



HomeWorkers  
**hww** Worldwide

# we work at home



## HOMEWORKERS WORLDWIDE MAPPING PROGRAMME

The mapping programme is an action-research programme aiming to build independent, democratic organisations of homebased workers in selected areas of Asia, Latin America and Eastern Europe.

The programme includes horizontal mapping, which identifies what kind of homebased work is being done, who the homebased workers are, the main issues and problems and how organisation can be developed.

This is followed by vertical mapping of production, marketing and distribution chains. As the programme develops and the capacity of local organisations grows, it addresses policy issues at the wider level of national, regional and international bodies.

The action-research methodology aims to give organisers a systematic understanding of the situation of homebased workers at the same time as giving visibility to the issue.

It also aims to document the organising process and to develop leadership among homebased workers themselves.

This report highlights some of the achievements of the programme so far, in giving visibility to homebased workers and in developing organisations to bring about change.

“This is the first time that we have this kind of organisation in Latin America and we have to make this experience different. It has to be based in a culture of solidarity and respect for others. We have to respect all the diversity and difference of culture. We have to recognise the different rhythms that women have. Our organisation has to be based in tolerance, respect and solidarity.”

HOMEWORNER ORGANISER, CHILE

COVER  
Photos: Al Garthwaite,  
Sharon Jones, HomeNet



LEFT  
Workers in Tamilnadu look  
at the HomeNet photopack  
Photo: READ Foundation

BELOW  
Bolivian workers at a meeting  
Photo: Sharon Jones



ALL PHOTOS BY HOMENET UNLESS STATED OTHERWISE.

FIGURES FOR LAND AREA FROM THE WORLD GUIDE 2001/2002

FIGURES FOR POPULATION FROM UN, 2003

FIGURES FOR AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME, GIVEN ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES, ARE BASED ON WORLD BANK ESTIMATES FOR 2001. AS AVERAGE FIGURES.

## AN INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME

The mapping programme provides a general framework and methodology, which can be adapted to local conditions. It draws on the experience of the wider international network, HomeNet, as well as those organisations working as part of the mapping programme.

The aim of the mapping programme has been to develop new work in areas or sectors where organisations did not exist or were very new. The local work with homebased workers, whether in the form of informal groups or the establishment of formal trade unions or associations, has been the basis of all other work.

The mapping programme has demonstrated that homebased work is widespread. Many things change from place to place, according to local conditions. But there are also common features, particularly the great poverty and insecurity in which many women live and work.

The programme of international workshops and exchanges has given local organisers and homebased workers an opportunity to visit other places and share experience. An international workshop was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in December 2001, to share experience of the pilot year. Other exchanges, meetings and visits have taken place between organisers from different countries and regions.

"It was of great importance for the participants to meet other homeworkers, see other forms of production, the culture of a beautiful country and the other regional projects. The experience renewed our energy to keep working."

BRAZILIAN COORDINATOR, AFTER VISIT TO BOLIVIA



ABOVE  
Delfa from Serbia, attending a handicraft fair in Maramures, Romania.



RIGHT  
Miriam Ortega, Latin America coordinator, meets with women from Bhusura village, Bihar, India.

## BRAZIL

The mapping project has been co-ordinated by the Social Work Department of the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio). The team includes lecturers, students and leaders of homebased workers.

Contacts were made with homebased workers in three contrasting areas within the state of Rio de Janeiro. In Rocinha, a favela (shanty town) in the heart of the city, many women do sewing and handicraft work directly for the local market or sometimes for employers. In Paciencia, a small rural town, there are at least two hundred women making straw bracelets for intermediaries, with others doing similar work to that in Rocinha. Novo Friburgo, on the other hand, is the centre of the underwear industry and many women sew underclothes at home and in family workshops.

Three associations of homebased workers have now been established. Members of the team visit each area regularly, holding meetings and individual discussions with the women. Training has been organised, both on technical issues such as skills development or marketing and on women's rights and citizenship.

"In the ten years that I have been a homemaker, I have always tried to pay for social security and health insurance. In that time, the prices that I have been paid for my work have remained the same. The only way that I can earn more is by working faster and faster, as the piece rate is always the same."

HOMEWORKER

"Being a homemaker is definitely a life of hard labour, a life full of sorrow."

HOMEWORKER

# BRAZIL



LEFT  
Sewing underwear,  
Novo Friburgo  
Photo: Sharon Jones

BELOW  
Group Meeting in Rocinha,  
Rio



### COUNTRY FACTS

LAND AREA - 8,511,969 SQ KM

POPULATION - 178.4 MILLION

MAIN LANGUAGE - PORTUGUESE

AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME - USD 3070

**BOLIVIA**

The Women's Centre (CEMUJ-B) has been working mainly in the capital city La Paz, and adjoining settlement of El Alto. Another organisation, Rural Artisans (Artesanas Rurales de Bolivia) has been working with women of indigenous communities in villages near Lake Titicaca.

On the streets of La Paz, there are thousands of street stalls, giving the city the appearance of one huge market. Many of the goods are produced in informal workshops in neighbouring El Alto.

For example, in the centre of La Paz is a flower market where you can buy cut flowers or arrangements in baskets or pots. Behind the flower sellers in this market, are homebased workers who make up artificial flowers, baskets, ceramic pots or other rustic containers.

In the rural areas, women combine homebased work with agriculture and animal-raising. The most common form of work is spinning, weaving and making up of products from alpaca and llama wool. Intermediaries who drive down prices are the main channel to the market.

"The work that I do is alpaca. I raise the animals and do all the jobs, from spinning to weaving. We sell our products very cheaply. It is not easy work. I have been doing it for fourteen years. There are few benefits. We are always working and we are always humiliated by the intermediaries and others. This is the first time that I have had the opportunity to come to a meeting like this."

HOMEBASED WORKER

**BOLIVIA**



LEFT  
Making bamboo baskets for flower stalls

BELOW LEFT  
Woman artisan  
Photo: Sharon Jones



COUNTRY FACTS

LAND AREA - 1,098,580 SQ KM  
POPULATION - 8.8 MILLION  
MAIN LANGUAGES - SPANISH, QUECHUA, GUARANI, AYMARA

## CHILE

Mapping has been done by AnaClara, a women's training organisation, in Santiago. AnaClara has supported the formation of new local trade unions and informal groups of women homebased workers in several districts of the city.

At the beginning of the programme, AnaClara set up a research team who trained homebased workers to carry out surveys and do follow-up work with homeworkers. As a result of this work, informal groups were established and some were later formally registered as trade unions. AnaClara has developed extensive leadership training programmes for the women, using popular education methods.

AnaClara has focused on urban homebased workers, some of whom are own-account, doing handicraft or food work for sale locally. Others work for local companies or intermediaries while others are doing piece-work for the garment and leather footwear industry.

Outside Santiago, AnaClara is also working with indigenous women doing traditional handicrafts in the North and seaweed collectors on the coast in the South.

"We have had achievements and we have had bad times. There is a small group that is always here, ready to work and sacrifice. There is a much larger group that comes and goes. We have had sadness and happiness. But we love our union and are determined to reach out to more women."

HOMEWORKER LEADER

"When we work as homeworkers, we always think that we are the only ones doing it. But now we have realised that it is not only us. There are many others like us, doing the same things. We have seen that there is another reality."

HOMEWORKER LEADER



RIGHT  
Homeworker  
handstitching shoes  
in Santiago

BELOW  
Leather homeworker  
in Santiago



### COUNTRY FACTS

LAND AREA - 756,950 SQ KM

POPULATION - 15.8 MILLION

MAIN LANGUAGE - SPANISH

AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME - USD 4590

## MEXICO

Mapping in Mexico has been done by Factor X, a women's organisation, based in Tijuana, a town on the border with the USA. Tijuana is dominated by maquila industries - large assembly plants making goods for export to North America. Factor X has a history of training women maquila workers as leaders and has extended their work to include homebased workers in the city.

Factor X has contacted many women and men homebased workers, doing both dependent and subcontracted work. They set up a small team including organisers, ex-maquila workers and homebased workers. Many women and some men were sewing garments. The most common form of work for women was food-processing. Other work included labelling and packing, metalwork, making plaster figures, woodwork, leather and ceramics.

Following initial contacts and interviews with homebased workers, Factor X was able to offer a range of advice and services to the women. They have also traced the production chains of products made by homeworkers, some of which are exported to the USA. An informal group of homebased workers has been established.

"What we did gives me satisfaction because nobody comes to your house giving you information. This is information we need to know to defend our human rights."

HOMEWORKER ORGANISER

# MEXICO



LEFT  
Assembling metal  
brushes  
Photo: IGRECA

BELOW LEFT  
Making plaster angels  
Photo: Factor X



### COUNTRY FACTS

LAND AREA - 1,958,200 SQ KM

POPULATION - 103.4 MILLION

MAIN LANGUAGE - SPANISH

AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME - USD

5530



## THE INFORMAL ECONOMY

Today, at the beginning of the twenty first century, informal work is growing in all parts of the world. Millions of people earn their living through informal work.

The scale of the informal economy varies from country to country. In some countries, like India, the vast majority of workers have always earned their living informally. In others, like the UK or Chile, informal work is increasing as a result of recent economic change. In regions like Eastern Europe or China, informal employment has grown as a result of the transition from a planned to a market economy.

It used to be thought that informal work was a thing of the past and that as time went by all countries would have a modern economy, in which most people worked in formal workplaces. Instead, there have been two trends in the opposite direction.

On the one hand, modern industries like clothing, electronics or footwear have decentralised production, which is now organised with subcontracting chains stretching round the world.

At the same time, in countries where the majority have always worked informally, even remote rural areas are linked into the global economy and people need a cash income.

Homebased work is one form of informal work. Carried out in the home mainly by women, it is the most invisible. There are few laws, policies or programmes supporting home-based workers and little recognition of the important contribution they make to the economy. They are invisible workers.

# WORLDWIDE



EUROPE  
Selling pottery, Romania

ASIA  
Palm weaving,  
India  
Photo: K.A.Srinivasan



## WHAT IS HOMEBASED WORK?

Homebased work is the production of goods and services, carried out in the home or nearby premises, for a cash income.

Homebased work can be done for an employer, often through subcontractors or intermediaries. This kind of work is found in modern and traditional industries. The homemaker does not design or market products but carries out a particular task in return for a wage, usually in the form of a piece rate. These are dependent or piece-rate workers, often working at the end of subcontracting chains.

Homebased work can also be done by people who design and market their own products.

This is common in handicrafts, where people use traditional skills to earn a cash income for their family. But people also do food-processing, non-traditional hand work (eg. making soft toys) or process agricultural or forest products. These are own-account workers.

The reality of homebased work, however, is less clear cut. Many women do both kinds of work, depending on what is available. Women doing handicraft work may be economically dependent on traders or money-lenders. Because their homebased work is irregular or seasonal, many women combine it with other forms of paid work, such as waged work in agriculture or part-time cleaning jobs.

Many women homebased workers are from the poorest communities. If they have their own organisations, they can become active agents for change, both in immediate concerns of fighting for a decent livelihood and their rights as workers, and by becoming leaders in the democratic life of their community.

LATIN AMERICA  
Knitting sweaters,  
Bolivia  
Photo: Sharon Jones



## BIHAR AND JHARKHAND INDIA

Adithi is an umbrella organisation working with over 60,000 women and girls, mainly in the rural areas of Bihar and Jharkhand (formerly South Bihar).

Adithi aims to empower women economically, socially and politically. They combine a broad range of livelihood work with programmes on literacy, education, health and credit. Through the mapping programme, Adithi has focused on homebased work as an important livelihood strategy for thousands of rural women and girls.

In Bihar, it is possible to grow three crops. Around 12% of women do some kind of homebased work. In Jharkhand, there has been a long drought and over 90% of the women depend on homebased work.

In Jharkhand, surveys were carried out of women making leafplates and in Bihar of those doing a traditional form

of embroidery called sujini. Other homebased occupations include: making rope, spinning and weaving jute, making mats from date palm, bamboo work, tassar silk spinning and weaving, making muri (puffed rice) and bidi (cigarettes).

Adithi has lobbied the state governments of Bihar and Jharkhand for a social security fund. A federation of homebased workers in Bihar and Jharkhand has been set up.

“Women should have access to their rights and to resources. Women should be self-sufficient and independent.”

HOMEBASED WORKER ORGANISER, JHARKHAND

“We were never able to eat all we wanted. We were only able to eat a handful of rice. We have to form an organisation to get rid of poverty from the world and we should think of others not only ourselves.”

COOPERATIVE LEADER, JHARKHAND



LEFT  
Weaving jute in  
Katihar,  
Bihar

BELOW  
Weaving bamboo  
Jharkhand

RIGHT  
Women organisers  
meet at the READ  
office

BELOW RIGHT  
Making garlands  
from flower buds



## TAMILNADU INDIA

In Tamilnadu, the Rural Education and Development Foundation (READ) started the mapping project, with a focus on garment homebased workers, in January 2003.

READ is based in Pudukkottai district, a poor rural area suffering from drought, in the Tamilnadu state of Southern India. They have set up a team of eleven women organisers who travelled to villages in six blocks (subdivisions) of the district to make contact with women working on garments.

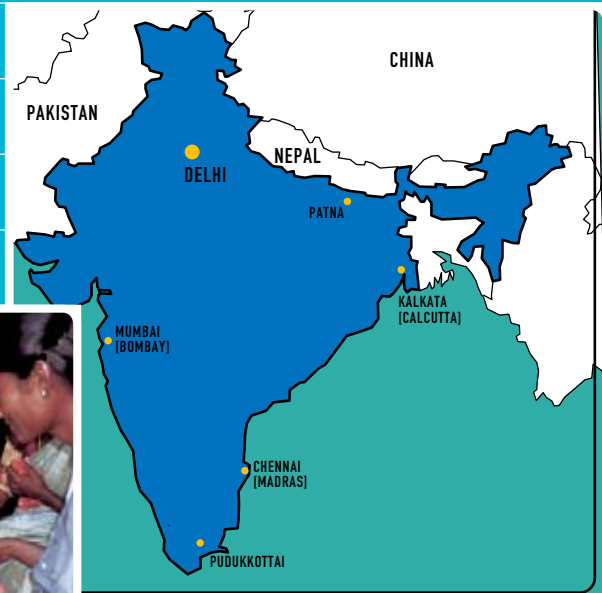
Nearly 1,000 women garment workers were contacted and a series of meetings were held throughout the district. As a result of this intensive three month campaign, 46 Self Help Groups were set up in different villages and a rally was held attended by over 900 garment workers and supported by the formal trade union CITU.

READ has also begun some initial investigation of the situation of the many hundreds of women in the district who make garlands from flowers. The work is very low-paid and usually the main family income. Because of the drought, there has been a shortage of agricultural work and more and more women have been moving into making garlands.

"We are paid very little. The agents decide the price, and sometimes they reject our work and reduce the price. If they say the work is faulty, they even deduct money for materials and cloth which they say we have used."

HOMEWORKER

# INDIA



### COUNTRY FACTS

LAND AREA - 3,287,588 SQ KM

POPULATION - 1 BILLION

MAIN LANGUAGES - HINDI, ENGLISH, 17 OTHER OFFICIAL LANGUAGES INCLUDING TAMIL

AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME - USD 460

## NEPAL

In Nepal, the recently established Home Based Worker Concern Society - Nepal (HBWCSN) has been carrying out mapping in two districts, Sunsari in the East and in Kathmandu.

The study focused on dependent homeworkers, working for an agent or contractor. In Dharan, a small semi-rural area of Sunsari District, HBWCSN interviewed 150 workers each in three sectors: making pote - bead necklaces worn by married women; dhaka weaving - a traditional patterned cloth; and knitting with wool by hand or by machine. Following the interviews and discussions with homeworkers, an organisation was set up in each sector with an elected leadership of homeworkers.

HBWCSN has carried out a similar programme in Kathmandu, working with homeworkers in three sectors: making pote, sewing garments and doing work on cotton threads, including the fringes, for woollen carpets.

"The attainment of a society where all wage employment and women home-based workers are provided with justice, visibility, equality and dignity."

HBWCSN MISSION STATEMENT

"This is the only work I can do. So my daughter and I are dependent on this work for our living. I earn about 700 Nepali rupees a week from knitting sweaters."

(700 Nepali Rupees is about USD 9)

HOMEWORKER

"The biggest health problem for her and her family is that the small particles of wool spread in the room and cause problems in breathing. 'I have back pain and my arms ache. I cannot sit for so long,' she said."

ORGANISER

# NEPAL



### COUNTRY FACTS

LAND AREA - 140,800 SQ KM  
 POPULATION - 25 MILLION  
 MAIN LANGUAGE - NEPALI  
 AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME - USD 250

ABOVE  
 General meeting of homeworkers,  
 Sunsari District  
 Photo: HBWCSN

RIGHT  
 Garment sewing, Kathmandu  
 Photo: HBWCSN

## CHINA

Since 1978, economic reforms in China have brought about great changes in people's lives, as society moves from a planned to a market economy. The mapping programme is at an early stage in developing work in China. Some initial work has been done identifying different types of homebased work in both urban and rural areas, among Han Chinese and national minority communities.

Homebased workers include unemployed workers, particularly older women, who find it difficult to find formal jobs; rural women, particularly married women with children, who combine agricultural work with other occupations; people doing traditional handicrafts, such as weaving, embroidery or pottery, including national minority people with their own distinctive cultures; those working for subcontractors and traders, in small workshops in large cities or for the growing rural enterprises in country towns and villages.

Work in China has identified home-based workers who receive work from informal workshops and formal factories. Some are producing for the local or national market, while others are producing goods for export, either through Hong Kong or directly to Western markets.

# CHINA

RIGHT  
Traditional weaving on  
Hainan Island

BELOW  
Making blinds from  
rushes in a village in  
North China



### COUNTRY FACTS

LAND AREA - 9,559,867 SQ KM  
POPULATION - 1.3 BILLION  
MAIN LANGUAGE - STANDARD  
CHINESE  
AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME - USD



## EUROPE

The countries of Eastern Europe and the Baltic States have been going through a rapid transition, which has led to a decrease in formal employment, particularly for women. Official unemployment rates are high and unofficially many men and women rely on informal work to survive. On top of this, in the former Yugoslavia, the last ten years has seen civil war, the splitting up of the country, sanctions and bombing by NATO. Many women have turned to homebased work to cope with the years of crisis.

Following a workshop held in Bulgaria in March 2002, there have been mapping projects in Bulgaria, Serbia and Lithuania, with a number of contacts in other countries, particularly with a handicraft organisation in Romania.

There are many homebased workers involved in the production of traditional handicrafts, including weaving, woodwork, ceramics and textile work. Subcontracting from Western Europe is another source of informal work, including dependent homework. Many women also make food or garments for local markets.

## SERBIA

In Serbia, the mapping project has been carried out by a coalition of women's organisations based in different towns. Small surveys and local meetings were organised in seven different towns and the work continues to bring in new groups. As a result of the work a new organisation, Felicitas, has been established to represent homebased workers.

The activities carried out by homebased workers include making cakes and other cooked food; dry flowers; kilim weaving; making jewellery; making honey and toys. In Serbia, the groups have covered a minority of women working in services such as hairdressing or proof-reading. The vast majority are own-account, but as in other areas it is anticipated that more dependent workers will be found as the work develops. Under the umbrella group Felicitas, local groups are developing activities suitable for their members and a lot of emphasis is being given to training on a range of issues.

"Through their own example of associating and organising, women pointed out that despite all the problems and troubles, it is easier if women are organised. It does not mean that problems will be solved 'now' or 'immediately', but it certainly means support and opportunity to find gradual solutions."

FELICITAS MEMBER



ABOVE  
Making corn dolls in  
Serbia



### SERBIA COUNTRY FACTS

LAND AREA - 102,170 SQ KM  
POPULATION - 10.5 MILLION  
MAIN LANGUAGE - SERBIAN  
AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME - NO FIGURES

### BULGARIA COUNTRY FACTS

LAND AREA - 110,910 SQ KM  
POPULATION - 7.9 MILLION  
MAIN LANGUAGE - BULGARIAN  
AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME - USD 1650

# EUROPE

## BULGARIA

In Bulgaria, we have worked with a number of partners, including the Bulgarian branch of the Clean Clothes Campaign, an association based in the Northern city of Russe and those working with homebased workers in other parts of the country.

Many women are now unemployed or are retired and trying to live off a meagre pension. Some are doing traditional handicraft work such as the fine cross stitch embroidery found on sale in the centre of Sofia, the capital city. In many rural areas, there is also still a strong tradition of weaving. Others are using their crochet and knitting skills to earn money for basic expenses. In Russe, for example, women do crochet and knitting for traders who export to Greece.

In the South West of the country, there is growing subcontracting mainly from Greece in a number of different sectors, including garments and footwear. Some work goes into factories owned by local Bulgarian or Greek people, but work is also subcontracted out to informal workshops and homeworkers.

"There should be a way to fix prices, at least in one region or town. At the moment, all the traders have different prices. One homemaker will receive more money for the same work. But there should be a comparison. If a homemaker says anything, she will lose her work. But this work is necessary and women rely on it for their expenses."

BULGARIAN HOMEWORKER



ABOVE RIGHT  
Machining sheets,  
Lithuania

RIGHT  
Traditional carpet  
weaving,  
Romania

## LITHUANIA

In the course of the mapping programme, a number of contacts have been developed in Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia, the three Baltic states that are going through difficult times since their independence from the Soviet Union. In Lithuania, the European Contact Group has started a mapping project with homebased workers in a number of areas, starting mainly with urban workers but gradually extending to rural areas.

There is extensive homebased work in the handicraft sector, although many people have lost their markets. Many women are also making garments for Russian or Western European markets. The mapping team is beginning to investigate in rural areas, where there are high levels of poverty and a lot of homebased work processing agricultural products.



### LITHUANIA COUNTRY FACTS

LAND AREA - 65,200 SQ KM

POPULATION - 3.4 MILLION

MAIN LANGUAGES - LITHUANIAN, RUSSIAN, POLISH

AVERAGE ANNUAL INCOME - USD 3350

# INFO

The mapping programme on home-based work is managed by Home Workers Worldwide, the UK centre for HomeNet, the international network of homebased workers.

Research Adviser  
**PROFESSOR RUTH PEARSON**  
 Centre for Development Studies (POLIS)  
 University of Leeds

Evaluator  
**ANNE-MARIE DELETTREZ**

This programme is supported by DfID, the UK Government Department for International Development.

Published by  
**HOMEWORKERS WORLDWIDE**

30-38 Dock Street,  
 Leeds LS10 1JF  
 United Kingdom

Email:  
[mapping@homeworkersww.org.uk](mailto:mapping@homeworkersww.org.uk)

Web:  
[www.homeworkersww.org.uk](http://www.homeworkersww.org.uk)

August 2003

Copyright  
**HOMEWORKERS WORLDWIDE**

Designed by  
**ANDY EDWARDS DESIGN**

Printed by  
**BOWMANS**



**Regional Co-ordinators**

**MIRIAM ORTEGA**

AnaClara  
 Calle Garcia Reyes 537  
 Santiago  
 Chile

Tel: +56 2 688 2522  
 Email: [anaclarachile@tie.cl](mailto:anaclarachile@tie.cl)

**VIJI SRINIVASAN**

Adithi  
 2/30 State Bank Colony - II  
 Bailey Rd  
 Patna 800014  
 Bihar  
 India

Tel: +91 612 259 3018  
 Email: [adithiwomen@rediffmail.com](mailto:adithiwomen@rediffmail.com)

**MAJDA SIKOSEK**

Felicitas  
 Resavska 25  
 11000 Belgrade  
 Serbia

Tel: +381 11 32 45 067  
 Email: [fltcs@eunet.yu](mailto:fltcs@eunet.yu)



RIGHT  
 Photo: Sharon Jones