



*Homeworker in Tamil Nadu, with hand-stitched moccasins - a common style for export.*

**Homeworkers Worldwide**  
**Annual Report 2015**

## **Homeworkers Worldwide Annual Report Summary 2015**

During 2015 our work has increasingly focussed on homeworkers in the leather footwear sector. Whilst this has been an area of interest to HWW for some years, and whilst we continue our other work in the garment sector and more broadly, in 2015 the leather footwear work has begun to gather real momentum. HWW has been researching and working with leather footwear homeworkers in Ambur, for a number of years, and this summer our partners Cividep were able to commence an organising project. At the same time, HWW has been reaching out to companies to begin a dialogue on issues facing homeworkers in the leather sector, and we have been developing links with the Change Your Shoes campaign, through Labour Behind the Label, to increase the visibility of homeworkers in campaigns. Towards the end of 2015 research and writing on our footwear report began in earnest, and we are anticipating a busy year focussing on footwear in 2016 - with the publication of the report and subsequent campaigning and activities.

## **Networking**

As a small NGO developing alliances and networking is essential to maximising our impact. We maintained close contact with our allies in India, particularly Cividep, SAVE and the Tirupur People's Forum in relation to the problem of forced labour, and have also been working with Cividep on a new organising project with homeworkers (see below.) We have continued to meet and collaborate with other labour rights NGOs such as Women Working Worldwide (WWW) and Labour Behind the Label (LBL). WWW commissioned us to prepare a syllabus for training women workers on their right to a Living Wage. HWW were invited to speak on homeworkers in the leather footwear industry at the LBL 'People's Meeting' event in London in December. We have also agreed to produce a joint report with LBL as part of the Change Your Shoes project. We have continued to work with our allies ICN (India Committee of the Netherlands) particularly in relation to forced labour in Tamil Nadu. Our work on the Modern Slavery Act (see below) has strengthened our links with CORE (the Corporate Responsibility Coalition). We have continued our participation in the Women's Forum of the Yorkshire and Humber TUC.

## **Organising work**

We and our partners Cividep commenced a new organising project in August. Cividep have experience of successfully organising women workers in export industries, using pre-union organising techniques. In Ambur, Tamil Nadu, the project is using a self-help group model to begin the process of organising homeworkers in the leather footwear industry. HWW is supporting this project through funding, advice and guidance and through our work with companies in the UK.

## **Companies work and Ethical Trading Initiative**

HWW has continued to be an active member of the ETI, as one route to influencing retailers and brands in the UK. We have actively participated in the NGO Caucus, the Leicester garments project, and the Tamil Nadu garments project. We have also been working on the issue of forced labour. In addition we have promoted the Preventing Child Labour in Homebased Crafts Production Toolkit (jointly produced by Traidcraft and HWW in 2014) to ETI members and provided feedback to four companies on strategic plans and annual reports.

We have also been contacting companies both inside and outside the ETI, with regard to homeworkers in their leather footwear supply chains. We instigated a teleconference with ETI members on this issue and have been conducting research for the forthcoming footwear report. We have had productive discussions with Clarks who have a positive attitude to the rights of homeworkers in supply chains. A University of Leeds student on a brief placement with us has also been collecting market research data on the footwear industry.

## **Lobbying**

This year the Modern Slavery Act became law and, thanks to the efforts of the CORE coalition, it included a clause on Transparency in Supply Chains. The Transparency in

Supply Chains (TISC) clause establishes a legal responsibility for companies to be in some way accountable for conditions in their supply chain, reporting on their actions to tackle modern slavery. Whilst it may not in practice deliver much transparency, the principle of companies taking responsibility for what goes on in global chains is an important one, and making this a legal requirement is a starting point for pushing for greater responsibility and accountability in the future.

We met with Hilary Benn MP to discuss the problem of forced labour in Tamil Nadu, and the inadequacy of UK company responses to this.

### **Research and publications**

The first two briefing notes in our Organising Women Workers series were launched at the end of 2015, 'Organising homeworkers in Tirupur's garment industry' and 'The Aekta Project: Organising garment workers in the West Midlands, UK'. The third, based on Jean Jenkins research with Cividep in Bangalore, was completed in 2015 and published in January 2016.

<http://www.homeworkersww.org.uk/resources/publications>

Jane's chapter on 'Forced Labour and Ethical Trade in the India Garment Industry' was published in the book *Vulnerability, Exploitation and Migrants: Insecure Work in a Globalised Economy* in November 2015.

### **Thanks**

Our thanks to all our funders, and our trustees.