

WORKSHOP REPORT

HomeNet Nepal in partnership with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) India and Nepal office, Global Labour Institute, Geneva and HomeNet South Asia (HNSA) organized a workshop on *“Towards Securer Lives: Advocacy for Social Protection for Home based workers in South Asia”* on Feb 19th and 20th, 2007, at Kathmandu¹.

Background

Home-based work is fast emerging as an increasingly important source of employment worldwide. It is estimated that there are over 100 million home-based workers in the world and over 50 million home-based workers in South Asia – of whom around 80% are women. Fewer workers the world over are working in formal, unionized jobs and more and more people, particularly women, are working informally, many of them at home. With the growing globalisation and decentralisation of production, home based work has emerged as the final link in a global chain of subcontractors encompassing a wide range of industries and services. From traditional embroidery and weaving, home based work today extends to some of the latest sectors such as computers and tele-work.

Typically, home-based workers in South Asia are dispersed, illiterate, un-represented and invisible both in the national data or programs. They have little or no legal and social protection, poor working conditions, minimal or no workers benefits. It is a well known fact that traditionally home-based workers were predominantly women and their numbers continues to rise today. It is equally well known that that their working and living condition is perhaps the most vulnerable.

Social security is a crucial need for all home-based workers. The main issue is how this can be achieved, ensuring appropriate, efficient and quality services and timely disbursement, preferably at their very doorsteps. Extending social security to the homebased workers is not merely a matter of extending

¹ See Annexure 1 for detailed agenda.

existing organized sector schemes to new groups but also to complement them with specially designed schemes to meet the needs of this category of workers. The diversity of employment and the geographically dispersed nature of the workplace pose real challenges. Employment relations vary considerably, and a major obstacle to introducing contributory social insurance schemes is the difficulty in identifying the employer. Besides a large proportion of the homebased workers are women and child-oriented needs become increasingly important. And finally, unlike the formal sector where steady and regular employment, on which social protection schemes are designed is a normal case, home based workers need employment security, income security and social security simultaneously.

Social protection in South Asia as currently conceptualized in government interventions includes poverty eradication programmes on the one hand, and worker-oriented social security which is largely confined to formal sector workers. For informal workers, Welfare Funds, where they exist, are seen as both practical and with good outreach; they imply a sectoral approach to social protection. In all countries, the outreach to workers in distant rural areas is particularly weak and both conceptually, and in implementation, much remains to be done to ensure their inclusion. An Approach to social protection²

Workshop Objectives and Participants

HomeNet Nepal in partnership with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) India and Nepal office, Global Labour Institute, Geneva and HomeNet South Asia (HNSA) organized a workshop on “Towards Securer Lives: Advocacy for Social Protection for Home based workers in South Asia”. The objective of the workshop was to highlight the social security needs and vulnerabilities of the home based workers and to develop an approach to designing social security program for the home based workers in the region.

The workshop was attended by over 40 participants, including delegates from Governments and members of civil society from all the five countries of South Asia -Bangladesh (2) , India (11), Nepal (25), Pakistan(4) and Sri Lanka (3). The

² See background note – in annexure 2

workshop also included international delegates from ILO and Global Labour Institute, Geneva.

Inaugural Session

The workshop was inaugurated by *Mr. Ramesh Lekhak, Hon'ble Minister of Labour & Transport Management*. Speaking on the occasion, he underlined the current invisibility of home based workers and highlighted the need for documenting numbers and contribution of the home based workers at the local and national level. The minister highlighted the needs of statistics on home based workers – not just numbers but also the nature of work, poverty relationships and gender dimensions. He expressed solidarity with the cause of social security for the home based workers, and offered support to the Home Net Nepal and the cause of the home based workers. The minister also commended Home Net Nepal for being part of a regional movement which was taking up this cause at the regional level.

In her Special Address, *Ms Renate Tensbuch, Project Director, FES India* gave the historical background to FES³, highlighting its work in the areas of gender, trade unions and social protection, in the region. Founded in 1925 as Germany's first political foundation, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung is a private, non profit organization committed to the precepts of social democracy. It bears the name of the first democratically elected president of Germany, Friedrich Ebert, preserving his legacy: the promotion of freedom, solidarity and social justice through the political process. The FES undertakes to carry out this mission in Germany and abroad through its programmes promoting political education, international cooperation, study and research.

“Available evidence suggests that home-based work is an important source of employment especially for economically disadvantaged women, and that a great majority of both old and new forms of home-based work is undertaken by women in this region”.

Ms Renate Tensbuch, FES India

³ Please see annexure 3 for full speech.



(L-R) Ms. Karin Pape, Ms. Namrata, Ms. Renate Tensbuch, Ms. Verupi., Ms. Shreyna, Ms. Sapna

Social justice is a central pillar of social democracy, which is what the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung stands for. Trade Unions are key actors in promoting democracy and social justice. Promoting social dialogue and labour relations based on social partnership and thus promoting trade unions is one of the core tasks of our international activities in our approximately 100 projects world-wide. Ms Tensbuch pointed out that Social Security has been an important area of FES activities in India, particularly in the post 1991 era. FES intervention had been in the areas of defining / redefining concepts and contents; awareness generation; formulating strategies for programme implementation; etc. In such activities the focus of FES had been to enhance the capacities of the membership based organisation to seek enforcement of existing and proposed policies, programme and legislation so as to cover maximum proportion of the target population.

FES engagements in the areas of social protection and social security has highlighted the following concerns:

- ✚ Not a priority sector: despite of the fact that over 93% of the workforce are located in the informal sector who are not effectively covered by the legislative provisions, the issues of social security remain out the focus area of the policy makers.
- ✚ Mindset : there is a problem of mindset also which is negatively biased- its too costly
- ✚ Lack of gender Perspective: women workers, although have greater needs, are accorded negligible importance.
- ✚ Trade unions and other MBOs are not fully engaged in the implementation of schemes.

In a brief address, *Mr Dev Raj Dahal, Head FES Nepal*, also spoke about FES's work around three themes - freedom, solidarity and justice. He mentioned FES's engagement with addressing how to overcome the democratic deficits of

We should strengthen advocacy efforts to ratify the ILO Convention, 177. The Convention states that equality of treatment shall be promoted for the home based workers. ... there is a need for a national policy on homework which would ensure the inclusion of home based workers in the regulatory framework of national labour laws and will lead to shared responsibility by the employers, by the government and by the home workers with regard to social security.

Mr Diwakar Chand, Vice President, HomeNet South Asia

South Asia and also, consequently, the role of collective organization to prevent economic and social polarization. He highlighted the key role of SAARC.

Mr Diwakar Chand, Vice president, HomeNet South Asia in his address welcomed the delegates to the conference and

presented the objectives of the workshop. He pointed out the the number of home workers in the region was not insignificant - it is estimated that there are over 100 million home-based workers in the world and 50 million home-based workers in South Asia. In Nepal, there are 2 million home based workers. Typically, home-based workers are dispersed, illiterate, un-represented and invisible both in the national data and programs. Social security is a crucial need for all home-based workers. The main issue is how this can be achieved, ensuring appropriate, efficient and quality services and timely disbursement.

He also strongly advocated for SAARC to play a stronger and more visible role in taking the issues of home based workers at the regional level.

TECHNICAL SESSION 1

The first session set the scene for the workshop, presenting a regional level study on the social security needs of the home based worker in the region, an international perspective and a country level best practice on the subject. The session was chaired by Ms Renate Tensbuch, FES.

Shrayana Bhattacharya, ISST presented a paper on the Homebased Workers And Their Social Security Needs, based on a regional study carried out by the ISST⁴. The objective of the research was to understand the risks and vulnerabilities faced by home-based workers in several different situations, and the coping mechanisms that they use.

The specific objectives of the research/study were:

1. Explore risks faced across the life-cycle by home-based workers. This was to be done against the context of changing patterns of livelihood
2. Identify both governmental and non-governmental interventions that have been successfully implemented in order to address these risks.
3. Exchange practical experiences and research findings, and build capacity for research and advocacy, among Home Net South Asia member countries and organisations.
4. Use social security as a tool to organize homebased workers.
5. Prepare concrete social protection policies and programme prescriptions based on review of government and non government initiatives

Following this study conducted across several sectors in South Asia, a few commonalities emerge in the approach required for social protection within the context of home based workers in the region. First, the economic security of some of the home based workers is feeble as they are unable to respond adequately to global market competitors and technological changes. Even when the sector overall is experiencing expansion, the home based workers are generally in a situation of stagnant or decreasing demand. This is because within their sector, workers are part of low end labour which caters only to dwindling local demand. Further, they are

⁴ See Annexure 4 for the full paper.

unable to cater to the urban or export markets due to their geographic and socio-economic position in the region which renders them invisible in the sector.

Most workers who are engaged in home based work in the survey were part of extremely poor and backward sections within their nation. To tackle risks these workers face, measures relating to their habitat and immediate living environment are important. The home is the epi centre of livelihoods for these families and yet the source of major health problems and emotional anxiety and tensions.

‘The study shows that finding work is getting more difficult for varied reasons, and that people have to supplement their earnings from traditional home based work from other sources. Whatever approach is taken for social protection needs to be in tune with the overall direction for development and growth prospects of the area and sector workers are engaged in’.

Shrayana Bhattacharya, ISST

Access to health care is a significant need articulated through the study as each sample reports occupational and habitat related health hazards. Ms Bhattacharya also pointed out that following such concerns of home based workers, specifically their vulnerability to risks, an action plan has been mapped by HNSA. Also, at the research level, there is a strong need articulated through the study for a shared conceptual framework to be developed for social protection for home based workers, especially spelling out a minimum set of entitlements. For policy advocacy, research materials need to be adequately disseminated and repackaged. Finally, proven social security interventions need to be more explicitly analyzed and promoted as best practices.

Karin Pape, from the Global Labour Institute, Geneva⁵, presentation on ‘homework in the context of Globalization’, highlighted the need to ratify the ILO Convention. The basic idea of the Homework Convention is as to create the

⁵ See Annexure 5 for the full paper.

same conditions that are valid for formally employed workers. It calls for equal treatment, in particular in relation to:

- (a) the home workers' right to establish or join organizations of their own choosing and to participate in the activities of such organizations;
- (b) protection against discrimination in employment and occupation;
- (c) protection in the field of occupational safety and health;
- (d) remuneration
- (e) statutory social security protection;
- (f) access to training;
- (g) minimum age for admission to employment or work; and
- (h) maternity protection

Until recently only four countries had ratified the Homework Convention: Finland (17.06.1998), Ireland (22.04.1999), Albania (24.07.2002) and the Netherlands (31.10.1992). On 31.07.2006 Argentina ratified as the fifth country the Homework Convention. This is very encouraging for home workers' organizations worldwide, especially for those like, for example in South Asia, which have lobbied for a long time for ratification of the Homework Convention.

Karin Pape, GLI

Ms Pape pointed out that the ratification and – most importantly – implementation would mean no less than lifting home workers from the informal to the formal economy. Furthermore the Homework Convention calls for a national policy on homework, which is supposed to be implemented and reviewed in consultation with organizations concerned with home workers and those of employers and home workers (Article 3). It seems that the approach of different home workers' groups is, first to demand a national policy on home work and then as a second step to lobby for ratification of the Home Work Convention. This was also the case in Argentina. Article 6 requires appropriate measures to include home work into the national labour statistics. Ms. Pape also mentioned that the Home Work Convention can only be applied if an employer exists or can be identified. Since home workers find themselves at the end of the production chain, the employment relationship is often disguised, ambiguous or triangular. In 2006 the Recommendation on the

Employment Relationship (R198) was adopted at the International Labour Conference. It helps governments to introduce legislation that fills this gap of definition.

Concerning the international standards of social protection, Ms Pape stressed the point that the extension of social security is back on the international agenda. A recent calculation of the cost of basic social protection benefit packages (essential health care, a universal old-age and disability pension, universal child benefits) and their affordability has been undertaken for five Asian countries: Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Vietnam for the period 2006 to 2034. They are based on three scenarios with a different extent of coverage. Results show that even the more generous assumptions could be financed out of domestic resources. For Bangladesh and Nepal some support from the international community, at least for a transitional period would be necessary.

Ms Sapna Desai presented on the SEWA's experience of organizing for social security. The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) was founded in 1972 by Ela R. Bhatt. A trade union for women in the informal sector, SEWA has a current membership of 963,000 women across India, with 480,000 in Gujarat. SEWA's goals are to organise women to attain: 1) full employment, which includes work and income security; food security; and social security; and 2) self-reliance, which includes both economic reliance and decision making power.

Over the years, SEWA has learned that social security is integral to ensuring women can attain full employment and full reliance. In fact, lack of social protection has been a primary reason women fall deeper into debt and poverty, through catastrophic expenditures such as for illness or loss of assets. Further, risks are multiple and frequent in the lives of women workers in the informal sector – and the poorest of women face the most severe and frequent risk. Thus for over thirty five years, SEWA has worked to organise women for social security as an integral component of full employment. Today, the social security program in Gujarat includes health, insurance, housing and childcare services.

SEWA Health was initiated to raise awareness amongst women and their families on basic health issues and build the capacity of local leaders, especially midwives, to be health care providers in their communities. The program is implemented through a women's health cooperative, Lok Swasthya Mandali, to promote sustainability as well as full employment for health workers. The program has organically grown over twenty years, with a range of preventive and curative services, training and research. Several key components continue to be the basis for activities - and could be instructive for scaling up. Building the capacity of local women has proven to be the most successful and crucial area of SEWA's health work. Although a long and often difficult process, ensuring women are organised for their own health is critical to sustainability. Also, the program has focused on awareness and access to information on existing services, rather than create a parallel system - an approach that allows for scale and a wide reach. Integration within health services and between health and other development activities has also proven critical to ensuring a needs-based approach for women workers. Lastly, advocacy for improved public services has remained a core activity throughout, again to promote sustainability and activation of the public system.

In organising for social security, SEWA's experience in scaling up and replication has illustrated that services cannot be transplanted. Rather, local demand and a basic approach must drive design and implementation in new areas. Programs must be founded on a need based approach, with services at women's doorsteps.

Implementation should be decentralized, led by women through capacity building of local teams. Self-reliance, through contribution and workers organizations, should be integrated through all programs. Lastly, a holistic and integrated approach to social security with work security ensures that women access services tailored to their lives and their needs.

Sapna Desai, SEWA Social Security

BalSEWA, SEWA's child care program, builds the capacity of local women to serve as child care givers and teachers. Implemented through Sangini, a cooperative of child care workers, BalSEWA's centres provide nutrition, health care services, and child development activities, as well as involve parents through regular meetings. The impact of BalSEWA has been resounding in

ensuring children and their siblings attend school, improving the income of mothers, and enhancing overall well being of children. The main lessons learned from BaSEWA, which can inform replication, are: 1) focus on capacity building of teachers; 2) adjust centre hours to meet member needs, especially for a full day's work; 3) maintain a strong advocacy program on child rights; 4) devise a sustainability program and linkages with existing services.

SEWA's insurance program, VimoSEWA, was established in 1992 to protect women and their families from catastrophic expenditure. Close to a total of 200,000 women, men and children are insured by VimoSEWA. Women are the primary insured, with the option of insuring her family for additional premium. The current insurance package is an integrated product, with life (natural and accidental), asset and mediclaim coverage. Implemented in partnership with insurance companies, the product has evolved over time to consistently meet the needs of women in the informal sector. As in all social security services, the approach to implementation has been key: SEWA has learned that decentralised services close to women and managed by local organisations are central. Accordingly, premium collection and claim servicing are conducted through doorstep services and integrated with existing services such as loans and self help groups. Simple, decentralised system and procedures, supported by constant contact and education, are both critical to a viable and effective product.. Other key lessons include that health insurance is a top priority of the poor, and that they are willing to pay for their security. While health insurance creates demand for public health services, linkages, preferably cashless tie-ups, with hospitals and providers are key to access and quality. Finally, sustainability must go hand in hand with effectiveness; although microinsurance is challenging in terms of financial viability, it is possible.

Varupi Jain and Namreta, from GTZ⁶ presented a study on 'Design and Management of Social Security Benefits for Unorganised workers' in Karnataka, with funding support from GTZ. The purpose of the study was to assist the Department of Labour, GoK, Bangalore, in the identification of social security needs and in the design of benefits. Specifically, the study aimed to

- To analyse the social security needs of unorganised workers.

⁶ See Annexure 6 for the full paper.

- To review the current risk management strategies (formal and informal) applied by individuals and households, and identify the gaps and shortcomings.
- To analyse their willingness to contribute for social security benefits.
- To suggest policy measures aimed at the design and management of social security benefits.

The study found that the agricultural workers, assigned top priority to old age pension and unemployment benefit. (Workers from developed districts preferred old age pension and workers from semi-arid district of Gulbarga expressed the need for unemployment benefits). The avg. amount of expenditure was Rs. 1206 on all types of work related risks - the higher amounts of average expenditure for accidents while using implements or for prolonged illness. Workers resorted to borrowing, family and friends and past savings to tide over the crises and incurred high costs in the form of interest rates. Over 67% of agricultural workers expressed capacity to contribute.

For the construction workers, top social security needs were unemployment benefit, old age and employment injury. Over 72% of the expenditure incurred during these crises was met through borrowing and sale of assets, with employers covering less than 2% of expenditure. High cost informal mechanisms were thus adopted to tide over the crisis. None of the workers surveyed had benefited from Workman's compensation Act. 82% of construction workers expressed willingness to contribute to their social security.

For the domestic workers, top social security needs for domestic workers were old age and unemployment benefits. The proportion of workers preferring for old age benefits was highest in Gulbarga, and a larger number of workers preferring unemployment benefits belonged to Bangalore and DK. Over 72% of the expenditure was met either by borrowing and sale of assets or taking help from friends and relatives.

The study concludes that unorganised workers are keen for social security and although they have diverse social security needs, the following were important - Old age, Unemployment and Employment injury (health). Death was also an

important need, although not explicitly stated. High cost informal mechanisms were widely used to tide over the crises and access to formal mechanisms was limited, and was not useful in tiding over the crises. The study also shows that the state provision for social security need not necessarily be subsidised or free. Between 67 and 82% of workers expressed the willingness to contribute. The study also recommends that contributions can be deposited at banks and post offices and to be collected by SHGs and flexibility in the schedule of contributions is critical. Representation from govt., workers and employers is needed fore ensuring transparency and accountability in the registration and settling claims as well as convenient and timely settlement of claims.

TECHNICAL SESSION 2: Towards Designing a Social Security Program

Group Discussions

In this session, the plenary divided into four groups around the issues of microinsurance; health housing and childcare, organizing for social security and advocacy. Each of the groups brainstormed to chalk out a way forward on the subject and recommend next steps.

Health, Housing and Childcare

Reflecting on the research which had been presented and personal experiences, the group agreed that the focus on health, housing and childcare was essential and a universal requirement in each country and for all workers across sectors and geography. Health and hygiene conditions are seen to impact productivity and output, particularly for female HBWs. The group followed this agreement with focusing on common concerns and brainstorming on needed action plans specific to each nation, sector or cluster they worked with.

The key recommendations that were set out and are as follows:

1. Mapping and Research on existing service providers from the private, public and civil society sphere in the areas of housing and health care. After creating such a list of service providers and their profiles, a need assessment is required from the home based workers group on the type of facilities, nature of delivery arrangements and services they require in lieu of personal healthcare needs, housing and child care. Such demand

and supply mapping can assist the process of fostering linkages between these groups. Problems faced by workers in accessing such facilities and services in the past shall also need to be enlisted to ensure that organizations can build awareness and mechanisms which can assist in tackling such barriers to access.

2. In the field of occupational health, training for home based workers emerged as key. Group members stated that problems plaguing women's health were often rooted in the work process such as postural related aches and pains. Recent research conducted also corroborates such phenomena across countries and sectors. Thus, a training session for female HBWs on how to maintain a safer and healthier production process would be useful in disseminating information on how to prevent certain occupational diseases. Assistance in innovations within the work process through the use of technology, design or basic equipment such as masks could further safeguard women from occupational health hazards. For such training materials to go forward organizations and support units will need to be identified and collaborations sought.
3. For Housing, the group suggested the creation of training guidelines for home based workers dealing with the specifics of a clean and safe house, equipped to manage higher productivity and output. Issues such as sanitation and ventilation are key and using such training materials women can improve upon housing conditions. Further, thought and training on work space management could be useful in reducing stress associated with tackling productive and reproductive work in the same space. Finally, local hygiene and habitat associated cleanliness and sanitation were stressed upon.
4. For Child care, day care centres run by the community were seen as a good model to follow. Further, training and awareness generation within the communities on the linkages between childcare and productivity need to be looked at.

Following these recommendations, the following action plan was suggested by the group for HNSA. The first agenda sought would deal with further research and clarity on the linkages between health and productivity. This link is crucial and needs better articulation for advocacy purposes. The

second dealt with training and guideline materials for home based workers to manage their housing and working conditions better.

Microinsurance

The small group on microinsurance articulated key issues and devised recommendations on how microinsurance can be designed and implemented for home based workers. Microinsurance was defined to be a basic package of life, health and asset insurance for the poor. To contextualize microinsurance within a national or regional setting, the group emphasized the importance of understanding and interacting with regulatory bodies and administrative focal points. Further, health insurance specifically must be addressed in relation to the public health system. While insurance can cushion out-of-pocket expenditure for private health care, it cannot replace a functioning public health system, particularly for primary health care for the poorest.



Group Discussion: Microinsurance

The group identified several issues that must be addressed in designing microfinance products. Equity, regarding what income group can access microinsurance and who is better equipped to submit claims, arose as a key factor. Effectiveness of a product must be viewed vis-à-vis the needs of home based workers, rather than only viability. Another design issue faced by many organisations is determining whether microinsurance should be compulsory or voluntary, taking into account both sustainability and ideological concerns. The relationship between microfinance and microinsurance programs must also be clearly delineated through design, particularly in separating premium collection and operations. Given that understanding of insurance among the poor is crucial, design must take into account this effort and integrate a strong capacity building component for local implementers and the community.

Implementation of microinsurance was also discussed, with articulation of concerns faced by both new and well established insurance providers. Organizations interested in initiating microinsurance face reaching a critical mass of clients and negotiating feasible relationships with private partners as two interlinked obstacles to implementation. Also, existing programs must address issues of quality of servicing, tracking clients, negotiation with service providers, and sustainability. For a successful program with home based workers, the group emphasized that building capacity of community based providers is key, and must be the foundation of implementation.

The group established three general recommendations for microinsurance programs: 1) A basic package must include life, health, disability and asset insurance; 2) Health insurance must be linked with broader health reform; and 3) Relevant bodies must regulate providers and facilitate direct payment systems. The group suggested that the role of HomeNet South Asia be to: map existing systems and regulatory bodies; raise social security for homebased workers at the SAARC meeting; and create a platform for exchange of information on social security.

Organizing for Social Security

In this age of globalization and economic transformation, organizations of home-based workers are essential to fight for and defend their rights. By

creating awareness about their situation, building capacities to cope with the negative impacts and to capitalize on the opportunities presented, they make themselves visible and heard. Organizing at the grassroots is fundamental to finding solutions to the various problems faced by home-based workers. At the same time, there are many issues that go beyond local level. For example it is difficult to achieve minimum wages or social protection without appropriate policies and laws. Economic policies also have an impact on home-based workers. Home based workers need associational linkages and network at national, regional and global levels.



Group Discussion: Organizing for Social Security

The group deliberated to make recommendation towards designing an effective organizing strategy, at the national and regional level. The role of the national homenets was identified as acting as facilitator in organizing home based workers, creating awareness amongst networks and home based workers, running media campaign for social security and lobbying and advocacy with government for a national policy on hoem based workers, in each of the countries. The strategy employed for organizing home based workers for social security would include research on existing policies and schemes, trends and issues of home based workers, collecting data and

building profiles of this category of workers, as well as need assessments which includes risks, vulnerabilities, priority and affordability. A Resource Centre for collection, storing and disseminating information could also be built up, communication with stakeholders need to be strengthened to make governments recognize home based workers as well to advocate for a national policies on home based workers. The role of Home Net South Asia was visualized as a Resource Centre; as a means of strengthening national networks by providing technical support and advocacy at regional level through SAARC.

Advocacy

Advocacy has been a very important tool to initiate policy changes. For the homebased women workers to be able to respond effectively to the new opportunities - as well as the negative impacts - associated with the liberalization of trade and investment, it will be necessary to build organizations of the women informal workers and give them voice in relevant policy dialogues. This group deliberated on the strategy for advocacy on issues of the home based workers, at the regional or the national level, with special reference to developing a strategy for the ratification of the ILO Convention 177.



Group Discussion on Advocacy for ratification C 177

The strategy for advocacy for the ratification of the ILO Convention must be chalked out at all the four levels – local, national, regional and global level, keeping in mind, differential levels of political commitment, knowledge base, engagement of stakeholders, and practice. However, ratification is an Act of the national parliament and efforts have to culminate in convincing the majority in Parliament to ratify C 177. In Nepal, several developments are already underway. Translation of the text of C 177 into Nepali and taken it to the grass route level, presentation have to been made to several ministries and interaction All three trade unions centres that have a (rotating) mandate at the ILO have assured support. With the new social contract being formulated, an opportunity is fast emerging for pushing for the ratification. In Pakistan too, Home net Pakistan has been strengthening its advocacy efforts through research as well as running the multimedia campaign for awareness.

The group made several recommendations for the way forward –

- Hold National conventions of HBWs.
- Regional event on sidelines of SAARC summit.
- Engagement of SAARC secretariat .
- Leverage the 2000 “Katmandu Declaration”
- A Home Net SA side event at ILC 2007/2008 . (Key Themes)

- Strengthening the ILO's capacity to assist its Members' efforts to reach its objectives in the context of globalization,
- Global Report on Equality and Work
- Widening the base of HNSA, more active engagement of TUs, government, academics, media, civil society as a whole.

Valedictory Session

Mr R. K. A Subrahmanya, Social Security Association of India began his reaction to the presentations of the Group sessions by highlighting the differences between social security, as distinguished from economic security. He also cautioned against absolving the state of all its responsibilities towards the poor. He advised that the role of country networks and their partners could be to ensure the state services reach the poor, in time and in an efficient manner. He also advised the social security needs should be prioritized and home based workers should be addresses as a category of workers with in the broader informal sector. Taking the example of the recent social security bill in India, he said that the worker facilitation centre has adequate 'space and scope' for organizations of the home based workers to work towards ensuring effective social security coverage for the home based workers.



(L-R) Ms. Karin Pape, Mr. Subramanya, Mr. Karamat Ali, Mr. Diwarker Chand

Ms Karin Pape in her address highlighted the role of the Home Net South Asia, as it had emerged during the consultations of the current workshop. Home Net South Asia can emerge as a platform for information exchange, as well as for technical advise and sharing of good practice from the region. She also pointed out that the empowerment of HomeNets is also critical, and the process must be ongoing. Karin Pape said that HomeNets are the focal points of the movement of the home based workers in the region which is gathering pace in the region and is poised for significant achievements in few of the countries. However, the need is to make a realistic estimation of what can be achieved, and then prioritized action.

Karamat Ali from PILER said that the issues of home based workers must be examined in the broader context of core labour rights and decent work. He pointed out that social security must be treated as a basic human right. There is considerable evidence to suggest that states have ample resources for providing social security for the poor, provided there is political will. Besides, Mr Ali, pointed out that there is also ample proof that the poor are willing to pay.

Mr Diwakar Chand in his address pointed out that several commonalities do exist across the region. He said that he saw the role of HomeNets as 'watchdogs' to maintain the fine balance between economic development and social welfare and suggested that the efforts of Home Net members could be of supplementing and implementing the government system, as opposed to duplicating it.

Ms Sapna Joshi from HNSA and Ms Damyanty from FES gave the vote of thanks.

Key Recommendations of the workshop

- Social security is an essential economic support to poor home based workers, especially women.
- The key priorities for social security identified at the workshop included health housing and credit facilities.
- Improving access to existing public services is the key. In addition, microinsurance is one of the mechanism that can help the poor women to combat the vulnerability caused by exposure to risks. Microinsurance should include life, health and asset loss components.
- The workshop strongly recommended strengthening advocacy efforts to ratify the ILO Convention, 177. The ILO Convention (C 177) aims to treat home based workers equally to other wage earners. The Convention states that equality of treatment shall be promoted, in particular, in relation to protection in the field of occupational safety, health and statutory social security protection. Until recently only four countries had ratified the Homework Convention: Finland, Ireland, Albania and the Netherlands. On 31.07.2006 Argentina ratified as the fifth country the Homework Convention.

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