

Introducing the *Hidden Homeworkers Programme*

Are you sourcing apparel and footwear from India, Pakistan or Nepal?

Homeworkers Worldwide has found women homeworkers in South Asia embroidering, sewing and finishing clothes, and stitching leather shoes for international retailers. Typically employed informally by subcontractors or intermediaries, and drawn from the poorest communities, women homeworkers are the worst paid and most insecure workers in most company's supply chains. Their very low rates of pay create a risk of child labour; their employment is irregular, precarious and sometimes hazardous, but they have no access to social protection or benefits. Despite this, for many women, particularly those with young children, homeworking offers a vital source of family income.

The presence of homeworkers is often hidden by suppliers, and may not be disclosed by audits.

We would like to **invite you** to join a new project to extend monitoring to reach hidden workers beyond first tier suppliers, and work together to help homeworkers access their rights and improve their working conditions.

Hidden Homeworkers is a partnership between **Traidcraft Exchange**, **HomeNet South Asia**, and **Homeworkers Worldwide**, a specialist UK based NGO supporting homeworkers and other women in precarious employment, with financial support from the European Union.

Who we are:

- **Homeworkers Worldwide** [HWW] has extensive experience of working with transnational companies: helping identify homeworkers in their supply chains, assessing their working conditions, and working with suppliers and local partners to put in place practical measures to improve the working conditions of any homeworkers who are present.
- **Traidcraft Exchange** is an international development NGO that uses the power of trade to bring about lasting solutions to poverty.
- **HomeNet South Asia** is a regional network of home-based worker organisations spread across eight countries in S Asia.
- Through HomeNet South Asia, the project will work with local civil society organisations (CSOs), these include
 - SAVE (Social Awareness and Voluntary Education), in Tiruppur, South India
 - SEWA Delhi in Delhi NCR
 - SABHA Nepal & CLASS Nepal in Kathmandu
 - HomeNet Pakistan in Lahore.

Our offer to brands

- To support you to adopt an effective Homeworker policy which encourages your suppliers to disclose the use of subcontractors and homeworkers
- In collaboration with skilled local CSOs, to trace and document homeworker supply chains, and working with suppliers, agents and homeworkers, to draw up an action plan to move forward. This could involve:
 - Working with stakeholders to identify what constitutes a Model of Good Employment for Homeworkers in this particular supply chain, and to agree next steps
 - Introducing simple systems to set fair piece rates for homeworkers and document homeworkers' work and wages, and support for suppliers and intermediaries as they introduce changes

- Working with homeworkers, so they can be actively involved in finding solutions, including accessing any available social protection and grievance mechanisms
- We can also help you look at purchasing practices, to identify how these can lead to adverse conditions for homeworkers. The focus is on seeking constructive solutions; for example, ring-fencing homeworker labour costs in open book costings, to ensure that fair wages are paid.

We prefer to work with several brands sourcing from a particular region together, to increase leverage and encourage suppliers to seek sector wide solutions to issues.

In return, we ask brands to commit to

- Working with your suppliers in a joint endeavour to remediate any issues which may be identified and to maintain commercial relationships while supply chain mapping and remediation is in process
- Contributing to the financial costs involved in the programme, alongside our grant from the European Union.

The programme is also keen to work with Multi-stakeholder Initiatives to share learning around effective policies, tools and approaches to homeworking within member companies' supply chains.



Case-study

HWW has been working with two leather footwear retailers and Cividip India, to trace supply chains involving homeworkers in Tamil Nadu. Homeworkers' working conditions have been documented in two supply chains, and key issues identified.

Although there is still work to be done to embed these changes, one retailer has now implemented simple systems to increase transparency, coupled with a 20% increase in homeworkers' piece rates. HWW is keen to continue this work, and extend it to include other companies sourcing leather footwear from India.

For more information, please contact:

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