively HomeNet Thailand, the HomeNet Thailand Association and the Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (FLEP). It provides an overview of existing protective legislation for the self-employed and homeworkers and the larger environment, and gives an overview of the main aims, achievements and challenges of the HBW organizations in each of the four countries. In addition, a brief overview of the work on home-based workers in Indonesia is presented to explain the history and introduce the recent efforts made to promote decent work for homeworkers under the ILO/MAMPU project during 2014 – 2015.

### 2.1 CECAM in Chile

The case study documents work undertaken in Chile from 1999 to 2006 to build organizations of HBWs. In 1994, three women leaders who had been political prisoners under the military rule of the Pinochet regime founded Ana Clara, a women's labour rights organization to support women in trade unions. Following the adoption of Home Work Convention No. 177 at the International Labour Conference in 1996, Ana Clara started reaching out to home-based workers through their networks of women trade union and community leaders in Santiago and other parts of Chile in 1999. Contacts were made with around 100 home-based workers through a simple survey. They participated in a series of local meetings and in 2000, a national meeting brought together 70 home-based workers to establish a common identity as women workers, identify their needs, seek solutions to their problems and explore different forms of collective organizing.

In 2001, Ana Clara became a partner in an international programme to support new forms of organizing HBWs, coordinated by HomeWorkers Worldwide (HWW), an organization based in the United Kingdom (UK) supporting HBWs' organizations in various countries. This programme funded by the Department for International Development of the UK Government consisted of systematic action research, organizing, capacity building among home-based workers and policy advocacy to improve their situation. The processes involved in the programme which became known as the mapping programme, consisted of six main stages: making contact with home-based workers; organizing meetings; forming research teams; horizontal and vertical mapping in new areas; training and education; and forming organizations. In 2003, Ana Clara renamed its organization as Centro de Capacitacion para la Mujer Trabajadora (Training Centre for the Working Woman) (CECAM).

## Legal and policy environment

The majority of countries in Latin America have some form of legislation to protect dependent homeworkers, but in Chile, the 1931 regulations on home work were repealed in the 1980s by the Pinochet government, thus ruling out the existence of an employment contract for those working at home. In 1992, Law No. 19250 'allowed the possibility of recognizing a labour relationship (and thereby an employment contract), if all necessary elements can be proven.' According to CECAM, inefficient application of this law maintained the lack of protection for homeworkers.

By the end of 2001, the labour code made an exception for telework providing that teleworkers with an employment contract with a company could work at home and keep their labour and social security rights. Subcontracted home workers, however, remained without any effective legal recognition. Similarly, own-account workers disqualified from labour protection as they were considered to be self-employed micro-entrepreneurs.

However, there was one provision in the Labour code (Article 216) that facilitated organizing. This regulation enabled the setting up of local branches of trade unions, provided 25 members registered, and this was later reduced to eight members. This made it possible to organize local groups either as trade unions, or if the home-based workers preferred another format, as labour workshops, where groups of women worked together to make products and market them. Even with this legal provision, the authorities were initially reluctant to register organizations of own-account workers as a trade union but CECAM was able to use clause (c) of the above article which specified that it was possible to set up a trade union of workers not dependent on an employer.

## Aims, main achievements and challenges

From the outset, it was Ana Clara's aim to support HBWs to establish their own membership-based body, independent of Ana Clara and directed by the HBWs themselves. By renaming Ana Clara as the Centro de Capacitacion para la Mujer Trabajadora (CECAM: Training Centre for the Working Woman) in 2003, the support agency confirmed its vision of its own role as a small support organization focused on training, education and coordination.

By 2004, the efforts of CECAM and the HBWs' organizations had resulted first of all, in the collection of information on this group of hitherto invisible workers in Santiago, Chile's capital and in the second major city, Concepcion, and surrounding areas. Surveys were undertaken with 1,334 home-based workers. The main results were:

- Home-based workers were found in the following economic sectors: 41 per cent in textiles and clothing; 23 per cent in food processing and 20 per cent in footwear. Other sectors included the printing industry, general services and handicrafts. Home-based work in rural areas consisted of processing natural products such as (alpaca) wool, seaweed and forest produce.
- Although a minority of men was found in home-based work, CECAM focused the surveys (and the organizing and capacity building activities) on women HBWs. The majority of the surveyed women were between 20 and 40 years old. Heads of households (single, separated or widowed) made up a substantial proportion, and 27 per cent depended on home-based work as their sole source of income.

- Both homeworkers and own account workers had low incomes and worked without any form of labour or social protection. Out of 933 women asked about their monthly income from home-based work in 2001, 406 were able to calculate an approximate figure: 80 per cent earned less than the minimum wage; 13 per cent around the minimum wage and only 7 per cent earned more.
- More than half of the HBWs could only access free health care at government centres for indigent or destitute people, and more than nine out of every 10 could not contribute to pension schemes or save for their old age.
- For many, the main concern was to find regular work. Some women combined home-based work with other activities, such as street-vending, paper recycling, seasonal horticultural work, or domestic work to make a living.

Organizing work had flourished too. By the end of 2004, national and regional structures of HBWs existed, and around 750 women had organized in 15 local independent HBWs' organizations. These included six trade unions with a mixture of homeworkers and own-account workers, three labour workshops organized around the production of goods, an artisan group of indigenous women, a group producing honey and four other groups.

#### **Examples of economic empowerment through group action:**

- In the case of Caleta Timbes, 200 seaweed collectors, after value chain research and a long process of education on marketing and collective negotiation, developed a strategy that allowed them to eliminate several intermediaries and negotiate directly with the purchasing company. They also improved product quality by doing their own quality control, and diversified their markets, thereby, increasing further sales (See also 4.1.).
- The women in the trade unions of seaweed collectors of Punta Lavapie, Llico, El Morro, la Convhilla and Lota Bajo, on the coast of Arauco province, were trained on caring for marine resources and collecting seaweed without destroying the roots. They learned how to do quality control, thus delivering a better product for a better price. They also started collection of a new seaweed that they had discounted earlier because of ignorance of its properties and sold it to the pharmaceutical industry.
- Collective organization improved the working conditions of dependent and own-account HBWs in the textile sector in terms of fixing pay rates and accessing more and better market outlets. The four groups included: trade union No. 1 of women home-based workers of La Pintana (Santiago) with 15 active members; production workshop La Pintana sector 2 with 11 members, Rancagua trade union of women home-based workers with 17 members; and the grassroots group of Puente Alto with 10 members.

In Chile, policy advocacy at both the local and the national level by CECAM in cooperation with workers', women's and faith-based organizations aimed at raising the visibility of HBWs to persuade authorities to acknowledge the existence of home-based workers, to recognize their contribution to the economy, and to supply more appropriate services to them. The country case study indicates that, on the whole, advocacy initiatives carried out through such alliances were more successful at the local level than at the national level. As in other countries, it takes many years and a favourable political climate to persuade governments to make major changes in law or policy in favour of workers, and up to the ending of the project in Chile in 2006, little substantial progress had been made at the national level.

After 2004 external funding for the CECAM's community level organizing work was considerably reduced and CECAM received project funding mainly to support the establishment of HBWs' organizations in

other countries in Latin America (Bolivia, Brazil and Mexico). After 2006 there was even less financial support for the continuation of the work and CECAM was dissolved. Although groups of HBWs still exist, the national and regional structures of home-based workers could not operate independently and were not sustained. However, many lessons were learned from the work done in this period that may be useful for organizing HBWs, and other workers in informal employment.

## 2.2 HomeNet, the FLEP and HNTA in Thailand

Since the late 80s a group of NGOs in Thailand from the North, the North-East, the South and the Central regions as well as the capital Bangkok formed a network of HBWs' groups, including homeworkers and self-employed workers as well as NGOs. The network was supported by a sub-regional ILO project for protecting and organizing women HBWs in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand which was funded by the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). The network continued to operate after the project's completion in 1996. It was known as HomeNet Thailand (HNT) or as the Informal Workers' Network in Thai, and, by 1998 had a coordinating unit, known as the Homeworkers' Study and Development Centre, and a Committee structure at the local, provincial and national levels representing the occupational groups of HBWs based in rural or urban communities.

In 2003, the NGO part of the network registered as the Foundation for Labour and Employment Promotion (FLEP) which aims at developing HBWs, including homeworkers and other informal workers such as contract farmers and domestic workers. HNT had its own executive board and committees but was not registered and relied on FLEP staff, finances and facilities to organize its members.

From the late 90s onwards, FLEP and the network members of HomeNet Thailand continued to strengthen homeworkers and other occupational groups of informal workers, such as motorcycle-taxi drivers and domestic workers by promoting safe work and health care among HBWs and sensitizing local health and other authorities about occupational risks in HBW and through policy advocacy for legal protection of homeworkers and social protection for all informal economy workers.

A start was made with transforming the HBWs' network into a membership-based organization during 2009 - 2010, when HomeNet Thailand organized skills training and exposure visits for 184 HBW leaders and members throughout the country with WIEGO support. In addition, with support from HomeNet South Asia, 36 leaders and organizers visited SEWA in India and learned about membership-based organizing. In 2010, HomeNet Thailand HBWs' leaders and members identified employment, fair wages and social security as the three main priorities for HBW members and set the goal of setting up a separate organization of HBWs, entitled the HomeNet Thailand Association (HNTA).

The HNTA was successfully registered with the Ministry of Interior as an MBO in 2013 with the following objectives:

- Promote members' groups and informal workers' networks.
- Promote and support members' economic capacity.
- Develop and provide welfare support to members.
- Advocate for laws and policies for social protection for members.
- Support and preserve local wisdoms, resources and the environment.

In 2004, the HNTA had 4,500 members. In 2015 over 5,000 ordinary members from more than 50 production groups paid a THB 20 application fee and an annual membership fee of THB 20. Most ordinary members are home-based workers, including homeworkers and some are street vendors, motorcycle taxi drivers and casual workers. Experts or other supporting individuals can be invited to join the HNTA as extra-ordinary members: they have no voting rights and do not pay the fees.

## Legal and policy environment

Home-based workers and other informal workers are generally not protected under the Thai labour law which covers mainly workers in a formal employer-employee relationship. However, due to policy advocacy by HomeNet Thailand and the FLEP, among others, the Ministry of Labour (MOL) issued a *Ministerial Regulation on the Protection of Homeworkers B.E. 2547* (2004), to officially recognize homeworkers and protect their rights. The Regulation stipulates:

- Homeworkers must be at least 15 years old. Any employment of a person who is under 15 years old as a homemaker is strictly prohibited.
- The employer has to produce a working contract, give a copy to the worker, and have it ready for review by labour inspection officials.
- Employers are prohibited from giving hazardous work to homeworkers.
- If employers do not comply with applicable laws, employees have the right to complain to labour inspection officials or the Labour Court. Breaches to the Regulation are considered a criminal offence.
- Employers are prohibited to discriminate in employment and must comply with the equal treatment principle between male and female workers with regard to remuneration.

A year later, in 2005, the MOLs Department of Labour Protection and Welfare drafted the *Homeworker Protection Act* and this Act was enforced on May 2012 with the following essential provisions:

- Home work is recognized as work and as part of an industrial business.
- Labour disputes between employers and homeworkers are under the jurisdiction of the labour court.
- Homeworkers must be paid a similar wage for work of similar type, quality and quantity and must get similar wages received by workers protected under the labour law, irrespective of whether the homeworkers are men or women.
- Pregnant women or children under the age of 15 years are prohibited from employment in hazardous or unsafe work.
- Homeworkers are prohibited from being employed to work with hazardous substances or engaged in the work that may affect their health, safety or environment.
- An employer is responsible for medical treatment and funeral expenses of homeworkers who are injured or die because of the home work, and the occupational hazards or injuries do not result from the homeworkers' intention or gross negligence.
- A Home Work Committee will be established to propose policies on the protection, promotion and development of homeworkers. The Committee will consist of five representatives of the Ministry of Labour, one representative of the Ministry of Industry, and the Ministry

of Labour shall appoint three representatives of the employers, three representatives of the homeworkers, and three representatives of experts in law, financial economy, or the environment.

- The Ministry of Labour shall conduct labour inspections through its labour inspectorate.

In the view of FLEP and the HNTA, there are some major loopholes in the law that need to be addressed. These include:

- The definition of homeworkers should be clear and include the existing different types of home work, which cover the manufacturing, cottage and service industries.
- If there is no standard monitoring mechanism, it is likely that mediation will represent the interest of the employer or contractor rather than the interest of homeworkers. Therefore, a Dispute Mediation Committee should be appointed, consisting of local administration organizations and labour experts, to settle disputes by mediation.
- Labour and human rights specialists should be added to the Home Work Committee besides the experts in law, financial economy, or the environment to ensure a rights-based orientation in the Committee.
- Community participation should be encouraged by recruiting local volunteer labour inspectors as assistants to labour inspectors.
- Measures for the promotion and development of homeworkers should be established as legal rights.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.3 MWPRI and the ILO/MAMPU project in Indonesia

In the late 90s, NGOs, local universities and the government in Indonesia started to look into the situation of home workers with the support of the above-mentioned ILO project to protect and organize homeworkers. In 1996, NGO<sup>12</sup> and academicians<sup>13</sup> founded Mitra Wanita Pekerja Rumahan Indonesia (MWPRI or the National Network of Friends of Women Homeworkers) in Malang, East Java with a view to improve the socio-economic situation of Indonesian home-based and informal economy workers. Since then, MWPRI has engaged in developing HBWs' organizations and represented HBWs at the local, national, subregional and international levels, though the scale of activities has depended on the availability of external resources.

As mentioned in the first chapter, in 2012 the ILO partnered with the Ministry of Manpower, employers' and workers' organizations to increase women's access to decent jobs and remove workplace discrimination and became part of MAMPU (Maju Perempuan Indonesia untuk Penanggulangan Kemiskinan, or Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction), a cooperation programme of the Indonesian and the Australian Governments, to improve access to jobs and social protection and livelihoods for poor women in Indonesia in selected geographical areas. In 2013, in cooperation with the National Program for Community Empowerment or Program Nasional Pemberdayaan Mandiri (PNPM), the ILO/MAMPU project increased the business skills of women HBWs in North Sumatra and supported the organization of homeworkers in East Java. Since early 2014, following a reorientation of the overall MAMPU programme cooperation between the Governments of Indonesia and Australia, the ILO/MAMPU project focused on improving the working conditions of homeworkers, including women with disabilities in home-based work.

## Legal and policy environment

Since home work is carried out by women in and around their houses, homeworkers are often not considered as workers and homeworkers themselves often do not realize that they are workers. There is also a general notion in Indonesia that the labour law is applicable only for workers in formal employment and not for workers in the informal economy. It is therefore commonly considered that the labour law does not cover homeworkers and the overall majority of homeworkers do not have access to legal and social protection.

However, an ILO review<sup>14</sup> of the labour law indicates that homeworkers are implicitly covered by the Manpower Act No. 13 (2003) based on the following provisions:

- Article 1 (2): Manpower is every individual or person who is able to work in order to produce goods and/or services either to fulfill his or her own needs or to fulfill the needs of the society.
- Article 1(3): A worker/labourer is any person who works and receives wages or other forms of remuneration.

The review further establishes that homeworkers are in an employment relationship and entrepreneurs are under an obligation to observe various provisions of the Manpower Act No. 13 (2003) as follows:

- Article 1 (5): An entrepreneur is an individual or partnership or legal entity that operates a self-owned enterprise.
- Article 1 (6): An enterprise is every form of business, which is either a legal entity or not, which is owned by an individual, a partnership or legal entity that is either privately owned or state owned, which employs workers/labourers by paying them wages or other forms of remuneration.
- Article 1(15): An employment relation is a relationship between an entrepreneur and a worker/labourer based on a work agreement, which contains the elements of job, wages and work order.
- Article 51: Work agreements can be made either orally or in writing.
- Article 86: Every worker/labourer has the right to receive protection on a) occupational safety and health.
- Article 88 (1): Every worker/labourer has the right to earn a living that is decent from the viewpoint of humanity.
- Article 90 (1): Entrepreneurs are prohibited from paying wages lower than the provincial or district/city-based minimum wages or provincial or district/city-based sectoral minimum wages.

## Aims and achievements

Given the lack of understanding of homeworkers as ‘workers in an employment relationship’ among employers, government officials and homeworkers themselves, the ILO/MAMPU project worked with the government, the employers’ association, trade unions, NGOs and HBWs to raise awareness on homeworkers’ issues and to facilitate policy dialogue to advocate for the recognition of homeworkers as workers.

In addition, from mid 2014 to early 2015, the project partnered with BITRA in North Sumatra, TURC in Central Java, YASANTI in Yogyakarta and MWPRI in East Java to create awareness on gender equality and workers' rights among homeworkers and improve their working conditions by facilitating the organization of homeworkers' groups and building their capacity in areas such as organizing, leadership, negotiation and advocacy skills, occupational safety and health, and financial literacy. Trade union partners also created awareness on homeworkers' issues to start extending trade union support to homeworkers. Despite the relatively short time frame, the project partners supported 2,104 homeworkers (1,958 women and 146 men) to improve their knowledge and working conditions and as many as 34 groups of homeworkers have been formed covering 1,197 homeworkers. A homeworkers trade union, Serikat Pekerja Rumahan Sejahtera (Prosperous Homeworkers Trade Union), initially consisting of 10 occupational groups of around 300 homeworkers in total, has been established in January 2015 in North Sumatra, and at least 429 homeworkers successfully negotiated with their employers for better working conditions, resulting among others, in wage increases, provision of holiday allowance, and coverage of some of the production costs.

## 2.4 PATAMABA in the Philippines

Organizing HBWs also has a long history in the Philippines. The National Network of Informal Workers, Philippines (PATAMABA or Pambansang Kalipunan ng mga Manggagawang Impormal sa Pilipinas) was established in 2003, expanding the former National Network of Home-based Workers (Pambansang Tagapag-ugnay ng Manggagawa sa Bahay) which was founded in 1991. This grass roots organization was the brainchild of HBWs belonging to the Association of New Filipina (Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina – KaBaPa), which had been set up by mainly rural women in 1975 and engaged in research, training, organizing and institution building of women's organizations.

PATAMABA organizes home-based and other informal workers towards greater visibility, recognition and participation of these workers in their immediate community and the society, so that they can gain access to productive resources and social protection and obtain better policies and programmes for these workers through improved legislation.

### Legal and policy environment

The 1987 Philippine Constitution mandates the State to ensure the welfare of all workers. Article II, Section 9 declares *"The State shall promote a just and dynamic social order that will ... free the people from poverty through policies that provide adequate social services, promote full employment, a rising standard of living, and an improved quality of life for all."* And Section 3 of Article XIII provides: *"It shall guarantee the rights of all workers to self-organization, collective bargaining and negotiations, and peaceful concerted activities, including the right to strike in accordance with law. They shall be entitled to security of tenure, human conditions of work, and a living wage. They shall also participate in policy and decision-making processes affecting their rights and benefits as may be provided by law."*

HBWs, spearheaded by PATAMABA, succeeded in lobbying for the issuance of specific labour protection for homeworkers. The *Labor Code* of the Philippines regulates the employment of industrial home workers, and the implementing rules and regulations of Articles 153-155 in Chapter 4 (Employment of Home workers) in *Department Order* (DO) 5 to provide for the implementation of law popularly

known as DO 5 was signed in 1992. DO 5 affirms the rights of home workers to labour protection as follows:

- Registration of home workers' organizations, and their employers, contractors and subcontractors (and provision of assistance to those who have registered).
- Immediate payment for home work.
- Standard output rates based on time and motion studies, individual/collective agreement between the employer and workers; or consultation with representatives of employers and workers in a tripartite conference.
- Prohibition of home work in the production of explosives, fireworks, poisons and other toxic substances.
- Designation of the Department of Labour and Employment's (DOLE) regional directors to administer compliance and hear complaints.

The PATAMABA case study indicates that attempts to urge contractors and subcontractors to register have been a failure. In reality, PATAMABA members find that the Labor code covers mainly the formal sector of the economy. The laws on labour standards (wages, hours of work, employee benefits, etc.) and labour relations (unionism, collective bargaining, dispute settlements, etc.) apply largely to formal sector workers only because the enjoyment of such rights and entitlements requires proof of the existence of a formal employer-employee relationship.

The *Social Reform and Poverty Alleviation Act* (R.A. 8425) which took effect in 1998, was the first national legislation to recognize the informal sector as one of the basic sectors in the economy. It defines workers in the informal sector as *"poor individuals who operate businesses that are very small in scale and are not registered with any national government agency, and the workers in such enterprises who sell their services in exchange for subsistence level wages or other forms of compensation."* In 2002, the National Statistical Coordination Board, through Resolution No. 15 Series of 2002, released the official definition of the informal sector: *"The informal sector consists of 'units' engaged in the production of goods and services with the primary objective of generating employment and incomes to the persons concerned in order to earn a living. These units typically operate at a low level of organization, with little or no division between labour and capital as factors of production. It consists of household unincorporated enterprises that are market and non-market producers of goods as well as market producers of services. Labor relations, where they exist, are based on casual employment, kinship or personal and social relations rather than formal or contractual arrangements."*

The PATAMABA case study concludes that the limited coverage and problematic implementation of the above-mentioned laws show clearly that effective national and local mechanisms that focus on the need and ensure the rights of the informal workers are still not in place. This is an anomaly in the light of the fact that informal workers comprise the majority of Filipino workers.

## **Aims, main achievements and challenges**

In the late 80s KaBaPa carried out a study of rural women HBWs with ILO support. In 1989 it became part of the above-mentioned subregional ILO project for protecting and organizing HBWs. The project brought the government, employers' and workers' organizations and HBWs together to improve the latter's situation.

Starting with a group of 29 home-based worker leaders from nine provinces in 1989, the National Network of Homeworkers in the Philippines or PATAMABA held its founding Congress a year later to raise awareness among home-based workers, national and local governmental agencies and the general public on home-based workers' concerns, needs and priorities. Training was provided to facilitate the organization of HBWs by industry or craft in communities, and help them to develop their social and income earning skills.

Following the closure of many garment factories in the late 80s, and the increase in informal employment during the 90s, PATAMABA decided to expand its membership to other groups in the informal economy. During its fifth Congress in 2003, the organization was renamed as the National Network of Informal Workers, Philippines but it kept the acronym PATAMABA.

PATAMABA envisions a free, peaceful, prosperous and democratic nation, where everyone enjoys human rights, with a sustainable and environment-friendly lifestyle and active and comprehensive empowerment of workers in the informal economy towards individual and collective self-reliance. Through continuous capacity development and organizing it seeks to:

- Ensure the rights and uplift the economic, political and social conditions of workers in the informal economy.
- Integrate the rights, needs and interests of women in its policies and programmes.
- Establish networks and linkages nationally and internationally for resource mobilization, capacity building, planning and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of various development programmes and projects for sustainability and self-reliance.
- Serve as a vehicle for initiating and supporting activities addressing the needs of informal workers through its local chapters all over the country.

PATAMABA has individual and affiliate members. Individual membership has reached a total of around 19,000. The overall majority (98 per cent) are women, between 18 and 75 years of age who are organized into 300 chapters in 34 provinces located in 12 regions. Of these, 4,102 are subcontracted home workers, 14,986 are self-employed own account workers and 1,667 do both. The subcontracted workers are engaged in sewing, smocking and weaving; and producing handicraft, paper mache, bags, Christmas balls, fashion accessories, embroidery and sawali (woven strips of split bamboo used for walls). Self-employed members are raising livestock, weaving and or otherwise producing agri-based products, bags, slippers, fashion accessories, novelty items, food, woodcraft and garments.

Besides home-based workers, the expanded PATAMABA also includes 11 affiliate group members with their own legal identity, composed of vendors (market, street and ambulant), small transport operators of tricycle/pedicab and bancas (boats), non-corporate construction workers (carpenters, masons, plumbers who are project-based), service workers (beauticians, barbers, laundry persons) and youth (youth advocates and working youth).

Besides registering PATAMABA with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) in 1991 as a non-stock, non-profit NGO, PATAMABA registered as a workers' organization with the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) in 2005. It also registered with the Cooperative Development Authority, the Philippine Commission on Women (PCW) and the Department of Trade and Industry. PATAMABA local chapters are accredited as people's organizations in several local government units like Quezon City, Caloocan City, Iloilo City, Davao City, Angono and Taytay in Rizal, and Bulacan. This enables them to be part of the decision-making bodies at the ground level and to avail of government livelihood training

and assistance, to participate in the government's bottom-up planning and budgeting processes and to become a partner of government and private institutions in programmes and projects for informal workers.

## 2.5 SEWA in India

The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was born in the early 70s as a trade union of self-employed women. It grew out of the Textile Labour Association (TLA), India's oldest and largest union of textile workers founded in 1920 by a woman, Anasuya Sarabhai. The inspiration for the union came from Mahatma Gandhi, who led a successful strike of textile workers in 1917. He believed in creating positive organized strength by awakening the consciousness in workers. By developing unity as well as personality, a worker would be able to hold his or her own against tyranny from employers or the state. To develop this strength he believed that a union should cover all aspects of worker's lives both in the factory and at home.

The ideology of Mahatma Gandhi and the feminist seeds planted by Anasuya Sarabhai led to the creation of the TLA Women's Wing in 1954 which at the start mainly engaged in skills training and welfare for the wives and daughters of mill workers. TLAs scope expanded in the early 1970's when a survey probed complaints by women tailors of exploitation by contractors and revealed the large numbers of women workers untouched by legal protection and unionization.

In 1971, a small group of migrant women working as cart-pullers in Ahmedabad's cloth market came to the TLA with their labour contractor to find some housing for these women as they were living in the streets without shelter. They spoke with Ela Bhatt, the head of TLAs Women's Wing, and she joined them to the places where they lived and worked. There she also met women who worked as head-loaders, carrying loads of clothes between the wholesale and retail markets and suffered from insecure access to work and low and erratic wages.

The TLA Women's Wing started campaigns to improve the working conditions of these groups of women workers and help them negotiate with their employers. Soon, a group of used-garment dealers approached the TLA Women's Wing with their own grievances. A public meeting of used-garment dealers was called and over hundred women attended. During the meeting in a public park, a woman from the crowd suggested they form an association of their own. Thus, on an appeal from the women and at the initiative of the leader of the Women's Wing, Ela Bhatt, and the TLA president Arvind Buch, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was born in December 1971.

The women felt that as an association of informal workers, SEWA should establish itself as a trade union. This was a fairly novel idea, because the self-employed had no real history of organizing. The first struggle SEWA undertook was obtaining official recognition as trade union. The Labour Department refused to register SEWA because they felt that, since there was no recognized employer, the workers would have no one to struggle against. Initially, the trade unions were also against SEWA registering as a union because HBWs and other informal sector workers are not formally employed. SEWA, however, argued that a union was not necessarily against an employer, but embodied the unity of workers. SEWA also had to argue convincingly that informal women workers are, in fact, workers, entitled to the same rights as men. SEWA was registered as a trade union under the Trade Union Act of India in 1972.

Thereafter SEWA continued to grow, increasing its membership and including more and more different occupations within its fold. The beginning of the first women's decade in 1975 gave a boost to the

growth of SEWA, placing it within the women's movement, and since the late 70s, SEWA has become a recognized advocate for HBWs at the international level.

By 1981, relations between SEWA and TLA had deteriorated. The TLA did not appreciate an assertive women's group in its midst. Also, the interests of TLA, representing workers of the organized sector often came into conflict with the demands of SEWA, representing unorganized women workers. The conflict came to a head in 1981 during the anti-reservation riots when members of higher castes attacked the Harijans<sup>15</sup>, many of whom were members of both TLA and SEWA. SEWA spoke out in defense of the Harijans, whereas TLA remained silent. Because of this outspokenness, TLA threw out SEWA from its fold. After the separation from TLA, SEWA started new initiatives. In particular, the growth of many new co-operatives and other economic ventures, a more militant trade union and the provision of many other support services to HBWs gave SEWA a new shape and direction.

## HBWs' situation and environment in India

Economic growth in India has been encouraging and poverty has been decreasing since the mid 1980s; however, the informal economy has been growing. The IASEW case study reports that protective labour legislation covers seven per cent of the workers only and the remaining 93 per cent, namely more than 370 million workers belong to the informal economy. This means HBWs and other informal economy workers have insecure access to employment, earn low incomes, face difficulty in sending children to school and covering risks such as illnesses and have no support in old age.

In India, in 2009–2010, nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) of all HBWs – 65 per cent of men and 40 per cent of women – were own-account workers. A far larger percentage of women (39 per cent) than men (19 per cent) were unpaid, contributing family workers. A small percentage of HBWs were wage workers: nine per cent of all, eight per cent of men, and 18 per cent of women; and a somewhat smaller percentage (except of men) were employers: eight of all, eight per cent of men and three per cent of women.<sup>16</sup>

The case study reports that women who work in the informal sector in India face gender discrimination and come from sections in society which need income to survive at any cost. An average woman spends some seven to eight hours on household duties and family care, and those who do not have remunerative work spend an additional five to eight hours as unpaid family workers. A mere 7.5 per cent of all women workers are a member of a registered trade union. Most of the women lack proper education and training. They have few options as far as gainful jobs are concerned. Still, nearly half of these women are sole income earners of their families.

## Aims and main achievements

SEWA defines itself both as an organization and a movement, rooted in the labour, co-operative and women's movements. "It is a movement of self-employed workers; their own, homegrown movement with women as leaders. Through their own movement, women become strong, visible and their remarkable economic and social contributions get recognition."

SEWA has two basic goals: **full employment** and **self-reliance** of members. Full employment means employment whereby workers obtain work security, income security, food security, and social security (at least health care, childcare and shelter). Similarly, self-reliance (or self-sustainability) means that

women are autonomous and can rely on themselves, individually and collectively, both economically and in terms of their decision-making ability. Members believe that full employment and self-reliance increases the bargaining power of workers.

SEWA has created membership-based organizations of home-based workers, engaged in making bidis (local cigarettes), incense sticks, garments, candles, kites, fireworks, agricultural or forest products, etc. By 2012, SEWA's country-wide membership had increased to 1.4 million. In Ahmedabad, Gujarat, SEWA's home State, alone, the 2012 membership was 396,654, of which almost 121,000 were HBWs. Today, SEWA is recognized as a national trade union and a unique organization of women members in the informal economy. SEWA membership base stands at 1.7 million women members, one-third from urban areas and two-thirds from rural areas who live and work in 15 districts in Gujarat State and another nine states in India.

In the process of organizing women for sustainable livelihood and self-reliance, SEWA has initiated several sister institutes, formed by SEWA members to pursue specific goals, such as policy advocacy, access to credit and marketing support, cooperative development, capacity building and housing support. A list of the main SEWA sister institutions is given as follows.

1. Many SEWA members have formed district-wise associations, for example, SEWA members from Kheda and Anand districts have formed *Kheda Jilla Swashrayi Mahila Sewa Bachat Mandal* (Kheda District Self Employed Women Savings Association).
2. The SEWA Federation of Gujarat Co-operatives is a federation of more than 120 women co-operative societies formed by SEWA members for income generation in Gujarat State.
3. SEWA Cooperative Bank provides a wide range of loan products to meet the productive credit and emergency needs of its clients.
4. SEWA Social Security Net provides for childcare, healthcare and other types of social insurance for its members.
5. The Indian Academy of Self Employed Women (IASEW), formerly known as the SEWA Academy functions as a university and provides training, literacy, research and communication to HBWs, their organizers and leaders and members of support organizations and governments from India and other countries.
6. The SEWA National Council (SNC) was established to initiate national level advocacy initiatives and to guide and monitor state-level bodies of women from the informal sector.
7. SEWA Bharat in Delhi coordinates SEWA programmes and activities in various states at the national level.
8. SEWA Gram MahilaHaat was set up by SEWA members to market and distribute agricultural products from SEWA members from rural areas.
9. The SEWA Trade Facilitation Centre provides marketing support to help grassroots producers to access mainstream global markets.
10. The SEWA Mahila Housing Trust is a charity trust set up by SEWA members to provide housing support to the members.

### 3. Good practices and lessons to start the organizing process

A major challenge for organizing HBWs relates to the difficulty of responding to the multiple and multi-faceted economic and social needs of women HBWs, whose incomes are low and whose working and living conditions are often extremely precarious. The HBWs' organizations in all four case studies responded to the variety of problems faced by home-based workers by (i) setting holistic goals using integrated strategies to address the practical and strategic needs of their members and (ii) working with HBWs and a range of workplace and government actors from the local to the national and international levels to reach those goals, and (iii) building their organizations both horizontally and vertically.

This section introduces important organizing principles, goals and strategies for working at the local, organizational and policy levels to develop, empower and organize HBWs. It highlights good practices in the above three areas and provides two tools to start the organizing process.

#### 3.1 Organizing principles

The main organizing principle for success and sustainability seems to be the explicit emphasis on **self-reliance and self-help for and by HBWs**. This is most visible in SEWAs and PATAMABAs ideology and value system:

- In the case of SEWA self-reliance and full employment are the two basic goals of the organization. These goals emphasize the importance of women's empowerment. Women obtain bargaining power because they are autonomous and can rely on themselves, as individuals and as a group, both economically and in terms of their decision-making ability, and because they have secure access to work, income, food and social security.
- Similarly, PATAMABA underlines the importance of self-reliance and self-organization: "The strength of PATAMABA lies in the fact that it is organized and governed by home-based workers themselves. As it is an organization of poor and marginalized women, from the very start, it was clear to the membership that positive changes would happen only if they help themselves and if they work together for a common goal: In the early years of organizing work, the members had to bring their own food and pay for their own transportation when attending seminars conducted by the group."

### **Good practice 3.1.1: Empower HBWs with an emphasis on self-reliance, collective organizing and capacity development from the start**

PATAMABA sticks to the golden ground rule: *'Instead of giving people fish to eat, teach them how to fish'*. PATAMABA does not organize HBWs mainly to respond to their economic needs and does not promise better and improved income right away. Its socio-economic projects are introduced only after members have gone through organizational skills training.

In essence, PATAMABA focuses first on guiding new chapters (groups of home-based or other informal workers) in basic membership and leadership training on workers' and women's rights, and PATAMABA's mission, vision and goals; development of project proposals, resource mobilization, organization of campaigns and self-development. Socio-economic concerns are tackled after the members and their leaders already have the basic skills that help facilitate access to government funds and/or funding opportunities from private organizations and other productive resources and address other needs, such as social protection, as identified by the members. PATAMABA believes that only when women HBWs are aware of their problems and are armed with the necessary skills can they have the confidence to take actions to change their situation for the better.

Example 3.1.1: PATAMABA's organizing work is guided by the following principles:

- M** - otivation through awareness raising and inspiration.
- O** - rganizing and seizing opportunities.
- V** - ision, visibility, voice, victories.
- E** - nergy and empowerment.
- M** - oney, and multiple stakeholders approach.
- E** - cology and solidarity economy.
- N** - etworking and new technologies.
- T** - rust in grassroots women, young women and men.
- S** - ecurity, sustainability, solidarity in diversity.

## 3.2 Holistic and phased approach and integrated strategies

### Good practice 3.2.1: Develop an integrated approach and strategies

“SEWA believes that multiple inputs and interventions are essential for women (i) to emerge from poverty, vulnerability and years of deprivation and (ii) to move towards securer livelihoods. SEWA takes an integrated approach towards any initiative that it undertakes for creating sustainable livelihoods and enhancing the quality of life.

SEWA's **integrated approach** comprises of the following:

- The poor need **collective, organized strength** (through their member-based associations) to be able to actively participate in the planning, implementation and monitoring processes of the programmes meant for them, and also in other affairs of the nation.
- The poor need **capital formation** at the household level through access to financial services (savings, credit and insurance) to build up and create assets in their own names (land, house, workplace, equipment, cattle, bank account). Asset ownership is the surest weapon to fight poverty.
- The poor need **building of their capacity** to stand firm in the competitive market i.e. access to market infrastructure, technology, information, education, knowledge, technical and managerial skills. Such capacity building is also essential for women to run their own organizations.
- The poor need **social security** – at least health care, childcare, shelter and insurance (i) to combat the chronic and acute risks faced by members and their families; (ii) to enhance their well-being and productivity and to (iii) ensure that sickness or sudden crises do not become a drain on their fragile household economies.

PATAMABA's **agenda for empowerment** to uplift HBWs' lives is as follows:

- **“Recognition and representation.** Registration and accreditation with the appropriate government bodies increases the visibility and voice of home-based and other informal economy workers.
- **Access to productive resources.** Government agencies are identified to enable the workers to access national and local government programmes to help them improve their sources of livelihood.
- **Access to safe work, social protection and social justice.** Members are encouraged to enroll in existing social security programmes and contribute to Damayan (traditional culture of helping one another) schemes. PATAMABA addresses occupational hazards and safety issues among informal workers by prodding the Occupational Health and Safety Commission (OHSC) to look at the situation of specific sub-sectors of informal workers.
- **Asset reform** relates to accessing governments' housing programmes for the poor.”

The HNTA aims at meeting the following **priority needs** of their members:

- **Employment.**
- **Fair wages.**
- **Social security.**

## The phased approach to organizing in Chile

Another example of an integrated, phased approach to improve the situation of HBWs is the mapping programme implemented by CECAM in Chile, which consists of six main phases. In practice, this phased organizing process was more complex, and did not follow a uniform pattern, as it was needs-based and depended on the pace and priorities of the HBWs' groups. Sometimes, different stages went step-by-step, took place in parallel, or a particular step had to be repeated, with the process going both backwards and forwards. The six main phases were as follows:

1. **Door-to-door contact** with HBWs to find women in HBW and engage them in a two-way communication process: asking them what they do, providing them with information with an introductory leaflet and/or photo-pack about HBW, and inviting them to meetings.
2. **Holding small meetings** for HBWs to identify their aspirations and difficulties, analyze their situation as workers and women, and come up with strategies to address their needs through organizing and collective action. At the start, HBWs' leaders organized these meetings at people's homes. Later neighbourhood organizers were responsible for organizing small group discussions and, finally, larger meetings were organized by CECAM at central locations.
3. **Forming research and organizing teams** consisting of the NGO organizers, HBWs and researchers. HBWs were included in the research teams and several were trained as interviewers. Their involvement shaped the action research content and process but HBWs' ongoing support was not sustainable because of their time and economic constraints.
4. **Horizontal mapping** of HBWs and **vertical mapping** of selected value chains. Horizontal mapping consisted of action research through quantitative surveys among HBWs by the research teams to identify the type of work they were doing, their problems and the possibilities for organizing. Organizing teams carried out follow-up work to identify potential HBWs' leaders and start addressing the needs of HBWs. Vertical mapping consisted of tracing selected value chains to understand the place of subcontracted home work in the wider local, national and global economy, the factors governing these chains and identify possible allies and pressure points for lobbying and advocacy work.
5. **Training and education** using the participatory 'popular education' methodology developed in Latin America for HBWs and potential organizers and leaders among them. For more information, see section 4.2.
6. **Organizing and forming organizations.** While all activities aimed at encouraging women home-based workers to participate in and drive the organizing, this did not occur naturally. HBWs needed extensive support, confidence building and training to take the step from interviewee to organizer. Many HBWs faced time and financial constraints to participate in action research, to organize and support others, and asked CECAM to provide the interviewers and organizers. While the process of forming viable organizations proved to be challenging and time-consuming, faced numerous setbacks and went through various transformations, several groups of HBWs managed to develop into stable organizations.

### 3.3 Working with many parties at different levels

HBWs organizations and their support organizations need to address the challenges faced by their members in the communities as well as the larger systemic, institutional and legal or policy-related challenges which cause the problems at the local level. Work usually starts at the community level when the income, working and living conditions and security of specific groups of HBWs are jeopardized and trigger the need for organizing. The immediate challenges faced by HBWs are often related to limited access to work, deficiencies in working and living conditions, and the socio-economic, cultural and gender constraints of HBWs.

However, these problems are usually caused by exploitative trade or labour practices toward marginalized women workers in poverty who face discrimination on the grounds of their sex, gender, class/caste and, often, ethnicity and, hence, can only access substandard work. Thus, their challenges are related to inadequate trade, labour and social practices, laws and policies in the larger economic, legal and institutional environment. This calls for legal trade, labour and/or social reform, and changes in public institutions and private companies. Therefore, HBWs and their organizations need to engage in policy advocacy, negotiate and seek partnerships with the local authorities and local middlepersons or traders all the way up to the district, provincial, regional, state, national and international levels.

#### Good practice 3.3.1: Work at multiple fronts simultaneously

HomeNet Thailand (HNT) started working in communities using safe work as an entry point to organize HBWs in communities and improve their working environment by themselves. In doing so, HNT engaged the local health authorities in this work by sensitizing them to the occupational health risks of this invisible group of workers. At the same time, at the national level, HNT lobbied for reliable data collection by the National Statistical Office and engaged in extensive policy advocacy with the Ministry of Labour. This contributed to the issuance of a *Ministerial Regulation on the Protection of Homeworkers* in 2004, the drafting of an Act to protect and develop homeworkers a year later, and the enforcement of the *Homeworker Protection Act* in 2012. More information is found in section 2.2 on the content of the legal provisions and in section 4.7 on safe work promotion.

### 3.4 Horizontal organizing

At the community level HBWs leaders and their organizations, opted for organizing in trade unions, as well as labour workshops and trade groups in Chile and India respectively, while HBWs' groups in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand are organized in craft and occupational groups respectively in specific communities or areas. In practice, most community HBWs' groups today organize as groups of mainly women engaged in the same type of occupation, trade or craft. Sometimes an area-based approach only is chosen, especially in rural areas or among indigenous groups.

It has been challenging for HBWs to register as a trade union as the validity of a union of homeworkers in the informal economy is questioned by government or among trade unions used to organizing formal sector workers only. For example, in Malang, East Java, Indonesia, a trade union of homeworkers, *Himpunan Wanita Pekerja Rumahan Indonesia* (HWPRI or the Association of the

Indonesian Homeworkers) was registered in 2005 and MWPRI helped the union to mediate a dispute regarding a worker who was dismissed after sharing her story on the poor working conditions with the media. The case was dismissed as the trade union was considered different from trade unions in the formal sector, and homeworkers were considered not to have the same rights as other workers. More recently, however, 10 community based occupational groups established a local trade union of informal workers in North Sumatra in early 2015.

However, as mentioned, the main SEWA umbrella organization is a trade union and PATAMABA is registered as both a people organization and a workers' organization at the national level.

### Good practice 3.4.1: SEWA's step-by-step strategies in organizing HBWs

Membership-directed or grass roots strategies to support HBWs include:

- Capacity development.
- Improving the home as the workplace.
- Fighting for better working conditions, negotiating with employers and subcontractors for better prices or raw materials or with the authorities to improve labour regulations or access to services.
- Developing business and technical skills, and facilitating product development and marketing support.
- Facilitating access to social security and/or welfare.

SEWA begins its organizing work by carrying out simple **surveys** by area and by occupation/trade and to organize informal meetings with HBWs to understand their concerns, needs and priorities, and use these as entry points for organizing. SEWA identified 11 indicators which help to determine whether groups of women will be motivated and able to organize. These include: (i) deficiencies in employment, income, nutrition, health care, childcare, housing, and in access to assets, credit and insurance; (ii) availability of organized strength such as existing groups or cooperatives, and leadership; and (iii) interest in self-reliance and education.

**Foundation training** is then provided covering issues like member education; women's role as workers and their contribution as HBWs to the economy; leadership training; SEWAs values and work. During such meetings pro-active women with leadership potential emerge who are selected as group leaders. They receive **training as organizers** and are responsible for organizing meetings among HBWs to start addressing the priorities identified by the group, and to decide on becoming a membership-based trade group affiliated to SEWA. From these leaders, **trade representatives** are elected who start participating in trade committee meetings every month. At these meetings they discuss their groups' problems, priorities and aims with SEWA leadership and develop action plans to address these for implementation in their communities.

### Good practice 3.4.2: Empowering women homeworkers – from invisibility to leaders in Indonesia

In Indonesia, organizing work among homeworkers has flourished over the past year with homeworkers taking on responsibilities from the start. This has been a great achievement for the members many of whom had been engaged in home work for many years without questioning the situation until they started working towards improvements. BITRA, MWPRI, TURC and YASANTI used the following strategies and steps to empower and organize homeworkers:

1. Locating homeworkers.
2. Developing a relationship and trust.
3. Building capacity to organize into groups.
4. Building solidarity and negotiation power.
5. Bargaining with employers or their intermediaries.
6. Forming sustainable groups.

**Step 1. Locating homeworkers.** Each NGO employed field facilitators who were responsible for identifying homeworkers, facilitating group development, and coaching homeworkers' leaders. They identified homeworkers using the term 'piece rate worker' or 'Pekerja borongan' in the local language. Since they found homeworkers engaged in many different types of occupations, they selected types of jobs with high numbers of homeworkers (e.g. sewing baby seats, wallet, plastic floor mattress, and clothes, cutting sandals, cleaning/processing vegetables or seafood).

**Step 2. Developing a relationship and trust.** The field facilitators approached homeworkers in the selected occupations to establish a relationship and trust. Many homeworkers were initially hesitant as they did not fully understand the purpose of the field facilitators and did not want to waste their time. After regular visits and repeated discussions, homeworkers started joining activities, such as training on gender equality, workers' rights and negotiation skills.

**Step 3. Building capacity to organize into groups.** The next step was to organize the homeworkers into groups. The women homeworkers who participated in training were asked to share the new knowledge with their group members after the training. Facilitators supported these leaders in sharing the new knowledge in the first two to three meetings, but thereafter the group leaders became capable of facilitating meetings and sharing new knowledge independently. Grouping the homeworkers according to their job worked well for building solidarity as homeworkers were interested in sharing job-related issues with others in the same occupation.

Ms. Putri, in Central Java described the changes she experienced: *"I've been doing this homework for years. No difference between then and now. I still do the same thing for work. But the way I view my work is different now. Before I just did the work without thinking – only for the sake of money whatever the amount is. But now I do the work with a consciousness that I deserve better working conditions and better protection. And we should strive for that to happen"*.

**Step 4. Building solidarity and negotiation power.** Over time solidarity among the homeworkers became stronger, and they started to recruit more homeworkers to join their groups by sharing their experience and new knowledge. When they faced problems, they discussed possible solutions, and they jointly decided on how to further develop their group.

<b>Key messages used by homeworkers to reach more workers:</b>	<b>Things to avoid when recruiting homeworkers shared by homeworkers:</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homeworkers are workers, not cheap workers.</li> <li>• No one will change the condition unless you change it.</li> <li>• Fight for homeworkers to achieve common goals.</li> <li>• Fight for yourself to improve the livelihoods.</li> <li>• Homeworkers are not domestic workers.</li> <li>• If you do not want to pass the same situation to your children, you need to act now.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be careful with words: do not make promises you can't keep (e.g. the wage will be similar to that of a factory worker if you join the group).</li> <li>• Losing temper: Have to be patient.</li> <li>• Think about your own interest only.</li> </ul>

#### **Step 5. Bargaining with employers or their intermediaries.**

After several trainings, the homeworkers' groups became confident to discuss their working conditions with their intermediaries or employers, and negotiate for better working conditions. The NGOs also trained the homeworkers in policy advocacy, and they held various discussions with the local departments of manpower to lobby for the development of local regulations on home work. See section 4.4 and 4.6 for more information.

**Step 6. Forming sustainable groups.** Many of the groups formed 'arisan' or traditional savings and loan groups. This enables the women homeworkers to meet regularly for a specific purpose without continuous dependency on community facilitators. It also builds group cohesion and financial management skills and discipline.

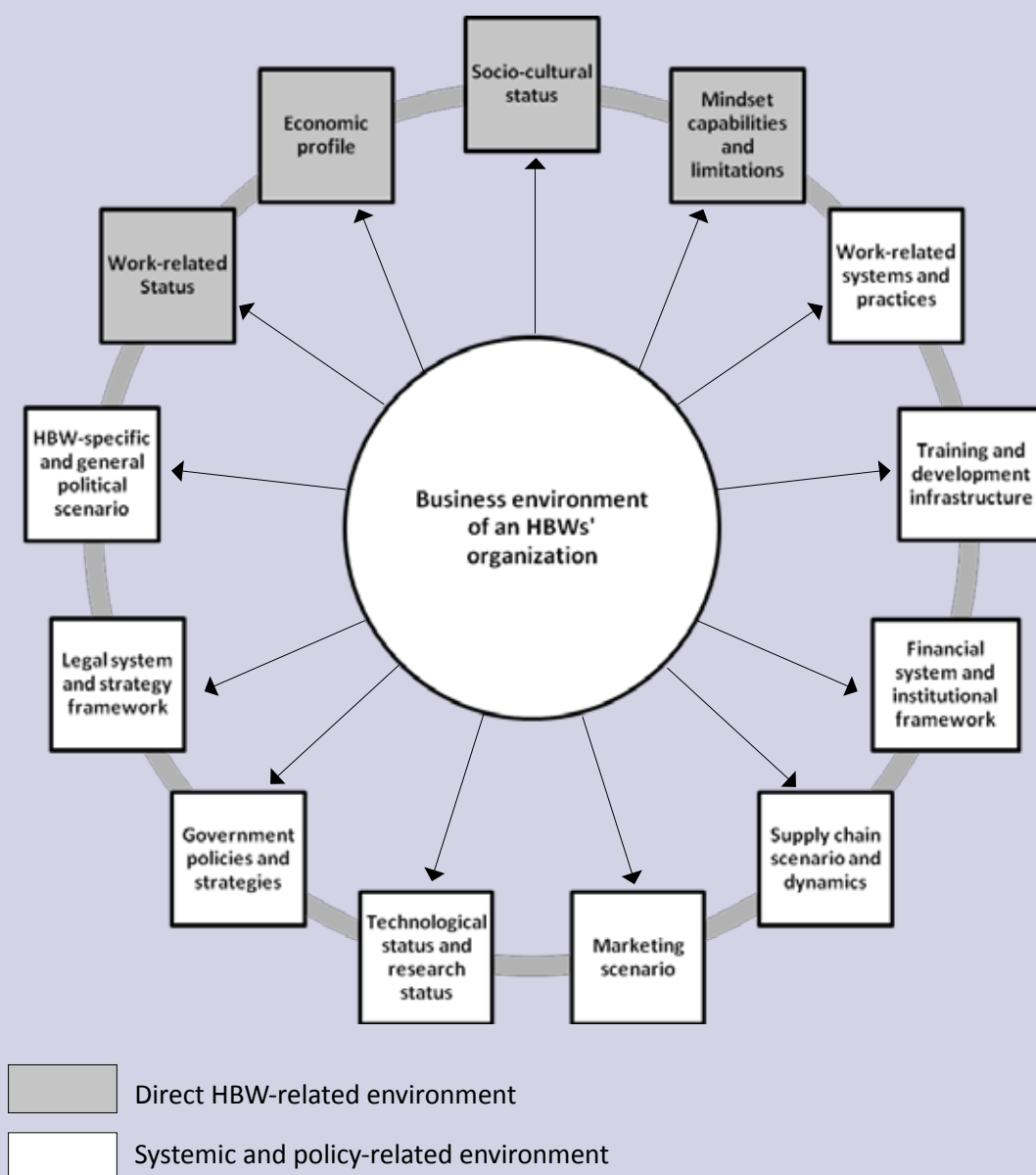
#### **Tool box 3.4.1: PATAMABA step-by-step guide for reaching and organizing home-based workers**

Based on experience on the ground and reflections on organizing work, PATAMABA has developed a step-by-step guide for organizing HBWs for use by organizers. The guide provides practical tips and explains how to scan the community environment, how to draft a recruitment plan, how to hold a recruitment meeting and start a membership campaign and how to start building the HBWs' organization in the community. See Annex 1 for the tool.

**Tool box 3.4.2: SEWA tool to scan the environment of HBWs and their organizations**

SEWA members and institutions regularly scan their 'business' environment to help them set priorities and plan and review their work. Part of the business environment scan relates to issues which directly affect HBWs and their families, including their economic, socio-cultural and work-related profile and their mindset capabilities and constraints. The other topics relate to the larger political, legal and policy environment, the status of the HBW organization in terms of technology, research, marketing and supply chain scenarios, and the main functions within HBWs' organizations, including the financial and institutional frameworks, the human resource development and training infrastructure and work-related systems and practices. It is useful for HBWs organizations to carry out a scan of their environment to identify entry-points for action, opportunities and threats which may facilitate or hinder the operation of HBWs organizations, and decide on the priorities to address at any given time and place.

**Figure 1. Environmental scan for a HBW organization**



## 4. Good practices and lessons to improving HBWs' working and living conditions

### 4.1 Action research and data collection

Organizing usually starts with fact finding or horizontal mapping of HBWs through some form of action research, surveys or environmental scanning. Involvement of HBWs in action research at the design and validation stages increases the research quality as they know what are the burning issues. Their engagement in research builds trust with potential interviewees, and attracts new members and potential leaders during the interview stage. However, HBWs leaders should not be over-burdened or receive payment for the time spent on the research as their first priority is to earn income. Involvement of researchers is necessary to ensure credible, valid and reliable data collection, analysis, and reporting.

#### **Good practice 4.1.1: Value-chain research results in improved bargaining and marketing positions**

Research on the production and marketing chains in which HBWs are working (also known as vertical mapping or value chain research) enables HBWs and their organizations to find out the interests of the various actors along the value chain at the local, regional, national and international levels, and identify entry points for improving the conditions of HBWs.

As mentioned in section 2.1, one example of successful value chain research was when seaweed collectors in the South of Chile carried out vertical mapping to understand the supply chain in which they were harvesting and drying seaweed with researchers and CECAM. The study identified the multinational cosmetic and food companies that used the seaweed. The seaweed workers registered a union through which they negotiated improved payment, and eliminated the need to work through a middle person. The union used the process of mapping the supply chain to increase their capacity. This learned how to negotiate directly with buyers, arrange their new work and distribution processes and collectively bargain for better prices. This resulted in a threefold increase in their incomes. They also discovered the commercial value of a type of seaweed that they had hitherto discarded.

CECAM also carried out a vertical mapping study of one major transnational footwear company that was the source of homework for many women, through layers of subcontracting to intermediaries and workshops. In addition to desk-based research on the international structures of this company and its different production sites, the vertical mapping process involved contacting organizations linked to workers in other parts of the chain, particularly

the trade unions, in what remained of organized factories and other organizations linked to workshop workers. This resulted in homeworkers' better understanding of the value of their labour in the whole of the chain and the larger economic structures. It also created greater awareness among the trade unions of the changes that were occurring within the unionized garments and footwear industries, and the need to improve conditions for both factory and informal workers.

Within countries, it is also useful for HBWs organizations and their support agencies to engage national statistical offices (NSOs) to identify what relevant quantitative information is available from labour force, household, establishment or other surveys, and what data are missing, and to call for the inclusion of questions that capture HBW and other informal economy workers.

#### **Good practice 4.1.2: Measuring HBW and informal employment**

In India, the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) has worked for many years with national and international research and statistical offices to develop statistics on working poor women in the informal economy. The 1999-2000 survey on employment and unemployment initiated by SEWA and the National Sample Survey Organization was the first official survey in India that measured the informal sector in urban and rural areas and enabled the classification of HBWs, both self-employed and industrial out-workers or homeworkers, and of street vendors.

Other countries too, have started to measure informal employment. For example, the HNT case study refers to two surveys, carried out by the Thailand's National Statistical Office, one on home work including contract workers and unpaid contributing family workers in 2007 and another on informal employment in 2013. In Indonesia, the National Statistics Office (BPS) in October 2015 shared their plan to include questions to better understand the working conditions of the workforce and identify home-based workers in the labour force survey questionnaire to be used from 2016.

An International Expert group on informal sector statistics, known as the Delhi Group plans to further improve the measurement of informal employment and on the informal sector and its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) with the ILO responsible for labour statistics and the United Nations Statistics Division responsible for national accounts and gender statistics. As part of a global project 'Inclusive cities for the rural poor' Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) carried out an informal economy monitoring study to provide an in-depth understanding of how the informal workers including home-based workers are affected by and respond to economic and social forces in selected cities around the world.

Sources: ILO; WIEGO: *Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Geneva, 2013), pp. 40, 56; and ILO/MAMPU project: *Progress Report, October 2015*

## 4.2 Capacity development: Awareness raising, education and training

As mentioned in 3.1 on organizing principles, self-development of the HBWs is the starting point of all action, so that they are able to help themselves and obtain the necessary support in their immediate living and working environment, and at the community and national levels. Skills development, building confidence and learning how to organize one's self and others were priorities in all capacity development.

### Good practice 4.2.1: Training and mentoring

PATAMABA believes that, only when women are aware of their problems and are armed with the necessary skills, will they have confidence to take action and change their situation for the better. By and large, PATAMABA officers face the problem of upgrading their skills to effectively and efficiently manage a chapter (in case of local leaders) and the national network (in case of national leaders) because most of them attained at most high school level. Through seminars, training-workshops and on-the-job training conducted with the help of supportive professionals, PATAMABA leaders have demonstrated that they are capable of acquiring skills they lacked and that they were able to produce HBW-leaders who are good organizers, educators and policy advocates.

PATAMABA provides organizational skills training as follows:

- The basic membership course includes topics such as vision, mission, goal and strategies of PATAMABA and the organization's structures and by-laws.
- Leadership training comprises topics such as facilitating meetings, minutes taking, roles and responsibilities of leaders and members.
- Other skills training includes subjects like trainers' training, alternative livelihood, business management, simple bookkeeping, product development, proposal writing, paralegal training, proposal writing and organizational development.

PATAMABA utilizes different strategies that combine education and mentoring programmes:

- Approaches to capacity development and organizing are tailor made to fit the overall complexity and diversity of the HBWs situations.
- Training activities are also utilized to network with representatives of various governmental and non-governmental organizations who act as resource persons.
- Empowering and participatory educational approaches and indigenous training methods are used to explain complex concepts that are connected to the personal and community issues of the HBWs.

Mentoring proves to be a good strategy in developing leaders. Potential leaders go through an empowering leadership skills training, where trainees learn-by-doing and are very much involved in the process of enhancing their skills. Concretely, they are given particular tasks that they have to deliver on their own. Then, they will be asked to evaluate their own performance and draw insights from the learning experience. In the process, PATAMABA makes women realize their potential that otherwise would have been left unexplored because of their socio-economic situation.

PATAMABA also finds that every leader is different. The quick or slow development of leaders depends on many factors such as commitment and conviction of a person to learn, existing skills, resources available, etc. It is important to treat leadership development as a never ending process and maximize opportunities for self-development.

#### **Good practice 4.2.2: Popular education and training**

CECAM used the concept of popular education developed by Paolo Freire which has been widely implemented in Latin America and beyond. This participatory training methodology is a way for building awareness among people and turning them into active participants in social change movements. The starting point for learning is people's own experience rather than abstract concepts. It is based on a two-way communication process where the practical reality of people's lives is the entry point for discussion and systematic reflection of wider perspectives and deeper understanding which participants can then test in practice and apply in their own life as they see fit. In this way HBWs can connect personal and community issues to problems at the structural and macro levels. Popular education provides a set of dynamics that builds the identity of the women home-based workers through collective learning processes with gender and class perspectives. Both dimensions are social constructions that require a learning process as the necessary condition for achieving the development of independent and critical thinking among the women.

In Chile, two-way communication started during the first contact. HBWs were interviewed about their activities and given information about home-based work and other HBWs. An introductory leaflet was used, soon followed by the introduction of a photo pack with pictures of home-based workers in other countries and in Chile, because many women were illiterate. The latter was an eye-opener, showing other women worldwide engaged in the same type of activities. This helped HBWs to realize that their work is not invisible: the work they do is real work and they are real workers.

CECAM regularly organized seminars each year to train HBWs' leaders and organizers. Women came together for a weekend away from their homes so they could leave behind their everyday tasks and worries. Training on the economy, political analysis, labour, social, women's and workers' rights, trade unionism and other forms of association building were combined with practical training for home-based workers' personal development and economic empowerment.

The overall themes of these weekends were self- and group-development, organizing and confidence building. Different techniques were used to ensure active participation and learning in a way that was also fun and built solidarity, skills and knowledge among the women. The methods included:

- Life techniques or dynamics – games or sessions where everyone needs to play a part to share real life experience and build relationships in the group.
- Acting techniques – creating and acting out small dramas and role-plays or producing dramatized stories.
- Audio-visual aids – films, talks, slideshows, use of photography.

- Writing and drawing with the use of flip-charts, brainstorming with written cards, using symbols and drawings, making posters etc.

Miriam Ortega, Director of CECAM explains:

*“After talking about their needs, we started basic workshops on the history of organizing in Chile, self-development, the position of homework in the economy, using videos with interviews with homeworkers so they can see people and recognize themselves. We also did workshops on presenting their demands, not only identifying needs, but presenting solutions... They discussed how they represent these needs by breaking down into small groups, then coming back together. We have our own ideas but we want the ideas to come out of the discussion.*

*The issue of the history of women is very important, through looking at the history of the family we can look at how women have solved problems throughout the country’s history. To the next meeting they bring the history of another woman, who can be famous or can be their grandmother. Another one is gender needs identifying where men and women have different issues: 40 per cent of the families have a female head. Male chauvinism is very strong in Latin America so the issue of domestic violence is regularly raised at weekly meetings.*

*Issues running through the workshops, local and national meetings are class identity, gender identity, values – solidarity and respect for diversity, social commitment, voluntary support to make us independent of outside finances, importance of organizing and collective work, not just for the organization but for production, as working together and selling together is not so easy in cities in Chile.”*

In CECAM’s experience, carrying out popular education and training was not without its challenges, because some of its leaders and staff, as well as HBWs’ leaders and organizers suffered from an ‘overly maternal’ approach, that is thinking and deciding for people rather than inviting them to do this themselves. This required frequent meetings, discussions and systematic self-evaluations of training events and planning of new ones.

CECAM also assisted HBWs with attending longer-term training. This consisted of functional and financial literacy programmes, as many women could not read, write and calculate; help with obtaining educational qualifications; basic business management skills such as costing and pricing and including their labour costs; and hands-on vocational and technical training on product design and improvements, and producing for new markets, including export markets.

### 4.3 Labour protection and law enforcement

HNT, PATAMABA and SEWA successfully lobbied for the development and adoption of **protective labour legislation** for HBWs, in particular homeworkers, after persistent efforts but the process is long and laborious. New labour legislation for homeworkers was adopted in the Philippines in 1992, and in Thailand in 2004 and 2012, as described in sections 2.3 and 2.2 respectively. These regulations and laws are a start but they do not provide adequate protection and there continue to be problems with effective implementation.

#### Example 4.3.1: SEWA's strategies to promote legal protection for HBWs

Where **laws and policies exist** to protect the rights of HBWs, such as minimum wage legislation, SEWA's first strategy is to get them implemented. As a union, SEWA has organized HBWs to demand higher rates and better working conditions, and helps them to directly engage in dialogue and negotiations with their contractors and to obtain support from the local authorities. Another strategy is to use collective strength to get practical measures implemented such as an immunization drive for children, or improved housing or sanitation.

Women producing bidis (indigenous cigarettes) at their homes were one of the first SEWA groups to organize and unionize. Bidi rolling is one of the few home-based trades which are covered by protective legislation under the Minimum Wages Act (1966), the Bidi and Cigar Workers Act, and the Bidi and Cigar Welfare Fund Act (1977). These laws cover workplace conditions, minimum wages, maternity leave, creche facilities, scholarships for workers' children, medical services, and housing.

Bidi work had been mostly done by men in factories but following the adoption of the above laws, the production shifted from factory-based workers to women homeworkers where none of the above legal provisions could be enforced. The HBWs saw the emergence of a complex contracting and subcontracting system which "made it impossible to grab the choti (hair) of the principal employer". Bidi workers obtain the raw materials from the contractors, roll the bidis and hand the finished product over to them. However, the work is often done under the sale-purchase system: Women 'purchase' the raw material from the contractor who 'buys' the completed bidis back. The employer then records the homeworkers as self-employed workers and does not have to provide the welfare benefits.

Bidi work done at home is extremely unhealthy due to the tobacco dust in tiny rooms and nutritional levels were extremely poor due to the low wages. Action started with a bidi worker asking SEWA for help to go to a hospital for bidi workers and their families which stood empty as employers refused to issue identity cards to the bidi workers. The first SEWA trade organization of women bidi workers was formed in 1978 and many others, belonging to bidi workers of different religions and ethnicities followed.

When SEWA first began organizing the bidi workers in 1978, they were earning Indian Rupees (INR) 4-5 per 1,000 cigarettes rolled, which was less than half the minimum wage. After a struggle of more than a decade – during which SEWA workers held rallies, sit-in protests, a strike, and filed four cases in various courts – an agreement was finally reached with employers, and bidi workers started earning the minimum wage and getting identity cards. A few groups had also started to set up cooperatives, among others, to obtain better housing.

SEWA has also assisted bidi workers with obtaining social protection, first by setting up a group insurance scheme and later by ensuring the establishment of financially viable provident funds and welfare boards for bidi workers. For example, after a long struggle in every place where bidi workers became SEWA members, SEWA successfully organized the issuing of identity cards to the HBWs which are essential as proof that they are workers eligible for these benefits.

SEWA lobbied successfully for an increase in the sales tax on bidis to finance the Bidi Worker Welfare Board. Then, they had to engage in and finally won court cases to ensure social security payments from these funds to bidi workers, and to fight corruption in the collection of the sales tax from employers. Policy advocacy to ensure proper minimum wage fixing and discontinue the sale-purchase system required continued struggles and SEWA was able to lobby successfully for the participation of SEWA's bidi worker member groups in policy formulation and enforcement provided under the law.

To this day, SEWA organizes and unites bidi workers to inform them about their rights under the law, increase their wages, and issue them with identity cards to access welfare funds in various parts of India. Membership today stands at around 10,000, and new groups organized in Ajmer, a new location in 2011.

Where laws and policies do not exist, SEWA lobbies for **legal or policy reform**. For example, garment stitchers, were not protected by any laws, including the Minimum Wages Act. In this case, the union's struggle took the form of trying to get them protection under the law. It took five years, but a law was finally passed. Today garment stitchers too are covered by laws which provide for piece rate minimum wages which amount to a daily livable wage, social security benefits and participation in policy formulation and enforcement. SEWA has carried out similar struggles on behalf of incense stick workers, cotton pod shellers, and embroiderers.

However, SEWA soon found that getting laws passed was not enough. Extensive follow-up was needed to ensure implementation and enforcement of the laws. The IASEW case study indicates that it is excruciating and very difficult to fight systemic corruption. For example, if labour enforcement officials enter into an alliance with contractors for a share of the benefit, they will overlook transgressions in record keeping. In one area, organizers found that while the wages of all the bidi workers were being deducted for the provident fund, none of them were issued receipts, and the contractors were only recording and paying 20 per cent of what they collected. They could perpetrate this because the labour officials helped them get around the law.

Even in the case of honest labour inspectors, the human resource constraints they face make enforcement almost impossible. In one ward of Ahmedabad, for example, there is one inspector for nearly 10,000 establishments. Moreover, promotion quotas are based on the number of how many complaints they register, not how many prosecutions result, and labour inspectors are often transferred.

The **courts** are also slow and cases often remain unresolved for years. These realities shed light on why it takes years of struggle by the same women to effect change. They often have to re-explain the same problem and re-convince consecutive groups of officials or judges of the same issue. For these reasons SEWA leaders consider it vital that their own representatives sit on labour monitoring boards, that women be appointed as labour inspectors for home-based workers and that a separate labour department be established for the self-employed

trades. Similarly, PATAMABA monitors election promises of elected politicians and their parties to ensure that they deliver on their promises, and, in Thailand, HBWs' organizations are represented on the Homeworkers Committee established under the law.

Over the years SEWA concluded that effective implementation of the law means long and arduous processes requiring hard and often bitter struggles. Given that HBWs are economically and socially vulnerable and have little or no bargaining power, it is very difficult for them to sustain such long-term struggles. For this reason, SEWA's emphasis has shifted to the **adoption of alternative economic systems** like cooperatives. By working together in cooperatives, women learn how to access markets, bypassing middlepersons and moneylenders, and are better able to access social benefits such as healthcare, childcare, savings programmes, and insurance.

## 4.4 Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment strategies will vary to some extent in each situation depending on whether HBWs are self-employed and/or subcontracted workers, and whether labour and social protection is provided by law or not. For example, homeworkers facing insecure jobs and poor working conditions require increased bargaining power and more, secure contracts. Self-employed, own-account producers facing competition in often, overcrowded and low-budget markets, need better market access and other business development services. In both cases, however, it is important to increase HBWs' capacities in terms of income-earning and management capacities. Many lessons have been learned on how to do this most effectively, and how not to do it.

As mentioned in section 3.1, HBWs often have urgent **economic needs** and request support agencies to solve these for them. While these needs must be addressed as a matter of priority the emphasis must be on helping people to learn how to do this by themselves rather than do it for them. For example, in Chile, CECAM decided to work on creating an economic alternative for a relatively small number of HBWs through a project to produce and sell honey. While this initiative was successful, it was a time- and resource-consuming process. This meant that CECAM's energies were increasingly spent on helping this small group earn a regular income rather than on further mobilizing a member-based organization of HBWs and advancing their political, economic and social rights.

This example shows the importance of striking a balance between **meeting** both the immediate, **practical economic needs** of women HBWs, and meeting their **strategic needs** by addressing the **root causes** of their problems. This means motivating them to join and become active in MBO organizations of their choice and build up the critical mass and momentum to change exploitative trade and/or business practices and laws, policies and institutions, rather than focus on addressing their immediate economic needs only.

In Thailand, the earlier HNT, and the current FLEP and the HNTA also found that many HBWs, in first instance, want immediate help to address their economic problems, especially access to markets or subcontractors, rather than sacrifice time and resources to learn how to do things differently. In interviews for the country case study, HNTA committee members mentioned that the expectation to 'take' among potential and new members is rather high. As one HNTA Committee member and group leader of garment workers commented:

“I have seen lots of progress among active groups that would like to pursue better conditions for homeworkers and they are dedicated to contribute to the Association. Nevertheless, some groups of homeworkers still think that they are aid or benefit recipients from HNTA. They want HNTA to solve their groups’ problems rather than collectively contribute to HNTA so we can address their issue structurally.”

As mentioned in section 3.1, PATAMABA meets HBWs’ economic needs by emphasizing skill development and awareness raising as the main means of helping them to improve their incomes, and provides economic support services only at a later stage. Another successful strategy used in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand to effectively address the economic needs of HBWs consists of enabling HBWs’ groups to **participate in local or national development programmes**, and, thereby, gain access to funds and economic support services.

In Thailand, FLEP and HNTA explain clearly to potential and new HNTA members that the HBWs’ organizations are not responsible for meeting the economic demands of members without their active involvement. The HNTA and FLEP may provide some seed money but they do not aim to secure major funds for the HNTA grassroots members. However, they do help with resource mobilization by connecting their members to local state funding agencies or other local partners to provide market access, credit, grants or other business development support services. MWPRI in Indonesia also identifies local partners to mobilize resources for HBWs. For example, it coordinated with Bank BPTN to make low interest loans available to homeworkers in the garment industry, and facilitated online marketing sale for HBWs’ products through the Bank’s CSR programme. Matching HBWs initiatives with local administrative bodies and budgets requires extensive policy advocacy and is labour intensive but it ensures sustainability and continuation of activities. It enables HBWs groups to access larger loans or grants from public or private sources, than the limited resources that are available to the HBWs’ organizations.

#### **Good practice 4.4.1: From factory worker to a ‘sweatshop-free’ home-based worker cooperative in Thailand**

The HBWs’ organizations in Thailand also aim at supporting groups of subcontracted homeworkers to become organized groups of own-account workers. After six years of preparation and training, the ‘Solidarity Group’, a sweatshop-free production group of homeworkers and some own-account workers in the garment industry registered as a workers’ cooperative securing a legal entity under the Thai law in 2014. The HBWs’ group consists of unionized ex-garment factory workers who had been dismissed in 2002. In first instance, HNT had helped this group like other groups to register as an occupational group to enable them to apply for micro or bank loans and gain access to occupational skills training from the Ministry of Labour and other government services. In addition, HNT had been assisting the group with product design, marketing, quality and skills improvement.

When government procurement offices became interested in buying the sweatshop-free garments from the Solidarity Group, they became interested to transform from a group of mainly homeworkers to a group of self-employed workers, and to secure a larger volume of orders from local government and other state sectors. However, the group could not join the procurement bidding process because they were not registered and did not pay taxes. Registering the group as a partnership or a company limited required initial capital to pay for company registration and technical staff to help the group with accounting and other corporate functions which the group could not afford.

The HNTA and FLEP trained the Solidarity Group to manage its own administration and finances. The group members prepared extensively, they learned management, business and marketing skills and adapted their production methods to meet their customers' demands and requirements. Changing from subcontracted workers to own-account producers and cooperative members required a different mentality and mindset, and the Solidarity Group members went through a massive change process.

After registration as a workers' cooperative, the Solidarity Group could finally take bulk orders from public procurement agencies, and increase production and income stability. The Solidarity Group now aims to have sufficient orders from entrepreneurs or public procurement agencies. They do take on subcontracted work if they do not have enough orders and they subcontract work to other HNTA members, if they have too much work.

However, the case studies note that not all homeworkers' groups have the ambition to shift to own-account work and become entrepreneurs. Where homeworkers groups believe that they can earn enough and gain income sustainability from subcontracted orders, they are less willing to change their way of production, learn new technical skills and strive for their own autonomy even if they can earn a more stable income. Moreover, there are also homeworkers who consider that 'exploitation from middlemen' is preferable to managing their own affairs even if this means they remain in a vicious circle of dependency. As the HNT case study notes: *"Lack of access to markets forces homeworkers to work as subcontracted workers to ensure that they can sell their products and do not have to be responsible for other aspects of production or design and finding markets themselves. This lack of willingness to change pushes homeworkers deeper in poverty because they do not have negotiation power, nor the means of transportation to go and bring or receive the work, and they totally depend on the limited numbers of contractors who agree to bring the work to their areas."*

#### Good practice 4.4.2: Development of alternative economic organizations by SEWA

In India, a large majority of self-employed women do not own capital nor the tools and equipment of their trade. Consequently, they remain vulnerable to private moneylenders and remain indebted indefinitely at interest rates that can be as high as 10 per cent per day. The indebtedness puts them in a weak bargaining position with the middlemen and traders on whom they are dependent for their livelihood, thus perpetuating their low wages and insecure access to work, and creating many other problems. To free women from this vicious circle, SEWA first aimed at linking them to the credit facilities from registered banks, but decided to establish **SEWA Cooperative Bank** in 1974, two years after SEWA was registered as a trade union.

SEWA Bank started with 4,000 members, each contributing Indian Rupees (INR) 10 as share capital. The bank aims at reaching a maximum number of unorganized, poor women workers and provide them with suitable financial services for socio-economic empowerment and self-development through their own management and ownership. SEWA Bank is a women's space. The women say, "It is like my mother's place," where they feel comfortable and at home. They also refer to the bank as 'the village well,' which in Indian tradition is the common place where women go to fetch water, meet each other, talk about issues, and learn and share experiences.

Most of the loans made by the SEWA Bank are unsecured because initially poor women have little besides their jewelry that can be offered as security. But the women in the union and in the cooperatives are all encouraged to own their own tools, maintain a savings account in their own name and, if possible, to have their land or home registered in their own name, or at least jointly with their husbands.

Forty per cent of SEWA bank loans are for housing. Since a home-based worker's house is also her workplace, women take loans to buy land and building materials; they add on to existing houses by building a porch or putting down a cement floor, and they install connections that will provide access to running water and electricity.

SEWA Cooperative Bank brings illiterate, poor women workers and producers in the mainstream of the formal banking system, where SEWA Bank deals with the Reserve Bank of India on par with other Co-operative Government banks. The auditors of the Reserve Bank of India have to sit at the same table and discuss – maybe for the first time – banking matters with the Board of Directors of SEWA Bank who are representatives of bidi workers, artisans, labourers, hawkers and vendors. This provides a unique experience of exposure and dialogue to both sides.

The formation of SEWA Bank, recalls Ela Bhatt, came out of the union's struggle to organize women workers. While it was not easy to obtain recognition at the start it gave us confidence to organize more **HBWs cooperatives** in both urban and rural areas. In the urban areas, the specific experiences of chindi (making textile products like quilt from leftover textile pieces from garment factories) workers, hand block printers and bamboo workers showed the way for setting up alternative production systems. After years of exploitation by merchants, over 600 chindi makers organized in 1977 to pressure for the payment of minimum wages. After a long series of negotiations a compromise agreement was reached between the homeworkers but the merchants broke the agreement within 24 hours. Not only did they refuse to pay the women the agreed upon piece rate, but they also began to harass the workers by giving them bad materials and less work. In many cases, they stopped giving them work altogether. So with SEWA's support, the women decided to start a chindi production unit of their own in the form of a workers' cooperative. This formed the start of building many more alternative economic institutions through which poor, self-employed women can acquire skills training, and assistance in marketing finished products, purchasing raw materials, securing storage and workspace, and acquiring capital.

In SEWA's experience, the development of alternative economic organizations goes through three distinct phases. During the first phase women are trained in a new skill or upgrading an existing skill. The second phase consists of organizing an economic unit of the workers to earn an income from the skill. And the final phase is the formation of a cooperative. These cooperatives enable HBWs to break away from exploitation by directly procuring raw materials, manufacturing goods and selling them against bulk orders or directly to consumers. The surpluses from these business transactions are used to put the cooperatives on a sound financial footing and enable the workers to truly control their own units.

### Good practice 4.4.3: Micro-finance, organizing and empowerment in the Western Visayas region in the Philippines

PATAMABA also found that meeting the economic needs and expectations of members, especially those in newly organized chapters, dispersed all over the country who are looking for concrete interventions such as gaining access to credit, is a continuing challenge. In the past, a revolving credit fund was set-up at the national level to respond to this concern. Unfortunately, it was not sustained and local-based initiatives have proven to be more effective.

PATAMABA Region VI in the Western Visayas, like other PATAMABA chapters, suffered a severe setback when the national level credit fund floundered at the height of the financial crisis in the late 1990s. This experience did not faze the Regional PATAMABA Coordinating Council and Committee – a group of 15 active, committed, inspiring and disciplined women leaders who have been elected since its formation up to the present – but led to a greater resolve to rise from failure and institute a micro-finance programme that really works.

Starting with a small village chapter in Sta. Barbara, Iloilo in 1992, PATAMABA Region VI membership quickly spread to 41 village chapters in 12 municipalities and in four provinces in the region. Today, it has 3,400 active members. PATAMABA also helped establish two group enterprises for their members – an eco-bag production unit from recycled products in Sta. Barbara, and a bakery in Carles, Iloilo.

PATAMABA Region VI has a **credit plus approach** to micro-finance, combining lending with capacity building towards greater women's participation and empowerment. Its integrated programmes and services include financial services like livelihood loans, savings mobilization and capital build-up; skills training; awareness-raising on gender issues and reproductive health; community organizing; entrepreneurship development; marketing assistance; and emergency assistance through the establishment of a mutual aid or 'damayan' (helping one another in times of crisis) programme for burial assistance.

**Features of the micro-finance programme.** Before loans are released, borrowers are briefed on loan policies and procedures, loan forms and documents, and undergo training on value formation, skills training, enterprise development and gender sensitivity. The training programmes are held in the PATAMABA offices, in community village halls and other centers, as well as in the homes of members. Loan sizes vary depending on the members' kind of business, and their position in the organization. Borrowers with business experience, entrepreneurial skills, a sound track record and good repayment record, whose products have ready markets, can have an initial loan size of Philippine peso (PHP) 5,000.<sup>17</sup> Interest (2 per cent per month) is spread out and included in the amortization payment collected every two weeks by the PATAMABA treasurers and coordinators.

**Borrowers' features.** Most of the borrowers' projects are in food processing, producing candles, candle handicrafts, give-aways or novelty items; or services like a sari-sari store (small-scale convenience store) or eatery. Most of these are low-growth enterprises which need little capital, although some borrowers have the need and the capability to borrow more. The borrowers are individual women, most of them are HBWs and market vendors, and some are village health workers. Many of them are married, but there are also widows, single parents, and live-in partners. Most of them have a low level of formal education, a few have gone to college or a vocational school without completing their education.

**Management of the micro-finance scheme.** The Regional Committee is in charge of policy-making for all programmes, projects, and activities, including the micro-finance programme. Three women in the Regional Committee directly manage the micro-finance programme: the regional coordinator, the project coordinator, and the treasurer. They receive honoraria of PHP 1,000 each a month to cover their transportation and meals during repayment collection and project monitoring. They monitor the various groups, receive and deposit collections twice a month, and keep the financial records. The same is done at the decentralized municipal and village levels while HBWs' group leaders collect repayments in far-flung areas of the villages.

The provincial coordinator receives the overall collection at the PATAMABA Regional Office at the municipal hall of Sta. Barbara, Iloilo. A bookkeeper records the financial transactions on a monthly basis at a monthly honorarium of PHP 2,000, and the treasurer deposits the repayments in a bank. The PATAMABA Region VI Committee keeps the following records: baseline data on clients; bilingual application form and proposal; bilingual business plan; promissory notes; records of loan releases; loan amortization schedules; repayment and collection; savings and capital build-up; and monthly reports.

**Coaching, monitoring and repayment discipline.** The three Regional Committee leaders in charge of the micro-lending programme carry out monthly coaching and monitoring visits to each client to see if the loan was used for its intended purpose, to give advice on the client's business, and to track changes in the client's income and asset base, as well as her role in the household and community. They know that clients are all right if they see investments in assets and in home improvements, and if the clients can expand their economic projects. In terms of repayment discipline, sometimes member beneficiaries delayed their repayment due to reasons beyond their control. However, the management team imposed discipline on delinquent borrowers such as confiscating some of their properties or even personal belongings (such as cell phones or household appliances) after meeting with the village chiefs/captains who act as witness and as co-maker or guarantor, that is, by contract, they will repay the loan if the original borrower fails to do so.

**Achievements.** A 97 per cent repayment rate has been maintained. As of April 2014, the beneficiaries of the micro-finance programme reached 580. In 2008, PATAMABA Region VI had a total capital fund of PHP 1.4 million. Additional funding came from the Foundation for Sustainable Society Incorporated (FSSI) at PHP 500,000 in 2006 and PATAMABA Region VI savings. Thereafter, the total capital fund reached PHP 1.9 million but went down by 40 per cent in the aftermath of Typhoon Yolanda, the most powerful typhoon in recorded history which struck the Philippines in late 2013. Since then PATAMABA is helping members rebuild their livelihood also with the support of various international donor agencies.

**Emergency assistance.** The regional leadership incorporated a traditional **mutual aid** (damayan) scheme in case of death into the micro-finance programme, because they were frequently asked to assist families of members who have died. At first, it was only the officers who took it upon themselves to contribute PHP 5.00 a month to a reserve fund in order to finance this need. When the micro-finance programme went on stream, they expanded the mutual burial aid scheme by enrolling the borrowers into the scheme. So far, about 480 have joined in, contributing PHP 2.50 twice every month, and the campaign is ongoing to build in burial assistance into the new lending cycles of the micro-finance programme.

**Success factors.** Features that contributed to the success of the PATAMABA Region VI micro-finance programme include:

- Orientation programme on the scheme followed by training on value formation, enterprise development and women's participation and empowerment.
- Strong networking, lobbying and advocacy.
- Establishment of good relationships with partners/stakeholders.
- Good credit standing.
- Membership and representation in Local Special Bodies (e.g. Municipal Development Councils, Local Zoning Board, Bids and Awards Committee, Local Health Board, Municipal Peace and Order Council for the Protection of Children).
- Accreditation with government agencies.
- Dedicated and committed PATAMABA leaders and members.
- Good PATAMABA implementers with regular and frequent monitoring and evaluation of projects.
- Space for the PATAMABA VI Regional Office provided by the Municipality of Sta. Barbara in Iloilo.

**The way forward.** The PATAMABA case study concludes that experience thus far shows that PATAMABA Region VI has the capacity to make a small fund grow and to use it well. Regional leaders have set up a lending and collection scheme system based on regular monthly visits to every chapter. Overall, PATAMABA client borrowers have also shown sound credit discipline and can absorb higher loans if given the opportunity.

The case study concludes that PATAMABA Region VI needs to upscale and formalize its micro-finance programme in the future towards further sustainability and institutionalization. For the scheme to be expanded and formalized, however, it should be able to afford paid staff. This means increasing the lending fund to about a million pesos, which is of sufficient scale to justify the hiring of dedicated personnel. One way would be to place the micro-finance programme under the umbrella of the two existing cooperatives, and motivate the clients to contribute more if they are already members, and to provide membership shares if they are not yet members. This way the lending fund will grow and client members will be more eager to borrow and save as they will receive dividends and patronage refunds.

#### Good practice 4.4.4: Increasing homeworkers' bargaining power in Indonesia

Following training in negotiation skills homeworkers started to negotiate with their employers or subcontractors to increase their wage or be reimbursed for some of the production cost. This was not always successful, and always met with (initial) resistance but some groups managed to improve their employment conditions. For example, in North Sumatra, a group of homeworkers making barbeque grills was intimidated by their employer and did not receive any jobs for a month when they negotiated for a pay increase. In total, 27 homeworkers including non-group members did not receive any job orders. However, they did not give in to the threats of the employer, and after an open discussion between the homeworkers and the employer about the mutual benefits of maintaining the working relationship, the two parties agreed on new working arrangements: the work by homeworkers must be neat, and the employer is responsible for dropping off the materials and picking up the finished products. As a result the employer started giving job orders again and provided a pay increase.

In Malang, East Java, a group of women making badminton rackets, and a group making embroidery held a collective strike for a few days to demand for an increase in the piece rate payment with positive results. Some other groups were also successful in negotiating for the reimbursement of production costs such as electricity and transportation. In Batu, a homeworkers' group sought help from the village leader to negotiate with a middleman to demand for the reimbursement of electricity cost. The strategy to engage the village leader worked well and the demands of the group were met, even though the price increase was small.

#### Types of improvements gained by homeworkers in North Sumatra and East Java, Indonesia after negotiation with their employers or subcontractors

North Sumatra			
Medan		Deli Serdang	
Type of work	Improvement	Type of work	Improvement
Sewing cloth/patchwork	Product delivery cost waived (used to be Rp2,000/delivery)	Sewing baby seats	Pay increased by Rp1,000/dozen from Rp7,000/dozen to Rp8,000/dozen
Cutting onions	Pay increased by Rp50/kg, from Rp100/kg to Rp150/kg	Weaving fish grills	Pay increased for small sized grill to Rp1,500/package, middle sized and big sized to Rp2,000/package
Cutting sandals	Pay increased by Rp500/sack, from Rp5,500/sack to Rp6,000/sack	Packing prayer papers	Pay increased by Rp300/package, from Rp2,000/package to Rp2,300/package
East Java			
Putting strings on the badminton rackets	Pay increased by Rp500 per dozen, from Rp2,500 to IDR3,000.	Embroidery	Pay increase by Rp5,000, from Rp50,000 to Rp55,000.

## 4.5 Gender equality

The HBW organizations, portrayed in this report, started out as women's organizations. Overcoming gender constraints is central to their mission, vision and aims and gender equality promotion is integrated into their organizing approach.

This starts with including gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights in all awareness-raising and capacity building training activities for the HBWs. The women's group meetings provide a safe space enabling women to share and discuss thoughts without fear of judgment. Through **gender training**, women learn to value their contribution to their families and communities. For example, one leader emphasized that it was in PATAMABA that she understood the importance of women having their own money to provide for their needs. Accordingly, in her chapter, women are encouraged to save 5 per cent from their earnings so that when PATAMABA calls for a meeting they have the resources to at least cover their transportation expense.

Women also build their **self-confidence**, as one homemaker from East Java, Indonesia said: *"Gender and leadership training was very useful. It was my turning point to become what I am now. I used to be shy, quiet and afraid of my husband, and I often felt worthless. The training made me realize the potential in me and I learned to negotiate with my husband. He is now very supportive and I am now brave to speak about my concerns even in front of the public".*

The four case studies give examples of the various forms of **gender biases** that work against women HBWs. Societal pressures to conform to traditional gender norms continue to be powerful barriers hindering women's entry into decent work in formal labour markets and even making it difficult to carry out HBW. Gender perceptions are reinforced by attitudes of discrimination against the lower income classes and/or lower caste occupations and trades, or on the basis of women's ethnicities, social origins or health conditions leading to cumulative disadvantages. Specific gender constraints mentioned in the case studies were:

- Illiteracy and low levels of education among women are listed as severe challenges in the country case studies from Chile, the Philippines and India.
- The SEWA case study from India reports that young girls in rural areas have to assist their mothers making textile products, incense sticks or processing food at home, and thereby forego their education.
- Several case studies indicate that women have to resort to carrying out subcontracted home work because they are not allowed to go out for procurement of material or for product delivery due to limits set on their mobility.
- The country study from India gives examples of unequal pay for work of equal value: Women who make bidis or incense sticks receive a lower piece rate wage than men, who do the same work.

Changing such attitudes and perceptions and building up a critical mass to promote and support gender equality and HBWs' causes through awareness raising and policy advocacy remains very necessary. Gender relations are starting to change but this is generally a slow process.

**Combining work and family responsibilities.** In practical terms, many women HBWs are bound to work at home when they are raising children as they have no access to other childcare. For this reason, PATAMABA provides a children's corner where leaders take turns in taking care of children

during meetings and seminars. In the other countries, women with children also bring their children to meetings and training, if they cannot arrange for childcare.

The ability to carry out both paid work at home and household and childcare duties is often pictured as an advantage of HBW. This is certainly true if women or men have the opportunity to make an informed choice among viable economic alternatives, but this is often not the case for low income HBWs. For example, a recent study on HBW in 10 states by the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) found that – contrary to the general perception that women prefer to work at home so they can combine HBW with their household – only 3 per cent of women workers reported that they prefer to work at home so that they can simultaneously take care of their children whereas the other 73 per cent preferred to work at a workplace other than their home.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Tool box 4.5.1: Community childcare: Training manual**

ILO/MAMPU project research and needs assessments in 2012-2013 in East Java and North Sumatra found that there was an unmet demand for childcare in many lower-income communities. Women and women's groups were interested in better running or starting childcare centres but insufficient guidance was available on how to provide affordable, quality childcare for working parents in communities.

A training manual<sup>19</sup> was therefore prepared by international and national experts to provide practical information and guidance on how to establish and manage a childcare centre in Indonesia and beyond. The manual is intended for use by community members already engaged in providing childcare services, and those interested in doing so, such as women's groups and entrepreneurs in communities, as well as community extension workers with expertise in child, gender, equality, business and cooperative development, facilitators, trainers and leaders. It is hoped that the manual will:

- Promote affordable and quality childcare that contributes to optimum growth and development of children.
- Increase the availability of decent jobs for women and men in the childcare sector.
- Facilitate women's access to paid employment outside of the home, thereby reducing household poverty.

Work-life balance issues and gender norms also form an obstacle in organizing HBWs. Demands of work coupled with domestic chores are burdensome for women HBWs especially those with small children and/or unsupportive spouses, as some men do have doubts about their wives' involvement in an organization. The HBWs' organizations discuss with their members how to deal with such issues.

For example, PATAMABA members inform their families about the aims of their organization. Wives with doubtful husbands invite their spouses to observe or participate in their activities or enable them to earn income by providing transport or other services to the organization. As a result, conflicts between spouses decreased. The men were able to understand what the women were fighting for, and they also developed friendship among themselves. Some of the children of PATAMABA members who grew up in the organization established PATAMABA Youth. PATAMABA reports that most of its members, because of their long term organizational involvement and their exposure to gender training, manifest empowerment within the home – husband and other male members of the family share housework and childcare – within the organization, and within the community.

In Indonesia, women homeworkers often needed to get permission from the husband or their family members to participate in group activities. For example, Ms. Sinta in East Java said: *“In the beginning, my husband approved my participation in the group, but once I started to be active and was away for travel to join training for a few days, then he started to prohibit my participation in the activities”*. Here too women discussed gender equality with their husbands and family members and experienced positive changes. Some women reported how their husbands started to share their household duties such as cleaning, washing, and watching children.

In Thailand, women’s group members, provincial leaders as well as second line (new generation of) women leaders also cited difficulties with their family members and spouses to participate in training and other events to improve their leadership capacity. Unless women can effectively communicate with their family and make them understand the benefits of participating in the HBWs movement, female leadership in the HNTA would be limited to those without family burdens.

However, as in the Philippines, women leaders informally consult their elder peers on how to manage both their duty as a group leader and as a mother and wife. Here too, men are invited to activities of the group to understand what the group is doing and see for themselves how the group can benefit their family. One of the female group leaders from Bangkok said: *“When my son knew that my participation in the homemaker group in Bangkok involved youth activities, he was interested and he formed his own youth group in the neighbourhood. I can see his improvement because of better peers and he can have an opportunity to be accepted in his youth group and among adults. My husband tended to see a benefit also. Still I have to prepare food in advance if I want to join a meeting so that my family members can have meals.”*

Turning to gender equality issues in institutions and the wider society, all case studies emphasize that policy advocacy by HBWs and their organizations will only be successful if they **educate** all relevant parties with a say in HBWs working and living conditions on **gender equality and the value of women’s home-based work**. Public institutions and private companies tend to be dominated by men, especially at the higher levels and both male and female policy makers and implementers have often not been sensitized on gender equality, let alone HBWs’ issues. The majority of government officials, the judiciary, service providers e.g. those working in banks, and private sector representatives do not understand the issues that women HBWs face. Many consider that women do not work, that HBW is not work and that these are women doing some work in their ‘leisure’ time for spare pocket money.

Policy advocacy messages, therefore, need to continuously **raise the profile of women HBWs** to ensure that women’s work is recognized and valued. The development of strategies to increase the wages and income from HBW also has an impact on the value attached to it by service providers in the community and in the wider society.

## 4.6 Policy advocacy and representation

There are many examples of the struggles, successes and sometimes failures of policy advocacy by HBWs’ organizations and support NGOs in the case studies. These are highlighted throughout this report. This section lists the main stakeholders that need to be targeted in policy advocacy, and gives guidance on how to engage with government. It gives examples of policy advocacy for legal reform and highlights how HBWs’ representation in governance mechanisms increases their voice in decision-making and resource allocation.

## Policy advocacy

The best advocates for advancing HBWs' interests are HBWs themselves. They need to engage in policy advocacy with a **wide variety of actors** including:

- Employers, (sub)contractors, agents, other middlepersons, their associations and other support agencies, buyers, traders, raw material suppliers.
- Buyers and consumers of HBWs products and services, at the local, national or international levels.
- Local governance structures, such as village committees, local authorities at village, district, neighbourhood or municipal levels.
- Provincial, regional, state or national level governments, semi-government and tripartite structures or mechanisms, including the judiciary, public administrations, political parties and politicians.
- CBOs, MBOs, NGOs and people's or workers' organizations and networks at the local, national and international levels.
- Public or private sector service organizations like banks, training institutions, insurance companies, infrastructural service providers, healthcare organizations, OSH or social security agencies.
- Regional and international actors, organizations and development banks.

HBWs, their organizations and support NGOs need the **cooperation of government** in all sectors and at all levels. This may require policy advocacy with a range of different actors. However, public administrations' stand towards HBWs can range from supportive and positive to neutral or negative. Different government agencies may have competing interests resulting in contradictory messages and services. For example, government agencies in charge of pro-poor or other development policies and programmes may act in favour of women workers, but government agencies in charge of industrial, trade or other economic development may act against them.

HBW organizations have to develop a good understanding of government administrative systems, the legal and regulatory frameworks and mechanisms, and the programmes and projects of relevant ministries in charge of trade and industry, labour, social security and welfare, interior or social affairs. It is advisable to organize HBWs, where feasible, in alignment with the various government policies and statutory frameworks, both at the local and district levels, and at the provincial, regional, state and national levels. Local authorities may decide on policies and measures that can facilitate better infrastructure for work, such as water and electricity supply, or primary health care and education. State and central governments have to be sensitized to work towards legal and policy reform. Sensitizing government officials and obtaining their support also requires their involvement in seminars, exposure visits, negotiations and written representations.

**Example 4.6.1: Policy advocacy for legal reform to protect informal economy workers**

Key actors. In late 2005, an alliance of organizations started to campaign for the passage of a Magna Carta for workers in the informal economy (MACWIE) bill to enshrine their rights at work, access to resources and social protection, and representation in decision-making.<sup>20</sup> A year later, PATAMABA and other HBWs constituencies decided to launch HomeNet Philippines to represent the specific rights of women HBWs in the campaign. HomeNet Philippines is composed of 25 MBOs, one NGO, one cooperative and 15 experts, and PATAMABA acts as its main secretariat. It registered as an NGO in 2011 and became a member of HomeNet South-East Asia in 2012. HomeNet Philippines became the main organizer and coordinator in the lobby for the MACWIE bill.

**Main campaign strategies and steps.** Policy advocacy work on the MACWIE bill consists of formulating, filing and promoting the draft bill. The first priority was to popularize the legislative and executive agenda of the informal workers at the policy level, and increasing the capabilities of informal worker-leaders in launching and sustaining campaign initiatives. Main activities include formulating the agenda, crafting a campaign plan, enhancing the skills of the advocates, mobilizing the members of home-based and other informal groups, and finding support among politicians, and public and private sector formal and informal leaders.

Main advocacy strategies are as follows:

- Drafting, enhancing and finding sponsors for the bill by HomeNet Philippines, local leaders, the larger alliance of informal economy workers and MAGCAISA with interested political representatives.
- Capacity building, knowledge sharing and regular review with the informal workers and their leaders going through the various versions of the bill chapter by chapter at regular intervals.
- Information dissemination and popularizing the bill to gather widespread support in society.

Key steps are as follows:

- 1. Formulation of a national agenda, translating it into a local agenda and enriching the informal workers' national agenda.** It is important to obtain inputs of informal workers throughout the country and present the voice of the informal workers in a unified manner towards policy makers and the general public.
- 2. Promotion of an election-related advocacy agenda,** by including MACWIE and social protection for informal workers in electoral campaigns of political party candidates and for the general public, which can also serve as platforms for post-election follow up. Campaigns to disseminate the agenda also takes place on, for example, homeworkers' and informal workers' days in May every year.
- 3. Legislative advocacy in both Houses of Congress for the passage of the MACWIE bill.** This includes drafting the bill based on the realities of informal workers, identification of possible authors from among the legislators and continuously monitoring progress once the bill is filed. It also includes advocacy campaigns among the general public to popularize the bill.

4. **Building advocacy capacities** of leaders of home-based and informal workers' groups in launching MACWIE promotion and social protection campaigns.
5. **Working with different government agencies.** Advocacy initiatives are necessary at the national and local levels to raise awareness of planners, policy makers and government authorities. Engagements with various government agencies present opportunities to challenge the authorities to take a closer look at the different aspects of the concerns of informal workers.
6. **Building networks and including the MACWIE draft bill in government development agenda.** Cooperation with broad-based alliances (the academic community, other workers' organizations, faith-based organizations, government agencies, political, religious and women's leaders supportive to the issues of informal workers, and international organizations) is a must for including the MACWIE in the country's development plans. In 2010, it became part of the 17 point Medium Term Philippine Development Plan. It was included as one of the legislative priorities in the Philippine Development Plan for 2011-2016 and in the Philippine Labor and Employment Plan for 2011-2016. Informal workers' priorities were also included in the country's decent work agenda due to shared leadership by the trade unions and NGOs in the Tripartite Industrial Peace Council.
7. **Gender empowerment.** The advocacy concerns all informal workers, including HBWs, the majority of whom are women. The leadership potentials of women HBWs are honed through their participation in advocacy campaigns because the various activities which form part of the campaign provide venues where they can exercise leadership, create awareness about their rights and advance campaigns important to them as workers and as women.

**Current status.** The MACWIE bill was re-filed in the House of Representatives by the Congress Representative who worked closely with HomeNet Philippines and MAGCAISA and a counterpart bill was filed at the Senate by a Senator. The review of the bill at the Senate is ongoing. Particular provisions of the bill are reviewed in relation to existing laws and policies on the tax code, business development and social security.

**Achievements.** To date HomeNet Philippines and the MAGCAISA have made significant progress in making the concerns and priorities of informal sector workers visible. The formation of HomeNet Philippines was crucial in the formulation, filing and promotion of a MACWIE Bill that is rights-based and gender-responsive. The first bill was filed in the 12<sup>th</sup> Congress (2001-2003) followed by similar bills filed by different proponents in the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Congress. It is hoped that this bill will finally be passed in the current 16th Congress (2013-2016).

#### **Example 4.6.2: Policy advocacy for a national policy and regulations on homeworkers in Indonesia**

At the start of the ILO MAMPU project there was a lack of understanding on homeworkers' issues among the key stakeholders. There is no reliable data on the incidence of home work in Indonesia and homeworkers are also not explicitly mentioned in the Manpower Act. Local and national officials and the employers' association stated that the lack of data and legal protection were main reasons for preventing them to take action on improving their working conditions.

**Key actors.** The ILO/MAMPU project facilitated policy advocacy at the national and decentralized levels to improve the situation of homeworkers by engaging the key stakeholders including the Ministry of Manpower, the Ministry of National Development Planning, the National Statistics Office (BPS), APINDO, trade unions, NGOs and homeworkers' groups.

#### **Main strategies and steps.**

In 2013 the ILO/MAMPU project carried out a review of the regulatory framework on home work in Indonesia to identify the key gaps and barriers to the protection of homeworkers both in law and in practice.<sup>21</sup> The review explained that homeworkers can be considered regular workers engaged in an industrial employment relationship under the definition stipulated by the Manpower Act No. 13 (2003), even if the Act does not cover home work or homeworkers explicitly. This report became the basis to raise awareness on homeworkers' issues.

The Project organized field visits for government officials and representatives of the employers' association to visit homeworkers and have a direct dialogue to deepen their understanding on the working relations and conditions of homeworkers. Several smaller-scale studies were also carried out to map the nature and incidence of home work in several provinces and the ILO/MAMPU project worked with the National Statistics Office (BPS) to include questions in the regular labour force survey to generate information on home-based workers (e.g. question on place of work).

APINDO, the Indonesia Employers Association, and the ILO jointly published 'Good practice guidelines for the employment of homeworkers' in 2014 and a joint 'position paper on home work' was developed by TURC, the unions and NGOS for use in policy dialogues at the national and decentralized levels. The media were also sensitized on the situation of homeworkers. Under the decentralization system, local and provincial governments have the authority to develop regulations and policies to respond to the problems and needs in the areas under their jurisdiction, and for this reason extensive policy advocacy took place in the provinces covered by the ILO/MAMPU project and its partners. Homeworkers gained confidence and also actively lobbied for the protection of homeworkers.

**The way forward.** Progress has been made in terms of reaching a consensus on the need to address the decent work deficits faced by homeworkers at both national and local levels, but further work is needed to develop and adopt regulations and/or policies on home work. At the provincial level, the Departments of Manpower in North Sumatra and East Java have indicated that homeworkers' issues will be included in the local labour regulation planned to be adopted in 2018.

*"We are in the process of developing a local regulation to protect the workers in East Java which includes those in the putting-out system. The data and stories from the homeworkers are very crucial as they are invisible. We will not succeed unless homeworkers themselves are proactive to voice their rights," said Ms. Agatha, a parliamentarian from East Java.*

## Representation

As mentioned in section 4.4 all case studies refer to the importance of policy advocacy by HBWs' organizations and their support NGOs to enable HBWs' groups to participate in local or national development programmes, and, thereby, gain access funds and services. Recognition of HBWs groups and organizations by the local, (regional, state) and national authorities needs to translate into representation of HBWs in local and national decision-making committees and structures so they can voice their concerns and table their priorities.

Due to the short timespan of HBW organizing activities in Chile, it was not possible for CECAM to engage in successful policy advocacy at the national level, even if local lobbying effects resulted in increased services and infrastructure for HBWs in several locations. As mentioned, in India, SEWA is represented on several labour monitoring and welfare boards. In Thailand, two of the HNTA committee members have been elected in 2014 as two out of the three HBW representatives in the National Home Workers Protection Board established under the *Homeworkers Protection Act*. A HNT committee member has also been elected in the National Health Security Office Board (NHSO) to facilitate access of HNTA members to health services.

In the Philippines, PATAMABA engages in policy dialogue by actively participating in many different consultation mechanisms in the labour, NGO, cooperative and women and gender equality fields, and local PATAMABA chapters are accredited as people's organizations in local government units to participate in development programmes and access resources.

**Example 4.6.3: PATAMABAS Region VI chapter partnership**

As illustration, PATAMABAS Region VI chapter, described in section 4.4, partners with various governmental and non-governmental agencies at the local, regional and national levels as follows:

- The Technical Education and Skills Development Authority Regional Office VI provided training and production assistance through the Community-Based Training for Enterprise Development (CBTED) to PATAMABA members in Iloilo and Antique provinces amounting to PHP 670,000 with a seed capital of PHP 120,000.
- The Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) Regional Office VI provided PHP 45,000 for skills training on handicraft for working youth members.
- The SSS, PhilHealth and Red Cross are partners in the campaign for social security and insurance for informal workers.
- The Department of Science and Technology Regional Office VI provided PHP 40,000 worth of tools and equipment for a fish processing project in Carles, Iloilo.
- The Department of Trade and Industry Regional Office VI build capacity of members on quality control in product development.
- PATAMABA Region VI is a member of the Social Development Committee member of the Regional Development Council and a member of the Workers in the Informal Sector Council of the National Anti-Poverty Commission.
- PATAMABA Region VI is a member in the Municipal Development Council, in Local Special Bodies and the Advisory Committee of the Local Government Unit (LGU), and collaborated with other sectors in organizing the Sta. Barbara Informal Sector Cooperative (25 members) and the Provincial Governor of Iloilo province released a grant amount of PHP 50,000 as seed capital for its re-lending programme.
- The Foundation for Sustainable Society Inc. (FSSI) provided PHP 500,000 as a recoverable grant: PHP 50,000 for capacity building on enterprise development (accounting for non-accountants and bookkeeping) and PHP 450,000 as fund for the micro-finance relending programme to 480 beneficiary members for their livelihood projects.

## 4.7 Involving employers, workers, their organizations and companies

Homeworkers, while invisible to the public eye, contribute significantly to the local, national and international economy. In making efforts to enable homeworkers to improve their living and working conditions (working upwards from the lowest segment of the value chains), it is important to engage employers, workers, their organizations and companies to raise awareness on the issues and work together to make improvements (working downwards from the higher segments of the value chains) which contribute to the formation of working mechanisms with improved labour standard practices. Experiences from the ILO/MAMPU project in Indonesia show how employers, workers, their organizations and companies can be involved in efforts to promote decent work for homeworkers.

#### **Good Practice 4.7.1: Working with international companies/buyers to promote better compliance with labour standards**

Recognizing that workers contributing to IKEA's rattan products are often homeworkers in Indonesia and that it is important to ensure labour standards' compliance in home work in the rattan industry, IKEA and the ILO/MAMPU project formed a partnership to conduct a study on the barriers to decent work faced by homeworkers in IKEA's rattan industry, with a view to start addressing some of these barriers as identified by the research. The study reviewed how IKEA promotes labour standards' compliance, and analyzed the working relations between homeworkers and subcontractors engaged in the IKEA's rattan production, and the working conditions of homeworkers through questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions with the key stakeholders in each tier of the supply chain.

The research<sup>22</sup> found good performance in preventing forced, bonded or child labour and promoting basic safety at work. Increased health insurance coverage was also observed among workers at weaving centers. The areas requiring improvements included the use of a written contract, payment of minimum wages, strengthening occupational safety and health, and increasing awareness on labour standards – especially among women workers. The project also identified some specific challenges facing the rattan supply chain: supply issues (including irregular orders and rising production costs) and the shortage of skilled weavers due to the trend for young people to look for jobs elsewhere. Based on these findings, discussions have started between the ILO/MAMPU project and IKEA to address the barriers to decent work.

#### **Good practice 4.7.2: Promoting decent work for homeworkers among members of the Indonesia Employers Association (APINDO) and the trade unions**

Since the members of the APINDO come from formal enterprises, they do not employ homeworkers directly in most cases, but they work with suppliers who may engage homeworkers. In first instance, the general understanding on homeworkers' issues was very limited and home work was considered less relevant within APINDO. However, awareness raising events, policy dialogues and direct contacts with homeworkers changed this situation. As mentioned earlier APINDO and the ILO/MAMPU project developed guidelines for employers on their roles and responsibilities to homeworkers in Indonesia and to explain the relevance and application of the Manpower Act No. 13 (2003) and other national laws to home work.

APINDO and the ILO/MAMPU project also developed materials on the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis (TB), a disease that is still prevalent, and many workers in factories and home-based work need accurate information to stay healthy at work. These materials have been disseminated among APINDO members and APINDO is identifying enterprises which engage homeworkers to pilot practical measures to improve the working conditions of homeworkers and improving the productivity of enterprises.

Trade unions' understanding on homeworkers was also limited initially since they mainly organize formal sector workers and have many priorities to address. Union leaders raised awareness on homeworkers' issues among the leaders and members of their organizations, and they started to investigate the situation of homeworkers engaged in the same work as the formal sector workers covered by the unions. Once they identified homeworkers, they investigated the working relations and conditions of homeworkers engaged in their sector and

initiated discussions with their employers to bring the home work to their attention. The trade union members also explained the benefits of being a member of a trade union with a view to recruiting them to their organization. In North Sumatra, 46 women homeworkers involved in food, drinks, tourism and hotel industries were organized by FSB (Federasi Serikat Buruh Makanan, Minuman, Pariwisata dan Perhotelan) KAMIPARHO.

At the policy level, trade unions also utilized the tripartite industrial relations mechanisms at the national and provincial levels where government, employers and trade unions meet to discuss key labour issues, and introduced homeworkers' issues as one of the issues requiring attention on the agenda. This support was very useful for homeworkers, their groups and support NGOs as they are usually not included in these tripartite mechanism to access the key decision-makers to bring up the issue.

## 4.8 Safe work

As HBWs' home is their workplace, they and their household members face higher risks of occupational diseases and unsafe working and living environments. Long working hours, bad postures, dust, noise, lack of light and/or ventilation and/or protective equipment, a humid atmosphere and exposure to hazardous chemicals and other substances can cause health problems for themselves and their household members. Awareness on occupational safety and health (OSH) among HBWs is generally rather low. When they get sick or have an accident, they have to stop working and seek treatment, which they oftentimes cannot afford.

### Good practice 4.8.1: Occupational safety and health as entry point for organizing

Since the early 2000s up to the present, the FLEP and the HNTA in Thailand have been organizing HBW, especially homeworkers by meeting their demands to address their health concerns, increase the safety of the workers and their family members, and increase their productivity.

**Work started** with the development of a 'Work improvement for safe home' (WISH) manual in cooperation with ILO and Mahidol university to educate homeworkers on how to analyze their health risks and improve their working environment in a hands-on manner. Through the network of HBWs, HNT provided occupational safety and health (OSH) knowledge and educated members and non-members on how to access the Local Health Fund and other local funds to manage OSH risks. Local training was provided in pilot communities with trainers using OSH risk analysis tools such as body mapping, hazard analysis and health checks.

From 2004-2007 the HNT raised OSH awareness in 17 provinces with support from the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. As the public health authorities were not aware of the OSH risks among HBWs, the HBW organizations also sensitized and encouraged primary health care services to implement OSH promotion activities. Homeworkers' leaders were advised to identify and work with local health voluntary services such as the village health volunteers. Homeworkers groups and OSH trainers would draft their groups' safety rules during an OSH

training session, and together they would monitor the OSH situation in members' workplaces and homes after the workshop to maintain compliance.

To ensure sustainability, the HNT regional network worked with local HBWs' groups to identify 'Model OSH houses' in a community. 'Model hospitals and primary care units' were also selected. HNT also met with sub-district health and administrative authority, to establish 'OSH Committees' by local HBWs' groups and HNT with public assistance. Such networks enable public health personnel and administrative staff to hear from and to recognize HBWs in their community.

Work continued from 2008 onwards, with support of UNIFEM, the Thai Health Promotion Foundation and the Federation of Dutch Labour (FNV), using occupational health and hazard prevention and social protection as entry points to promote awareness and motivate HBWs to organize. In 2009-2010 WIEGO supported the drawing of lessons on how to promote OSH awareness.

In 2012-14 FLEP and the HNTA advocated for the provision of OSH knowledge by primary health care services to HBWs under the Universal Health Coverage scheme and to support the access of informal workers to local health funds. A HNT committee member has been elected in the National Health Security Office Board (NHSO) and has facilitated access of HNTA members to health services. HNT also received NHSO support for an OSH promotion pilot.

**Achievements** were as follows:

- When HBWs learned that OSH awareness and safe work practices reduced injuries and healthcare costs, and increased their productivity, they were keen to adapt their working environment and work habits. Those with OSH problems knew where to access healthcare and funding for health check-ups.
- The OSH workshops with local public health personnel and administrative personnel in each community also made homeworkers understand why they need to organize to have more visibility, and contribute to and benefit from their community's resources.
- HNT also noted that after the pilot workshops, more homeworkers apply to become HNT members and organize in groups. HNT assisted local HBWs' groups to register as occupational groups under the local administrative structures to ensure that the recognized community-based HBWs' groups will receive ongoing support from the local administrative agencies and budgets.
- Health and OSH awareness also made HBWs realize that they must engage at the policy level as a membership-based HNTA to lobby for both local and national policy changes.
- Through the building of partnerships between local HBWs' groups, health care providers and other community, provincial and national level organizations, HBWs learned that such partnerships with other organizations substantially increased their visibility and voice and ensured that legal and policy reform initiatives respond to their needs.

In sum, OSH risk prevention has reduced HBWs' need to access health care services and their fear of loss of income and financial burdens. OSH is a strategic entry point for organizing

as it meets direct initial needs, increases productivity and well-being and motivates HBWs to organize. Using OSH as an entry point, HNT leaders also learned about the structural income and social security concerns of HBWs and other informal sector workers who are unable to work because of sicknesses and accidents and this enabled them to respond by advocating for better social security for informal sector workers.

## 4.9 Social security and assistance

The country case studies from India, the Philippines and Thailand describe the utmost importance that HBWs attach to social security and assistance, in case of (occupational) diseases and accidents, disability, pregnancy and maternity, support during old age and upon death.

The social security systems in the three countries are in development. In the 80s and 90s there was hardly any social security system available to HBWs and other informal economy workers. For this reason SEWA started VimoSEWA, an insurance programme with private companies in 1992 (see further information later in this section). In Thailand, HNT also started a micro-insurance programme for its members, but it was not possible to leverage the numbers required to set up a viable scheme.

Since then, there have been many developments with countries slowly developing social assistance schemes, and growing international consensus on the need for countries to develop their social security systems. The ILO Social Protection Floors Recommendation No. 202 was almost unanimously adopted at the International Labour Conference in 2012. Social protection floors are nationally defined sets of basic social security guarantees aimed at extending essential health care and basic income security to people as an essential part of national social security systems. The basic social security guarantees include: essential health care, including maternity care; and basic income security for children, for persons who are unable to earn sufficient income due to sickness, unemployment, maternity and disability, and for older persons.

However, much remains to be done. Firstly, it seems HBWs are not adequately protected against the risks of occupational injuries and diseases with the possible exception – in theory – of subcontracted homeworkers in Thailand. The 2012 country's *Homeworkers Protection Act* states: *“An employer is responsible for a medical treatment and funeral expenses of the homeworkers who are injured or die because of the homework, on occupation hazards or injuries are not resulted from the homeworkers’ intention or gross negligence.”* However, employers are individually liable to pay for these expenses and they cannot insure themselves against this liability by contributing to the Workmen's Compensation Scheme (covering work-related injury, rehabilitation, disability and death). This makes it easy for employers not to apply this article in practice. In addition, it is not possible for informal workers to enroll themselves in this scheme.

In **Thailand**, the HBWs' organizations made social security and social assistance coverage a priority in policy advocacy, together with other informal workers' organizations in agriculture, street vending, domestic work and the entertainment industry. As a result, HBWs can access health care under the Universal Health Coverage Scheme for all Thai nationals funded by the State, and can access a limited number of welfare programmes for impoverished families and persons. Policy advocacy

by HBWs' organizations has resulted in the set up of nine Health Coordination Centres for informal workers under this scheme to raise awareness on the health rights of these workers and to accept complaints nationwide.

Since 1994, the self-employed can become a member of the social security scheme on a voluntary basis but they need to pay both the employer and the employee contributions. Thus, even with government subsidies, HBWs consider that the contributions are generally considered too high to afford. Research from 2013 indicates that less than 5 per cent of informal workers avail of this social security option for the self-employed.<sup>23</sup>

In the **Philippines**, HBWs also have access mainly to the publicly funded health (PhilHealth) and other welfare programmes for indigent population groups, many of which are means-tested. As mentioned in section 3.4, PATAMABA Region VI chapter set up the indigenous Damayan scheme to help the bereaved. PATAMABA and its chapters have also been lobbying for the amendment of the Social Security System (SSS) Law to allow for informal sector representation in the SSS Commission and have helped to explore mechanisms to enroll and maintain membership of informal workers in the SSS:

- PATAMABA helped persuade the SSS to allow self-employed HBWs to avail of social insurance through the Automatic Debit Account arrangement. This scheme was tested in PATAMABA Balingasa Chapter in cooperation with a Bank, the DOLE and the SSS: Informal workers could open an account with the bank from which their SSS monthly contribution would be deducted.
- Some PATAMABA chapters support another SSS programme called AlkanSSSyA for informal workers that allow members to save for their SSS contribution. Informal workers save a small daily minimum amount to meet the required regular monthly membership contribution at their informal workers' organization. A depository box for the members' daily contributions is located and kept safe at the organization.

With regard to social security and assistance for HBWs in **India**, SEWA confirms the learnings from many countries that the approach to implementation is very important: decentralized services close to women and managed by local organizations are most effective. SEWA has set up its own social insurance programme, represents workers on several tripartite welfare boards, and lobbies for the expansion of coverage and benefits of welfare boards for HBWs and other informal economy workers as follows:

- SEWA's insurance programme, VimoSEWA, was established in 1992 to protect women and their families from catastrophic expenditure. Over 10 million women, men and children are insured by VimoSEWA. The woman is the primary insured member, and she has the option of insuring her family for an additional premium. The current insurance package is an integrated product, with life (natural and accidental), asset and mediclaim coverage. Implemented in partnership with insurance companies, the product has evolved over time to consistently meet the needs of women in the informal sector.
- SEWA represents workers in tripartite welfare boards for specific industries. Funds are raised by levying a tax on the production of specified goods, and/or through contributions from various sources including employers, employees, as well as the government. The funds are used for meeting expenditures for the welfare of workers, as prescribed in the laws or schemes concerned, for example, for bidi and garment workers. SEWA facilitates linkages

of its members to the schemes by providing them information about the law. It also works with the implementing government agencies to identify workers, and provides individual guidance to the workers during their documentation for registration and issuance of identity cards.

- SEWA also advocates for the formation of other welfare boards, and inclusion of its members. For example, in 2007 SEWA was instrumental in lobbying for the creation of the Urban Informal Economy Workers Welfare Board in Gujarat, and ensured that HBWs such as the incense stick rollers, ready-made garment stitchers and kite-makers were included. Again, SEWA worked with the State's Labour Department to ensure workers knew about the new board and its benefits, and that they were issued identity cards to gain access to the benefits. SEWA also advocates that welfare boards expand the usual benefits, such as scholarships and medical benefits, to also cover skill training and provision of equipment kits.

## 5. Building sustainable HBWs' organizations

A main challenge to overcome, for both homeworkers and own-account workers is the extreme precariousness of their work which makes it difficult to establish and maintain sustainable organizations. The majority of HBWs are engaged in survival strategies, and it takes strong and committed leaders to address these immediate economic challenges, organize themselves and others to reach the longer term strategic goals by setting up an organization that is owned by the members and finding the time, and the human and financial resources to make this possible.

### 5.1 How to develop and grow HBWs' organizations

#### Role of founders and leaders

The HBWs' organizations described in the case studies were founded by strong women leaders, many from the trade union and/or women's movement who became committed to improving the working and living conditions of HBWs. These founders sought out, nurtured and build capacities of women HBWs who had the potential and interest to become leaders of HBWs in their communities and beyond. The case studies show that many strong and talented women leaders emerge from HBWs' groups and organizations, and are today managing HBWs groups at the local, national and international levels.

Of course challenges exist. For example, in many local organizations in Chile, there was a steady core of three or four workers with other women joining on a more irregular basis. Working as they did, at a survival level, many women had multiple demands on their time and energy, and spending time on fact finding or organizing was not always possible, especially when they could see no quick, immediate gains. Such challenges can be overcome by intensive, long term capacity development, through training, learning-by-doing, coaching and mentoring, not overburdening HBWs (potential) leaders beyond their capacity, keeping voluntary tasks within reasonable limits, remunerating people for work where possible, and inspiring and training large talent pools of young HBWs' leaders.

#### Creating HBWs' organizations

As mentioned in the case study from India, like-minded women founders decide to set up an organization, answering questions like: 'What do we want to achieve and how do we make it work? Why organize HBWs? What outcomes and impact do we expect from organizing? How to go about organizing? What will be the guiding philosophy and values that will govern the organizing process?'

Answering these questions means shaping the organization, or in other words, developing the **strategic management framework** of the organization. In summary, the key components in setting up an organization are usually as follows:

- Organizers, leaders and founders of institutions work with a vision about the organization in their minds and hearts.
- This vision indicates the direction in which they will keep moving as a life-long mission.
- They provide the basic ideology and value system that govern the decisions and actions of the members, leaders, staff and volunteers of the organization.
- They set the goals of the organization, the specific objectives to be achieved within certain time periods, and the strategies, that is, the ways and means for taking the organization forward towards achieving its goals and objectives.
- They usually are also good managers, directing and managing people within and outside the organization and ensuring that work gets done in a timely manner.
- They design and agree upon the decision-making and management structure and systems of the organization: Strategies need to be given hands and feet through the development of programmes and projects and in order to implement these successfully, an organization needs a decision-making and implementing hierarchical framework.
- When organizations grow, people specialize and become responsible for certain tasks for efficiency purposes. If the organization grows further, separate units are set up each with their specific roles, functions, responsibilities and decision-making authority.
- The growth of an organization also means that the organization needs a management control system to ensure effective and efficient delivery of activities and use of funds. This includes setting up administrative and financial procedures, documenting operations, and the monitoring and evaluation of operations, holding people and units responsible and accountable within the organization.

#### **Good practice 5.1.1: Specify the goals of the different HBWs' organizations at local, national and international levels**

The SEWA case study from India indicates that it is useful to differentiate between the objectives of primary HBW member organizations at the community level, the umbrella federation and different support organizations run by HBW members or support NGOs. SEWA is a trade union of self-employed women from the unorganized sector. SEWA founders and members have initiated a number of organizations with specific objectives, roles, programmes and activities:

- The HBWs in the communities who are the primary members of SEWA have formed their own organizations with a variety of objectives, such as increasing access to decent jobs and incomes, improving working and living conditions through self-development and self-organization. For example, HBWs who are engaged in stitching of garments have formed their cooperatives, associations or self-help groups in their respective towns and villages and each of these groups have their own decision-making structure, administrative set-up and systems. Strategic decisions are taken by the management committee or executive council after formal discussions with members and inputs from a knowledgeable expert as external resource person. These

community-based HBWs organizations are members of the HBWs' organizations at the state, national and international levels.

- SEWA, as the umbrella union federation has the same overall goal as its primary members: improving the status and situation of HBWs and addressing their needs and priorities. But its organizational objectives are different, such as, developing member capacities and improving legal or social protection for its members through effective policy advocacy and knowledge sharing and development. SEWA has its own organizational structure and management systems to achieve these objectives. SEWA members have set up different sister organizations with specific aims and support functions such as SEWA Bank for financial services and IASEW for research and capacity building. These, in turn, have their own structure and systems. However, all these organizations work within the strategic framework of SEWA as well as their own.

## The institutional and decision-making structure of HBWs' organizations

Every HBWs organization is, of course, different, depending on the societal context, culture and the origins of the organization, and the HBWs' organizations in the country case studies are also at different stages of organizational development, but some general trends can be discerned. For example, small, new organizations start with a horizontal management structure usually based on consensus or the 'one member, one vote' principle. However, as soon as the organization takes on more and different types of work, it becomes important to specialize and allocate specific duties to each leader, and a hierarchical system is usually adopted when organizations employ staff to undertake specific duties.

In a membership-based organization, the important, strategic decisions are taken by the members. Leaders, staff and volunteers are accountable to their members, but the management structure of the organization is hierarchical with a clear allocation of duties and decision-making power at each level.

The institutional and decision-making structure of SEWA in India, PATAMABA in the Philippines and the HBWs organizations in Thailand are explained below.

### **Example 5.1.1: The institutional and decision-making structure of SEWA.**

The structure of the union is based on trade groups. The 125 trade groups represent diverse communities of women who choose group leaders from among themselves. The group leaders for each trade meet every month as the Trade Committee, to discuss the ongoing problems and strategies of action. They are the main catalyst for action in each trade group. They in turn choose leaders to send to the Trade Council, which includes all the trade groups of SEWA. For every 200 members in a trade, one representative is sent to the annual Trade Council meeting to learn about the work of the other trades. From this 5,000-member Council, the Executive Committee of the union is elected.

The Executive Committee of 25 trade leaders and four staff organizers meets once a month to take the major political decisions of the organization such as whether a trade group will

strike, or what resolutions they will put forward to the government or the public. Resolutions cover both work issues, for example, demands for a Commission on self-employed women or minimum wage notification, and social issues, including prohibition of alcohol and sati – widow burning, an Indian custom where a widow is expected to put herself on fire and commit suicide upon her husband's death. The Executive Committee assigns work to the paid organizers of the union, who carry out their mandates. The Executive Committee members are the inspired leaders of SEWA. They are unanimously dedicated, articulate, and empowered women. The majority of the Executive members are in their 40s and 50s, due to their experience and because they have more time to devote to the unpaid work of the union, once relieved of the burden of child rearing.

In SEWA, core values are reflected in its organizational structure and the day-to-day practices followed at every level in the organization. Key aspects of the strategic management framework of SEWA are:

- From the start, SEWA has developed complete clarity about her values and ideology, and the Gandhian philosophy is a significant aspect. This clarity is reflected in all the institutions and levels of SEWA and her sister institutions.
- A core group consisting of founders of SEWA and its sister organizations has been formed for periodical planning, review and strategic decision-making. Members of this group ensure that SEWA's strategic framework – its ideology values, goals, objectives and policies – is retained and strengthened by all the institutions and their units. This group also provides strategic inputs to specific issues as and when required.
- The Annual General Meeting of SEWA provides a unique platform for scanning the business environment and sharing progress of the respective institutions. Every institution and unit of SEWA gives a presentation on its progress and activities during the year. Moreover, every institution develops a strategic plan of its operations on the basis of the environmental assessment.
- There are certain organizational or business practices which are carefully inculcated in the working of the various institutions. These practices ensure (i) adherence to SEWA core values and goals; (ii) implementation of SEWA's strategy of women's empowerment through capacity building, and (iii) consistency in SEWA messages and operations internally and externally. Key features of these practices are as follows:
  - ◆ Every institution enjoys full autonomy in its operations. However, all institutions must follow SEWA policies with respect to government programmes, international funding, accounting policies and external reporting within SEWA's strategic framework.
  - ◆ There is a heavy emphasis on capacity building through training and exposure visits. SEWA has developed a large cadre of master trainers and trainers who deliver training for grassroots level members as well as for international target groups.
  - ◆ To encourage learning from each other, team members of one district visit another district and evaluate their work. In the process they develop managerial qualities and skills in conceptualizing, analyzing and implementing.

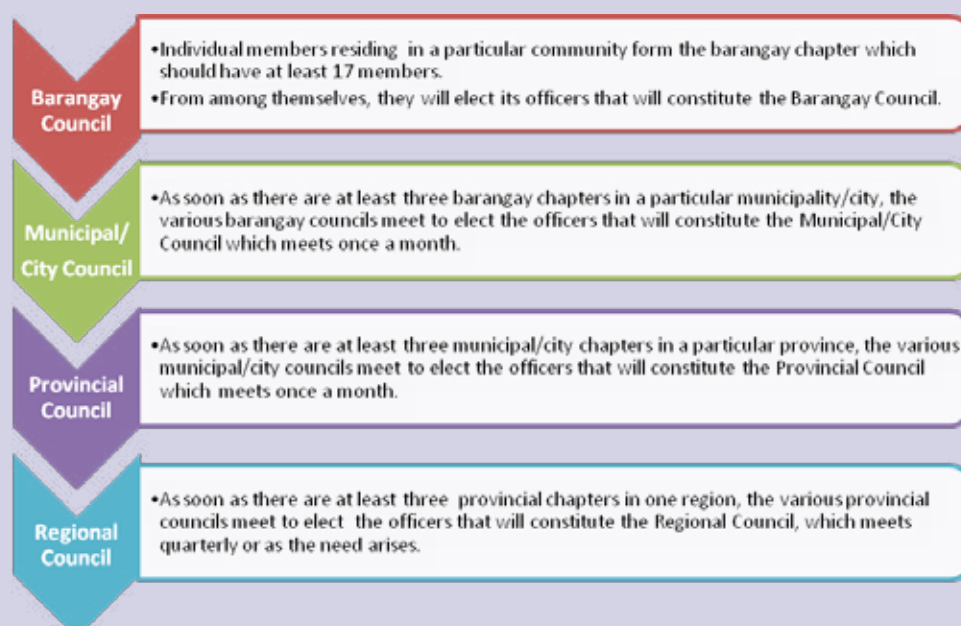
- ♦ Strategically SEWA focuses on collective leadership. Learning opportunities are provided to all and decisions are taken in meetings, not by one person but collectively. This has contributed to developing a sense of ownership and to efficient implementation of decisions.
- ♦ SEWA has a culture of continuous and open communication within SEWA and her sister organizations. This has played a great role in creating an understanding of SEWA's strategic framework among SEWA employees and volunteers.

The institutional structure of SEWA is attached as Annex 2.

### Example 5.1.2: The institutional and decision-making structure of PATAMABA.

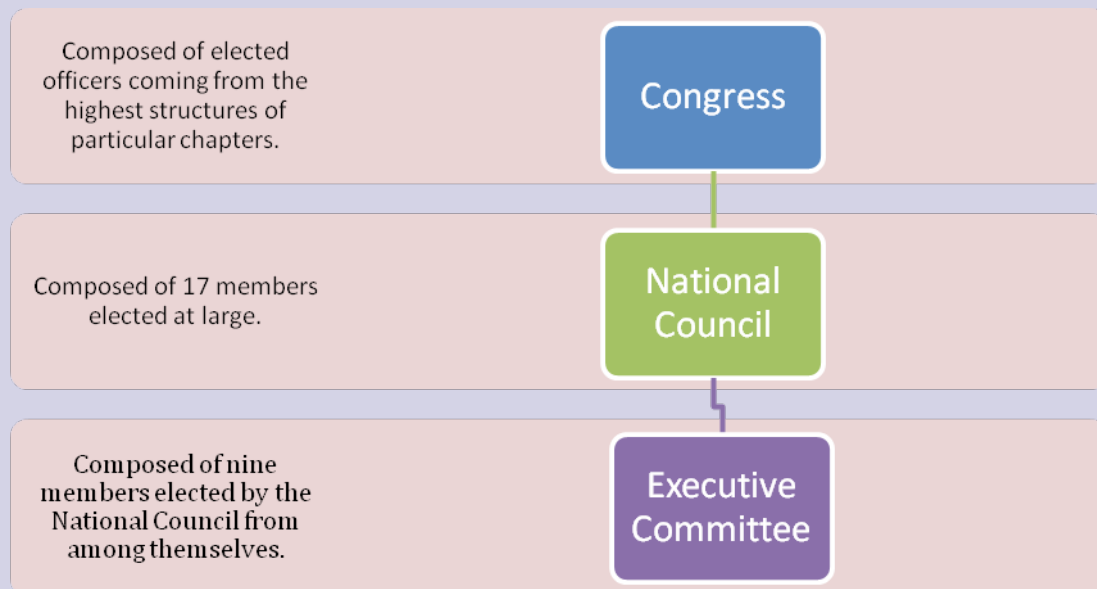
PATAMABA is a people's organization, thus, its leaders are elected at every level – from the barangay or village, to the municipal, provincial, regional, and national structures. PATAMABA members are organized in craft groups at the community, village or barangay level which form the backbone of the organization. A minimum of 17 members can constitute a barangay chapter, and they will elect a barangay council of nine members. The local structures from the barangay to the regional levels coordinate the activities in their locality and discuss PATAMABA policies and decisions. This information is transmitted to the national structure which discusses and decides on PATAMABA's directions. This ensures that the members even at the smallest unit are participating in the decision-making processes of the organization. The local structures are responsible for membership recruitment, expansion and consolidation. They must submit written reports to the immediate higher structure. To date, the majority of the local chapters are either at the provincial or municipal levels, and there are only four regional structures, namely in Region III, VI, IV-A and the National Capital Region.

Figure 2. PATAMABA chapters from the local to the regional levels



At the national level, PATAMABA's structure consists of the Congress, the National Council and the Executive Committee as follows:

**Figure 3. National PATAMABA structure**



The **Congress** is the highest decision-making body of the organization. It has the power to amend the Constitution and by-laws, approves strategic programmes and projects and elects the members of the National Council. It is composed of representatives coming from the local chapters and incumbent National Council members who meet every three years. Decisions are based on at least three-quarters of the votes of the representatives in attendance during the Congress.

Prior to convening of the Congress, pre-congresses are held in all local chapters (either regional provincial or municipal chapters) to discuss the proposed agenda of the Congress and input their ideas, suggestions and recommendations. In the pre-congresses, the representatives of the local chapters to the National Congress are elected.

The **National Council** is composed of 17 members and serves as the highest governing body of the organization until such time that the Congress is convened. It approves policies, plans, projects and activities based on the decisions of the Congress. It meets twice a year and elects the members of the Executive Committee.

The **Executive Committee** is composed of nine members, namely, the National President, the National Vice-President who is also the Chairperson for Organizing, and chairpersons respectively for education and training; projects and fund raising; networking, advocacy and paralegal work; marketing; health and social protection; and the Secretary; and the Treasurer. The Committee is responsible for the day-to-day operations of PATAMABA and the Chairperson for organizing monitors the activities of the local chapters on a quarterly basis. It meets once a month or as the need arises.

PATAMABA leadership is made up of HBWs and informal workers. The majority of them have high school and grade school education. Out of the nine members of the Executive

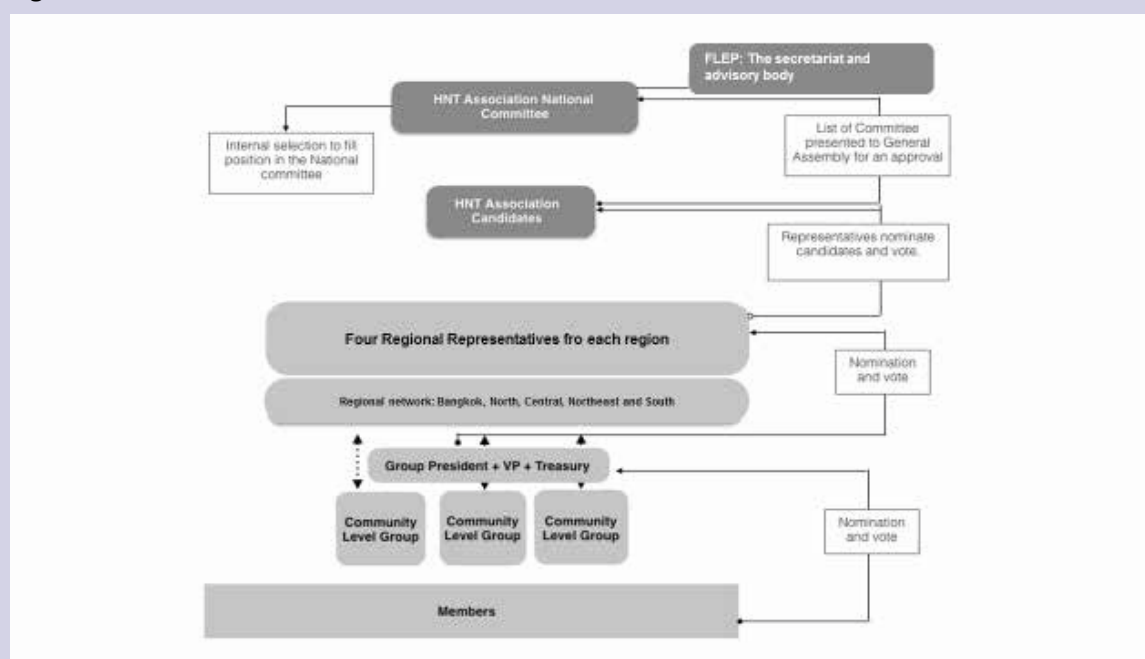
Committee, only three were able to finish college or a university education but are all engaged in home-based work. Two of them finished a degree in commerce; one is currently producing fashion accessories and the other produces footwear and homecare products. Another one is a graduate of Education and was a former sawali weaver.

In terms of **representation and voting rights** during Congress, the number of voting representatives is 10 per cent of the total membership of the highest local structure. The regional structures can field four candidates for an elective position in the national office; the provincial structures have three candidates while the municipal structures have two candidates. The candidates must be elected officers of the respective local structures. Affiliates, on the other hand, are clustered into six sub-sectoral groups and are allowed to field one candidate per sub-sectoral group.

### Example 5.1.3: The institutional and decision-making structure of HomeNet Thailand, HNTA and FLEP

HomeNet Thailand or the HNT has functioned as a **network** of occupational HBWs' groups and support NGOs since the early 90s and the HNTA, the association of HBWs was registered only in 2013. The members of the HNTA are mostly women working in the garment subcontracting industry. In communities members form into occupational groups with group leaders in four regions and Bangkok. In each region these group leaders elect regional representatives, who nominate and elect the candidates for the HNTA National Committee which is then presented to the General Assembly for approval. The current Committee members have been selected from the initiators of the HNTA, all of which are homeworkers, own account workers or informal workers who are regional or national HNT representatives. They meet four times a year to discuss the running of the Association and will serve as an interim committee for a year. In the future it is planned to elect the National Committee every three years.

Figure 4. HomeNet Thailand Association's structure and election mechanism



In the past, HNT decisions were made by the HBWs' leaders who were committee leaders but both HBWs' leaders and FLEP staff were represented in the Committee. Both had voting rights, thus the decision-making power belonged to the HBWs leaders and the FLEP even if FLEP decided to act as guiding partner and facilitator during Committee meetings. FLEP was responsible for book keeping and finance, administrative and secretariat functions because of its status as registered NGO.

The FLEP has been gradually transforming decision-making responsibility to HBWs' leaders in the HNTA network to prepare them to run the HNTA and take decisions based on the members' needs. In the future, FLEP and other experts will no longer participate in the voting and decision-making processes of the HNTA. FLEP has been responsible for supplying evidence-based research, developing policy papers and recommendations for HNTA's campaigns and policy advocacy because of its well established expertise, its connections with the academic network, and its capacity to attract international donors and to manage domestic and international research projects, which have complicated financial and administration requirements. As FLEP Director, Poonsap Suanmuang Tulaphan says:

*"It will be a demanding task for a newly registered association to run the financial and research management on its own, but HNTA gradually manages its own fund and FLEP involves them in participatory research so they can learn how to do this. I have witnessed many groups fall apart because of finance-related problems. When they receive funding from external funding agencies, they want to focus only on pursuing one's own interests and position in society rather than solving members' problems."*

HNTA as a membership-based organization for and by HBWs seems to enjoy more legitimacy at the national and international levels. However, HNTA and FLEP face several strategic challenges. Firstly, HNTA wants to increase the membership and thus receive more membership contributions. However, the annual contributions of members are very low amounting to THB 20 (around USD 0.80) per year. With the current membership of 5,000 HBWs this comes to an annual budget of THB 100,000 (around USD 3,200). The membership fee is used to cover transportation costs for the monthly meetings of the Committee members. All other activities such as printing a newsletter and holding meetings require external funding and the HNTA relies on FLEP and other internal or external donors to assist with resource mobilization, management and reporting.

Secondly, with such a small resource base it will be difficult to provide intensive leadership training to create a healthy number of young leaders, and to build members' capacities for their social and economic empowerment. With WIEGO support under the Inclusive Cities project, the HNTA and the FLEP organized intensive training and organizing. This has encouraged leaders to come forward. Several trained group leaders interviewed said that the best motivation for joining HNTA is the advancement of HNTA members at community level. For example, a female group leader, who was assisted by HNTA to form a Bangkok registered sewing group said:

*"When other homeworkers realize that joining a group is better than working alone and be exploited because of the race to the bottom among homeworkers, they express their interest to join. Subcontractors and brokers often claim they have been offered a lower price from other people in the community to keep the piece rate low. When we have a group and we have been trained to negotiate with brokers, we can agree and decide collectively. We have more bargaining power and eventually brokers give us a better rate than individual homeworkers."*

*When neighbours see that our group is doing well, they express their interest to learn about the group and I can introduce them to HomeNet.”*

Finally, it will be challenging for the Association to help their members to address their economic needs. HNTA members indicate that material and financial gains are the main reasons for people to join the association. In the past, FLEP has utilized labour law reform, occupational safety and health, and social security as entry points for organizing. Economic empowerment is, therefore, a relatively new goal for the HNTA. To date, HNTA has followed FLEP's strategy to act as a facilitator between HBWs groups and local, provincial or national public or private sector agencies to secure technical and financial support for the groups, for example, by helping a group to access a 'green market' outlet in the North-East.

## **Key strategies for building sustainable HBWs organizations**

Experience from SEWA, PATAMABA and the HBWs' organizations in Thailand show that HBWs organizations need to develop strategies to develop their organizations successfully in the fields of:

- Human resource management and development.
- Resource mobilization, financial resource planning, accounting, financial and administrative management, and auditing.
- Marketing.
- Technology management.
- Alignment with government policies and frameworks.
- Implementation.

Some of these issues are the results of increasing professionalism in the management of organizations; the changing profile of leaders, staff and volunteers in HBWs' organizations; and the impact of globalization and technological advancements.

## **Human resource management and development.**

The founders of the HBWs organizations in the four case studies were women, who were local and/or national leaders and organizers coming from the trade union and/or women's movement. They sought out and built capacities of HBWs who became leaders, first of community level occupational or trade groups, and later of provincial, regional, national and international HBWs' organizations.

During the initial stages, the HBWs' organizations and their support agencies have a relatively small, manageable team of leaders and implementers, consisting of HBWs and their supporters who share the same perceptions, commitment and approaches towards advancing the cause of HBWs. Many of them are volunteers and the HBW's leaders often have little formal education.

Over time, however, human resource management demands increasing attention particularly among HBWs' organizations with a large membership in a vast geographical area. Expansion calls for formal appointments and engagement of salaried staff who are relatively more educated. Slowly, managerial

and technical professionals also enter the organization. Ideally, larger HBWs' organizations have leaders and staff who are spirited, dependable, hard working and committed professionals. However, a major interest of salaried staff is generally their career development which may or may not be aligned with the vision, mission and goals of the HBWs' organization. Salaried staff also require job descriptions with clearly defined roles, functions and a performance appraisal system linked to compensation and rewards. The development of suitable human resource management policies and procedures is a challenge for large growing HBWs' organizations.

A human resource challenge faced by community-based HBWs organizations is that some HBWs' leaders are rent-seeking individuals who want to benefit economically or politically from the community-based group.

Finally, the case studies show that the composition of the leadership, many of whom are founders of the HBWs organizations, remains largely the same over the years, even if regular elections are held and the HBWs' organizations invest in training new generations of leaders. Planning of successor arrangements, therefore, is needed.

**Building managerial capabilities.** Through training, guidance, mentoring and learning-by-doing, strong and talented women became very effective in organizing, policy advocacy and resource mobilization. This is because the HBW organizations and their support organizations emphasized capacity development of HBWs to manage their primary organizations at the community level and set up MBOs. For example, the first four PATAMABA leaders faced the problem of upgrading their skills to be able to run a national organization effectively and efficiently. Most of them had grade school education and none had formal training in management and administration. Through seminar and workshops on planning, project development, business and financial management, as well as on-the-job training conducted with the help of supportive professionals, they have shown that they are capable of applying the acquired skills to run their own organization.

#### Good Practice 5.1.2: Building managerial capacities of HBWs

SEWA believes that women's empowerment is not possible without capacity building. An external agency or institution can help or guide HBWs in their struggles in specific points in time. But in the long run, HBWs and their organizations have to develop their own technical, human and managerial capacities. Therefore, capacity building on organizing and organization building has to be planned as a continuous programme through training and exposure visits.

Secondly, in the process of women's empowerment, SEWA realized that for managing their organizations better, HBWs must develop their 'business mind' and managerial capabilities. When SEWA started to focus on women's enterprise development, it felt the need for capacity building on economic empowerment to survive in global competition. As a strategic response, SEWA established the SEWA Academy, now known as the Indian Academy of Self-Employed Women (IASEW) for training and capacity building of HBWs and other members. This Academy conducts SEWA related trainings, membership trainings, life skill trainings and literacy training. It also conducts research which provides a base for new SEWA initiatives for her members. Later on in 2005, SEWA established SEWA Manager Ni School (SMS) which organizes training programmes and other capacity building initiatives on managerial, human and technical aspects of micro enterprise development.

## Resource mobilization, and financial and administrative management.

Mobilization of financial resources to run a HBWs' support organization is crucial to enable operations. Founders, leaders, Committee members and advisers will usually provide voluntary guidance to the organization. Leaders and members will generally also commit volunteer time and resources to lead and contribute to the organization, especially at the start and regularly thereafter, for example, for membership drives or policy advocacy rallies. However, there is a need to mobilize financial resources to carry out substantive activities to reach organizational aims, such as providing services to members, developing capacities, expanding membership, and engaging in action research, public relations, policy advocacy and networking. In addition, staff of, for example, cooperatives, HBWs' marketing organizations, and support NGOs, federations must be remunerated, as they do this work for a living. HBWs who take on full-time outreach and organizing work also need to be remunerated.

Resource mobilization is, therefore, part and parcel of the regular work of HBWs' organizations and their support agencies. The PATAMABA and the HNTA-FLEP case studies explain resource mobilization strategies with regard to sustaining the local chapters and running the national and regional/provincial structures. The HWW reports that it was not possible to sustain CECAM's work after external funding dried up, while the MWPRI in Indonesia also reports that its activities depend on whether external resources could be secured. The IASEW case study does not address this issue.

As mentioned earlier, the main strategy of PATAMABA and the HNTA-FLEP for meeting the development needs of their members are to attract external donor financing from within or outside the country for activities and staff undertaking research, policy advocacy and pilot projects, and to meet economic needs of HBWs community groups by linking them to programmes and resources from local, national or international government and other agencies' programmes and budgets. The PATAMABA case study also emphasizes the importance of self-reliance, of women leaders budgeting and saving resources to run the organization at local and national levels. In recent years, the HNTA-FLEP case study has also started to set fees for the start of and annual membership but the amounts are so small that they only allow for meeting the transportation costs of Committee members for meetings.

In terms of financial planning, management, reporting and auditing systems, HBWs organizations need to develop financial and administrative systems in line with reporting and auditing requirements of the organization and its donors. Accounting is not just record-keeping, but is also a tool in decision-making. For example, if a primary organization of HBWs is considering a revision of membership subscription, past data on such subscriptions can be helpful in decision-making. Similarly, basic accounting can also help in generating information on costs and fund flows. Such information can help in managerial decision-making on cost and fund management.

HBWs' organizations should also develop a strategy with regard to the administrative records that will be maintained to generate reports for planning, oversight and supervision. Administrative records go beyond the financial system and also cover non-financial operations like membership records, minutes of meetings, records of training days and field visits, employee records, etc.

**Marketing and public relations strategies.** The design of successful marketing and public relations strategies is important for HBWs in many aspects. At the level of primary organizations, HBWs groups need to market their products or services to consumers, or other actors in local, national or global value chains. Homeworkers need to obtain adequate work from contractors and other middlepersons, and negotiations need to take place with suppliers of material or equipment. This requires a business and marketing mindset with attention for product or service aspects like quality, punctuality, consistency and negotiating payment terms and conditions.

In policy advocacy, campaigning and organizing, HBWs and their organizations also need to market their ideas and agenda's in calls for negotiations, representations and communication with several agencies, such as government and various service providers like banks, insurance companies, and training institutions.

**Technology management.** Technologies change fast and this has a, sometimes, profound impact on the viability of HBWs' economic activities and the effectiveness of their organizations. Technology strategies for HBWs' organizations may cover issues like use of new technologies in campaigning, the application of information technology, new skill development, financial assistance, record generation, maintenance and upkeep. It is important for HBWs and their organizations to remain up-to-date with technological advancements, because such changes have implications for skill development, employment, incomes, investments and material infrastructures. On the whole, technology strategies should, where feasible, ensure that new technologies do not result in reduction of employment and income of HBWs.

### Regular monitoring to ensure effective implementation

The IASEW case study emphasizes that the design of a strategy or measure does not guarantee success in organizing HBWs, meeting their needs and achieving their goals. Much also depends on how strategies are implemented. For example, training requires follow-up, and new or revised laws need to be implemented and enforced. This requires persistent and sometimes long-drawn struggles, and continuous follow-up and monitoring.

SEWA observes that many HBWs' organizations, particularly those at the primary level do not have a clear and integrated perspective on how to manage and organize their plans and reach their objectives. Such HBWs' organizations do not have efficient accounting and record-keeping systems or do not keep them in order. They find it difficult to prepare management and output-oriented reports and information. They do not have efficient marketing strategies and cost-effective technology applications in place and they are often not able to engage in quick decision-making in a general way.

## 5.2 HBWs' alliances and networking at the national and international levels

Successful policy advocacy requires intensive networking and cooperation between like-minded organizations and beyond. In the early 90s, national and international HBWs' organizations, supported by the international trade union and women's movements, rallied around home work. They successfully lobbied for the preparation and adoption of international standards for the protection and development of subcontracted homeworkers at two successive International Labour Conferences in the mid 90s, resulting in the adoption of Home Work Convention No. 177 and Recommendation No. 184 in 1996.

## National level cooperation and networking

In many countries, HBWs organizations have joined other organizations of informal economy workers, including street workers, cyclo and (motor) taxi drivers, domestic workers and entertainment workers to lobby for legal reform, better policies, programmes and projects in the labour and social protection, and economic development arenas at the national and international levels. For example, in Thailand, HNTA and FLEP have worked intensively with other informal workers organizations and networks to extend informal workers' access to social security.

### Good practice 5.2.1: Strengthening the network through critical self-assessment

As mentioned in section 4.6, PATAMABA and other HBW constituencies set up HomeNet Philippines in 2006 as a network of 25 HBWs organizations, an NGO, a cooperative and experts to come up for the rights of HBWs and HomeNet Philippines became the main organizer in the campaign for the passage of the MACWIE bill with human and financial resources contributed by the network members.

An internal review in 2010 concluded:

- Identified strengths of HomeNet Philippines' were: skills and competence of leaders in each member-organization; IT skills of some; sense of volunteerism; capacity to produce policy, information, education and communication materials; skills in policy formulation; and the capacity to organize and engage members in advocacy work.
- Identified weaknesses included a lack of funds to sustain efforts both at the level of member-organizations and the coalition; the lack of registration as a legal entity of some member-organizations; problems of coordinating and synchronizing advocacy activities between the coalition and the local chapters of the member-organizations; and inability to maximize communication facilities for coordination purposes. All these weaknesses were basically related to a lack of funding and an adequate number of people to complete the various tasks within the network.

HomeNet Philippines made an effort to build on its existing strengths and overcome organizational weaknesses. Its 2014 report to its Congress showed the progress made by the coalition in terms of sustainability, unity, funds and development of second line leaders. The network has shown that an advocacy programme can be maintained through small contributions made by the different member-organizations, volunteerism of its leaders and sharing other resources to ensure that the different components of the advocacy work are implemented. Each organization also takes specific tasks and roles (aside from the formal leadership roles) through volunteer work at the Secretariat.

The PATAMABA case study concludes that HomeNet Philippines needs to further build on its strengths and that the current annual dues are very minimal to finance the advocacy agenda of the coalition. Other means to raise funds to sustain advocacy strategies and disseminate the advocacy agenda should be explored. Another important aspect is renewing the leadership profile. The majority of the current leaders of member-organizations are people above 40 years old. Therefore, the coalition involves young leaders in the implementation of activities at various levels in order to hone their skills in lobbying and advocacy work

## Regional cooperation in Asia

There are two networks of HBWs' organizations in Asia. In the South Asia region, SEWA, UNIFEM, WIEGO and other support organizations, like FNV have been supporting HomeNet South Asia (HNSA), a network of 600 HBWs organizations from Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.<sup>24</sup> SEWA also supports SEWA Afghanistan.

HomeNet South-East Asia (HomeNet SEA) was formalized as a network of HBWs' organizations and NGOs in 1997. Its founding members from Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand were joined first by NGOs from Cambodia and Lao PDR and later from Viet Nam and Malaysia to empower HBWs and other informal workers and table their concerns and priorities on national and regional policy agenda's in the subregion.

## International action

**Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing.** WIEGO is a global action-research-policy network dedicated to increasing the voice, visibility and validity of informal workers. It was established in 1997 by 10 informal economy specialists (from the French Institute for Development Cooperation, Harvard University, HWW, ILO, SEWA, UNIFEM, the United Nations Statistical Division and the World Bank). It now consists of 176 individual and institutional members from 40 countries.

WIEGO has been set up as a membership network with members from three constituencies: organizations of informal workers; researchers and statisticians; and development practitioners. WIEGO's main strategies are to:

- Strengthen organizations and networks of informal workers.
- Improving statistics and research on informal workers.
- Promoting fair policies, regulations and practices in support of informal workers.

### Example 5.2.1: Outcome of Global Conference of HBWs in early 2015

The conference was organized by HNSA and WIEGO in New Delhi and brought together 60 networks, associations and trade unions of HBWs, together with NGOs and researchers from 24 countries. The Conference issued the Delhi Declaration of HBWs and called for:

- Recognition of the contribution of women HBWs to family income security and to local and national economies, and prioritization of the protection and development of HBWs in poverty reduction and women's empowerment initiatives and programmes.
- Design and implementation of laws and practical measures on social and labour protection, based on decent work principles and workers' rights so HBWs can live in dignity, free from discrimination, poverty and deprivation through:
  - ◆ Recognition of HBWs as workers.
  - ◆ Extending and enforcing labour laws and protection: the right to fair prices in markets for the self-employed and fair piece rates for subcontracted workers; the right to secure, transparent contracts: work contracts for subcontracted

workers and commercial transactions for the self-employed; protection from exploitation: provision of poor quality raw materials, arbitrary cancellation of work orders or rejection of goods, or delayed payments; and the right to labour inspection and complaint resolution mechanisms.

- ◆ Support to HBWs' organizations and networks to achieve legal and formal status to enhance access to public and private services and benefits.
- Systematic data collection on HBWs and their contribution to national economies.
- Recognition of the rights to freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining in line with ILO Conventions No. 87 and No. 98.
- Building better and inclusive markets.
- Formulation of effective local and national policies for HBWs.
- Extending social protection to HBWs.
- Providing essential urban infrastructure services to HBWs.
- Ratification of ILO Home Work Convention No. 177.

**Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI).** HBWs' organizations and their support NGOs have also sought ways to work directly with the larger retail companies, that are often the most powerful economic actors in many subcontracting chains. International networks of HBWs' organizations link local organizations of homeworkers to campaigning and advocacy in the countries where the transnational companies have their customer-base. Thus, in 1998 an alliance of companies, trade unions and NGOs established the ETI with the aim of improving the lives of workers in global supply chains by promoting responsible corporate practice that supports this goal. ETI specializes in developing new approaches and tools for implementing codes of practice that address supply chain labour conditions, and is widely recognized as a global leader in this area. ETI is funded by member contributions and a grant from the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The ETI Base code is founded on ILO conventions and has become a model on which other codes are based. The ETI Base code contains the following principles which must be respected in any economic activity:

- Employment is freely chosen.
- Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are respected.
- Working conditions are safe and hygienic.
- Child labour shall not be used.
- Living wages are paid.
- Working hours are not excessive.
- No discrimination is practiced.
- Regular employment is provided.
- No harsh or inhumane treatment is allowed.

**Good practice 5.2.2: Homeworker guidelines of the Ethical Trade Initiative<sup>25</sup>**

In 2002 an ETI Homeworkers Group was set up by ETI members. They conducted research among homeworkers in the Christmas cracker industry in the UK and in the embellishment industry in India. The group developed the ETI 'Homeworker guidelines: Recommendations for working with homeworkers' which were field tested, and published in 2006 in close cooperation with HBWs' organizations. The guidelines aim to increase the understanding on how to interpret, monitor and implement the ETI Base code with homeworkers. The ETI homeworker guidelines seek to provide practical guidance to ETI members, retailers, suppliers and others on:

- Identifying the presence of homeworking in supply chains.
- Applying, implementing and monitoring the ETI Base code with homeworkers.
- Meeting the standards of the ETI Base code with homeworkers.

The guidelines present definitions of homeworking, the extent and characteristics of home work in international chains. It summarizes different initiatives tried out by commercial actors as well as trade unions and NGOs around the world to improve labour conditions with homeworkers. It explains the essential principles and the two different approaches to implementing these guidelines: individual activity and collaborative work, including through multi-stakeholder groups. It sets out what retailers, suppliers (agents, cooperatives, exporters, contractors and subcontractors) can do to improve labour standards among homeworkers.

A comprehensive toolkit helps to implement the guidelines' recommendations in practice. These include:

- Model policy on homeworking for retailers and suppliers.
- Sample mapping tools for gaining information about the presence of homeworking in supply chains, including a sample supply chain map.
- Application framework to interpret each ETI Base code clause in the homeworking context, plus actions and indicators which can be used to implement and verify Base code provisions with homeworkers.
- Questions to obtain information from homeworkers and a logbook for homeworkers' use.
- Guidance on how to conduct time and motion studies to establish fair piece rates and a list of companies which can help.
- Details of SEWA's insurance fund and further information about purchasing practices and how these can undermine the principles of the Base code.

SEWA, an ETI member, used the homeworker guidelines to establish RUAAB, a producer company of home-based women artisans eliminating layers of middlepersons by facilitating direct links with buyers in the global embellishment industry and ensuring fair incomes and work security for the workers.<sup>26</sup>

The case study by HWW points out that there have been both positive and negative results from the ETI's work on homeworking. On the positive side:

- ETI member companies are much more likely to recognize the value of the work done by homeworkers than those who are not members. Homeworkers have been made visible in the chains and became recognized by retailers. There is some acceptance that homeworkers are producing for global supply chains and should be treated like other workers and ways found to include them in accessing some legal rights.
- As a result of this acceptance, retailers and brands have encouraged their suppliers to be transparent about subcontracting and particularly about homeworking. Earlier, many companies would simply prohibit homeworking and see it as an unauthorized form of subcontracting. As a result of more transparency, there is more recognition and value given to homeworking and more openness about the problems.
- It has been demonstrated that it is possible to trace subcontracting chains and identify where homeworkers are found in the chains.
- In India, some companies have adopted specific homeworking policies, employed staff to deal with homeworking and committed to ensure minimum standards of pay and conditions. Some homeworkers have been able to access government welfare schemes and a minority has received an increase in pay.

However, there is still a long way to go before companies commit to fully implement the ETI code and apply the core standards in the Base code to the employment of homeworkers. Low pay and lack of access to order and work continue to be problematic. Few homeworkers receive minimum wages, let alone living wages, particularly if the regularity of work is taken into account. However, there are no compliance methods except the risk of damage to a company's reputation because adherence to the Base code is voluntary. Most companies have made no commitment to paying minimum wages to homeworkers. The main barriers appear to be company pricing and ordering practices that have had an influence on their lack of willingness to make this commitment throughout their supply chain. It appears that in most cases, ETI company representatives failed to have sufficient influence to have an impact on company pricing practices, often driven by buyers looking for the lowest prices.

Recognition and visibility for homeworkers are an important first step and can be used as a starting point for those organizing homeworkers at the end of the supply chain. There is less of a danger of homeworkers losing their work if local HBWs' organizers can make alliances with the HomeNet alliances, HWW, WIEGO, ETI the international trade union, women's, cooperative and fair trade movements and use this as a channel to the end user of their products. With local HBWs' organizers at one end of the chain with links with campaigners and NGOs and trade unions at the other end, there is the possibility of working from both sides to bring about decent work for homeworkers.

However, without a firm commitment from transnational retailers as well as local enterprises engaging HBWs to the implementation of core labour standards, and a willingness to bear their share of the costs, both in terms of time and changed business practices, as well as financial support, voluntary approaches still leave the burden of campaigning for basic labour standards to the HBWs' organizations and their support agencies.

## 6. The way forward

This report draws conclusions from the expertise, provided by the HBWs' organizations which contributed to this synthesis report. It summarizes the main achievements, good practices and lessons learned. It highlights important organizing principles, approaches and strategies, and provides suggestions for future action by home-based workers' and their organizations working at the local, organizational and policy levels to (i) develop, empower and organize HBWs, (ii) improve their working and living conditions, and (iii) establish sustainable HBWs' organizations.

### 6.1 Conclusions

HBWs in many countries started to organize in new ways, because traditional methods of organizing formal sector workers were not adequate to meet the challenge of the increasing new forms of informal employment. The case studies show that new forms of organizing have been tried out, tested and selected by HBWs and their organizations in Chile, India, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand.

#### Starting the organizing process

##### Horizontal and vertical organizing

In most cases, action started with women's unionists and labour rights activists initiating capacity development with HBWs and helping them set up their own organizations. The economic needs and concerns of HBWs in the same occupation formed the rallying point for organizing. Some local trade unions were established by HBWs at the community levels, but the majority of HBWs' community group leaders and members decided to set up occupational groups, trade groups, labour groups, self-help, savings or (pre-)cooperative groups.

Work started with capacity development of the HBWs, learning about human, women's and workers' rights, on gender, economic and political relations, on organizing, negotiating and advocacy, building self-confidence and skills to improve their income earning capacities. Such education and training was most successful if it involved active participation, genuine two-way communication processes, drawing from experience, learning-by-doing and personal commitment. In the process solidarity and friendships were built, which could be called upon in times of need.

In community-based organizations HBWs learned how to organize themselves and others, to increase their social capital and income, and mobilize other HBWs to become active and join a HBWs' group. They became adept in formulating their priorities and demands, speaking for themselves in their families and communities, and working to improve their incomes through cooperation between themselves and negotiating with employers or their representatives, and/or buyers or traders and the local authorities.

From the horizontal organizing of HBWs groups in communities, vertical structures were built. HBWs' groups leaders emerged who were elected to campaign beyond the community level to fight for institutional, policy and legal reform. As the IASEW case study states: At the grassroots level HBWs learn how to negotiate with retailers and suppliers (agents, contractors or subcontractors and buyers or exporters) and the local authorities. At the next level they have to struggle against ineffective policies and procedures as well as institutional machineries which are bureaucratic and not service-oriented, and at the third level they have to fight for legal reform and changes in laws, socio-economic policies and development programmes as well as exploitative trade and labour practices at the national and global levels.

Vertical organizing through elected leaders at the various levels allows for the identification of common problems, the sharing of local solutions and the translation thereof into local and national agenda calling for legal and policy reform and practical measures. National HBWs' agenda based on the realities in communities and specific trades or occupations is considered genuine by policymakers. Widespread, concerted campaigning on the same priorities by representative membership-based HBWs' groups and support agencies allows for the build-up of sufficient pressure to result in legal reform and policy changes, but often only after years of persistent struggle.

## **Achievements and challenges**

Over the past 25 to 40 years, SEWA in India, PATAMABA in the Philippines, and HNTA and FLEP in Thailand managed to develop HBWs' human resources and social capital, and attract local, national and international financial resources to successfully:

- Organize HBWs at the primary level in occupational or trade groups, or as cooperatives or associations in communities.
- Establish a membership-based organizational structure of HBWs with elected leaders from the local up to the national levels.
- And in the case of SEWA, set up a range of sister institutions run by members to provide economic, financial, research and capacity building support functions to members.

SEWA registered as a trade union from the start and later developed many other types of membership-directed support organizations, many of them in the economic sphere. PATAMABA registered as an NGO but later also as a workers' organization, and also registered with government departments in charge of cooperatives, women's development, and trade and industry at the national level and with Local Government Units at the decentralized levels. In Chile CECAM's women trade union leaders also had the explicit vision of establishing an MBO directed by the HBWs themselves, but in the end could not successfully reach this goal within the limited available timespan of three to four years. HomeNet

Thailand started and operated as a HBWs and NGO network for many years and established the HomeNet Thailand Association (HNTA) in 2013 with FLEP, the ‘parent’ NGO, carrying out the major support functions.

In Indonesia, the ILO/MAMPU project worked with existing and new support organizations to organize HBWs with a focus on homeworkers. The MWPRI which has operated as a network of CSOs supporting HBWs and HBWs’ leaders for around 20 years remains predominantly active in East Java province and new CSO partners started work in other provinces since mid 2014. Setting up a vertical structure of HBW’s organizations with elected HBWs’ leaders representing the community at the district up to the provincial and the national level remains a priority for future action in Indonesia.

### Fundamental organizing principles

The emphasis of SEWA on the organizing principles of self-reliance and working one’s self out of poverty to achieve decent work and social protection, and PATAMABAs emphasis on the importance of HBWs organizing and empowering themselves seem to be essential ingredients for the building of sustainable membership-based organizations, that are owned by HBWs from the start.

This means that the underlying philosophy behind any organizing should start with capacity development to help HBWs help themselves. Any economic support services such as helping homeworkers to negotiate with subcontractors or finding market outlets or credit sources for the self-employed should be done **with** HBWs and be done only **after** HBWs have learned about the importance of self-development and empowerment, and the values of organizing and collective action to improve their incomes and working and living conditions, and have built their own skills to earn income through, for example, negotiating, proposal writing, book keeping, or financial literacy. Providing economic support to HBWs only can result in continued dependency on external support, culturing a hand-out mentality or rent-seeking behaviour within HBWs organizations.

### Holistic, phased approach and integrated strategies

As the economic and social concerns of HBWs in poverty are many, multi-faceted and intertwined, all HBWs’ organizations have developed an integrated approach to address these needs. Priorities of HBWs usually include a combination of addressing deficiencies in respect for human, women’s and workers’ rights, and gender equality; in access to decent work, productive resources and assets, and living wages or incomes; in access to social security, safe work, adequate housing and workplaces, and in representation and voice in decision-making on issues that affect their life and work. Most HBWs’ organizations use a phased approach to organizing, starting with fact-finding, identifying pressing concerns of HBWs and the causes hereof, followed by capacity development to address HBWS’ practical and strategic needs. Further actions are determined by the priorities of HBWs and available entry points in their immediate or the larger policy, institutional and legal business environment.

## Improving HBWs' working and living conditions

### Legal reform

Policy advocacy for legal reform on **labour and social security protection** has been successful in India, the Philippines and Thailand, although much remains to be done. In India, SEWA successfully lobbied for the implementation of existing laws on labour and social protection in certain industries, such as bidi manufacturing and garment stitching, and the extension of legal and social protection to several other industries, such as incense stick rolling, cotton pod shelling and embroidery. In the Philippines and Thailand, PATAMABA and the HomeNet Thailand and the FLEP, among others, were instrumental in the adoption of specific labour legislation to protect and promote the development of homeworkers.

Legal reform to extend coverage of HBWs under labour, social, trade/industry and civil or commercial laws is crucial to achieve the protection and development opportunities HBWs should be entitled to like other workers. It is vital to start lobbying for legal reform at the decentralized and national levels at an early stage. This requires longer timeframes than the customary two to five year funding cycles of development projects, as well as persistence, often over many years. However, legal reform remains very necessary. Experiences by the HBWs' support organizations in Chile and Indonesia have shown that awareness-raising, negotiations and policy advocacy with the local authorities, employers and their subcontractors, or traders can lead to practical measures to improve the working and living conditions of HBWs at the local levels. But, political and public commitment must be enshrined in the law, policies and programmes must be adopted, and budgets allocated to obtain institutional support and mobilize public resources and services for HBWs in the long run.

While the adoption of appropriate legislation is a necessary condition for overall progress, it is not sufficient. Where labour laws or regulations for subcontracted homeworkers have been adopted, effective implementation has generally been seriously flawed, as reported in the case studies from India, the Philippines and Thailand. For this reason HBWs' organizations emphasize the importance of **representation** of HBWs in decision-making bodies, mechanisms and processes. In India, SEWA participates in labour monitoring and social welfare boards in selected industries where many SEWA members work. In Thailand, HNTA representatives are represented in the Home Work Committee established under the *Homeworker Protection Act*, and in the National Health Security Office Board. In the Philippines, PATAMABA is represented in the Anti-Poverty Commission and many other policy-making bodies.

### Economic empowerment

Basic education and functional and financial literacy are skills that HBWs with little education need to learn. Generally, HBWs' organizations encourage HBWs to move from subcontracted home work into self-employment and shift from individual micro-entrepreneurship to establish some form of group enterprise, such as cooperatives or other forms of social enterprises. However, where there is a strong economic demand for home workers, groups may wish to continue carrying out home work.

In order to meet the economic needs of community level member groups, HBWs' organizations and their support NGOs play an important role to enable HBWs' groups to participate in development programmes, and access funds and services. For example, in Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand, the HBWs' organizations and their support agencies may provide some seed money but they do not aim to secure major funds or economic support services for the HNTA grassroots members. Instead, they

do help with resource mobilization by connecting these members to local state funding agencies or other local partners. Matching HBWs initiatives with local administrative bodies and budgets ensures sustainability and continuation of activities, and this also enables them to access micro-finance loans or grants from public or private sources. In a similar vein, some buyers, retailers, suppliers or their subcontractors will call on HBWs organizations to link them to specific HBWs occupational groups, as these groups are generally more business-minded and quality conscious.

SEWA has set up a range of economic support organizations, such as SEWA cooperative bank, marketing and trade facilitation support as well as the IASEW academy to support the economic activities of her members. One of the regional PATAMABA chapters has been operating a micro-finance scheme for its members which is successful due to the intensive coaching and monitoring of the borrowers and their repayments by PATAMABA regional leadership over many years.

## Social security

There is general consensus among the ILO member States on the importance of providing a social protection floor to population groups in poverty. The countries' social security systems described in the HBW organizations' case studies are in development. However, for now, both subcontracted homeworkers and self-employed HBWs are only covered under publicly funded health schemes for the poor and the indigent in the Philippines and Thailand. Efforts to extend social security for the self-employed also to HBWs including subcontracted homeworkers have been made, but the contributions are generally not affordable to both subcontracted and self-employed HBWs. The social welfare boards in India provide some social assistance for HBWs in certain industries. In SEWAs home State, Gujarat, an Urban Informal Economy Workers Welfare Board has been created which provides welfare to HBWs such as incense stick rollers, garment workers and kite-makers.

Protection of HBWs against **occupational safety and health risks** is not available in any of the countries. As the home is also the workplace, and populations in poverty generally lack access to adequate infrastructure, such as electricity, clean water, affordable, sturdy houses and roads, occupational safety and health problems abound, jeopardizing the health and productivity of HBWs and their family members. HomeNet Thailand provides an example of successfully using OSH as a means of organizing homeworkers, and sensitizing first the local and then the national health and social security authorities to the need for basic health protection to HBWs.

## Building sustainable HBWs organizations

### Human and financial resource mobilization and management

Mobilizing adequate human and financial resources continues to be a paramount challenge for membership-based HBWs' organizations and their support agencies. The case studies show that there is a large talent pool of HBWs' leaders at the primary organizational levels whose potential can and must be harnessed from the start. Young generations of HBWs' leaders require training and capacity development to take the place of the older generations. Regular elections and limiting successive terms of elected leaders are the methods selected to choose the HBWs' leaders although various HBWs' organizations seem to have the same elected leaders for many years.

HBWs' support NGOs and networks tend to rely on salaried staff for managerial, programming, financial, administrative, IT and other specific functions. For example in Thailand HBWs' leaders have

from the start relied on the support NGO FLEP to attract financial resources, implement development projects and provide training and other services to members. SEWA and PATAMABA leaders frequently volunteer their time to carry out leadership functions. Within SEWA and its sister institutions, HBWs' leaders have increasingly recruited paid staff to manage and run these institutions. This can be challenging as larger numbers of paid staff require setting up professional human resource management, development, supervision and evaluation functions. Attitudes of HBWs' leaders who are fully committed to the HBWs' vision, goals and mission and of paid staff who have a job to earn income may not always be aligned.

In terms of meeting the primary organizations' need for financial resources, the HBWs' organizations in the Philippines and Thailand do not provide substantial business development support services, such as credit, market outlets or work orders, but link their primary organizations' members to local government and private sector programmes and funds. SEWA is providing many of these economic support functions through its sister institutions.

Longer term, relatively modest external resources are needed to build the organizational capacity of HBWs and their organizations, engage in policy advocacy beyond the community level and provide services to their members. As the example of CECAM in Chile and the MWPRI in Indonesia seem to show, the precariousness and informality of much of women's home-based work and the absence of protective legislation make it difficult to build stable structures overnight. The good practices and examples from the other HBWs organizations have shown that HBWs can successfully be brought together to organize and build sustainable organizations, networks and alliances. However, where membership fees and dues are collected from members, these are very small. They serve to cover, for example, transportation and meeting costs of HBWs leaders but can not cover the cost of professional staff and the management of larger scale programmes and projects over any prolonged periods of time.

### **Building partnerships and alliances**

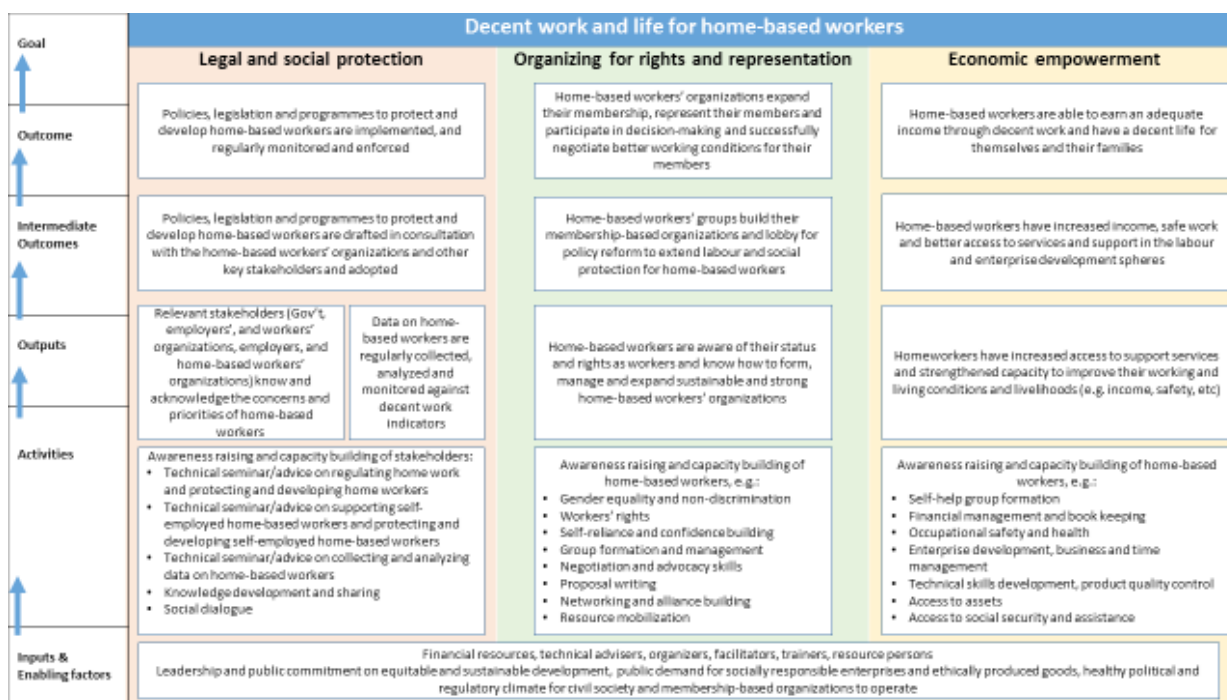
Successful HBWs organizations have built relations with supportive government leaders and politicians at the various levels. They can also call on expert groups, committees, women's human rights or lawyer associations, workers' organizations, and fair trade or socially and ethically responsible companies and enterprise networks at the local, national and international levels to obtain professional legal and business advice and guidance. HBWs' organizations also form alliances with other groups of informal workers and form a larger coalition of informal economy workers to pursue major policy reform.

While organizing has to have its roots in local forms of mobilization, education and capacity development, international alliances and solidarity have an important part to play in ensuring that HBWs, along with all other women workers, have a voice of their own and organizations through which they can work to improve their working and living conditions.

## 6.2 Suggestions for future action

The HBWs' organizations which prepared the case studies for this report have amply demonstrated that collective organizing for rights and representation, achieving labour and social protection under the law and economic empowerment are crucial to enable HBWs to earn adequate income through decent work and ensure that they and their families can escape poverty and live a decent life. See Figure 5 which shows the theory of change to reach this goal.

Figure 5: Theory of change



The lessons and good practices of the HBWs and their organizations from the HBWs' organizations' case studies provide many specific suggestions for future action as follows:

### The start of action: Develop, empower and organize HBWs

- Build in the principle of self-reliance from the start. Avoid doing things for HBWs which they can learn to do for themselves, by themselves.
- Ensure that both social and economic goals and objectives are set by HBWs for their organizations at the different levels which are clear and agreed upon among the members and leaders. Translate objectives into a workplan and agree on who will do what by when.
- Identify the specific needs and concerns of local groups of HBWs and use these as an entry point to build capacity and alliances to address them through collective action.
- Address the economic needs of HBWs that are often the main driver for HBWs to seek help and work with others, with an emphasis on capacity development and collective action. Do not provide financial services or facilitate orders or marketing only, as it creates dependency.

- Encourage community level HBWs groups to start a savings groups as it calls for organizing regular meetings to collect payments.
- Maximize the use of existing community centers or gathering places to support HBWs' activities and initiatives.
- Invest time, energy and support to enable learning-by-doing and collective decision-making processes.
- Educate and train people on how to operate viable MBOs with economic, social and gender equality goals, including fair incomes and workloads, and shared decision-making between women and men in households, organizations and enterprises.
- Build self-confidence, leadership and negotiation skills so that HBWs can influence and convince traders, retailers, suppliers (agents, contractors, sub contractors, exporters), government and support organizations at different levels to support HBWs demands.
- In capacity development, broaden perspectives of HBWs to understand that individual problems often relate to larger inequalities and unequal power relations between men and women, the rich and the poor, peoples of different, ethnicity, colour and other differences, as applicable in each context.
- Address HBWs' practical and strategic needs as women and as workers from population groups in poverty, and invest in equality and non-discrimination training for HBWs, their families, and their leaders.

### **Decent work and social protection: Improve HBWs working and living conditions**

- Develop and design a holistic and phased approach with integrated strategies to address the multiple needs of low-income women HBWs and their families. The agenda for the social and economic empowerment of HBWs depends on each local situation, but strategies usually include a combination of:
  - ◆ Social justice and respect for HBWs' rights as women and workers through collective, organized strength aimed at the visibility, recognition, voice, representation, and validity of HBWs' and their organizations.
  - ◆ Capacity development of HBWs to enable them to compete in markets and value chains, and manage and run their own organizations.
  - ◆ Access to at least minimum piece rate wages for homeworkers and to productive resources for all HBWs – including adequate housing which are HBWs' workplaces – and access to financial services to build up assets in their own names.
  - ◆ Access to safe work, social security and assistance.
- Develop an agenda for legal and policy reform, and law enforcement at the decentralized and national levels.
  - ◆ Engage in extensive campaigning to raise awareness among HBWs and key stakeholders.
  - ◆ Have suggested solutions ready for review and consideration by policy makers or employers when advocating improvements in the working and living conditions of HBWs.

- ♦ Prepare multiple strategies when advocating, so that there is a back-up strategy to continue advocacy, in case the initial strategy does not work.
- ♦ Help draft new laws and policies.
- ♦ Address local level HBWs' realities and priorities in national agenda.
- ♦ Lobby for and ensure HBWs representation in decision-making mechanisms.
- Set priorities and objectives within specific timeframes:
  - ♦ Identify the needs, concerns and priorities of HBWs.
  - ♦ Scan their business environment to identify entry points and priorities for action.
  - ♦ Set goals and objectives that are achievable within specific time frames.
- Identify, take into account and address the intertwined vulnerabilities and disadvantages of specific groups of HBWs, caused by discrimination due to, for example, their gender, class, caste, race, colour and ethnicity, health conditions (such as disability and HIV infection), migrant status or any other characteristics which cause discrimination, and result in unequal treatment and opportunities.
- Promote work-life balance:
  - ♦ At the household level this means more equal sharing of paid and unpaid productive and reproductive duties and responsibilities between female and male household members.
  - ♦ At the organizational and workplace levels it means arranging for practical childcare facilities for workers with children.
  - ♦ At the policy level, it means encouraging public agencies and companies to invest in the provision of childcare facilities.
- Carry out extensive awareness raising on gender and HBW among the authorities at all levels, among employers, actors in subcontracting chains, traders and other important stakeholders about the value of women's work, and their contribution to the family, community, economy and society. Repeat this type of awareness raising at regular intervals as policy makers, government officials and other key actors change, and others take their place.
- Call for and facilitate evidence-based surveys for quantitative data and/or qualitative in-depth research related to working relations and working and living conditions of HBWs for negotiation with policy makers, the government officials, enterprises, intermediaries and subcontractors. Involve HBWs in the design and validation of research findings.

### **Building sustainable membership-based HBWs' organizations**

- The development of HBWs' organizations starts with jointly developing a vision, mission, goals, objectives and strategies of the HBWs' organization and doing a scan of the external business environment to identify opportunities, entry points, and priority action. Then, develop and design programmes and projects for which human and financial resources need to be identified.
- Draw up and implement an organizing strategy and campaign to recruit and retain members.

- Build in decision-making processes for the HBWs members to decide on the main directions of the organization and hold elected leaders and staff accountable.
- Engage external experts and resource persons to allow for informed decision-making.
- Clearly define and decide on the division of duties and responsibilities of members, leaders, staff and volunteers within HBWs' organizations.
- Record, report, document achievements of objectives and expected outcomes, production of outputs, carrying out activities and use of financial inputs. Ensure internal and external accountability processes through regular participatory internal and external evaluations and auditing.
- Small organizations means that HBWs' leaders and staff need to be able to switch roles and carry out multiple functions at the same time. In larger organizations, it is more effective to have professionals carrying out specific functions along clear hierarchical lines and supervised by HBWs' leaders and their selected experts as appropriate.

## Networking and alliances

- Explore, identify and work closely with key persons from the government, enterprises, NGOs and other institutions who can take up on HBWs' issues.
- Cultivate relationships and work simultaneously with the government, employers', workers' and other relevant organizations to identify areas and measures to contribute to improving the living and working conditions of HBWs.
- Engage the relevant government officials, enterprises and local leaders to create awareness and promote better understanding on the working conditions and specific challenges faced by homeworkers, so that they can support the efforts of HBWs.
- Identify available support programmes or schemes by the government or enterprises so that homeworkers can access and benefit from them, such as training programmes or finance schemes by the government or private service providers like banks, training by enterprises.
- Establish contacts with trade unions and other NGOs to explore areas for collaboration to improve the living and working conditions of HBWs, build alliances, and plan for collective policy advocacy.
- Establish and maintain contacts with HBWs' organizations, other membership-based organizations of informal workers and their support agencies at the local, national, regional, and international levels to share knowledge and experience, and develop joint agenda for action.
- Call on the ILO, UN Women and other relevant UN agencies in charge of developing, promoting and supervising international labour and human rights standards to ensure that HBWs are covered by these standards.
- Call on external donors to provide reliable financial support over longer timeframes.
- Call on multinational, national and local companies, international and other buyers, retailers and others to subscribe and adhere to the ETI Homeworker guidelines.
- Celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Home Work Convention No. 177 and Recommendation No. 184 in 2016 by calling on:

- ♦ The ILO to develop and implement a plan of action to start a ratification campaign and provide policy guidance to promote implementation.
- ♦ National governments to implement the Convention and develop national plans of action for the protection and development of HBWs.

## End Note

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- 1 Convention No. 177 has been ratified by Albania, Argentina, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Finland, Ireland, Netherlands, Tajikistan, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. More recent landmark international labour standards for informal women workers are the Domestic Workers' Convention No 189 and Recommendation No. 201, which were adopted in 2011 and, to date, have been ratified by 22 countries.
- 2 More information available at: [http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/104/texts-adopted/WCMS\\_377774/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/104/texts-adopted/WCMS_377774/lang-en/index.htm) (accessed 5 Sep. 2015).
- 3 See Convention No. 204 on the transition from the formal to the informal economy, for definitions, unless otherwise mentioned.
- 4 ILO; WIEGO: *Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Geneva, 2013).
- 5 Carr, M.; Chen, M. A.; Tate, J. 2000. "Globalization and home-based workers" in *Feminist economics*, 6:3, pp. 127.
- 6 ILO; WIEGO: *Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Geneva, 2013), p. 39.
- 7 More information available at: <http://www.bridge.ids.ac.uk/sites/bridge.ids.ac.uk/files/reports/re40c.pdf> (accessed 29 Aug. 2015).
- 8 UN Women; Ministry of Women's Affairs, Cambodia: *Training local authorities on gender and migration* (Phnom Penh, undated).
- 9 More information available at: <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTPOVERTY/XTEMPOWERMENT/0,,contentMDK:20272299~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:486411~isCURL:Y,00.html> (accessed 29 Aug. 2015).
- 10 Adapted from: UN Women and Interagency Network on Women and Gender Equality: *Good practices in gender equality promotion and gender mainstreaming from the United Nations system*, <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/goodpraexamples.htm> (accessed 13 October 2014), and Burt Perrin: *Combating child labour: Sample good practices guidelines* (ILO; UNICEF; World Bank, Geneva, 2003).
- 11 Adapted from <http://www.homenetthailand.org/index.php/en/law-and-policy/health-safety-en-gb-2/204-policy-brief-on-social-protection> (accessed 29 Aug. 2015).
- 12 Yayasan Pengembangan Pedesaan (the Rural Development Foundation), Bina Swadaya Yogyakarta Foundation, Yayasan Pemerhati Sosial Indonesia, and Lembaga Daya Darma.
- 13 LPM Merdeka University.
- 14 M. Fajerman: *Review of the regulatory framework for homeworkers in Indonesia 2013*. (Jakarta, ILO, 2014).
- 15 Haryans, also known as Dalits or Untouchables traditionally occupy the lowest place in the Hindy caste system.

- 16 Sources: ILO; WIEGO: *Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition* (Geneva, 2013), pp. 46.
- 17 USD 1.00 amounts to around PHP 44.00.
- 18 ILO: *Report of trade union consultation on home-based workers, 8 May 2015, New Delhi* (unpublished).
- 19 ILO: *Community childcare: Training manual* (Jakarta, 2015).
- 20 The adoption of overarching framework legislation is common in the Philippines. The passing of such legislation may take one or two decades or more. For example, a Magna Carta of Women and the Reproductive Health Act were adopted by the Philippine Congress in 2009 and in 2012 respectively.
- 21 M. Fajerman: *Review of the regulatory framework for homeworkers in Indonesia 2013*, (Jakarta, ILO, 2014).
- 22 Lim, L.L: *Employment Relationships and Working Conditions in an IKEA Rattan Supply Chain in Indonesia*, (Jakarta, ILO, 2015).
- 23 Chaleamwong; Meepian (2013), "Social Protection in Thailand's Informal Sector" in *Thailand Development and Research Institute (TDRI) Quarterly Review*. (2013, Bangkok), 28 (4), <http://tdri.or.th/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/t5d2013-final.pdf> (accessed on 20 Mar. 2015), quoted in case study for this report.
- 24 More information available at: [https://www.google.co.th/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=HomeNet+South+Asia&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&gws\\_rd=cr&ei=8UIVVtu1J8mLuATP9J\\_4Ag](https://www.google.co.th/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=HomeNet+South+Asia&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8&gws_rd=cr&ei=8UIVVtu1J8mLuATP9J_4Ag) (accessed 5 Oct. 2015).
- 25 Information on the ETI comes from the CECAM case study for this report by HWW and the ETI website which also provides a copy of: ETI, *Homeworker guidelines: Recommendations for working with homeworkers*, (2006, UK).
- 26 See: <http://sewadelhi.org/ruaab-sewa/> (accessed 5 October 2015).

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## Annex 1

### PATAMABA step-by-step guide for organizers on how to start organizing with home-based workers in communities

#### Key steps for organizing HBWs in communities

##### Step 1. Scan the community environment

Environmental scanning of a community is initially done by a PATAMABA leader, usually the Chairperson for Organizing with the help of a focal leader, such as an existing member or leader in a particular community. Scanning serves as entry point for contact building and identification of potential members and leaders in the area. Data is gathered through informal conversation about HBWs' own experiences and observations. A focal leader receives meal and transportation reimbursements charged to the Chairperson for Organizing.

During the first step, the Chairperson for Organizing seeks to find out the following information:

- How many home-based workers (HBWs) are there in the community? What is the number of potential recruits?
- What type of dwelling places do they live in?
- What types of work do they engage in?
- What problems do they encounter as workers?
- Have they been members of any organization?
- What are the existing local laws and regulations affecting HBWs in the community?
- Who are the potential allies and opponents in organizing HBWs?
- What are the resources available in the community?
- How many HBWs are motivated to take action?

If there are at least two HBWs who indicate their willingness to start a chapter in their community, PATAMABA will proceed to Step 2.

##### Step 2. Draft a recruitment plan

The Chairperson for Organizing and the focal leader form an Organizing Committee which is responsible for drafting a plan of action on how to proceed with the recruitment of home-based workers. The following points need to be included in the plan:

- **Contact person** (focal leader): Generally, it is best to work with a contact person who is known in the community as a trusted or a distinguished community leader or worker.
- **Meeting place**: An appropriate area where everyone feels comfortable to share their experiences or a workplace where the identified workers stay most of the time (house, terminal, market, etc.)

- **Meeting time:** HBWs are busy and their time is precious. An organizer must find out what is the best time to talk with them, e.g. during work breaks, 'merienda sena' (snack time) or at night.
- **Communication tools:** Speak with the HBWs in their own language as much as possible, and use a pamphlet and other simple reading materials to help explain the organization and its objectives.
- **Mobilizing issues:** HBWs usually face many serious and pressing concerns that require immediate attention. Develop and craft strategies together with them from the start to identify their priorities, how to address them, how to build campaigns to achieve certain goals and how to sustain the interest of HBWs to pursue these goals.

### Step 3. Organize a recruitment meeting and membership campaign

Once there are at least 17 potential recruits, an orientation and consultation meeting will be held. The orientation starts with an analysis of their problems as HBWs and how these are connected to larger issues in the community and society. A brainstorming follows on possible solutions to solve their problems. PATAMABA as an organization will also be introduced during the orientation.

Based on experience, the following questions and concerns will be voiced by participants:

- What assistance can your organization extend to us if we lose our job?
- I'm very busy attending to the needs of my children. I don't have time to attend meetings and related activities.
- Will you lend us money for capitalization?
- My husband will not allow me to attend meetings especially if these take place outside the community.
- How much do I pay as a member?
- What services or benefits will I get once I join your organization?
- How can we work together?
- Who is behind your organization? What is your political affiliation? You might just want to use us for your own agenda.
- Organizations like yours always conduct interviews but no positive changes happen in our lives. You are just wasting our time.

The above concerns need to be addressed. At the end of the activity, there will be participants who say:

- I think that your organization will be able to help us.
- I will be joining your organization.
- We will think about joining your organization.
- We learn new things.
- I now understand the meaning of home-based worker and informal worker.
- I realize that we are not the only ones who are in this situation.

- I realize the importance of being organized and united.
- I am now aware that there are laws or proposed legislation for our sector.

#### **Step 4. Build the organization**

As soon as there are 17 members or more in a particular barangay (community or neighbourhood), a barangay chapter will be formed by electing its set of officers. Also, capacity building activities will be scheduled to help strengthen the new chapter. The new leaders will go through a leadership seminar and later on will be mentored by the national or provincial leaders. A plan of action will be drafted by the chapter and this will be monitored and assessed on a regular basis.

### **Frequently asked questions**

Important messages to discuss with HBWs to help them understand their situation, and encourage them to organize and improve their livelihoods are as follows:

#### **What contributes to the current situation of women doing HBW work?**

- Most HBWs are women. They are compelled to seek ways to meet the day-to-day needs of their families. However, there is a notion that the earnings from women are just to supplement the household needs, when, in many cases, they are the main breadwinner of the family.
- Women HBWs often cannot go out due to their household duties and caring responsibilities. Therefore, they remain invisible and unrecognized by society and the labour movement.

#### **Why is it important to raise awareness and organize home-based workers?**

This work is important because:

- Nowadays, the number of home-based workers continues to increase due to the lack of jobs in workshops, factories and industries, as well as in agriculture.
- HBWs are not fully aware of their rights as workers and women, and do not realize that they make an important contribution to their family, community and society. Because of these contributions they have a right to obtain services from the government and other service providers.
- Since HBWs are isolated and wide-spread, it would be good for them to come together to form networks or legal organizations.

#### **Why increase the awareness of HBWs?**

Despite difficult experiences such as not being assured of adequate work and payment by their contractors or traders for their products and services, HBWs are still not fully aware of the challenges of their situation, or deal with this as an individual problem rather than being strong as a group.

An empowered person is someone who understands this situation, what brought it about and what one can do to change and improve these conditions. Part of this is to be fully aware of ways and means to overcome the challenges and improve their opportunities for better livelihoods.

**Is it right that home-based workers income is lower because they work at home and have no transportation cost?**

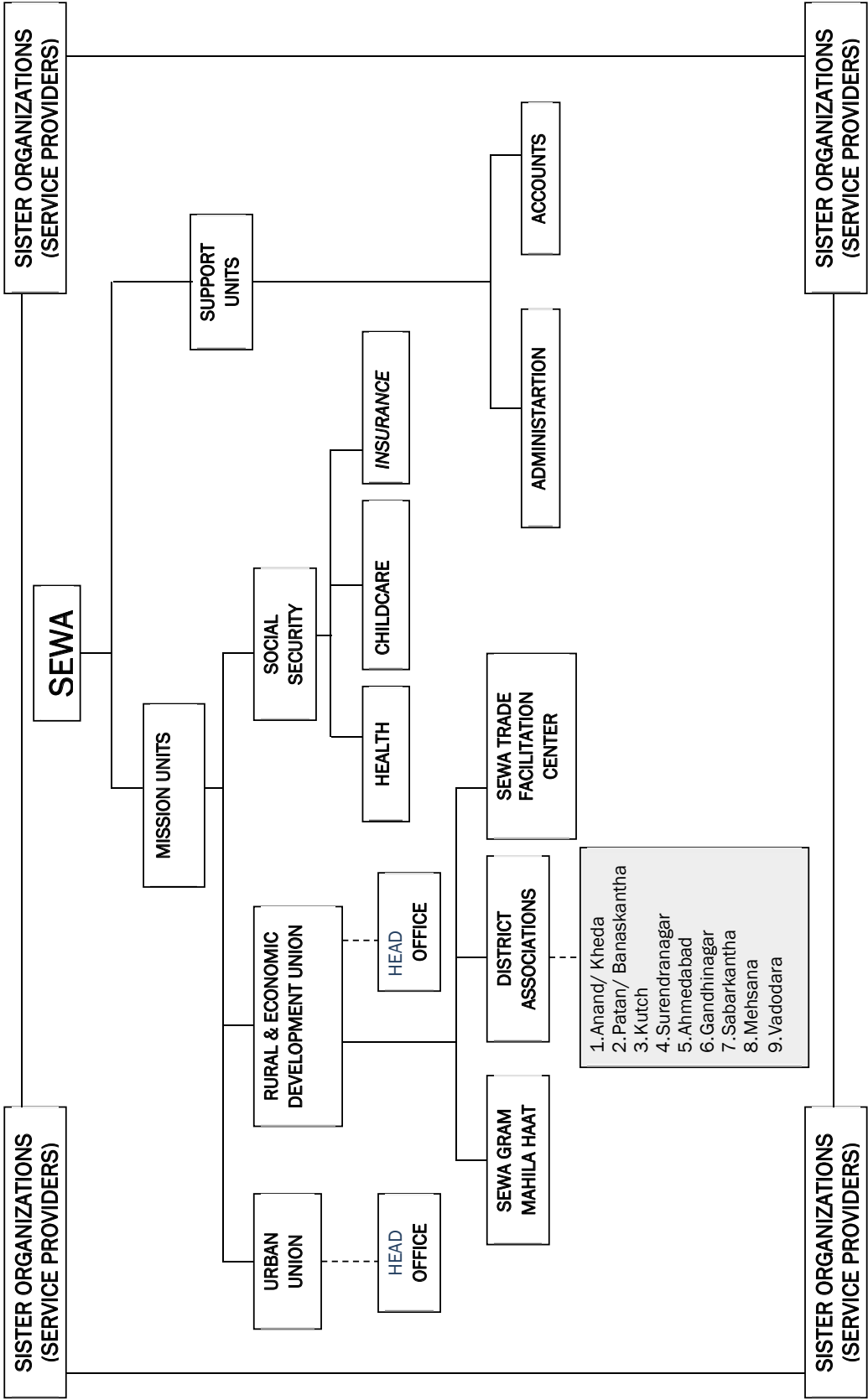
It is not justified to pay lower wages to HBWs since they have to cover various costs such as workplace and electricity, which is covered by the employer in factories. They often also do have transportation costs as they need to buy materials or equipment and deliver goods to subcontractors, traders or other buyers. Oftentimes, HBWs are also not provided with the usual benefits of workers in formal employment like social security, including health insurance, as well as paid vacation and sick leaves.

Further, it is not reasonable to provide lower wages to home-based workers, when one looks at the profits that importers are accumulating these days. For example, only PHP 1.00 is paid for making one baby dress, when in fact, this is being sold at about USD 15 or PHP 375 when exported abroad.

**Isn't it better to have a little income than none at all?**

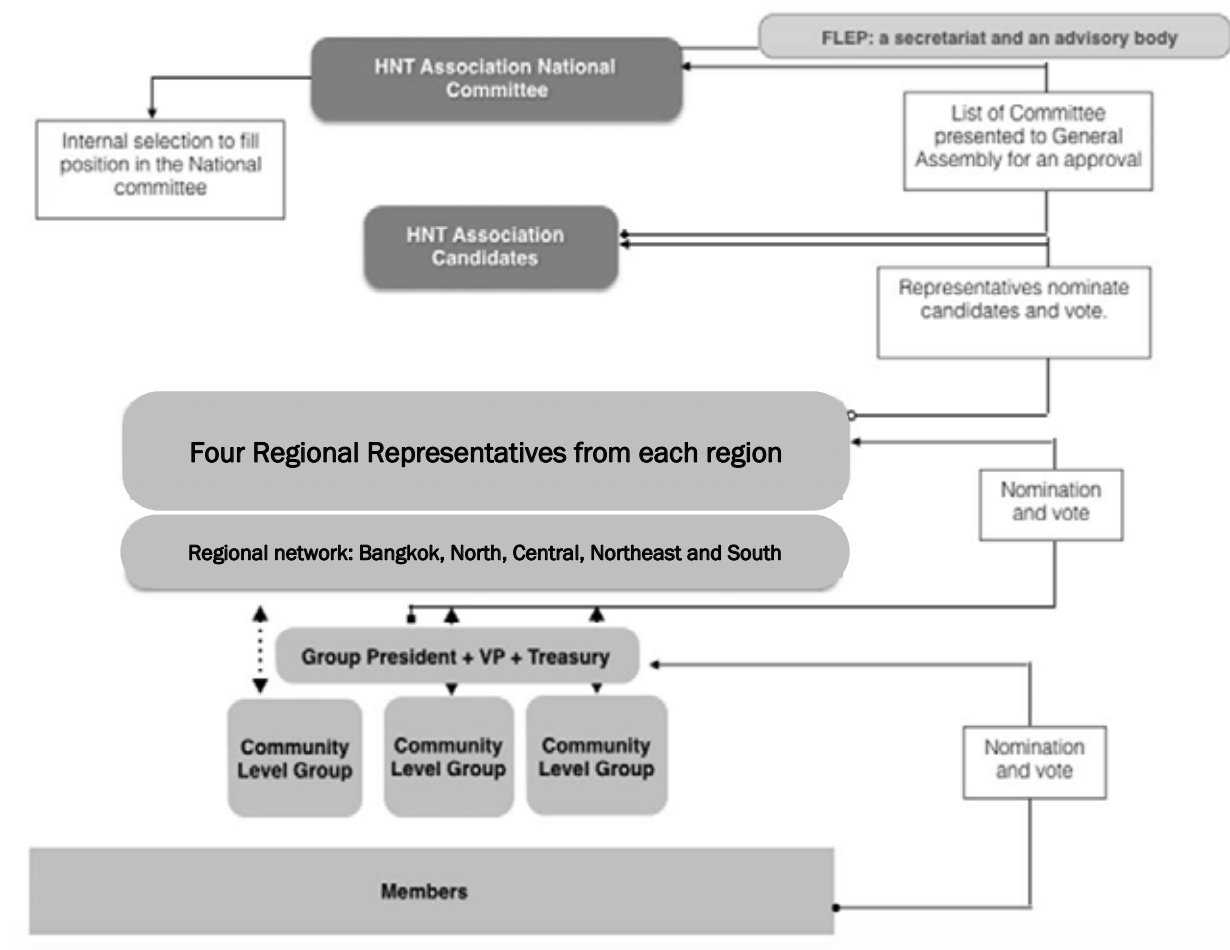
It is better to have some income, than none at all. However, that does not mean that one should be content with it and not look for a better job options. The products made by the HBW are of similar quality to the products produced in a factory, and made by legitimate factory workers, who, fortunately, receive higher wages, with benefits, than the HBWs.

SEWA Organizational Structure



## Annex 3

### Structure of the HNTA and FLEP in Thailand





**Australian Government**  
**Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**