

HomeNet

VERTICAL MAPPING

PACK

Tracing Subcontracting and
Marketing Chains to Support
Homebased Worker Organising



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Introduction

These guidelines are intended to introduce those carrying out horizontal mapping work with homebased workers to vertical mapping techniques. These can then be used to support organising work, and in particular to develop strategies to improve the situation of homebased workers.

The opening sections of this pack explain why it is important for organisers to understand the different chains of production, marketing and distribution involving homebased workers.

A. What is Vertical Mapping?

Homebased workers often produce goods for subcontracting or marketing chains which may be global, national or go no further than the nearest housing estate or rural village. ‘Vertical mapping’ is a process that traces – or ‘maps’ – these chains, with the aim of supporting the homebased workers as they organise to improve their working and living conditions.

It is important to stress that the aim of this kind of vertical mapping is not to collect information for its own sake. We need to work closely with homebased workers to ensure that the central objective of the mapping is to support their organising work. Starting from the homebased workers’ knowledge of their work, usually at the bottom of the chain, you can then use other sources to gradually build up a picture of the whole chain.

Many homebased workers produce goods or services for a local market. However the work of many others passes through a long chain of intermediaries and subcontractors before it is eventually sold to the final consumer at distant national or even international markets. These chains are very diverse – even within the same industry different systems may be used in different places, as companies seek to take advantage of the particularities of a given location (see Case Study 3). Furthermore the arrangements are constantly changing as companies compete with one another and explore new ways of organising their operations to maximise their profits.

It is important for homebased workers to understand these chains of production so that they can discover who holds the power within the chain to improve working conditions. This information can determine potential targets for campaigning, and can also identify potential allies and supporters.

This pack brings together the knowledge and experience of HomeNet members who have used vertical mapping techniques to support their organising work with homebased workers. It includes case studies involving both piece rate and own account workers, and practical advice for those who are developing this area of their work. For subcontracted workers the emphasis is on tracing the production chain and identifying who ultimately controls – and profits from – the homebased workers’ work. For own-account workers vertical mapping usually involves tracing existing markets and exploring new opportunities, or costing raw materials and seeking alternative supplies.

Vertical mapping starts with the homebased workers

Vertical mapping, when used by workers' organisations, enables them to trace homebased workers' involvement in production and marketing chains. Although many homebased workers participate in global, national or local chains their contribution is often unrecognised. It is vitally important therefore that the mapping programme starts with the homebased workers and is designed to reflect their needs and priorities. Some homebased workers may already know much about the chains of production in which they are involved, but others may know very little. Often there will be gaps in their knowledge, particularly when goods are produced for sale in different regions or countries. This pack also suggests possible techniques to fill these gaps. These can be used either by the organisers themselves or by researchers working closely with them.

The office can provide information about large transnational retailers based in the industrialised countries, and also draw on the expertise of researchers in different countries who are working on these issues. HomeNet members also liaise closely with campaigns in Europe, North America and Australia, which highlight the poor employment conditions under which many consumer goods are produced. If a homebased workers' organisation can find out where their products are being exported, the office may be able to put them in touch with a consumer campaign in that country to provide leverage to support the homebased workers as they organise for better conditions.

However information exchange is a two way process! This system will only work well if member organisations recognise its importance and pass on information from their vertical mapping to the central mapping team. A database of company information can be then built up so that when a new group of homebased workers ask about a company, the central mapping team can pass on relevant information and even put them in touch with homebased workers in other parts of the world who are also producing for the same company.

Where goods are produced for export there may be scope for solidarity work. When a group of homebased workers in India discovered that their work was sold by a UK retailer, UK members of HomeNet sent them a catalogue, so that the Indian homebased workers knew the prices of their work in the UK.

Vertical mapping can help own account homebased workers.

If own account workers understand the chain through which their products are sold, they may be able to cut out intermediaries and get a better price for their work. Vertical mapping can facilitate their own market research, which could then lead to either improving quality (and so increasing prices) or accessing new markets (and hence increasing sales and/or prices). Organising strategies for own account workers often include training in financial management, business skills and cooperative methods to enable women to work together to reduce costs and maintain prices. For those exploring the opportunities for global marketing, we hope that the Homeworkers Worldwide office can provide information about alternative marketing channels, and thus enable new groups to benefit from the experience of others who are already marketing their goods through fair trade organisations and handicraft associations.

Homebased Workers in the Global Economy

There is now much evidence that homebased work has been increasing since the 1970s, in both the developing and developed countries. The most common explanation for this trend is that as governments introduce neoliberal reforms to open up their economies to global markets, domestic companies are forced to adopt so-called 'flexible' production processes in order to survive.

Nowadays, high street retailers rarely manufacture the goods they sell. Instead a complex web of suppliers is used, which allows the retailer not only to reduce their overheads but also to pass on to their subcontractors the risks associated with a rapidly changing market. Although technically independent companies, these subcontractors are usually much smaller than the multinational retailing company and are often dependent upon orders from a particular retailer for their survival. To maximise profits, buyers play sub-contractors off against each other, thus forcing them to reduce their costs still further. This leads either to deteriorating conditions within factories or to more work being 'put out' to low paid homebased workers within the informal sector. Homebased workers provide the ultimate 'flexible' labour force, available when required but with minimal overheads; they do not need a factory and even pay their own electricity bills!

HomeNet members report that these same global economic trends are eroding the differences between piece rate and own account homebased workers. Whilst the casualisation of waged labour weakens the position of dependent piece rate homebased workers still further, the involvement of more powerful commercial traders in traditional craft or agricultural production threatens the independence of the much smaller own account homebased workers. The image of many craft industries – as a traditional process that is an integral part of a subsistence way of life – often masks the increasing commercialisation of homebased industries as new national or even global markets are developed for their products.

Kilim weaving in Turkey was once a traditional activity where the work was done within family units, but as commercial interests have become involved the artisans have lost their independence and the relations of production are closer to those of waged labour rather than of independent family enterprises.

C. Why Do Vertical Mapping?

Vertical mapping enables homebased workers to collect information about the subcontracting or marketing chains in which they are involved. This process can strengthen the capacity of homebased workers' organisations to organise effectively to improve their members' working and living conditions by helping them:

- » To identify who holds the power – and thus effectively controls the chain;
- » To understand the impact of the regulatory framework on the sector;
- » To understand who benefits at different stages in the chain;
- » To understand the relations of production at each point;
- » To identify potential allies along the chain (e.g. trade unions);
- » To identify campaigning groups that may act in solidarity;
- » To identify future organising strategies;
- » To collate information about the sector for future campaigns.

Case study 1: The Australian Fairwear Campaign

Over the last twenty years garment manufacture in Australia has moved from the factory to small workshops and homebased work. As more and more factory workers lost their jobs during the late 1980s, their union, the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia, was left with little alternative but to seek ways of organising homebased workers. The majority of these 'invisible' workers are women, many from minority communities, such as the Vietnamese-Chinese communities. Most work for low wages, with long hours of work and no social security or health and safety protection.

The union's strategy, initiated in 1994, was based on the principle that responsibility for homebased workers' pay and working conditions should be spread across the whole contracting chain and that retailers should be accountable for the conditions under which their products are made. Vertical mapping of subcontracting chains – to identify lines of responsibility – was central to this plan. Initial research demonstrated that all the major Australian retailers were selling clothes made by homebased workers. So a key element of the union's work was to trace where the work was going and the working conditions of the workers making the products.

In the late eighties the union fought for national industry laws that provide protection for homebased workers in line with factory workers in the sector and covers rights such as minimum wages, social security and health and safety protection. The union won support for strengthening the conditions protecting homebased workers. The law forces employers in all states to register if they put out work, to provide lists of subcontractors and homebased workers, and to pass on this information to the union. In 1995 this law was strengthened to require employers to maintain records and to make the contract chain more transparent.

The union was also well aware that the majority of the women, many of whom were drawn from minority communities, were often either unaware of these rights or too frightened to make a complaint. They feared that they would lose their work, and also that their allegations would be disputed, as they rarely had written evidence and often spoke little English.

Recognising that many homebased workers were reluctant to jeopardise their work, the union joined with community partners to initiate the FairWear campaign. This broad based coalition brought together many community organisations to support homebased workers' rights. Women's groups, church bodies and community organisations joined the union in calling for companies to take responsibility for the workers situated at the bottom of their subcontracting chains.

They organised media friendly stunts and demonstrations outside their stores to push retailers to sign a code of good practice and to alert their customers that homebased workers were producing their clothes. In this way they strengthened the position of the homebased workers without requiring them to identify themselves and so risk reprisals from their subcontractors.

The union and employer industry groups negotiated the Homebased Workers Code of Practice in 1995 as a result of a national Senate inquiry into homebased work in the garment industry. Companies which sign up to the code must demonstrate that they have systems in place to guarantee that any homebased workers producing their clothes are employed legally, and also provide the union with detailed lists of their suppliers so that this can be confirmed. The code while voluntary also includes monitoring provisions. This includes a labelling system for tracing the origins of clothes and an electronic manual that calculates garment piece rates according to the minimum wage and can check if homebased workers are receiving their legal wages.

Alongside this legal framework, the voluntary code and the campaigning work, the union has also put resources into contacting the homebased workers directly in their own languages. Recruitment campaigns encourage them to join the union, raise awareness of their employment rights and provide appropriate training for those homebased workers willing to take on a leadership role.

To date the campaign has been successful; not only do homebased workers within Australia have a much higher profile and some degree of legal protection but they are also beginning to get some results. The majority of Australian retailers have signed up to the code and some are seeking accreditation and permission to use the code's 'no sweatshop' labelling system. Information collected from companies and homebased workers has been collated into a database and in 2001 this was used by the union to challenge the powerful multinational Nike in the courts over their denial that homebased workers were involved in their subcontracting chains.

The TCFUA has realised that the effectiveness of their vertical mapping strategy and their efforts to organise homebased workers is dependent upon making the contracting chain as open and transparent as possible. This makes it possible to trace the work, and to advocate for homebased workers conditions across contracting chains. In this way broader inequalities for homebased workers are addressed not just individual complaints.

Guidelines For Vertical Mapping

This part of the pack offers some practical guidance for those embarking on the vertical mapping of homebased work. It begins with some general advice, then the next section describes various techniques that are more appropriate for piece-rate homebased workers, working in industries such as clothing, footwear or the print industry. The final section is intended primarily for own account homebased workers and their organisations. Several case studies are interwoven within the text to give real examples of how vertical mapping has been used in different parts of the world to support homebased workers in their struggle for better pay and conditions.

1. Introduction

Vertical mapping need not be difficult

A homebased worker who sells hotdogs for sale in her local community can easily experiment with new ‘attractions’ or alternative selling places. A homebased worker making school uniforms for a local trader may already know both the final selling price and the profit margins for both worker and trader.

Don’t be afraid to involve other people

Vertical mapping can be time consuming, particularly where the chain is long or complicated. Where products are being made for export, library research, internet searches and interviews may be needed to uncover the full picture.

To save time, many organisers prefer to work closely with researchers with specialist knowledge of an industry or sector.

Vertical mapping should follow horizontal mapping

Researching vertical chains and even linking up with a consumer campaign is no substitute for local organising, as the vertical mapping should reflect the priorities and concerns identified by the homebased workers on the ground.

Identify priorities

We will never have the resources to trace all the subcontracting and marketing chains involving homebased workers. In any case these are constantly changing.

Make sure that homebased workers are actively involved in decisions about which chains to prioritise.

A note of caution

Vertical mapping produces sensitive information (for example, company and brand names) so if companies or intermediaries find out where the information came from the homebased workers are likely to lose their work.

Be sure to involve the homebased workers in deciding how information should be acted upon. Take precautions to protect their identities.

2. Subcontracted Homebased Workers

A. General Advice

Invisible workers

Homebased workers – especially those doing subcontracted work – are often afraid to speak about their work. Most companies are reluctant to admit that homebased workers make or pack their products, or are otherwise involved in their production chains. In most industries much of the existing academic research makes no mention of them.

To counteract their invisibility it is important to begin with evidence collected from the homebased workers themselves.

Look for brand names, logos & company details

Brand names, trade marks and logos printed on goods or packaging are registered to a particular company, which can be either the manufacturer or more commonly nowadays, the retailer and so can be used to find out where the product is sold.

For example, the Dutch company C&A uses Clockhouse as a brand name, so homebased workers who sew labels with the name ‘Clockhouse’ are producing goods for C&A. Homebased workers doing packing work for big retailers will know the product brand name and often the name of the retailer, even if they do not know the subcontractor.

Keep careful records

Many companies deny that homebased workers produce their goods so clear evidence will be needed to demonstrate the truth. The media are often keen to print ‘exposures’ of big companies, but workers’ organisations then lose credibility if their claims are later shown to be inaccurate or unsubstantiated, even if the basic facts about the unjust working conditions are still correct.

Keep samples or photos wherever possible. Otherwise make detailed notes and sketches of what you are told.

Beware of forgeries!

Copying branded goods is a multi-million dollar industry. Check the brand name or logo carefully to see whether a particular item is authentic or whether it is a copy.

Record information systematically and accurately

In Australia, the Union asks homebased workers to give a simple written legal statement to confirm details of their work and the names of any brands or companies. This validates the homebased workers' experience, and also provides an evidence statement that is available if required at a later date. It is crucial to collect this & other forms of evidence as you may need to prove any claim that you make.

Talk to as many homebased workers as possible

Since there aren't any official records of homebased workers, homebased workers themselves will initially be your main source of information. However the amount of knowledge the homebased workers have about links further up the chain varies greatly. Some may have worked inside a factory in the past and understand the link between formal and informal production. Others may have done the work for many years and may have much detailed anecdotal information. Others still may not even know where their work comes from or the name of the company involved.

By talking to different people you will gradually be able to piece together a picture of what is often a very complex situation on the ground.

There may be little written evidence

Many of the relationships between homebased workers, intermediary and subcontractor are completely informal and often nothing is written down. In such situations it is doubly important to make careful records and to cross check information in order to get as accurate a picture as possible.

B. Confidentiality

One of the main issues for homebased workers is that they are afraid of losing their work. Information gained through vertical mapping, if made public, can be risky. If a subcontractor or intermediary discovers that homebased workers are beginning to organise they may respond by taking the work away.

Protect individuals' identities

At the beginning of the Australian campaign the union collected the same labels from many homebased workers across the country. They could then release information about particular companies, whilst also ensuring that no individual or group could be identified as a result.

It is vitally important to respect confidentiality if this is requested. Do not discuss information identifying particular individuals with other people (even other homebased workers) and be careful about what is published about your work.

Published case studies should not include personal or geographical details, or details of particular products which could identify the homebased worker. If necessary take photos that do not show the workers' faces.

Involve the workers in decision making

It is important to be open with homebased workers about the risks involved in acting on information gained through vertical mapping. In any event it is likely that they will already be aware of them. It is also important to ensure that they are able to make informed decisions about any actions which might affect their livelihoods.

Any company information collected from homebased workers needs to be confidential until a specific decision is taken to release the information.

The decision to go public on company information – and the methods chosen – should be taken in consultation with the homebased workers concerned and should reflect their priorities and goals.

 **Identify a strategy to minimise the risks to the workers**

Any agreement made with the company should cover all homebased workers producing goods for that company. It should include provisions to reduce the incentive for the company to move the work to a group of unorganised homebased workers in the future (for example, a commitment to publicise the agreement to other homebased workers and a monitoring system.)

C. Tracing the Chain

Analyse the relationships within the chain carefully

It is important to distinguish between a homebased worker who also distributes work to several others but whose main income comes from her own homebased work, and intermediaries whose income is drawn completely from the homebased workers' earnings.

Look for potential allies

Information from the homebased workers will lead you to informal workshops and small subcontractors. These intermediaries are often also treated very badly by companies or agents higher up the chain and may be potential allies for homebased workers.

In a small study of homebased working within the garment industry in London, UK, subcontractors recounted how they were frequently not paid on time, and that completed orders were rejected on false excuses.

Consider the broader legal framework

Vertical mapping should also consider the impact of other factors that may affect the homebased workers' situation such as the impact of local regulations, export quotas and access to markets.

For example, organisers in Bulgaria report that in recent years Greek and Turkish clothing manufacturers have invested in garment factories in Bulgaria (many of which also outsource to homebased workshops). Although in part they are attracted by lower labour costs in Bulgaria, the main reason for this is that Bulgaria has preferential access to EC markets.

Who controls the chain?

As production processes become more disparate it becomes harder to identify who actually holds the power along the chain. Thus for example in Case Study 2, a complex web of subcontractors was actually controlled by and dependent upon the large printing and distribution company which could play off smaller suppliers against each other. That could drive down prices for contracts, and in turn wages for homebased workers. In the Italian situation in Case Study 3 the small subcontractor was a highly skilled craftsperson and this gave him more leverage to negotiate directly with the much larger retailer.

Case study 2: The Greetings Card Story

West Yorkshire in the north of England is a major production centre for greetings cards, Christmas decorations and novelties. Much of the labour intensive work in this sector such as assembling crackers or packing greetings cards is put out to homebased workers, who often work for incredibly low rates of pay.

This particular campaign began with a phone call from a woman who had done some homebased work several months ago, packing small gift tags into cellophane packets and then boxing them up. The delivery van had never returned to collect the work and pay her and now she wanted to get rid of these big boxes of cards cluttering up her small house.

Although the homebased worker did not know the name of the company there was a distinctive logo on the boxes. This was later recognised as identical to the logo on a charity fundraising catalogue selling Christmas gifts. On the catalogue there was a company name. Through the local commercial library the organisers then discovered that this distribution company was part of a much larger group, which included a printing company and a chain of shops, and had its own registered brand names.

The company marketed its branded cards and novelties through its own shops and also supplied other major retailers on a wholesale basis. Another branch also managed the Christmas catalogues of many of the major UK charities. Each charity could select from the company range of cards, crackers and novelties. A sister firm then made up the catalogue and dealt with the orders.

The West Yorkshire Homeworking Unit also collected information about those at the opposite end of the chain. They visited homebased workers who were making or packing similar products and asked them to pass on any new contacts. They even followed delivery vans as they dropped off the work. On one council estate the trail led to a house where huge lorries regularly delivered container loads of printed materials. A friendly vicar working closely with the homebased workers' organisation was able to make contact with the woman who lived there.

She had originally been a homebased worker herself, but had realised that there was more money to be made by distributing the work to others. She controlled a network of around 100 homebased workers; a constant stream of people came and went from her house, collecting and delivering work. Winning the trust of these workers was difficult, as they were too afraid to complain in front of the intermediary. Outreach workers spent many hours visiting their homes and organising small meetings in the local community centre. Gradually, over a period of about two years the organisers gained the confidence of the homebased workers. Information was collected from these homebased workers. The catalogues, logo and brand names enabled the organisers to confirm that their work did originally come from the same company, and to highlight the fact that the homebased workers were producing goods sold in the charity catalogues.

The organisers gradually built up a picture of the production chain. The large company distributed the labour intensive packing and assembly work to many different subcontractors operating throughout West Yorkshire. Some of these were legitimate small packing companies, but others were informal operations such as the one on the estate described above.

Pay rates for the work were extremely low. There were also many other problems. Finished work was left in workers' homes for weeks and wages were not paid on time if at all. One group of women was regularly kept waiting for hours in the warehouse where they had to deliver their completed work. They were then paid in cash and the piece rates were unclear and difficult to check.

Organisers worked with the homebased workers to complain about some of these abuses and set things right. Since there were no formal contracts, and no legal minimum wage for homebased workers in the UK at this time, this was difficult. Sometimes the subcontractors simply closed their warehouse and moved on. Eventually it was agreed that the big company concerned should be held responsible and letters were written explaining the homebased workers' concerns. There was no reply.

Links were made with the branch of the print union in the main factory, which passed on some information about subcontractors. The campaigners wrote to the charities to inform them that 'their' Christmas cards were packed by women on 'poverty' wages. There was no reply.

The group of homebased workers then decided to use two new tactics. The first was to 'go public': a major national newspaper carried an article exposing the 'scandal' of Christmas cards being packed at poverty wages for major charities. They also contacted their local Member of Parliament (MP) and he wrote to the Managing Director of the big company.

Some of the charities concerned finally responded and put pressure on the company. The Managing Director of the company then agreed to meet with the homebased workers and their organisers, and subsequently accepted some responsibility for pay and conditions for homebased workers employed on their work by subcontractors. A new clause was inserted in the contracts requiring that any homebased workers employed were paid a minimum rate of pay. Work abandoned in people's homes was collected and paid for in full.

Sadly, this was not the end of the story as several months later, the company stopped delivering work in the area. The organisers did not have the resources to trace where the work had gone, and so could not ensure that the company was sticking to its agreement. However, the homebased workers involved in the campaign had received back pay for the work that had not been collected and had at least won a significant improvement in their pay. They had the satisfaction of

knowing that they had won the right to a minimum rate of pay long before the national minimum wage was implemented in the UK.

D. Working with researchers

Where the chain is relatively long or complicated, many local organisers prefer to work with researchers who have more time to do the detailed work which can be involved in vertical mapping. They often have easy access to written sources. Employers and intermediaries may speak more freely with them than they would if approached directly by a homebased workers' organisation.

It is important to find a researcher who is willing to collaborate with homebased workers' organisations and to tailor their study to the priorities of the workers.

E. Other sources of information

Local markets and export surplus shops

In many countries clothes made for export can be found for sale in local markets and export surplus shops.

In both New Delhi, India and in Istanbul, Turkey clothes originally made for export orders were found for sale locally – some were already packed and labelled for export, with the destination country and in some cases even the price. If organisers recognise clothes in the market as identical to those described by homebased workers, they have traced another link in the chain, and if they are lucky, the final retailer and selling price!

Trade unions

Find out whether any of the workers involved at other points along the chain are organised. Trade unions often have a detailed knowledge of a sector or industry and can provide information about parts of the chain not known to homebased workers. They may know more about the production or distribution process and be able to help in situations where the homebased workers cannot identify the final product.

Trade unions can provide useful national and international contacts and could be potential allies in a subsequent campaign – providing you can

convince them that homebased workers are a legitimate part of the workforce. Homebased work is still seen by some trade unionists as a form of cheap labour that should be abolished rather than protected!

Company catalogues and websites

Catalogues and websites can be used to help homebased workers discover what happens to their products. If a homebased worker recognises her work from a picture in a catalogue or on the internet, organisers will also know where it is sold and for how much.

Newspapers and Trade Journals

Newspapers provide another useful source of company information. Local papers often give up-to-date information about prominent local firms, whilst national papers cover larger companies and also more general economic trends.

Commercial libraries and business studies departments at universities can be useful. Look for commercial directories and trade journals that can provide background information about the industry and even help track particular products.

In the UK reference libraries provide much company information (for example, directories of registered brand names can be used to trace the parent company, and details of ownership and company structures can be found).

Internet research

Many big companies have websites which provide background information about the type of company, their image and 'ethos', and the products or services they offer. Some sites also include useful additional information, for example, details of production sites or retailing outlets, or even the company's Annual Report.

Additional sources

Try to think creatively to find ways of accessing the information you need. A local Chamber of Commerce or Employers' Association may have relevant information (particularly if approached by an independent researcher rather than a workers' organisation!).

Some local or national government departments also produce useful statistics – for example detailing the contribution of different industrial sectors to the economy and to exports.

The next case study illustrates how some of these sources were used in a real situation. It also demonstrates how vertical mapping can be used to trace international subcontracting chains, and highlights the considerable differences that often exist between chains in different countries, even within the same sector.

Case study 3: European Subcontracting Chains Research

Between 1994-96, HomeNet co-ordinated a European study of subcontracting chains involving homebased work. In Italy and Portugal, researchers focused on the leather footwear industry and tried to trace the chains from the homebased worker to the retailer/end user. Independent researchers were used for mapping the middle and top end of the chain, and for company research whilst existing HomeNet members provided the information from homebased workers at the bottom of the chain.

The research began with the homebased workers. Workers were selected who were known to be producing goods sold by multinational companies with well-known labels. Their information was complemented by material from other sources, including direct interviews with other participants in the chain and related research reports.

In Italy the researchers were fortunate enough to have a very good relationship with a small subcontractor, operating in an area renowned for its traditional leatherwork and footwear industry. There was quite a short chain; the subcontractor negotiated directly with a buyer from a major UK retailer, and supplied shoes for sale in its high street shops and by mail order.

To produce the shoes the subcontractor did some of the work in his own small workshop (employing only 10 people) and subcontracted other parts of the production process out to other local businesses, artisans and homebased workers. Each link in the chain was paid for its particular task. This complex web of skilled labour enabled him to produce the finished product to the buyers' specifications. Although the homebased workers were involved in the labour intensive work of machine stitching the leather uppers, they were paid only 6.25% of the final retailing price.

In Italy traditional artisans have made shoes for centuries and there is a highly skilled workforce. In this example, the subcontractor, a skilled craftsman, was the main source of new information. The researchers were able to gain his trust and this made it possible to trace the complete chain, with the prices paid to those at each stage. It is usually much harder for a homebased workers' organisation to gain similar access.

The situation in Portugal is quite different. Footwear manufacture is a new industry, but one that has grown rapidly as European manufacturers are attracted by the low cost labour and the country's proximity to European markets. Many new shoe factories have been established, either operating as subsidiaries of foreign firms or subcontracting orders from them.

The researchers interviewed homebased workers who were hand-stitching shoes for British, French and German retailers. Their subsidiaries or subcontractors in Portugal gave the work to intermediaries who took the shoes to rural areas for hand-stitching by homebased workers. In some cases, only the uppers were assembled in Portugal, with the final assembly of uppers and soles being done in the North of Europe.

The shoes produced were for a different segment of the market from those coming from Italy. In one case, it was possible to trace some of the shoes being made to a major UK retailer and get the selling price of the finished product.

Lessons to be Learned

The European study established that the use of homebased workers in shoe manufacture, particularly in the sewing of leather uppers, was an integral part of modern shoe production in three different European countries. This evidence makes it much more difficult for companies to argue that homebased workers are only working for domestic producers making cheap shoes for local markets. The study could for example be used in support of a campaign for a system of regulation that goes beyond the national level.

The study also demonstrated that there are complex reasons behind a company's decision about where to source its goods, and that labour costs is only one factor in the equation. Other important issues include access to markets and raw materials, the skills of the labour force and the regulatory framework operating in a particular country or region. Within the shoe industry, some homebased work is likely to stay in Europe whilst at the same time other parts of production are shifted to countries where labour costs are lower.

F. Organising strategies using vertical mapping

Raising awareness

Vertical mapping provides a useful educational tool to help homebased workers and their supporters recognise that they are an integral part of global economic processes.

Simple comparison of the final selling price of an item with the original piece rate paid to the homebased worker can help to raise awareness of the injustice involved (although additional production and transport costs also need to be considered).

Case study 4: Women workers in the Fruit Marketing Industry

A recent study mapping subcontracting chains within the fruit marketing industry compared the temporary women workers who picked grapes in Chile with the part time workers working on the checkouts of UK supermarkets. Although the Chilean women were working in particularly difficult conditions, both groups of workers were often employed on short term contracts and at low rates of pay. An alliance between them could potentially provide leverage to improve the working conditions of both groups. Such a strategy would be strengthened if the lorry drivers and distribution workers who transport the perishable fruit could be persuaded to lend their support.

Alliances with trade unions in the formal sector

Forming links with trade unions working within the same industry is a crucial part of vertical mapping. Unions can not only provide much valuable information and useful contacts but they could also be potential allies in a subsequent campaign.

Key contacts within worker organisations involved at different stages of the chain – including those involved in the distribution and retail sectors – could strengthen the homebased workers' organising strategies.

The next case study describes how another group of marginalised workers – seasonal fruit pickers – have successfully organised in the US to improve their working conditions. Organisers used their understanding of the subcontracting chains operating within their industry coupled with strategic alliances with consumers and share holders to pressurise large retail companies to take responsibility for the labour conditions within the industry.

Case study 5: Farm workers organises in the US

In the mid Western states of the US Latin American migrant workers are hired during the harvest season to pick fruit and vegetables. Many growers pay very low piece rates for the work and until recently operated a share cropping system where the workers received a share of the crop as payment for their work. Legally they were treated as independent contractors and in this way the farmers evaded their employment responsibilities and could also claim that they were not responsible for hiring child workers. (Many of the fruit pickers were forced to put their children to work to earn enough to feed their families).

In the 1970s these workers began to organise to improve their poor working conditions and the Farm Labor Organising Committee (FLOC) initiated a campaign against the share cropping system. They recognised that it was the large companies that processed and marketed the vegetables, rather than the much smaller growers, who effectively controlled the agricultural production chain. Although their focus was on the workers, sympathetic growers were also encouraged to participate in the campaign, which initially targeted one of the most famous brands, ‘Campbells Soups’.

During the growing season the FLOC led active organising campaigns on tomato farms producing for Campbells, encouraging workers to join the union and to strike for improved conditions. When the company tried to break the strike the FLOC adopted a new strategy - a consumer boycott of Campbell’s products was introduced although the direct organising continued targeting new migrant workers who were unaware that they had been brought in to break the strike. A broad-based campaign was used to raise public awareness of the appalling conditions faced by the farm workers. Creative tactics attracted media attention. In 1983 the FLOC organised a 550 mile farm workers’ march to Campbell’s head offices in New Jersey – stopping off en route for a Mass at the Catholic Cathedral in Philadelphia where priests symbolically washed the feet of the marchers.

The campaign was subsequently extended to shareholders so that Campbell’s faced pressure from all sides. Eventually (after a eight long years!) they signed a historic agreement abolishing the share cropping system and also introducing a tripartite grievance procedure. In future farm workers were all to be recognised as employees, entitled to a minimum wage, health insurance and health and safety protection as well a contract of employment. Subsequent campaigns and negotiations extended the agreement to several other major companies and the rights of over 7000 farm workers are now protected by similar agreements, although other firms are still holding out and campaigns are continuing against those who refuse.

The FLOC success can help to inspire homebased workers in that it is an example of how a comparatively weak group of unorganised migrant workers have used broad based consumer campaigns working in conjunction with active organising strategies, to strengthen their bargaining position and achieve security and employment protection for their members.

Alliances with consumer campaigns and pressure groups

Where homebased workers are producing branded goods, find out whether there is a consumer campaign operating in the countries where the goods are sold. Consumer campaigns (such as the Clean Clothes Campaign in Europe) can be powerful allies for homebased workers' organisations, as their comparatively weak bargaining position can be strengthened by enlisting the support of consumers concerned about the conditions under which goods are produced.

Although consumer campaigns can pressurise the powerful retail companies at the top of subcontracting chains, it is important to be clear and precise about the homebased workers' demands to ensure that subsequent negotiations do not damage the homebased workers' interests.

Company codes of conduct

Many companies have introduced their own corporate code or claim to have independent monitoring of their supply chain. Such codes have many limitations. It is common that the workers making the products have never seen the code and do not enjoy the rights contained in such documents.

Nevertheless, the existence of such a code could however provide another source of leverage if vertical mapping reveals that homebased workers are producing for a company that has made a commitment to trade 'ethically', yet the homebased workers are working in conditions which fall short of the company's stated standards.

Never approach a company with information about homebased workers unless you have clear demands worked out in consultation with the homebased workers concerned. This process should also include a strategy to protect their work, so that the company cannot respond by moving the work to another group of unorganised homebased workers.

Broader policy work

Vertical mapping processes demonstrate the link between homebased workers and the powerful multinational companies which control subcontracting and marketing chains. We hope that this mapping programme will provide further evidence that HomeNet members can then use to lobby for changes in both company and government policy to protect the interests of homebased workers. We also need to identify new policies and legislation which puts the responsibility on the large firms for improvements in working conditions and employment protection for all the workers participating in the various stages along the chain, including homebased workers.

There is not sufficient space here to explore the many different types of codes of conduct and ethical monitoring systems which are currently being developed. Although as suggested above, some company codes amount to little more than public relations exercises, more comprehensive codes and agreements which are negotiated by campaigners and workers' organisations can be used as an organising tool. These include provision for independent monitoring by trade unions and homebased workers' organisations.

Another strategy is to campaign for a law that requires companies to provide detailed supplier lists, and records of where work is put out and of pay and conditions down the chain makes it easier for organisers to monitor the situation even in areas where the homebased workers are not yet organised. Holding companies and their subcontractors jointly liable for labour rights abuses is another important tool which again spreads responsibility beyond the workers' immediate employer.

Codes of conduct and well-designed laws will only be effective when backed up by both local organising and effective alliances between trade unions and others organising homebased workers. Our final case study provides an example of such a broad based strategy that is bringing real improvements in homebased workers' lives.

Case study 6: Justice For Janitors

This case study shows how vertical mapping techniques have been used to strengthen workers' organising strategies.

In the US during the 1970s the introduction of subcontracting within service sector industries as well as manufacturing led to a casualisation of employment amongst workers who had previously been well organised. Office janitors (cleaners) for example, who were traditionally employed by building managers lost their secure jobs (which had been covered by union agreements) as maintenance and cleaning work was outsourced to independent cleaning contractors who employed the janitors in non-union positions on lower rates of pay. As competition for contracts was fierce, the subcontractors were forced to steadily reduce their prices and as they did so, the workers' pay and conditions came down with them.

During the 1980s, the Service Employees Union in Los Angeles launched its Justice for Janitors campaign. In an attempt to reverse the decline in union membership (and deteriorating working conditions) the union began with an organising campaign to 'organise the unorganisable' – the isolated cleaners working for the new contractors at office locations scattered across the city. Many of the janitors were immigrants and some were working illegally but by turning the close knit relationships within the immigrant communities to the union's advantage a strong local organisation was established.

From the workers and through company research, the union accumulated detailed information about the subcontracting chains operating within the sector, which enabled them to target high profile actions at the powerful building managers (or even their wealthy commercial tenants) rather than the small cleaning contractors whose tight margins left them with little alternative but to exploit their workers. After a long struggle they were eventually successful in reversing the downwards spiral in working conditions, as more and more janitors joined the campaign and the subcontractors signed agreements with the union.

The Justice for Janitors Campaign combined vibrant local organising with accurate targeting to put pressure on those who held the power to improve the workers' situation within the sector. In this example, the organisers used their understanding of subcontracting chains to the workers' advantage, but this leverage was complemented by active community based organising to ensure that it was used in ways which addressed the concerns of the workers.

3. Own Account Workers

A. The impact of global economic trends

Vertical mapping can benefit own account homebased workers in a number of ways. Firstly, like piece rate homebased workers, many own account workers are directly affected by global economic trends. An understanding of these can help an organisation develop appropriate strategies in response. Some own account workers produce goods that are marketed across international boundaries. Often the final consumer is in the North (for example, seaweed collected and dried by homebased workers in Chile is used to make cosmetics in Japan, and cashew nuts processed by homebased workers in Brazil are sold in European supermarkets). In these situations the homebased workers collect and process a product and then sell it on to intermediaries and traders.

Other own account workers are dependent on international chains for their raw materials. In the Philippines and India thousands of women buy the waste cloth produced by the garment industry and make products for sale locally. If local garment production shifts to another country then these women too lose their livelihoods unless they can find an alternative source of low cost raw materials.

Restructuring can also affect what are often viewed as 'traditional' industries. The handicraft industry is a growing export sector in Gujarat, India where one product is traditional Kutch embroidery. As exports grow, larger companies become involved in marketing and often the economic independence of the original artisans producing the goods is steadily eroded.

Many own account workers sell their products locally but are indirectly affected by international trends (for example, dressmakers may lose business as imports of fashion clothing increase or the domestic garment industry expands). In India, traditional leaf plate makers could lose their markets to plastic and paper plates. These apparently indirect trends could still have a disastrous impact on homebased workers' livelihoods and so it is important that organisers take account of them in planning for the future.

B. Practical steps to help own account workers

Sourcing of raw materials

Own account homebased workers must collect or purchase their own raw materials before they can begin to work, so sourcing issues can be of crucial importance to them.

Tracing where raw materials come from can also lead to organising strategies. If a group buys raw materials in bulk they can negotiate a better price from their supplier.

Developing a marketing strategy

Many own account homebased workers face difficulties in finding markets for their products. Often they have no alternative but to sell to traders who pay very low prices and then can make large profits when they sell on to the final consumer.

As own account workers begin to organise, one of the most obvious ways in which they can improve their situation is by developing collective strategies which will give them greater control over the marketing of their work.

Begin by mapping existing markets

It is relatively straightforward for homebased workers themselves to evaluate local markets. They can find out (or may already know) what sells well and how to adapt their products with changes in fashion.

Don't be afraid to get help

For national and international markets, it is more difficult to trace the chains. Homebased workers may prefer to work with specialists, particularly those with skills in market surveys and product development. Researchers may also be in a better position to evaluate the feasibility of cutting out intermediaries and selling directly to the final customer.

Mapping should also include the competition

In many local handicraft markets every stall has very similar items so producers are forced to lower prices to make their products attractive to buyers. By introducing new colours or designs, or improving the quality, workers can ensure that their work stands out and thus has a competitive advantage.

Case study 7: Leaf Plate Mapping in Bihar and Jharkhand

The next case study shows how this type of vertical mapping, which traces markets and distribution networks rather than subcontractors and retailers can be used to help own account homebased workers.

Adithi is an NGO that uses organising and economic livelihood initiatives to empower women and girls in the Indian state of Bihar. Adithi is currently participating in the horizontal mapping programme, and in 2001 interviewed tribal women who make leaf plates or pattals. The women go into the forest and collect leaves from the sal tree; they take them back to their homes where they make them into pattals, which are widely used throughout India in hotels, temples, and for festivals and celebrations.

Adithi asked Udyogini, a research and development organisation based in Delhi, to carry out the vertical mapping of the leaf plate marketing chains. Udyogini started with the pattal makers; they interviewed them about their work and accompanied them as they into the forest to gather the leaves, returned to their homes to make the pattals and finally went to sell them in the local market and to shops and traders. Later they interviewed others involved in the marketing process – intermediaries, shop keepers, wholesalers and distributors. They ‘mapped’ eight different routes which linked the women who produce the pattals to the final consumer, calculated the costs and gains of the various parties involved and made recommendations as to how the women might work together to bypass some of the intermediaries and increase their share of the profit.

Market research is a crucial part of this kind of vertical mapping and should be carried out at as early a stage as possible. It is important to investigate whether the market for a product is healthy before raising workers’ hopes or taking up their time in organising cooperatives or training to improve skills. In this case the mapping demonstrated that the potential market for pattals was large. The traders and merchants could sell as many as the homebased workers could make. Yet because the women were not aware of this they often accepted very low prices.

As Udyogini traced the different routes between the homebased workers who made the leafplates and the consumer that finally used them, they also tried to find out the different prices paid at each stage in the journey. One of the marketing chains involved the use of a machine which presses several hand made pattals together to produce a stronger plate. These could then be sold at a higher price in the markets and shops in larger towns and cities. Most of these machine-made plates come from Orissa; the researchers found very few machines in Bihar and those that did exist were mainly owned and operated by men. They investigated the production process involving the machine, and demonstrated that it would offer the best way of enabling the women to significantly increase their income from the pattals. Adithi has since been able to secure funds to purchase such a machine, and the women are learning to use it, the plan being that they produce the higher quality pattals as a collective, and thus are able to access better markets and increase their share of the profits.

Another important issue for own account workers is the availability of raw materials. In this case, the pattals are made from leaves of the sal tree, which are collected by the women from the forest. The report described how the women travel far into the forest to collect these leaves but it makes no mention of any concerns about sustainability. Elsewhere, Adithi describes how they have set up reforestation schemes in some of the areas where the tribal people live, and clearly in the long term, some kind of strategy will be needed to manage the supply of leaves, particularly if the organising is successful in raising the women's income, thus attracting more women into the sector.

C. Using a market survey

Carry out an initial market survey

It is vitally important to begin by checking that a market exists for products before a lot of time is spent on improving quality. Sometimes a market survey can come up with surprising results.

Retazo workers in Manila, in the Philippines make products from the waste cloth from garment factories. Business advisers used a market survey to discover that there was a good market locally for low-cost products, such as floor mats and safety gloves. The survey also found that materials could be bought in bulk at lower cost and selling could be done direct without intermediaries.

Adapt your product for different types of customers

In most markets some customers will always buy the cheapest products, whereas others are prepared to pay more for good quality items.

Even within developing countries, there may be a more exclusive market among urban elites or tourists where customers will pay high prices for unique designs or high quality work.

Look for new markets locally

Be creative in searching for new customers. Local businesses may be interested, particularly if you can alter the product to meet their particular needs. Leaf plate makers in Jharkhand sell some of their plates to roadside food stalls.

Check out the prices

Most products are priced by adding the costs of production (raw materials, labor, transport, administration) along with a profit margin, although poor own account workers often underestimate – or leave out altogether – the cost of their labour. The size of the profit margin also reflects what the consumer is willing to pay for the product.

Competition from other similar products can bring prices down unless producers agree not to undercut each other. Careful market research can help to find out exactly what the market will bear at any particular time and thus maximise the homebased workers' income.

Be prepared to update your product

Most products need to be regularly updated to ensure that they meet new consumer demands.

There are different ways to keep up-to-date with city fashions. In Bihar embroidery groups send representatives to visit the shops or markets in larger cities and then feed back their observations to the others. Catalogues and magazines can provide information about market trends in more distant locations.

Balance authenticity and changing consumer tastes

Skills used to make traditional handicrafts can be used to make new products for a wider market but this can also erode skills and designs that have been handed down for generations.

Each producer group must negotiate this delicate balancing act for themselves, but their ability to make their own decisions will also depend on their economic independence and security.

Find ways to reach new customers

In Chile, handicraft workers have negotiated with local governments to hold regular craft fairs in the central plaza. There are key seasons when sales will be higher – for example at religious festivals – and groups need to plan ahead to ensure that they produce sufficient quantities to meet the higher demand.

Packaging can make the product more appealing

Labelling can emphasise key selling points – that the item is made from natural materials, or that it is an authentic craft product. For this to be effective, however, the worker needs a good understanding of the consumer's motivations and priorities. Labelling for cheaper products intended for everyday use should be functional – to explain how to use the item and any particular legal requirements (such as washing instructions and sizes for clothing). Attractive packaging can enhance the value of a craft product; if a product is packaged with attractive paper, or in a pretty box, customers are more likely to think that it is good quality. However, it is important to ensure that the additional costs involved will be outweighed by the higher prices and increased sales which may result.

Make products to order whenever possible

Homebased workers often have large stocks of unsold products that tie up money in the form of materials and take time to produce. To avoid this, produce a few samples or publish a catalogue, then products can instead be made to order provided that realistic order times can then be met.

D. Which way to Market?

If own account workers have access to a range of markets they are less likely to become financially dependent on more powerful traders or retailers. If one market collapses, they have alternatives and can maintain their income.

Using local and national markets

There are many advantages to a local or national market.

First, it is easier for the homebased workers to understand consumer motivation, and to respond to changing trends. If a popular household product or snack can be identified that is easily and cheaply made, the consistent demand will make up for the low prices.

But, there are often disadvantages as well.

If local people cannot afford to buy labour intensive handicrafts, workers have to rely upon foreign tourists. Intense competition at craft fairs can then keep prices very low.

Exporting can be an option for high quality products....

Although exporting goods is not easy, it can enable some groups to take advantage of market opportunities that do not exist locally. For example, high quality craft products which demonstrate artistic creativity can sometimes be sold for a much better price than would be available in the workers' own country. Accessing export markets takes time and considerable investment and is more risky than producing for domestic markets. Advisers recommend that no more than 30% sales should be dependent on exports because demand can fluctuate widely.

For example, Adithi supported a group of homebased sujuni workers in Bihar through the lengthy process of product development, design and market research to develop a high quality product. These are large quilts embroidered with beautiful designs and stories and based on traditional embroidery techniques. Although these have attracted high prices when sold in the US, the women have also found a market for their work in India, selling in the larger cities.

....But it is not 'the answer' for everyone!

Exporting goods will rarely be an option for a new organisation of own account homebased workers desperately in need of markets for their work. For new organisations, it is far easier to develop skills in production, organisation and marketing by starting with domestic markets.

There are several reasons for this. It is often difficult to keep track of trends and fashions in distant markets, and even more difficult for the homebased workers to decide how to adapt their products accordingly, thus increasing the risks involved.

Export orders are often large and a small group may lack the capacity to pay for the raw materials and to ensure that high quality standards and deadlines are consistently met. There are also substantial additional costs involved in exporting (e.g. transport, money exchange, paperwork, insurance etc), and may also be legal requirements. Toys and food-related items, for example, face stringent safety regulations in many countries.

Balancing all these demands, and still ensuring that a fair price can be paid for the homebased worker's labour, takes considerable experience and skill. They may put the price of the item above what the customers, even in a wealthy industrialised country, are willing to pay. New homebased workers' organisations are therefore best advised to focus on domestic markets and only consider extending to exports when they are sure that they have sufficient capacity to meet the demands of importers in terms of quality, quantity and deadlines.

Alternative export opportunities

Most products for export pass through commercial distribution channels. Marketing chains are often long, with the own account workers' product typically passing from a trader to an exporter, then the importer and retailer before finally arriving at the consumer. This means that although the final price may be higher, much of this will be paid to the intermediaries.

The other, much smaller channel is the "fair trade" channel, where alternative trading organisations seek to establish direct trading relationships with marginalised producers, and in so doing to contribute to their development by guaranteeing minimum trading standards. There is a global network for Fair Trade, the International Federation for Alternative Trade, which includes both producers of fair trade goods and those who market them (see Section D of Appendix 1), and can provide marketing advice for organizations which are interested in exploring Fair Trade opportunities.

Although this final example does not involve homebased workers directly it does demonstrate the ways in which fair trade partnerships can provide secure employment to marginalised workers and make a contribution to the development of their communities.

Case study 8: Bishopston Trading Company

The Bishopston Trading Company evolved from links between the South Indian village of K. V. Kuppam and Bishopston in Bristol, a city in the West of England. K.V Kuppam was a village that had a long history of handloom weaving and tailoring and the idea of a trading partnership grew from this. In 1985 a workers' cooperative was set up in the UK to market clothes produced by a small unit employing 6 tailors in K.V. Kuppam.

The trading partnership was based on fair trade principles, and aims to increase the workers access to markets and independence. Workers are paid a fair price for their work, a crèche is provided for their children and they also receive an allowance for health care and social security. The project also has an environmental focus – wherever possible organic cotton is used to make the clothes and in the future they hope to develop a dyeing unit to reduce the environmental impact of the dyeing process.

The project has been successful and has expanded rapidly. In K.V. Kuppam over 400 people are employed as tailors, handicraft producers and hand loom weavers and in the UK there are now 5 Bishopston shops, and the company also offers a mail order and wholesale service. Profits are ploughed back into the business or used to fund broader development projects in the area.

E. Organisational mapping of potential allies

In the same way as piece rate workers will seek allies from trade unions and consumer campaigns, an important aspect of vertical mapping for own account workers is to identify organisations that can help them develop their marketing strategies. We hope that the Homeworkers Worldwide office will be able to support this process by providing initial contacts and information but once again the strength of any central information base will depend on the quality of information that members send in to the office.

Four main types of organisation which could potentially be useful.



National Handicrafts Promotion Offices

Some governments (for example, in Thailand) have national offices to support the production and marketing of handicrafts, often to export markets. These vary considerably in the services and information that they can provide but at the very least, national marketing offices should have information on exporters and relevant NGOs.



Marketing Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)

Some NGOs offer marketing support for own account producers either as a specific project, or as part of a larger programme to improve the live of homebased producers. They will usually offer some of the following: training in business skills and product development, acting as selling agents, and/or providing contacts with appropriate buyers.



Alternative Trading Organisations (ATOs)

ATOs are organisations based in the industrialised countries who use alternative trading relationships to promote the social development of marginalised own account workers. The long-term objective is to enable the producer groups to become independent, profitable businesses with the capacity to adapt and succeed in the market, but in parallel with this the ATOs seek to ensure that they meet development goals and the workers' standard of living is improved. Many ATOs offer extensive support in product development and marketing, assisting small producer groups to make links to Northern markets.



Import Promotion Offices

Some governments have offices that can provide information and support for suppliers in developing countries. These offices can be helpful if specific information is requested, such as trade journals in certain industries and marketing reports and surveys. They might also be able to direct producer groups to ATOs and other NGOs that would offer more comprehensive support.

Further Reading

This pack is based on the experience of various HomeNet members, including homebased workers' organisations in the UK, the TCFUA in Australia and Adithi in Bihar, India. It also draws on an internal HomeNet report prepared by Sonali Duggal on Marketing for Homebased Workers. The following sources provide more information about mapping of subcontracting chains and marketing chains, and also about the case studies used in this pack.

Barrientos, S., (forthcoming), 'Mapping codes through the value chain - from worker to detective', in Pearson, R. & Seyfang, G., 'Corporate Responsibility & Labour Rights: Codes of conduct in the Global Economy', London: Earthscan.

Barrientos, S. & Perrons, D., (1999), 'Gender & the Global Food Chain: A Comparative Study of Chile & the UK', in Afshar, H. & Barrientos, S., (eds), 'Women, Globalisation and Fragmentation in the Developing World', Basingstoke: MacMillan.

Brill, L., (forthcoming), 'Can codes of conduct help homebased workers?', in Pearson, R. & Seyfang, G., 'Corporate Responsibility & Labour Rights: Codes of conduct in the Global Economy', London: Earthscan.

HomeNet, (1999), 'New Ways of Organising in the Informal Sector', Leeds: HomeNet.

Kumar, P. & Viswanath, V., (2001), 'From Product to Market: the channels for pattals (leaf plates) of Santhal Parganas, Jarkhand State', draft report, Udyogini Papers in Women's Livelihood Promotion, India: New Delhi.

There are also several other Udyogini case studies available in the central office which give other examples of how vertical mapping can be used for own account homebased workers.

Tate, J., (1990), 'A Penny a Bag: Campaigning on Homebased work', Batley: Yorkshire & Humberside Low Pay Unit.

Tate, J., (1996), 'Every Pair tells a Story' Report on a Survey of Homebased working and subcontracting Chains in Six countries of the European Union, Brussels: European Commission.

Women Working Worldwide, 'Workers' Rights in the World Economy', handbook for activists & workers' pocket guide, available from Women Working Worldwide, Manchester, UK (<http://www.poptel.org.uk/women-ww/>).

More information about some of the case studies can be found at the following web sites:

Justice for Janitors: www.justiceforjanitors.org

The Fairwear Campaign: <http://vic.uca.org.au/fairwear/cop.htm>

Farm Labor Organising Committee: www.iupei.edu/~floc/

Bishopston Trading: www.bishopstontrading.co.uk

Appendix 1: The Internet and Vertical Mapping

There is a great deal of information available on the internet which could be relevant for vertical mapping; in fact there is so much that it is easy to waste a great deal of time going through it all! The following notes are intended to provide some signposts to make it easier to access relevant information.

It is worth making one or two general points: firstly, it is important to be critical of information that is available on the internet. Anyone can create a website and so it is not always easy to clarify the origin and accuracy of information. For example, there are many NGO sites and, increasingly, business sites dealing with ethical trade and codes of conduct, but it is important to note that only some will be potential allies for homebased worker organisations such as ourselves.

Secondly, it is also important to think through the possible consequences of any enquiry – for example, an email request for information from a company site might be better sent from an individual rather than a homebased workers' organisation or trade union, unless this formed part of a strategy developed and agreed with the homebased workers whose work could be affected.

Finally, internet information is constantly changing and some sites are quite costly to access. Depending on resources the office may be able to subscribe to one of the on-line corporate databases, which could then be searched on request by members. A centralised system for recording and disseminating up-to-date company information collected by HomeNet members is also planned. An email circular would enable those directly involved in vertical mapping to share information and advise each other of useful sites or materials, as well as providing a space for discussion of tactics and strategies.

More general information about using the internet is provided in the on-line DIY guide to Company Research produced by UK campaigners Corporate Watch at www.corporatewatch.org/publications/diy_research.html.

We have divided this Internet Guide into the following Categories:

- » Company Information
- » Researchers & Academic Sites
- » Campaigners & Labour Rights Activists' Sites
- » Design & Marketing for Own Account Workers.

A. Company Information

As mentioned above many companies have their own website, which vary considerably in the amount of information they provide.

Information to look out for could include:

- » General background about company history and ethos
- » Details of suppliers and countries involved in sourcing of products
- » Catalogues of products and prices (useful for identifying where homebased workers' work is ultimately sold)
- » Information about a company's code of conduct, or their involvement in an ethical trading organisation.

Search engines can be used if you do not know the company's website (though try www.companyname.com first!). www.google.com and www.askjeeves.com are two which we have found useful, or you may know of an engine which is specific to your country. www.findarticles.com is a free online archive of journal and newspaper articles which is also worth using for company information.

In addition to individual company sites, much useful information is available through business search engines (<http://search.corporateinformation.com>). The Financial Times newspaper, www.ft.com has a powerful search engine which can access information on markets, companies and industries and most of this is available without charge. Company databases such as Hoovers provide some information free of charge, but charge a fee for access to the complete records (www.hoovers.com). The Virtual Garment Company (<http://www.garment.com/dbman/db.cgi>) is another useful resource for tracing chains within the garment industry.

Other sites to try include Wright Investors Service (www.wisi.com), which has comprehensive information on corporate databases and www.parsons.com, a US based site which provides free annual reports of companies. www.business.com has a useful search engine for seeking specific company information on a particular product line.

For particular countries, government offices can also provide more general information about an industrial sector or even particular companies in their country (for example, for India try www.textileoffice.com).

B. Researchers & Academic Sites

Again, many academics and university departments or research centres have their own websites; it is worth trying the Sociology, Geography or Economics or Development studies Department of your local university, particularly if you know the name of a particular researcher who has produced say a study of the garment sector in your locality. Otherwise, rather than wasting time trawling through university sites at random, use a gateway site to focus your search. The Eldis gateway site is run by the Institute of Development Studies in the UK and has material on ethical trade as well as general development issues (www.ids.ac.uk/eldis/). IDS also provides free access to www.id21.org, an online database which draws on the combined knowledge of some 40 university research departments in the field of Development Studies. www.sosig.uk is a UK based gateway to social science information whilst www.cid.harvard.edu/cidlinks is a US based development studies site.

C. Campaigners & Labour Rights Activists' Sites

There are many sites set up by NGOs and activists involved in campaigning on Labour rights issues, anti-globalisation and transnational companies, so once again it is easy to spend a great deal of time going through material which is of only limited relevance. Consumer campaigns with an explicit focus on labour rights issues are probably the most directly relevant, although the majority focus on factory workers rather than homebased workers (Australia's Fairwear Campaign is a notable exception to this, <http://vic.uca.org.au/fairwear/cop.htm>, and several of the others include homebased workers alongside factory workers. Thus for example homebased worker organisations producing goods which are sold by European transnationals might find potential allies in the Clean Clothes Campaign in Europe (www.cleanclothes.org), whereas sites in the US (www.nlc.org, www.sweatshopwatch.org, www.behindthelabel.org) and Canada (www.maquilasolidarity.org) are more relevant for those producing for North American markets. Many of these sites include articles about previous campaigns and about codes of conduct and monitoring, and often have detailed 'links' pages.

Many trade unions have their own websites now, and so the internet could be a way to link up with other trade unions representing workers at other stages in subcontracting chains (for example, distribution or retail workers). Some of the larger unions also have research departments, and others have specific campaigns targeting particular companies. Again, labour rights gateway sites such as www.labourstart.org and www.labournet.org provide a useful way to search for information if you don't have a website address. Labour Rights organisations, some based in Southern countries also have their own websites - for example the Asia Monitor resource centre in Hong Kong (www.amrc.org), SEWA in India (www.sewa.org), and AnaClara in Chile (<http://anaclara.tripod.com>).

For more general information about internet campaigning and researching transnational companies try www.corpwatch.org in the US or the UK based www.ethicalconsumer.org and www.corporatewatch.org. Official sites can also be very helpful. The International Labour Office has a huge website with much useful information (www.ilo.org), which includes the text of ILO conventions and research reports on labour related issues, including the informal sector. It is also good for more general information about a particular sector. There are also a wide range of ethical trade sites, some set up with government support (such as the UK based Ethical Trading Initiative (www.eti.org)), or the Fair Labour Association in the US www.fairlabor.org. Others are genuinely independent monitoring and research organisations such as Verite in the US, www.verite.org and SOMO in the Netherlands, www.SOMO.nl/monitoring, whereas others are more questionable. Global Alliance, for instance, has been widely criticised as a front for Nike's latest attempts to counter those who criticise its labour rights policies.

D. Design & Marketing for Own Account Workers

There are also many internet sites that could be useful for organisations of own account homebased workers. Many development organisations which provide training and assistance for own account workers have their own site, although with many of these the emphasis is on developing product quality and the marketing skills of individual entrepreneurs (www.aid2artisans.org and http://www.artisanenterprisenetwork.org/eng_index.html) both of which are based in the US.

However organisations involved in Fair Trade are likely to take a broader view and recognise the complementary importance both of commercial viability and collective organisation (for example, cooperatives can enable workers to access larger markets or reduce costs by bulk buying) and also ensure that as many workers as possible can benefit from the project see <http://www.fairtradefederation.com/endorse.html> and www.traidcraft.co.uk.

For groups which are seeking to develop export markets, Fair Trade sites can also provide links to potential buyers, particularly for handicrafts and food products. IFAT (the International Federation of Alternative Trade, at www.ifat.org) provides links to marketing outlets and trade fairs for Fair Trade producers, and also to those with expertise on market research and market surveys, whilst the European Fair Trade Association (EFTA) is based at www.web.net/fairtrade/fair17.html.

Traidcraft (www.traidcraft.co.uk) is the UK's largest Fair Trade marketing organisation and also works directly with partner organisations to develop their product quality and marketing skills. The CBI-Center for the Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (www.cbi.nl, cbi@cbi.nl) has a similar role and is based in the Netherlands, where as both Protrade/GTZ in Germany (www.gtz.de) and the International Trade Center (www.intracen.org, itcreg@intracen.org) in Switzerland focus more on marketing and product development.

Governments also often have Import Promotion Offices, which may provide assistance to organisations of own account producers; try contacting local government offices or NGOs for more information. There are also purely commercial sites which market craftwork and goods produced by artisans (e.g., www.eziba.org).