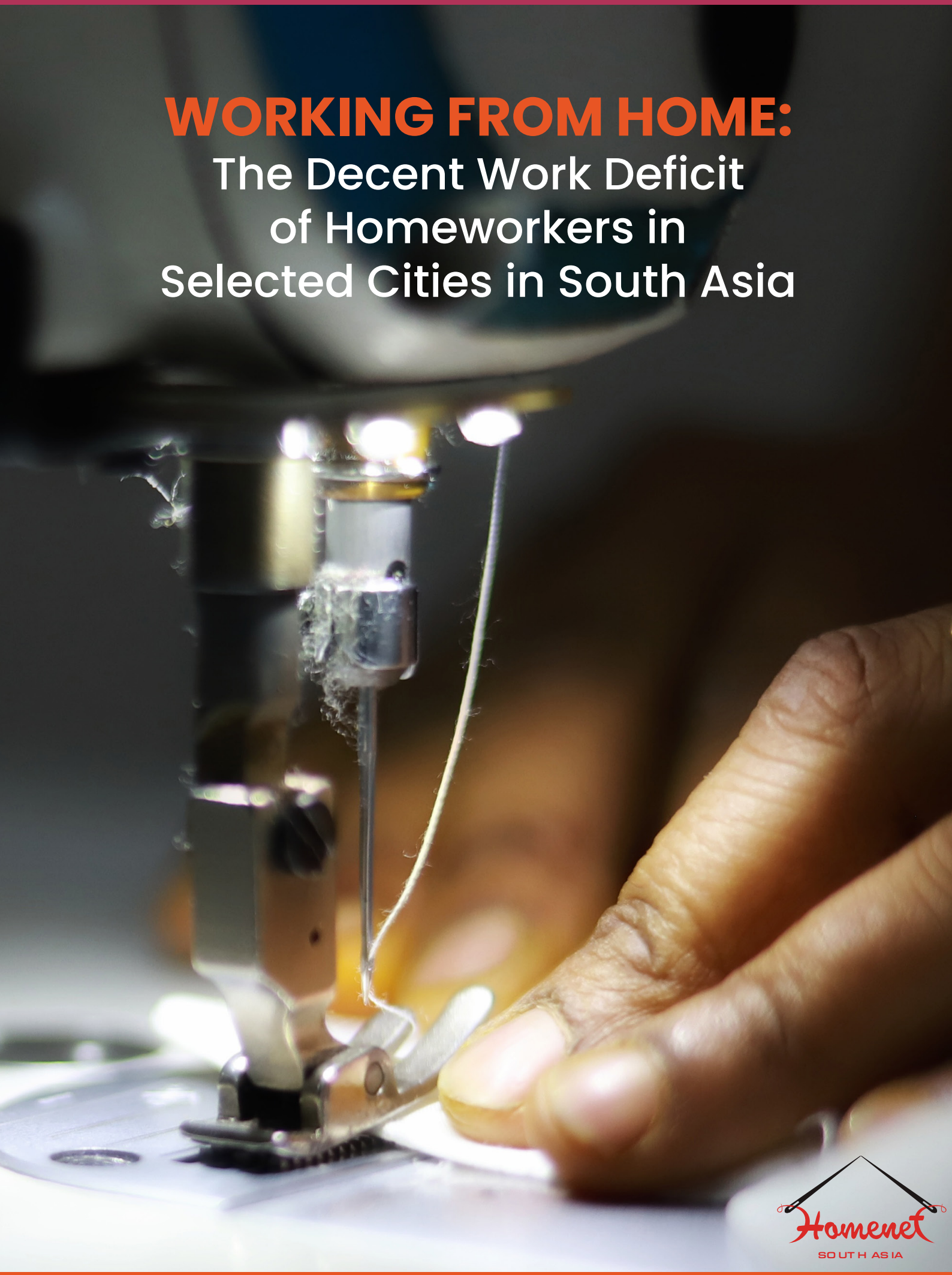
WORKING FROM HOME:
The Decent Work Deficit of Homeworkers in Selected Cities in South Asia



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February 2023

Acknowledgements

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Contents

Acronyms

GEFONT: General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions

HBWs: Home-based workers

HNP: HomeNet Pakistan

HNSA: HomeNet South Asia Trust

HW: Homeworker

INR: Indian Rupee

ILO: International Labour Organization

N: Number of respondents

NPR: Nepalese Rupee

PKR: Pakistan Rupee

SABAH: Saarc Business Association of Homebased Workers

SAVE: Social Action and Voluntary Education (SAVE)

SEWA: Self Employed Women's Association

USD: US dollar

Introduction

There are significant numbers of women around the globe who live on incomes from home-based work. They are occupied across various sectors, such as garments, textiles and footwear, and undertake a wide range of work, encompassing highly skilled to relatively low-skilled work (Nilsson, M., 2022)[1]. Due to the absence of work opportunities in the formal sector and household and care responsibilities, they represent a significant part of the informal economy. Globally, there are 260 million home-based workers (HBWs); 86% are in developing and emerging economies, and more than half of them are women (Bonnet, F., et al., 2021)[2]. South Asia alone has more than 50 million HBWs.[3] Home-based work, whether it takes the form of self-employment or sub-contracted piece-rate production, is the basis of livelihoods for many women in the developing world, and the informal economy is the source of these opportunities (HNSA, 2021)[4].

Subcontracted home-based workers, also known as homeworkers (HWs), represent the more vulnerable of the two categories of home-based workers. Working on a piece-rate basis, and dependent on contractors and other intermediaries for a livelihood, they constitute a divided workforce, are widely scattered and only a small minority have joined trade unions. Many do not know the company they produce for, that other HWs exist, where the goods are sold or the price they sell for (ibid). Due to the informal nature of their work, they do not have any formal agreements or set piece rate wage structures (ibid). Severely undervalued and often unrecognised by the brands or factories they work for, they are subject to economic and gender-based injustices. They face a range of occupational issues due in part to their isolated working arrangements including long hours without fair pay, the lack of social security, no provision for adequate workspaces and bearing their own costs of production. Work is irregular and depends upon the needs of the factory or brand; there is no guarantee of a smooth flow of work (ibid). Homeworkers are also used for labour-intensive, and often highly skilled, handwork without the provision of appropriate or skill-based remunerations (Harvey, 2019:2)[5]. They may work interchangeably for both domestic and international supply chains based on availability and market access and are unaware of who they are working for. They form part of an unequal landscape of global production where formal firms take advantage of their skills and flexibility while denying them their core labour rights such as fair wages, paid sick and maternity leave, social security benefits and job security (Ibid:2).

[1] Nilsson, M., 2022. Introduction, Continuity and Change: Gender, Place, and Skill Formation in Home-based Production. In Nilsson, M., Mazumdar, I., Neunsinger, S., (Eds), Home-Based Work and Home-Based Workers 1800-2021 (pp1 – 443). Koninklijke Brill, Netherlands. Accessed online, available at: https://www.homenetinternational.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Home-Based-Work-and-Home-Based-Workers-1800-2021-Home-Based-Work-and-Home-Based-Workers-1800-2021.pdf

[2] Bonnet, F., Carre, F., Chen, M., Vanek, J., 2021. Home-based Workers in the World: A Statistical Profile. Women in informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing. Accessed online, Available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---travail/documents/publication/wcms_771793.pdf

[3] Accessed via HNSA website – Available at: https://hnsa.org.in/home-based-workers

[4] HNSA, 2021. Homeworkers in Garment Supply Chains: Research from India and Nepal. Homenet South Asia. Accessed online, available at: https://hnsa.org.in/resources/homeworkers-garment-supply-chains-research-india-and-nepal

[5] Harvey, J., 2019. Homeworkers in Global Supply Chains: A Review of Literature. WIEGO Resource Document No. 11. Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing. Accessed online, available at: https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/migrated/publications/files/Harvey-Homeworkers-in-Global-Supply-Chains-Literature-

Since the Home Work Convention No. 177 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1996, the ILO has endeavoured to achieve decent work for all by promoting 'opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity' (ILO, 1999:3)[6]. In 2002, it made an expansion through its conference to focus on 'decent work and the informal economy' (ILO, 2002a)[7]. Accessing decent work has become an important issue for informal workers, including HWs, and, in many cases crucial to the possibility of escaping severe poverty and precarity. This report illustrates the challenges faced by HWs in achieving decent work as measured against the ILO's Decent Work indicators. It also assesses HWs' perceptions of decent work and identifies some of the areas that need to change if serious gains are to be made towards decent work for HWs.

Shoe making, Panauti, Kavre District, Nepal

[6] ILO, 1999. Decent Work: Report of the Director-General, International Labour Conference, 87th Session, ILO, Geneva.

[7] ILO, 2002a. Decent Work and the Informal Economy, Report VI, International Labour Conference, 90th Session, ILO, Geneva.

Measuring Decent Work for Homeworkers

The ILO framework of Decent Work Indicators incorporates "ten substantive elements corresponding to the four strategic pillars of the decent work agenda". These pillars are "full and productive employment, rights at work, social protection and the promotion of social dialogue." [8]

Full and productive employment refers to the adequate opportunity for work that is productive and that delivers a fair income under the principles of the fundamental rights of workers, provides a healthy workplace that includes safety at work and provides healthy working conditions. **Rights at work** refer here to freedom of association, i.e. every individual worker is free to organise and to join workers' organisations[9], either formally or informally. In addition, rights include non-discriminatory work with equal opportunities for all workers, regardless of ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or caste, as well as the absence of forced labour and child labour. **Social protection** refers to income security and safety nets to protect workers and their families. **Social dialogue** refers to the opportunities that workers have to present their views, defend their interests, engage in discussions to negotiate work-related matters with employers and authorities and organise and participate in decisions that affect their lives.

This report has been limited to an analysis of five indicators, namely: 1) The nature of HWs' work and their earnings, 2) workers' rights, 3) workplaces and health, 4) social protection and 5) social dialogue. These indicators have been used to understand the progress made towards the attainment of decent work objectives through the perception of HWs in Delhi, India, Tirupur, India, Karachi, Pakistan and Kathmandu, Nepal. The HWs have identified some of the barriers they encounter and suggested certain measures needed to overcome those obstacles in order that they can attain decent work.

[8] The ten specific indicators that correspond to these four pillars are: (1) Employment opportunities, (2) adequate earnings and productive work, (3) decent working time, (4) combining work, family and personal life, (5) work that should be abolished, (6) stability and security of work, (7) equal opportunity and treatment in employment, (8) safe working environment, (9) social security, (10) social dialogue, employers' and workers' representation. Source: ILO Decent work indicators , Accessed online, available at: https://www.ilo.org/integration/themes/mdw/WCMS_189392/lang--en/index.htm

[9] International Labour Standards on Freedom of association (ilo.org)

Methodology

The study is qualitative in nature. Data was collected between July and December 2021 and involved 126 HWs in four cities within three countries in South Asia: India (Delhi, 30 HWs, and Tirupur, 30 HWs), Nepal (Kathmandu, 36 HWs) and Pakistan (Karachi, 30 HWs). The interview schedule was designed by HomeNet South Asia (HNSA) with inputs from Transform Trade (Formerly Traidcraft Exchange) and HomeWorkers Worldwide. The tool was also reviewed by HNSA member organisations. A key aim of the tool design was to in-build questions that would elicit homeworker perspectives on decent work. Additionally, the tool was also designed to illuminate working conditions of homeworkers in relation to different dimensions of decent work. The study proceeded first in India and Nepal, before being undertaken in Pakistan. The final interview schedule is provided as an annexure to this report.[10]

Stone pasting on a lehenga, Baldia Town, Karachi

[10] The interview schedule provided in the Annexure was the version used in Pakistan, where the final phase of this research was conducted. Very minor changes were made to the interview schedule ahead of its use in Pakistan.

Piloting and data collection

HNSA member partners took the lead in collecting the data: the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Bharat in Delhi, Social Action and Voluntary Education (SAVE) in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu, India, the SAARC Business Association of Home-Based Workers (SABAH) Nepal in Kathmandu and HomeNet Pakistan (HNP) in Karachi.[11] Pilot studies held in each location to review the flow and comprehension of the interview schedule by HWs. It was found during the pilot study that HWs did not understand the term 'Decent Work', which led to the interview questionnaire being revised and the term 'decent work' being replaced with the term 'good work'. The researchers explained the ILO definition of Decent Work to HWs at the end of each interview.[12]

Sampling

Face-to-face interviews were held with HWs who were actively engaged in homeworking before or during COVID-19 (over the 12 months previous to the date of the interview). All homeworkers selected for the interviews were from low-income settlements.

Practical and logistical concerns – notably ease of access to homeworkers and the value of ensuring that discussions about these sensitive issues are undergirded by relationships of trust and reciprocity – led field teams to reach out, in many cases, to homeworkers whom HBW organizations were trying to organize or were already known to them. This means that the proportion of homeworkers featured in the study who are members of homeworker organisations is almost certainly larger than that among homeworkers in the population at large within these areas. Additionally, many homeworkers featured in the study have had contact with local homeworker organisations, which is not the case for all homeworkers.

In Delhi and Kathmandu, membership of a homeworker organisation entailed being connected to a community-based producer company and within this structure homeworkers had the option of taking work either from a sub-contractor or from local actors known as community leaders, who are themselves homeworkers or former homeworkers, and always women. The implications of these variations for our findings, insofar as they are present, are likely to cluster most particularly around the area of social dialogue and may lead to more positive responses than would have been the case were the homeworkers surveyed entirely unorganised and disconnected from any grassroots level homeworker organisations. This is because unorganised and more isolated homeworkers are, other factors being equal, likely to be more disadvantaged than their counterparts who are members of these organisations [13] or engaged with local agencies in other ways: as suggested by homeworker responses in this study, relationships with community leaders, within the context of a producer company, are likely to be less exploitative than those with contractors.

[11] HNSA's members in each location undertook the qualitative study and submitted reports. This report is a compilation of those individual reports, along with additional analyses from the raw data.

[12] During the interviews in Nepal, a few homeworkers enquired about the meaning of decent work. In these cases, a brief description was provided by the researcher at the beginning of the survey and a detailed explanation at the end of the survey.

[13] There have been instances, for example, of homeworkers who are members of the Tiruppur community-based workers' collective, *Anukatham*, acting together to attempt to negotiate with contractors.

Overall, the impact of membership on homeworker experiences, and their experiences with local grassroots interventions, will differ from location to location but does not, in any location, fundamentally alter the underlying conditions that characterise their work itself: homework remains highly precarious, secured on a piece-rate basis, and homeworkers must both subsidise the cost of production and make do without social security. Further, no support from a community-based organisation alone is ever likely to be enough to counter the severe power imbalance that homeworkers face within the supply chain vis a vis informal supply chain actors and, more particularly, suppliers and buyers.

Data analysis and report development

Analyses of the findings were based on the indicators selected for the study. The report development was led by HNSA, in close collaboration with Transform Trade[14] and Homeworkers Worldwide. The limited number of HWs interviewed for the study in each location meant that the findings provide only a glimpse of HWs' working situations, from the lens of decent work. Issues and aspirations arising from these exchanges can be further investigated by interested stakeholders.

[14] formerly Traidcraft Exchange

Key Findings

Employment

Nature of Work of Homeworkers:

Homeworkers are subcontracted piece-rate workers embedded in a range of tasks. They produce, assemble, package, check goods and add value to products for a variety of industries, including handicrafts, textiles, garments, footwear, electronics and more. Factories employ a number of middlemen who deliver the work to the HWs and provide them with the raw materials, guidelines and deadlines for completing the tasks.

Homeworker respondents were engaged in a variety of occupations ranging from lower skilled work such as trimming unwanted threads in garments, threading, folding and cropping, to more skilled work such as embroidery, weaving and knitting.

Table 1: Nature of Work of Homeworkers

DELHI	TIRUPUR	KATHMANDU	KARACHI
Thread-cutting, stitching, hemming, embroidery, embedding stones or beads, preparing garlands or kaleera[15]	Trimming, threading, folding	Weaving, knitting, stitching	Stitching, stone work, cropping, embroidery

In Delhi, the majority of respondents had been engaged in home-based work for less than five years. In Tirupur, the HWs had experience ranging from less than one year to more than five years. In Kathmandu, the majority had worked for more than ten years, and a significant number had worked between six and ten years. In Pakistan, HWs had been engaged for between two years and twenty years.

[15] The ornamental additions to the bangles worn by brides.

Homeworkers' Earnings

HWs' piece rate wages are based on jobs performed on particular products. There is no fixed piece rate wage structure for HWs in the surveyed countries, resulting in HWs receiving different piece rates for doing the same job. Research shows that HWs have been compelled to accept piece rates that are determined by the contractors due to their lack of bargaining power (Sinha & Mehrotra, 2016)[16].

Table 2 depicts earnings per country based on the jobs performed by the majority of HWs. Different types of work were chosen from each country to highlight examples of the types of work and the piece rate wages earned by HWs.

This study found high disparities between the piece rates and earnings of HWs across locations. Piece rates varied according to the type of work homeworkers were engaged in, with location[17] also likely to be a differentiator [18]. In Delhi, HWs engaged in stitching masks were only able to earn between 14% and 38% of the Delhi minimum daily wage rate, for unskilled workers. Other HWs who were embedding stones, pearls or mirrors on clothes were typically earning far below (26%) the minimum daily wage rate even for unskilled work. In Tirupur, while some (10%) HWs who were trimming were earning the appropriate daily wage rate in Tamil Nadu, the majority were earning well below the daily wage rate, with some earning as little as 14% of the local minimum daily wage rate. Most of the HWs in Kathmandu were knitters. Knitting a small item such as a hat might take half a day, while a sweater might take up to seven days to complete. Despite the intricate work, their monthly wage rates were usually far below the minimum wage. Homeworkers in Karachi faced similar situations with long hours of labour and minimal returns. Overall, 92% of the homeworkers reported earning considerably less than the minimum wage in their respective locations.

[16] Sinha, S., Mehrotra, F., 2016. Working in the Shadows, Women Home Workers in the Global Supply Chains. HomeNet South Asia Trust. Accessed online, Available at: https://hnsa.org.in/sites/default/files/Working%20in%20the%20Shadows%2C%20Nepal.pdf

[17] 'Location' here will capture a range of variables including for instance the level of homeworker demand for work, and the different piece rates offered by contractors in different areas. Consideration of these variables is outside the scope of this particular study.

[18] HWs respective country's minimum daily wage rate is compared to their daily earnings, as HWs are known to have irregular work. Country's minimum daily wage rate is calculated based on working 8 hours a day.

Table 2: Homeworkers' Piece Rate Wages

JOB	PIECE RATE RANGE	HIGHEST EARNING	LOWEST EARNING	AVERAGE EARNINGS
DELHI				
Embedding stones, pearls, mirrors on clothes	Ranged from 2.5 INR ($0.033) to 10 INR ($0.13).	750 INR ($9.75) per day making 300 pieces at 2.5 INR per piece.	160 INR ($2.08) per day making 16 pieces at 10 INR per piece.	Most HWs were in the lowest earning range, making 26% of the minimum wage.
Stitching masks	Ranged from 3 INR ($0.038) to 4 INR ($0.051).	240 INR ($3.04) per day making 60 masks at 4 INR per piece.	90 INR ($1.14) per day making 30 masks at 3 INR per piece.	14% to 38% of minimum wage.
TIRUPUR				
Trimmers	Ranged from 0.30 INR ($0.0038) to 1.50 INR ($0.019), where larger clothes were paid at 1 INR or 1.50 INR and small pieces were paid at between 0.30 INR and 0.50 INR.	400 INR ($5.07) per day trimming 800 pieces at 0.50 INR per piece.	50 INR ($0.63) per day trimming 100 pieces at 0.50 INR per piece.	Most HWs were in the lowest earning range, making 14% of the minimum wage 10% were making slightly higher than minimum wage.
KATHMANDU				
Knitting hats	Ranged from NPR 40 ($0.31) to 70 ($0.55).	140 NPR ($1.09) per day knitting 2 pieces at 70 NPR per piece.	80 NPR ($0.62) per day knitting 2 pieces at 40 NPR per piece.	14% to 24% of the minimum wage.
Knitting sweaters	Ranged from NPR 400 ($3.12) to 1000 ($7.80). Knitting sweaters would take 3 to 4 days for small pieces and 7 days for larger pieces. Pay for larger pieces would be more than for smaller pieces.	4000 NPR per month, knitting 4 pieces at 1000 per piece in a month.	2600 NPR per month, knitting 6.5 pieces a month at 400 per piece.	Most HWs were in the lowest earning range, making 69% of the minimum wage. Some HWs were making 42% above minimum wage.

JOB	PIECE RATE RANGE	HIGHEST EARNING	LOWEST EARNING	AVERAGE EARNINGS
KARACHI				
Stitching (ranging from stitching sleeves on shirts, curtains, full shirts and dresses)	Stitching sleeves and curtains ranged from 5 PKR ($0.023) to 7 PKR ($0.032) per piece with completion of 12 to 30 sleeves and 30 pieces of curtains, respectively. Full shirts and dress piece rates ranged from 80 PRK ($0.37) to 150 PKR ($0.69), depending on size.	210 PKR ($0.97). 240 PKR ($1.11) per day, 3 small shirts at 80 PKR per piece.	60 PRK ($0.28). 150 PRK ($0.69), 1 size large shirt or dress.	8% to 33% of the minimum wage.
Pasting stones on shirts/ clothes	Homeworkers were engaged in pasting stones on shirts/ clothes. Pasting stones took 9 to 10 hours. Their piece rate ranged from 70 PKR ($0.32) per item to 250 PKR ($1.16).	125 PKR ($0.58) per day for pasting stones for 5 to 6 hours each day for two days.	70 PKR for working 9 hours a day.	9% to 35% of the minimum wage.

To have an adequate living standard, workers are required to earn a wage that is sufficient to enable them to afford not only food, housing and clothes but also other essential needs – referred to as the living wage [19]. Nevertheless, a large gap exists between the minimum wage and the estimated living wage (Table 3).

Global campaigns around the living wage have shared a common goal to lift minimum wage levels to those of living wages. However, these campaigns have their origins in developed countries [20] with economic and social terrains that differ from those in South Asia, where there is a structural predominance of informal and very low-paid work. Whilst living wages represent a valuable goal, the reality of limited labour rights, and high rates of unemployment, especially of women, mean that the first priority must be to ensure that informal workers such as HWs are paid minimum wages before they can lobby for living wages.

[19] According to the Global Living Wage Coalition, a living wage is:
"The remuneration received for a standard workweek by a worker in a particular place sufficient to afford a decent standard of living for the worker and her or his family. Elements of a decent standard of living include food, water, housing, education, health care, transportation, clothing, and other essential needs including provision for unexpected events." Accessed online, available at: https://www.globallivingwage.org/about/what-is-a-living-wage/

[20] Schulten, T., & Müller, T. (2019). What's in a name? From minimum wages to living wages in Europe. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research,* 25(3), 267–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/1024258919873989

Table 3: Minimum Wages vs Living Wages

COUNTRY	NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE	ESTIMATED LIVING WAGE PER MONTH
Delhi	635 INR ($8.04) per day to 16506 INR[21] ($209) per month for unskilled labourers	22822.44 INR[22] ($371.43)
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu	363 INR per day ($4.06) to 9448 INR[23] ($119.66) per month	29323 INR[24] ($371.43)
Nepal	517 NPR per day ($4.50) to 13450 NPR[25] ($104.00) per month	41091 NPR[26] ($325.00)
Pakistan Karachi, Sindh Province	731 PKR per day ($3.36) to 19000 PKR[27] ($87.00) per month	42544.42 PKR[28] ($198.00)

[21] Minimum wages for unskilled wage workers. Express News Service, 2022. Delhi Govt Hikes Minimum Wage of Labourers. *Indian Express*. Accessed online available at: https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/delhi-govt-hikes-minimum-wage-of-labourers-7928295/

[22] Average Living Wage. Accessed online via Wage Indicator website, available at: https://wageindicator.org/salary/wages-in-context/garment-industry-living-wage-gap

[23] Homeworkers in Tirupur are paid as per the wages set under the Tailoring Sector under different Zones. The minimum wage for a trimmer under Zone A has been considered for this report.

[24] Average Living Wage. Accessed online via Wage Indicator website, available at: https://wageindicator.org/salary/wages-in-context/garment-industry-living-wage-gap

[25] At the time of the survey, minimum wage was 13450 NPR, which was raised to 15000 NPR as of January 2022. MyRepublica, 2021. Minimum wage for private workers reaches Rs.15000 per month. My Republica. Accessed online, available at: https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/minimum-wage-for-private-workers-reaches-rs-15-000-per-month/

[26] Road map to living wage, Accessed online available at: https://livingwages.maglr.com/roadmap/country-nepal

[27] At the time of the survey, Sindh minimum wage was 19000 PKR. As of June 2022, Sindh minimum wage has been raised to 25000 PKR.
Yousafzai, A., 2022. Rs25000 notified as minimum wage in Sindh. The International News. Accessed Online, available at: https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/972620-rs25-000-notified-as-minimum-wages-in-sindh

[28] Average Living Wage. Accessed online via Wage Indicator website, available at: https://wageindicator.org/salary/wages-in-context/garment-industry-living-wage-gap

Despite having meagre incomes, the study found that the majority of HWs across all the locations believed that their work was respected by their families and wider society. The ability to contribute to household expenses while fulfilling household responsibilities was valued by the majority of HWs in all locations. In Kathmandu, family members have encouraged women to use their free time to earn livings as alternative sources of income when work is otherwise scarce. In Karachi, respect was associated with women staying inside the home, which homeworking has allowed them to do while having the opportunity to earn a supplemental income.

Homeworkers were asked about whether their current work helped to meet their basic needs. Typically, these 'basic needs' were understood by homeworkers as referring to the basic needs of their households. In all study locations, meeting these basic needs was not generally considered to primarily be the responsibility of the homeworker but of her husband, who is deemed to be the primary breadwinner. This view can be attributed in part to the 'male breadwinner' norm that is highly prevalent in South Asia as well as in certain other parts of the world (World Bank 2022:121-122).

Fulfilment of basic needs such as food, shelter, clothes, education and skill formation are fundamental rights for all citizens. However, participants from all study locations mentioned not earning enough to satisfy their basic needs. The findings corroborate a study conducted by HNSA prior to the pandemic on understanding HWs in the garment supply chains [29] which found that HWs' basic needs prior to the pandemic were not met. The findings of this study showed the expenses most often noted included:

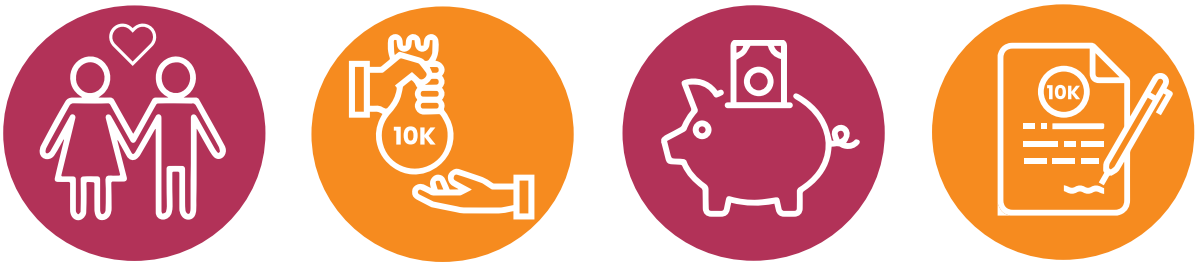
- Affordability of basic needs such as food and clothing
- Books and tuition fees for children
- House rent
- Medical expenses
- Miscellaneous expenses such as milk, electricity bills, gas connections, books and Wi-Fi for online education of their children due to the COVID-19 pandemic

They were also compelled to reduce consumption and use their savings, borrow from friends and neighbours or take loans from community groups or cooperatives to manage basic expenses. A study conducted by HNSA in 2021[30] on the impacts of COVID-19 on HWs showed that HWs (and their households) had large unpaid debt even after reducing expenses on essentials, selling or pawning assets, and drawing on savings. Unlike factory workers, homeworkers did not receive any social security benefits from their employer (Ibid).

[29] HNSA, 2021. Homeworkers in Garment Supply Chains: research from India and Nepal. HomeNet South Asia. Accessed online, available at: https://hnsa.org.in/resource/homeworkers-garment-supply-chains-research-india-and-nepal

[30] HNSA, 2021. Impact of COVID-19 on Women Home-Based Workers in South Asia: February 2020 - August 2021. HomeNet South Asia and IDRC. Accessed online, available at: https://hnsa.org.in/resources/impact-covid-19-women-home-based-workers-south-asia

Figure 1: Fulfilment of Homeworkers' Basic Needs



Knitting, Kathmandu, Nepal

The majority of the HWs in Delhi stated that they required at least 10 to 15 thousand INR ($125 to $188) each month to help their families cover basic expenses – assuming no increases in wages of husbands or other family members - while a few required 15 to 20 thousand INR ($188 to $250) each month. The majority of the HWs in Delhi also needed at least 58% to 88% more than their current estimated monthly piece rate wages[31]. In Tirupur, the majority of the HWs required an average of 8 to 10 thousand INR each month ($100 to $125), while a few HWs needed 15 thousand INR ($188) or more. The larger share of the HWs in Tirupur needed at least 31% to 84% more than their current estimated monthly piece rate wages[32]. In Kathmandu, the majority of the HWs needed 15 to 20 thousand NPR ($117 to $156) more each month, while a few mentioned needing 50 to 60 thousand NPR ($390 to $468) each month to achieve full independence. Homeworkers in Kathmandu required at least 82% to 95% more than their current estimated monthly piece rate wages[33]. In Karachi, most HWs noted requiring at least 20 to 30 thousand PKR ($90 to $135) each month to cover basic expenses. Homeworkers in Karachi needed at least 84% to 94% more than their current estimated monthly piece rate wages, assuming they had 26 days of regular work based on their current average daily wage rates.

[31] Monthly piece rate was estimated based on their daily piece rate wage received (Table 2) and assuming they have 26 days of regular work.

[32] Monthly piece rate was estimated based on their daily piece rate wage received (Table 2) and assuming they have 26 days of regular work.

[33] Monthly piece rate was estimated based on their daily piece rate wage received (Table 2) and assuming they have 26 days of regular work.

Rights at Work

Rights at work understood as including the freedom to choose work, the elimination of employment discrimination, fair wages and decent working conditions with no forced or child labour and the ability to exercise trade union rights.

The majority of the HWs from the four locations became engaged in homeworking to contribute to household expenses while allowing time to fulfil household duties including care work. Homeworkers did not suggest that they were forced to work but mentioned that they needed to do so because the incomes from husbands or families were not enough to cover basic expenses. Homeworking was also the preferred livelihood option for many. The majority of HWs in Tirupur (63 %), Delhi (60 %) and Kathmandu (53%) mentioned flexibility of work hours as the major reasons for working at home; in some cases, perceptions about working conditions in factories seem to also underpin their preference for homework.

Significantly, 19 percent of homeworkers in Delhi, Tiruppur, and Karachi - three cities with large numbers of export-oriented garment factories - also expressed concerns about factory work for various reasons, including it being a "burden" and requiring working in a "hurry." Homeworkers also cited the strict timings, long commute, and long working hours as being hard to manage along with childcare and other domestic responsibilities.

"They [factory workers] have way too much work and they work for long hours. We can make time for other things. I am able to take care of family and completing household chores is possible. Moreover, their working hours are strict."

Homeworker, Delhi

"They [factory workers] are working with stress. I am happy to work at home."

Homeworker, Tiruppur

"By working from home, we are able to look after our house and children and guests. In factory, there is fixed hours and it gets tiring. Commuting is also difficult because workplace is very far away and public transport is not in good condition. Also commuting alone is very scary for me. I have always been accompanied by either my husband, neighbours or children when going outside. Also women going outside alone is not considered good in our society because often times there are restrictions from family, husband and in-laws not to go outside as they doubt. Women going outside are considered as having bad character."

Homeworker, Karachi

Many homeworking mothers we spoke to felt being able to spend time with their children and not having to leave them alone at home while they work is the biggest advantage of home-based work. This finding corroborates a 2019 study on the situation of child rights in the textile and handicraft supply chains in Asia, which found that that the flexibility of home-based work allows women to care for their children in circumstances where alternative care arrangements may be difficult to find (SC and CCR CSR 2019). [34]

The same study also documented that those homeworkers identified and *recognised* by international brands as being part of their global supply chain, fared better in most areas, including working conditions and the overall wellbeing of their children. This is largely attributed to the higher levels of transparency and compliance driven by buyers/ brands.

Other factors can also make homebased work attractive. For instance, some of the women homeworkers we interviewed in Pakistan believed that home-based work is more suitable within a social context in which there is not widespread approval for women working away from their home, especially when the factories are located far from where they live and public transport is limited. In some South Asian contexts this disapproval can find expression in the view that women who work outside are considered to have 'bad character', as relayed by the homeworker in Karachi. Whilst this stereotype is highly problematic in itself, it serves as a reminder that a woman's decision to pursue homework in such settings may reflect her own individual agency

[34] The study also highlighted that children of home-based workers are rarely left unattended, are breastfed longer, and have higher school enrolment rates, which suggests that additional care that children may receive from mothers who work from home can have certain benefits. (In the Interests of the Child? Child Rights and Homeworkers in Textile and Handicrafts Supply Chains in Asia, Save the Children and the CCR CSR 2019)

within a challenging social environment. Clearly, any consideration of what decent work may look like for homeworkers, and indeed for factory workers, needs to be sensitive to the dynamics of patriarchy and to other socio-economic issues within which supply chains are embedded.

In Tirupur, those homeworkers (37 percent) who saw working in a factory as being more attractive cited workers' access to better salaries, regular work, bonuses and appropriate equipment. HWs in Delhi (40 percent) mentioned factory workers having regular work and fixed monthly income, Provident Fund, Insurance and paid leave. HWs in Kathmandu (43 percent) mentioned factory workers having better pay, fixed monthly income and medical allowances. In Karachi, whilst 33 % of HWs preferred working from home due to the flexibility of working hours, the majority (67 percent) said that factory workers had certain benefits when compared to homeworkers, such as monthly and timely payment, payment for overtime, social security, access to good equipment and protective equipment, transportation allowance and a better working environment making factory work more attractive. However, at least some of the HWs in all the locations expressed having mobility restrictions, child care and household duties as reasons why they needed to work from home, while some saw themselves as being beyond the age limit for factory work.

The majority of the HWs in all locations believed that they had been discriminated against in terms of wages and benefits in comparison to factory workers who were doing the same type of work. They believed that HWs should have the same pay and benefits as factory workers.

"Factory workers have access to modern technological stitching machines, transport facilities to commute to and from their workplaces, timely payments, provident funds and insurance facilities, while we receive low wages and have no such support."

Homeworker, Karachi

While harassment was not reported by HWs in the surveyed locations, verbal abuse by contractors and agents was reported by a few participants from Karachi, Kathmandu and Tirupur. Abuse such as showing aggression, yelling, no payment for re-doing work, scolding, unnecessary wage deductions and taunts were reflected as components of verbal abuse against HWs in Karachi. In Tirupur and Kathmandu, HWs were scolded and shouted at for not completing work orders on time or for failing to provide quality products.

Study findings also showed that HWs in Delhi, Karachi and Kathmandu who worked for community leaders had not endured verbal abuse. Community leaders, themselves homeworking women from the same communities, would obtain work directly from factories, workshops or contractors and then distribute it among HWs in their locality. Some of the community leaders are the result of organising efforts led by SEWA Bharat – Delhi, SAVE, SABAH Nepal and HNP, who have taken the lead in distributing work to HWs. This finding is also corroborated by findings from a study conducted in 2021 by HNSA on Homeworkers in Garment Supply Chains.[35]

In addition, 47.62% (93% in Karachi, 63% in Tirupur, 43% in Delhi and none in Kathmandu) of the HWs in the surveyed locations reported that there were no grievance mechanisms to report ill behaviour or exploitation by contractors to any authority. They were compelled to endure in silence. Many HWs in all study locations said that although in theory they could refuse work orders from contractors, they did not do so because they feared that they would not be offered work, particularly when orders were scarce. The findings showed that the homeworkers were prepared to endure verbal abuse, rather than risk losing their work.

Place of Work

Homes are workplaces for HWs, and many categorised these as one-room living spaces that are often congested, leaving little space to work. Many HWs are migrants from other states and sometimes from other districts within states, and are liable to pay for their rents as well as equipment costs.

In Delhi, Tirupur and Karachi, the majority of the HWs did not have adequate space to work or store their materials that were separate from their eating and resting areas (Table 3). Living in one room, they were compelled to arrange their workspaces from limited space, causing movement restraints. Homeworkers in Karachi (60%) were also deprived of access to clean drinking water due to water shortages. Homeworkers were compelled to buy water, which was often reported to be unclean.

[35] HNSA, 2021. Homeworkers in Garment Supply Chains: Research from India and Nepal. Homenet South Asia Trust. Accessed online, available at: https://hnsa.org.in/sites/default/files/Homeworkers%20In%20Garment%20Supply%20Chains%20Research%20From%20India%20And%20Nepal%20April%202021.pdf

"Accessing water is difficult; there is no provision for water through any government service."

Homeworker, Karachi

Having proper light and ventilation was also an issue for half of the surveyed HWs in Karachi, 20% in Delhi and 27% in Tirupur. The majority of the HWs in Delhi, Tirupur, Kathmandu and Karachi reported arranging for space with good light and ventilation in courtyards, on verandas or adjacent to their homes. However, half of the HWs in Karachi mentioned having poor ventilation because the houses were attached to one another and there were frequent power blackouts (load shedding) that made it difficult to work.

"There is no ventilation. When there is light, it is fine to work; otherwise, it gets difficult. There is a daily power outage of 4.5 hours, and if there is a major issue due to wires or rain, then there is no light all day."

Homeworker, Karachi

In regards to getting help from children aged 14 years or younger 43% in Karachi, 20% in Delhi, 14% in Kathmandu and 13% in Tirupur reported involving children when there were high volumes of work and urgent deliveries. Help from children consisted of tasks which, in the Indian context for instance, would generally be seen as non-hazardous [36], though in certain settings included some potentially hazardous forms of work. Jobs included adding elastic to masks, packing final products, cutting cloths, counting products and, among more concerning tasks, pasting stones on clothes. Low wages and irregular work were a driver of child labour as HW families had to meet their basic needs, one way or another. In these cases, engaging children in homework aids in completing orders more quickly, potentially freeing up availability for more orders. This situation is aggravated if work is irregular, as when work is available, a family may feel they must maximise their earnings by completing as many orders as possible, to ensure they have funds to see them through the periods when work is no longer available.

Table 4: Workplace Settings

DESCRIPTION	DELHI (N = 30)	TIRUPUR (N = 30)	KATHMANDU (N = 36)	KARACHI (N = 30)
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Space to work	50%	33%	67%	10%
Access to clean running water and toilet	100%	98%	83%	40%
Light and ventilation	80%	73%	97%	50%
Help from underage children	20%	13%	14%	43%

Homeworking and Health

Health issues resulting from the nature of the work are often overlooked by HWs. Occupational illnesses go unnoticed due to lack of awareness and the isolated nature of the work performed by HWs. Long working hours, cramped working conditions, poor lighting and failure to use protective materials leave HWs prone to stress and causes

[36] And thus, in the Indian context at least, legal, as long as it does not disrupt schooling.

related physical illnesses. Research has shown that long working hours and repetitive motions can cause long-term illnesses such as carpal tunnel syndrome that are often dismissed as discomfort due to 'old age' of the workers (HomeNet Guide, 1999 cited in McCormick, D., Schmitz, H., 2002 [37]). Homeworkers do not have access to protective equipment from their contractors; they must pay for it themselves, so they usually go without due to the extra expenses (ibid).

Study findings showed that HWs were prone to many occupational illnesses. While eye strain, headaches, back and shoulder pains were common in all locations, HWs in Delhi (100 percent) reported hand injuries, body pain and eye strain; HWs in Tirupur (50 percent) and Kathmandu (80 percent) reported dust allergies due to the nature of their work and HWs in Karachi (100 percent) reported body pains and eye strain due to sitting for long hours.

[37] McCormick, D., Schmitz, H., 2002. Manual for Value Chain Research on Homeworkers in the Garment Industry. Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, Brighton, England. Accessed online on July 5th 2022, available at: https://www.wiego.org/sites/default/files/migrated/resources/files/Manual-Value-Chain-Research-Homeworkers-Garment-Industry.pdf

Table 5: Occupational Illnesses of Homeworkers

DELHI	TIRUPUR	KATHMANDU	KARACHI
Eye strain, headache, hand injury and pain in the back or shoulders.	Hand injury, eye strain, headache, dust allergy and pain in shoulder, hip and back.	Headache, eye strain, dust allergy and pain in fingers, thigh, back and shoulders.	Headache, eye strain, joint pain, back pain, leg aches and hand injuries due to sharp thread. Numbness of hands and legs exacerbated due to sitting for long hours.

The majority of HWs in Delhi (87%) and Karachi (100%) mentioned that they do not use any protective equipment to safeguard themselves from dust or chemicals emanating from fabric glue while they are embedding stones or beads on cloths. However, HWs in Kathmandu (81%) and Tirupur (57%) mentioned using masks, gloves and needle guards as precautions to avoid injuries and dust while working.

Social Protection

Income security and safety nets are vital for workers, especially for HWs and other informal, low wage workers: to protect them and their families and to help them overcome unforeseen crises. The findings showed that HWs did not have any form of income or job security, and were not eligible for social security schemes provided by employers for contracted workers in factories, where they exist – for example, the ESI scheme in India which allows for access to healthcare. Their low wages and dependence on contractors for regular work made them vulnerable due to highly precarious and insecure employment. This was further exacerbated by the little to no legal and social protection provided by the State within the researched areas. Even when social protection programmes existed, not all HWs qualified, as many programmes were meant for the ultra-poor. For the purposes of this study, social protection is understood as including the various social schemes mentioned in Table 4, below.

Informal workers in India are recognised by the State, and HWs qualified for certain programmes (outlined in Table 4). However, 73% of HWs from Delhi and 63% of HWs from Tirupur reported not receiving any type of social protection support from the government. In Delhi, only 23% of the HWs were accessing ration support, and 3% accessing financial services under the Jan Dhan Yojana Scheme (See Table 4), and, in Tirupur, 33% were accessing ration support [38] and only 3% were accessing medical insurance.

The majority of the HWs in Tirupur and Delhi were not knowledgeable about the different programmes, while those who did know were unable to access them. In Kathmandu the majority of the HWs (92%) were not aware of the social protection scheme available to the citizens, while the remaining percentage was accessing the maternity allowance. In Karachi, many HBWs were unaware of social schemes due to mobility restrictions and inability to gain permission to leave their homes to learn new skills. Some of them tried to access the cash emergency scheme under the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP)[39], but they had not received any responses. The BISP is meant to support the poorest 20% of the households, and many HWs may not qualify for the 20% threshold. [40]

[38] Low levels of homeworkers accessing rations are likely to primarily to do with the fact that many are inter-state or intra-state migrants who have not yet settled in the area in which they work. Migrant status is a key factor explaining low uptake of rations, since ration provision is arranged for local residents; though some migrants were able to access temporary provisions during the pandemic

[39] This is a social support programme that widely supports women by providing financial assistance. The scheme is aimed at providing financial support for marriages, house construction and medical treatment.

[40] In Pakistan, the Sindh Home Based Workers Act was passed in 2018. However, the provincial government has yet to start the registration process of HBWs, only after which will they be able to register with social security institutions and become entitled to a minimum wage.

Table 6: Major Social Protection Schemes Available to Homeworkers

DELHI	TIRUPUR	KATHMANDU	KARACHI
• Ration cards • Pensions for workers 60 years and above • Savings Scheme for Girls (Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana) • Birth of Girl Child Scheme (Ladli Yogana) • Disability pension • Widows' pension for women • Affordable access to financial services such as bank accounts, credit, insurance and pensions (Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana) • Provision of LPG (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana)	• Ration cards • Girl marriage allowance for unmarried girls • Pregnancy allowance • Education scholarship • Spectacles allowance • Pension for workers 60 years and above • Accidental death • Natural death allowance • Funeral expenses • Provision of LPG (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana)	• Allowance for single/widowed women • Disability allowance • Old age allowance • Maternity allowance	• Benazir Income Support Scheme (enhances financial capacity of poor people through cash transfers of 26000 PKR annually). • Skill development through Benazir Bhutto Programme • Old age homes for workers 60 years or above

Social Dialogue

Social dialogue has also been a key component in the ILO Decent Work agenda. It is a problem-solving mechanism that paves the way towards enhancing economic and social progress and shaping policies for decent work. Social dialogue involves multiple stakeholders in policy decisions processes, often tripartism to facilitate democratic governance. It seeks to foster good governance practices, enhance economic and social progress and deal with crises[41]. The ILO has identified two major indicators for effective social dialogue – membership in organisations and collective bargaining.

Homeworkers are very rarely members of trade unions for many reasons, principally due to their insecure and informal employment, and are invariably in very weak positions with little bargaining power in discussions of pay and conditions. Within the areas researched for this study, local Civil society organisations (CSOs) and (in the case of SEWA) a trade union are supporting the organisation of HWs, with some success (see the above Methodology section for a further discussion on this in relation to sampling).

Table 7: Membership in an Organisation

DELHI	TIRUPUR	KATHMANDU	KARACHI
70% of the HWs interviewed were members of SEWA Bharat – Delhi Branch	10% of the HWs interviewed were solidarity members of Anukatham[42]	89% of HWs interviewed were members of one or more of the following organisations: SABAH Nepal, General Federation of Nepalese Trade Union(GEFONT), the women's groups, cooperatives and the Citizen Awareness Center	10% of the HWs interviewed were members of HNP

[41] Iyer, S.S., Ghosh, S., 2022. Challenges of Social Dialogue in India in Times of Crisis and Pandemic: Implications on Securing of SDGs. Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. Accessed online, available at: http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/indien/19117.pdf

[42] Anukatham is trade union, initiated by SAVE, whose members comprise unorganized and informal women workers in Tiruppur. It was not registered at the time of the study and hence workers joined initially as solidarity members rather than full members. Whilst the membership was fairly low at the time of the study, by July 2022, more than 40,000 workers had become members of the union.
For more information, see: https://www.anukatham.org/

In Delhi, 70% of the respondents were members of SEWA Bharat – Delhi Branch, and the remaining percentage was not linked to any organisation. The majority of the HWs reported that they or their organisation/network had not participated in any collective negotiation with any contractor concerning increases in piece rates, regularity of work orders or access to safety equipment. A few mentioned that they had participated in collective bargaining through their organisations, but nothing happened. In Tirupur, only 10% of the HWs were solidarity members of Anukatham, a local trade union for women informal workers. The majority of the HWs had not been affiliated with any organisations. While a few tried to negotiate with contractors for increases in piece rate wages, they were not successful.

In Kathmandu, 89% of the HWs were part of one or multiple organisations; these included SABAH Nepal, GEFONT, the Jyoti Mahila Co-operative, the Citizen Awareness Center, the World Vision Saving Co-operative and the Bhimtuna Co-operative. The majority of the HWs were engaged in collective negotiations with contractors or community leaders regarding piece rates and regular work, but only a few noted that they had a slight increment in piece rate wages. Out of thirty-six participants, only two participated in collective negotiations with their local government. The negotiations were held at ward level with ward chairpersons for the development and support of women HBWs. The study revealed that when workers suffered from any type of grievance, they had direct conversations about the problems with their employers. Sometimes they discussed the problems with friends working in similar fields.

In Karachi, 90% of the HWs were not affiliated to any organisation. However, 46% of the HWs had grouped together with other HWs to negotiate for better wages, resulting in a very low percentage (13%) of the HWs receiving slight increases in their piece rate wage rates. Homeworkers who were involved with an organisation usually did not involve the organisation in negotiations for fear that contractors would stop providing them with work. Organizations representing HWs also generally refrain from directly negotiating with contractors or employers, fearing that they will take the orders somewhere else. Their main activities lie in providing rights-based and capacity-building training, skill development training, and linking homeworkers to Trade Unions who are better equipped to negotiate with suppliers. Trade Unions also actively engaged with the government to adopt HBW policies and Social Protection for HBWs.

Homeworkers in each location attempted to negotiate with sub-contractors/ intermediaries who provide them work, but those efforts did not lead to any material gains. The majority of the respondents in all locations stated that collective discussions with local government, contractors, employers and HBW organisations had not yet taken place to address HWs' issues. The research also highlighted the lack of systems to allow HWs to register complaints or discuss or raise grievances with authorities regarding any injustices arising from work. In many instances, HWs were not aware of the additional individuals involved in the supply chains other than the (sub)contractors who provided them with the work.

Efforts of HWs to collectively bargain with their direct intermediaries have been shown to be insignificant and risky, as they had a high chance of no longer receiving work.

Conclusion: Decent Work Deficits for Homeworkers

Homeworkers face a range of decent work deficits. Most importantly, HWs across the study locations miss out on a fair income, with many earn levels well below minimum wages. This decent work deficit has consequences: in some cases, it contributes to household indebtedness and render them highly vulnerable to economic shocks. Homeworker vulnerability to such shocks was both exacerbated and illustrated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a depletion in work, making it difficult for HWs and their families to sufficiently cover the purchases of essential needs. In South Asia, the average unpaid debt of HWs was estimated to be 50% to 90% of their estimated annual incomes (HNSA, 2021). [43]

The extremely low wages and poverty experienced by HWs, their precarious employment, and a range of social factors, leave them vulnerable to harassment and exploitation by the contractors who provide their work. They are often asked to complete bulk orders within limited times, causing them to work long hours and, in certain cases, to recruit their children to help. Homeworkers have limited facilities at home, often working in cramped spaces with poor lighting and ventilation that make it difficult for them to work continuously. This is the situation of the HWs we met in Karachi, where they do not have access to government-provided water and face 4.5 hours of power blackouts each day. Homeworkers are also exposed to different occupational health and safety risks. They are often not aware of appropriate ergonomics for home-based work; continuously working for long hours without breaks, improper sitting postures and improper workspaces that result in work-related pains. Homeworkers in the study were also found to not be using any protective equipment, increasing their likelihood of work-related injuries and dust allergies. Protection of workers' safety and health should fall back on the employers, and structures and processes established to avoid work-related health issues and injuries (ILO, 2001)[44]. In the case of HWs, these responsibilities are avoided by factories that outsource work to contractors without attending to the issues homeworkers might face in ensuring that orders are completed in time.

The informality of work has also made HWs vulnerable; unlike many (though not all) factory workers, they do not receive social security contributions from their employers. While a few HWs in India have received some forms of support such as ration cards, access to financial services or medical insurance, the majority are not aware of the different programmes. In the case of Kathmandu, the programmes are minor and are not applicable to many of the HWs. As for Karachi, despite the existence of social protection programmes, HWs had not received any support.

[43] HNSA, 2021. Impact of COVID-19 on Women Home-Based Workers in South Asia: February 2020 - August 2021. HomeNet South Asia and IDRC. Accessed online, available at: https://hnsa.org.in/resources/impact-covid-19-women-home-based-workers-south-asia

[44] ILO-OSH, 2009. Guidelines on Occupational Safety and Health Management Systems ILO-OSH 2001 (2nd Edition). ILO. Accessed online, available at: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/normativeinstrument/wcms_107727.pdf

Tailoring, Baldia Town, Karachi

Since the HWs we consulted are scattered and isolated, it is difficult for them to engage in collective bargaining. The study found that only 10% were members of a HBW collective in Tirupur and Karachi. While the numbers were higher in Delhi and Kathmandu, they reported not being engaged in collective discussions on HBW issues. Homeworkers have also reported avoiding collective negotiations with contractors due to the fear of losing work.[45] The study also indicated a lack of systems to raise HWs' grievances regarding work-related issues.

While HWs acknowledged that the ILO's definition of Decent Work covered all the essential points, they expressed that it should be enforced by country governments that acknowledge HWs as an important part of the labour force. While many HWs considered their work to be 'good work' due to the freedom it provides to take care of household affairs and family, they also indicated that they were undervalued and poorly paid, even though the majority were skilled workers. Homeworking is essential work for many individuals who have mobility restrictions, those who lack formal education or are illiterate and for those who do not have access to formal jobs. This type of work is also often a family or community tradition, passed down to successive generations.

Homeworking is here to stay, and the majority of HWs have articulated their aspirations of what decent work should include. While a few indicators were notable in all four locations (See Table 8), others were based on cluster-level concerns.

[45] Discussions are usually taken up by HBW organisations with respective government departments and trade unions, as is the case for the organisations involved in the study.

Table 8: Major Demands by Homeworkers (% in each cluster)

DESCRIPTION	DELHI	TIRUPUR	KATHMANDU	KARACHI
Fair Piece rate wage	90.0%	83.3 %	72%	96.7%
Regular Work	76.7%	30.0%	14%	36.7%
Social Security	23%	0%	56%	90%

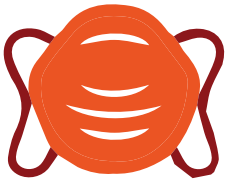
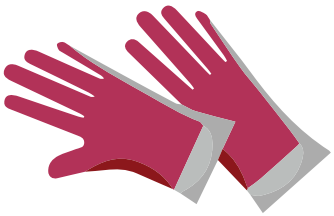
The most voiced out demand by HWs was to have a fair piece rate wage. In Tirupur, where the majority of HWs there were earning only 14 % of the appropriate minimum wage, this was articulated 83% of homeworkers. The. In Delhi, 90 % HWs demanded a fair piece rate wage as the majority of them earned between just 14% to 38 % of the minimum wage. In Karachi it was 97% HWs, with the majority earning between 8 % to 35 % of the minimum wage. In Kathmandu, it was 72 per cent, with the majority earning between 14 per cent to 69 per cent of the minimum wage.

With respect to other areas of concern for homeworkers, there was considerable variety between clusters. This is to be expected given the open nature of interview questions, which encouraged homeworkers to voice their own aspirations around decent work. The demand for regular work was most notable in Delhi (77 %) followed by Karachi (36 %), Tirupur (30 %) and Kathmandu (14 %). Regularity of orders is directly related to HWs' income level. Low regularity of work furtheraffect income levels and may compel HWs to take on debt in some cases.

The prioritisation of social security benefits was highest in Karachi where 90% HWs mentioned needing health insurance, old age pension, provident fund, paid leave, and transportation allowances for picking up and returning pieces they were working on. Around 56 % of HWs from Kathmandu and 23% from Delhi voiced the need for medical benefits including maternity allowance, old age pension, and provident funds. It is notable that a relatively low number of HWs demanded social security benefits in Delhi and the aspiration was not expressed at all by HWs in Tirupur. This may be on account of the fact that many of the homeworkers surveyed in Tirupur had only relatively recent experience of support from a grassroots organisation for informal workers ; and, in the absence of this support are likely to be have been less aware both of their rights and of existing government schemes.

Other common demands also came up during the study. These are listed out below:

- The majority of HWs in Tirupur (63 %), Delhi (60 %) and Kathmandu (53%) mentioned safety and flexibility of work hours as major reasons for working at home. In Karachi, 33 % of HWs preferred working from home due to more flexible working hours.
- Mechanisms to address grievances (for example, building on existing CSOs working with homeworkers) should be established to allow HWs to complain if they face any problems stemming from work, especially in relation to exploitation, sexual violence and harassment by those who provide work.
- Training opportunities should be provided to advance skill levels, and reduce health and safety risks.
- Equipment should be provided to make products such as automatic sewing machines and protective equipment such as masks, gloves, aprons and needle guards.

Some cluster-specific demands were also voiced out by some of the respondents. These included:

In Delhi:

- Contractors should be respectable towards homeworkers and refrain from any harassment or abuse.
- Training opportunities should be provided to enable women to learn a new skill and to be able to seek an alternative source of livelihood.

In Kathmandu:

- Piece rate wages should be based on skills.
- Worker identities should be acknowledged through Identity cards.
- Female HWs should not be discriminated against in relation to their male peers and should have equal benefits as factory workers.

In Karachi:

- Adequate space should be available within their houses or within their location so that they can adequately store their materials and be less distracted by household chores and be more productive.
- Adequate time should be provided by contractors for bulk orders. This creates environments where mistakes are more likely to be made and also compels HWs to request family members, including children, to help them finish within the deadlines.
- Factories should provide financial support to homeworkers during unforeseen events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Decent Work gap for HWs is enormous in garment supply chains and is probably wider than for any other category of workers in these supply chains. The isolated nature of their work and lack of recognition makes it difficult for them to advocate for their rights and secure fair working conditions. Achieving decent work for homeworkers thus requires a highly collaborative approach that puts them front and centre. Through the Hidden Homeworkers project, tools and resources have been collated which can be used by any supply chain stakeholder, wherever possible in collaboration with a local civil society partner, to reach out to homeworkers, document their situation and improve levels of transparency and ultimately, pay and working conditions (Homeworkers Worldwide & Cividep India, 2021). [46]

Brands should acknowledge HWs as workers in their supply chains and proactively engage with them by working with their suppliers and local civil society organisations to facilitate human rights due diligence. Without an explicit commitment from their brand customers, many suppliers may assume that brands prohibit the use of homeworkers and as a result, they will not disclose their presence within supply chains. This ensures that homeworking remains hidden and only makes it harder for homeworkers and the organisations working with them to take action to address their concerns.

It is important to recognize the contribution of homeworkers and provide them with the support and protection that they are entitled to, which should be at par with formal workers. Brands should also make efforts to improve transparency about homeworking within their supply chains and ensure that they comply with labour laws and standards. This requires ongoing monitoring beyond the first tier to make sure that homeworkers are treated fairly and receive appropriate compensation and enjoy good working conditions.

National and State governments should legislate and support programmes to formalise the employment of HWs, developing policies that protect HWs, secure their work and help maximize their earning potential. HWs should be recognized as vulnerable workers eligible for necessary government schemes as part of any emergency response in the case of unforeseen events such as a pandemic. Governments can also work with brands to establish fair remuneration by insisting on time-motion studies and ensuring job cards are maintained or transparency and traceability within the supply chains.

[46] Homeworkers Worldwide & Cividep India, 2021. *Toolkit: Finding Hidden Homeworkers in Apparel & Footwear Supply Chains.* Accessed Online, Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60a24248d1bdf007a7d6d14f/t/615ab9bc73282d56ef286d08/1633335742687/Hidden+Homeworkers+Toolkit.pdf

Home-based worker's organizations should continue organizing homeworkers and build their capacity on key technical subjects such as the dynamics of Garment Supply Chains, Labour Rights (including ccupational Safety and Health) Social Protection, Child labour, Minimum Wage, Violence at the Workplace, Transparency and Traceability, and the importance of Solidarity and Collective Voice[47]. These organizations must be the driving force to monitor and enforce programmes aimed to improve the working condition of homeworkers. Where homeworkers' conditions fall short in a number of areas, it is important that the homeworkers themselves are directly involved in setting priorities and agreeing the way forward.

It is noteworthy that a number of women from the various clusters revealed some concerns about factory work, which often seemed to underpin their decision to do home-based work. Homeworking offers a way to retain skilled female workers within the labour force, when either their domestic responsibilities or the occupational health issues that often result from years of factory work make it difficult for them to remain in formal workplaces. These issues can also be compounded by specific cultural norms within particular communities, leaving many of the most marginalised women workers with little option but to depend on home-based work as possibly the only form of paid employment available to them. Clearly, these are complex issues, but what they point towards is the need for stakeholders and policy-makers to be attentive not only to the dynamics of the supply chain but also the social and cultural settings within which this is located. This is particularly the case for women workers: whether homeworkers or factory workers, a gender lens must be integrated into human rights due diligence efforts. In applying this lens, brands need to avoid assuming that one type of workspace – either the factory the home – better serves the interests of women seeking a livelihood. In the short term at least, the most critical question is likely to be what form of employment allows them to safely participate in the workforce and earn a living. It also means that those women who wish to work from home should be supported to do so and have their rights as workers recognised and respected by the government and by the businesses and supply chain actors who benefit from their labour.

[47] A comprehensive set of information to build HWs capacity can be found at: HNSA-WIEGO, 2020. Working in Garment Supply Chains: A Homeworkers' Toolkit South Asia. HNSA and WIEGO. Accessed online, available at: https://hnsa.org.in/resource/working-garment-supply-chains-homeworkers-toolkit

Annexure

Interview Discussion on Decent Work [48]

DESCRIPTION	
Name of Interviewer	
Date of interview	
Interview location (physical meet or phone call):	
Name and Location of the Interviewee:	

Section 1

Participant's Introduction
(This section attempts to gather the name of the participant and the type of work she is engaged in as a homeworker. Only those HWs are to be selected for an interview who has been actively engaged in homeworking ***before or during covid-19 (the past 12 months)*** *within the textile and footwear sector and working for international brands)*
Request the participant to introduce herself by asking -

- *What is your name?*
- *Where are you from?*

Section 2

1) Please describe your idea of good job?
2) What are the characteristics of a good job?
3) Is there anything that you would like to change about the job that you do? If so, what needs to change to improve your work as home-based worker and why?
4) Do you think your condition is better than women working in factories?
   a. If yes, please elaborate.
   b. If not, please identify the differences.

[If the respondents does not provide you any answers, please ask the follow up questions]

[48] Free, prior and informed consent was obtained from all homeworkers before they participated in interviews.

5) Do you think homeworkers should have the same pay and conditions as formal workers? If yes, please specify what changes would be needed.
6) Is it easy for homeworkers to organize and be united in solidarity to voice out issues affecting them? If, not what are some of the constraints you know or have experienced?
7) Do you have the equipment you need to work efficiently?
8) Is there any protective equipment that could reduce any health and safety risks? Please list them out and their benefits. Also, who is responsible for purchasing this equipment?

Section 3

ILO's Decent Work Indicators
(This section uses selected pre-established indicators defined by ILO's concept on Decent Work to understand homeworkers' situation on decent work).

Employment

9) Can you briefly describe the nature of your work?
10) How long have you been working as home-based worker?
11) Does homeworking enable you to earn enough money to cover your and your family's basic needs (food, clothing, education and shelter)? Yes/ No
If Not:
    a. How much would you need to earn to meet your and your families' basic needs?
    b. What are you unable to pay for?
    c. How do you meet your family's basic needs?
    d. Do you have family members to help you cover your family's basic needs? If yes, who covers what expenses?
12) Does homeworking provide you respect and dignity from your family and society? If no, why?
13) How much do you get paid per piece? [For interviewer: Please request her to disclose the type of work she does and how much she gets paid per piece. It may help to focus on a specific piece of work, that she was doing yesterday or some other day. Get answers for the same item in questions 13 and 14].
14) How many pieces could you complete in an 8-hour day? [Explore by asking: how long does it take you to complete a single piece; how many could you do in an hour? how many pieces did you complete yesterday/on the chosen day? how long were you actually working on the chosen day? Once you have a reasonable estimate of timings calculate how much she would earn in a day, and check that with her "So if you worked for a full 8 hours you could earn x – is that right? You may need to adjust the timings if she replies that it is not]

Rights at Work

15) Do you feel that you are being forced to work as a homeworker?
16) Are you able to refuse to take orders, without fear *(fear when you say no you will not get work in future)?*
17) Are you able to carry out work for other contractors, or are you obliged to work exclusively for the contractor you are currently working for?
18) Do you receive loans from the contractor? *[if Yes, explore if these tie the homeworker to the contractor, which can reduce her bargaining power]*
19) Do you need help from your children who are 15 years of age or younger to complete work orders? If yes, when do they help you?
20) Have you ever experienced discrimination, harassment or abuse by the person who gives you work? If yes, please elaborate.
[Interviewer - Please explain to the interviewee that discrimination includes raising voice, yelling, cursing and harassment]
21) Tell me about the place where you do your homework by answering the following questions:
    a. Do you have enough space to work and store your materials – away from where you eat and sleep? (Seeking to understand if HWs have ample space to work).
    b. Do you have enough light and air/ ventilation where you work?
    c. Do you use chemicals for making products? If yes, please indicate the names of the chemicals, if you have been provided with any information on the possible health risk to you and your family and if you are able to store them in a safe place out of reach of children. Additionally, do you have to purchase this yourself, or are they provided to you?
    d. Are your children around when you are working?
    e. Do you have access to a proper toilet and clean running water in your home or near your home?
    f. Do you ever work with materials that create dust and fumes? If so, do you ear protective equipment such as gloves, masks, or glasses?
    b. Does your work give rise to any other health issues? (eg. eye strain, hand injury, and back/shoulder pain).

Social Protection

22) How do you manage your expenses when emergencies happen such as- a) illness and injury, b) lack of work, and c) any unexpected expenditure?
23) Are you currently receiving any social protection support from the government? If so, can you name them? [explore if homeworkers get elements of social protection: social security, sick pay, paid maternity leave, medical care, disability, any allowance, children scholarship, pensions, ration support, etc]
24) Has anyone (person or organizations) helped you to apply for the government social protection scheme? If yes, which scheme?
25) Are there any social protection schemes you qualify but unable to access?

Social Dialogue

1) Are you a member of an organization/network or Trade Union?
[organization could include- saving and credit cooperatives, an organization catering to women home-based workers]
2) Have you or your organization ever participated in any collective negotiation with contractors or the person who provides work in regard to
   a. Increase in piece rate wage _____
   b. Regularity of orders Work_____
   c. Access to health safety equipment or_____
   d. Any other topics not mentioned above?_____

28) Have you or your organization ever participated in any collective negotiation with the local government? If yes, please answer the following additional questions:
   e. Why was the negotiation held?
   f. In which topic was the negotiation held?
   g. When was the negotiation held?
   h. What was the process of negotiation?
29) Do you have a way to complain, discuss or raise a grievance with the sub-contractor or factory you work for if problems arise?

Section 4

Please provide the below-mentioned definition of Decent Work to the interviewee.

As per ILO, decent work is defined within the definition of 4 main components: ***employment, social protection, workers' rights and social dialogue. Employment refers to the adequate opportunity for work that*** is productive and delivers a fair income; provides a healthy workplace that includes safety at work and healthy working conditions. **Social protection** refers to income security and safety nets to protect workers and their families. **Worker rights** refer to freedom of association (every individual is free to organize and to form and participate in groups, either formally or informally, non-discrimination at work (equal opportunity for both men and women) and absence of forced labour and child labour. **Social dialogue** refers to the opportunity where workers exercise their rights to present their views, defend their interests and engage in discussion to negotiate work related matters with employers and authorities and to organize and to participate in decisions that affect their lives.

1) Do you think this definition misses anything that is important?
2) Are there any other components you think are important in order for your work to be decent/ good?

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