

## Homeworkers Worldwide Annual Report 2019



*Meeting with Homeworkers stitching Leather footwear in Tamil Nadu, January 2019.*

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## **Homeworkers Worldwide Activity Summary 2019**

In 2019 HWW celebrated our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. This gave us an excellent opportunity to take stock, reflect on our achievements as an organization, identify current and future challenges and renew our commitment to fighting injustice through supporting women workers. Our 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary event in September also enabled us to meet together with friends of HWW, and remember the enormous contribution of our founder and former International Coordinator Jane Tate. We are grateful to all those who attended and supported this event.

Our Director, Lucy Brill has been working closely with Trustees throughout the year to promote the rights of homeworkers and other precarious women workers, and as ever we are hugely proud that despite our small size HWW is able to achieve so much. Thank you Lucy!

We continue to collaborate with our partners Cividep and two major shoe brands in Southern India on improving pay and conditions for homeworkers in the leather footwear industry. We have also published a public report on garment manufacture in the UK, highlighting worker exploitation.

Our major activity this year has been the commencement of the four-year Hidden Homeworkers Project together with our partners Traidcraft and HomeNet South Asia. HWW's role in the project is to engage and support companies and multi-stakeholder initiatives in the task of improving conditions for homeworkers in clothing and footwear supply chains in India, Pakistan and Nepal.

### **Networking**

As a small NGO developing alliances and networking is essential to maximising our impact. We have continued to work closely with our Indian partners Cividep who have been working with us on leather footwear in Ambur, Tamil Nadu for several years now. We are also maintaining and developing relationships with SAVE, READ and Care T in South India and Manjaree in North India.

We have been collaborating with our allies Dalit Solidarity Network on a joint ETI Innovation Fund project, and more broadly on our work in the ETI. We have also been working with Arisa (formerly India Committee of the Netherlands). We continue to strengthen our links with other labour rights NGOs, such as our good friends Labour Behind the Label.

We have excellent links with the academic community. In 2019 Annie Delaney from RMIT University in Melbourne, who is a long-term friend of Homeworkers Worldwide, agreed to become an HWW Adviser. We also have greatly valued on-going relationships with Jean Jenkins at Cardiff University, Nik Hammer at Leicester and Charles Umney at Leeds. HWW is also participating in the Steering Group of Cardiff University's Operationalising Labour Rights project. This exciting project is partnering with female trade union activists from the Garment Labour Union in Bangalore, to document their work to enable women workers to claim their rights, and is also developing innovative mobile phone apps to support the process.

Work on the Hidden Homeworkers Programme has given us the opportunity to renew our partnership with Traidcraft (with whom we previously produced research and a toolkit on combatting child labour) and also to work with HomeNet South Asia, and their partners, on an exciting collaborative project

## **Hidden Homeworkers**

This project, funded by the EC and led by Traidcraft, commenced in April. Its purpose is to map homeworkers in clothing and footwear supply chains in India, Pakistan and Nepal, and to collaborate with companies and MSIs to implement improvements to homeworkers' pay and conditions in these supply chains. Our role is to lead on company and MSI engagement, supporting companies in better understanding the issue, adopting homeworking policies, mapping their chains and delivering tangible improvements to workers. To this end Lucy attended the project launch in Kathmandu in September, Peter travelled to Norway to discuss homeworking issues with the Norway ETI and we have had extensive discussions with a wide range of companies and multi stakeholder initiatives.

## **Ethical Trading Initiative**

HWW has continued to be an active member of the ETI, influencing retailers and brands in the UK, and collaborating closely with our allies in the NGO and Trade Union Caucuses.

Our footwear supply chains project funded by the ETI Innovation Fund was completed in January 2019. We worked with two brands and their respective suppliers, and with our partners Cividep, and Dalit Solidarity Network. Key project achievements include mapping homeworkers in a second footwear supply chain, as well as an end of project workshop in Tamil Nadu bringing together both brands and their respective suppliers to share learning and explore scope for future collaboration. Final reports for this project were published by HWW and featured in the ETI blog.

The ETI's Tamil Nadu Multi-Stakeholder Programme, was established some years ago to address issues of forced and bonded labour in the textile industry in South India. At the ETI's request, Lucy visited the ETI's TNMS project in Coimbatore, and reported back to the ETI on progress, strengths and weaknesses of the project.

Special thanks to HWW Trustee Peter Williams for all his work with Lucy on ETI issues.

## **UK Textile and Garment Industry**

In 2017 HWW completed a short scoping study on the textile and garment manufacturing sector in Greater Manchester, drawing on outreach work with local community and women's organisations. This year our public report drew great interest and media coverage. In December, Lucy was invited to present our report to the Apparel & General Merchandising Public/Private Protocol Group, which includes leaders of key enforcement bodies and several major UK brands to highlight our key findings and the potential for further work on this issue. We are continuing to pursue further funding to scale up the project to our planned participatory action research project.

## **South India Leather Footwear Project**

We have completed our work partnering with Pentland Brands, and with Cividep India to map homeworkers' involvement in their value chain together and produce a clear model for the ethical employment of homeworkers in leather footwear supply chains in Tamil Nadu. We continue to work closely with Cividep to support their work with leather footwear homeworkers in the area.

## **HWW 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Event Celebration**

Our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration took place in September. We held a workshop for around 30 participants at the Friends Meeting House in Leeds. The event was an excellent opportunity to reflect on the accomplishments of HWW, and Jane Tate's legacy in particular, and to address the current issues and challenges for work in the field on women's labour rights. The participants were a diverse mix of friends and supporters of HWW, activists, academics and allies in the sector, ensuring a stimulating and informative discussion. We grabbed the opportunity to kickstart work on our new strategic plan by incorporating a participatory consultation exercise as part of the workshop. We will be finalising this plan in the early months of 2020.

## **Research and publications**

*Introducing the Hidden Homeworkers Programme* – a briefing not for brands and other interested parties on what HWW will be doing as part of the Hidden Homeworkers Programme, and how companies can get involved.

*Due diligence in Tamil Nadu Footwear Manufacture* - This summarises the key learnings from our 2018 project funded by the Ethical Trading Initiative's Innovation Fund, which worked with two ETI retailers sourcing from these supply chains, highlighting labour rights risks for both homeworkers and factory workers, many of whom are women, involved in footwear manufacturing in South India.

*Greater Manchester Textile and Garment Industry Scoping Study* - This is a report of an initial scoping study documenting working conditions within the textile and garment industry (TGI) within Greater Manchester, based on fieldwork carried out in 2017, funded by the British Cotton Growing Association Work People's Collection Fund. The report highlights the importance of further research to enable workers voices to be heard in the debate to improve working conditions within UK manufacturing, and to prioritise our provisional policy recommendations.

All publications are freely available on the HWW website.

## **Funding**

This year we received funding from the European Commission for the Hidden Homeworkers Project, the Ethical Trading Initiative's Innovation Fund (which ultimately came from the UK Government's Department for International Development), and from their BOAG fund (from large NGO members' contributions), as well as from Pentland Brands and several small individual donations. A crowd-funder was held to raise money for our 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration and we are deeply grateful to all those who contributed. We have also undertaken consultancy work in order to share our expertise on homeworking, and raise additional income.

***Our thanks to all our funders, our staff and trustees.***

**Director:** Lucy Brill. **Trustees:** Linda Devereux, Al Garthwaite, Nesta Holden, Julie Jarman, Catriona Purdy, Peter Williams. **Academic Adviser:** Dr. Annie Delaney.