

IRENE/CCC Discussion Paper
**The Global Garment Industry
and the Informal Economy:
Critical Issues for Labor Rights
Advocates**

By Nina Ascoly, September 2004

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The Global Garment Industry and the Informal Economy: Critical Issues for Labor Rights Advocates

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Aim of this paper

This paper has been written as an input for the seminar “Campaigning strategies on informal labour in the global garment industry,” organized by the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), the International Restructuring Education Network Europe (IRENE), and the Evangelische Akademie Meissen, to be held at the Akademie September 23rd, 24th, and 25th, 2004.¹

Because of the important (and growing) role of the informal economy in garment production, an increasing number of labor rights organizations and networks focusing on the garment industry aim to become more active on the issue of women workers in informal employment. This seminar is intended to bring together labor rights activists who focus on the garment industry with those doing research on and/or organizing in the industry’s informal economy. By creating a space for the sharing of information and experiences, it is hoped that participants with more insight into the reality and needs of informal economy workers will better inform organizations seeking to formulate strategies for solidarity campaigns to support these workers’ struggles. The seminar is seen as an opportunity to invigorate the dialogue among all these organizations on informal garment economy issues and move closer toward developing a joint agenda for action. Optimally, the proceedings should generate concrete goals and strategies for labor rights campaigns seeking to take action to support women working in the garment’s informal economy.

The informal economy is a broad term that encompasses many diverse forms of work and workers. Sometimes there is unclarity surrounding the terminology that is used to describe the informal economy and the different problems, needs, and experiences of these workers employed in varying situations. Since seminar participants will be approaching these issues from different perspectives, this brief

¹ A first draft of this paper was circulated to the seminar’s international steering committee. The author is grateful for feedback received from various members of this group.

overview is intended to provide some general background information on the informal economy and the garment industry and highlight some of the key discussions currently going on in relation to informal economy workers' rights that are expected to be taken up during the seminar.

1. What is the informal economy?

The term "informal economy," replacing the previously used term "informal sector," is used to refer to workers and companies that are not recognized or protected under legal and regulatory frameworks and are characterized by a high degree of vulnerability (ILO, 2002).² Informal economy workers often have no wage agreements, earn little (not a living wage and often below legal minimum wage standards), are not paid on time, have no employment contracts, no regular working hours, are not covered by non-wage benefits (such as health insurance or unemployment benefits), and are not a priority for most governmental, political, or labor organizations.

The term informal sector, first put into use by the ILO in the early 1970s and still commonly used, is now seen as misleading because it masks the diversity and complexity of these work arrangements and processes, and seems to imply (incorrectly) that such processes are limited to one sector or industry. The concept of a sector seems to suggest that there is a dichotomy between "formal" and "informal" while in reality, as the ILO notes (2002: 8), a continuum exists, with linkages between formal and informal via subcontracting arrangements. It is also possible that formal employment situations can include workers operating in informal conditions (ex. workers in a formal workplace that have no contract). As the Committee for Asian Women observes, "in more and more situations, workers in so-called informal employment work side by side under the same roof as workers in formal employment" (CAW, 2001a: 2).

The terms informal employment, unregulated, unprotected, excluded, atypical, and precarious employment are also often used interchangeably to describe the situation of workers in the informal economy. Each term brings with it slightly different meanings, and usually the choice for one or the other is political.

² The ILO views the informal economy as comprising marginalized economic units and workers who are characterized by serious deficits in terms of income security, job security, work security, representation security, skills reproduction security (2002: 7-8). Reducing these deficits in the informal economy, they believe, will promote the transition to recognized, protected, legal – and, therefore, "formal" – activities and ensure decent work. See the full ILO report for more elaboration on terms.

2. The informal economy is global and is growing

The informal economy is growing and is not confined to certain regions or categories of countries.

“...The informal economy has been growing rapidly in almost every corner of the globe, including industrialized countries,” reports the ILO (2002: 5). “The bulk of new employment in recent years, particularly in developing and transition countries, has been in the informal economy.”

However, precise data on employment in the informal economy is difficult to come by. Some countries define informal employment differently; as a result the data collected only reflects a partial picture of the scope of activity really taking place in the informal economy. For example, much of the data collected at the national level only refers to those whose main job or only job is in the informal economy, leaving out those who have secondary jobs in the informal economy (a number thought to be quite large in some countries). Sources of data also vary from country to country, and in many countries data on informal employment only covers urban areas, or capital cities (Husmanns & Du Jeu, 2002).

The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) reports that “25% of the world’s working population are active in the informal economy and generate 35% of global GDP” (2004:1). The World Bank’s World Development Report of 2001 lists the informal sector share of non-agricultural employment at 57% in Latin America/the Caribbean, 78% in Africa, and 45-85% in Asia (Charmes cited in WIEGO, 2004b). But according to Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), an organization that has done extensive work on the issue of informal economy data collection, official statistics probably underestimate the size and economic contribution of the informal economy (2004b).³

To get a sense of the scale of the informal economy consider that the number of home-based workers alone, most of whom are part of the informal economy, is estimated to be 300 million worldwide, according to HomeNet, the international solidarity network representing, organizing, and supporting home-based workers around the world. But there are many other types of workers and work arrangements in the informal economy.

³ In 1997, The International Expert Group on Informal Sector Statistics (known as the Delhi Group) requested that WIEGO write a series of papers recommending improved concepts, measures, and methods for data collection on the informal sector. This project generated five papers and several recommendations, a summary of which can be found at the WIEGO website < <http://www.wiego.org/textonly/areas5.shtml> >.

3. The role of the informal economy in the garment industry

The trend toward informalization is also seen to be on the rise in the garment industry. Manufacture of garments for domestic markets and those made for export can involve production in the informal economy.

As those producing for the global market seek to remain competitive, informalization is a tool they use to cut costs. Globally, there is a trend toward reorganizing garment production to be increasingly flexibilized and decentralized, through diverse forms of subcontracting. This might appear to be at odds with the current trend toward consolidation in the garment industry, with brand name companies or retailers sourcing in fewer countries through fewer companies.⁴ However, orders are often fulfilled through subcontracting arrangements that make use of the informal economy. It is useful to think of garment production orders being funneled through an hourglass – a great many orders are sent to an increasingly concentrated number of agents or multinational production companies; they in turn distribute these orders to a great number of suppliers, who in turn distribute work to what amounts to a large network of subcontractors. Many of these subcontractors operate in the informal economy, also in a number of different arrangements.

4. Different forms of informal work

In the garment industry informal economy workers can include home-based workers, whose employment relationship with an employer is not recognized or protected; those who run micro-enterprises, who face various barriers and constraints to setting up and operating formal enterprises; and those who work for them, as well as other arrangements. Women who make garments for local markets might have no employers – they get their own inputs, produce the garments, and find markets for their goods.

⁴ In June 2003, several of the major global garment producers including Hugo Boss, Gap, JC Penney, Liz Claiborne, and Wal-Mart, gathered together at the IAF World Apparel Convention, reported that while they used to source from 50 or more nations, that number is now shrinking. Now they source from fewer nations (approximately 30 to 40, though they predict that this number may soon be as low as 10) and from fewer and bigger suppliers (just-style.com (2003) "World Apparel Convention focuses on quota freedom," July 8). Increased consolidation of garment production is being predicted in the context of the phase-out of the Multi-fiber Arrangement (MFA) at the end of 2004 (SOMO, 2004).

Organizations discussing informal employment in Asia at a seminar organized by CAW in 2002 felt that an important distinction to make was between those working with identifiable employers, such as part-time workers, contract workers, and dispatch workers (those employed by a recruitment agency for relay to temporary work positions within companies), and those working with non-identifiable or shifting employers such as home-based workers (including both “own-account” and contract workers). Own-account workers are one-person or family businesses with unpaid family workers.

It is important to understand that informal work in the garment industry can *extend into* regular, formally-operating factories and is not limited to informally-operating workplaces, as is the case with homework.

Some examples of informal work arrangements in the garment industry:⁵

- Work is subcontracted to small workshops and to homeworkers who often do not have contracts and have little or no legal protection or rights to form unions. Factory supervisors sometimes act as an agent, distributing work to others outside the factory. These workers manufacture parts of goods and do not receive the same amount of income and benefit as prescribed by law and cannot form a union.
- The factory owner or manager opens a new company within an existing factory and recruits workers to work there. These new workers may or may not receive the same amount of pay and welfare as workers in the existing factory.
- The factory owner lets another company, agent, or individual hire workers to work in the production department of his company but they are not considered employees of this company and the work assignment is short-term or the duration of the assignment is unknown. In this model within one factory, some production lines could in fact be filled with workers who are not employed by the company that runs the factory, but by someone else (or multiple others). The situation is similar to a workplace where some of the workers are employed by an employment or dispatch agency, but where employment agencies usually operate legally the dispatchers in the garment industry rarely do. The workers will sometimes work during the night shifts and receive lower wages than those directly employed by the factory. They cannot become union members or participate in union activities. They are

⁵ Some examples drawn from the Women Working Worldwide subcontracting chain research (WWW, 2003), see for example the Friends of Women (FOW) report on Thailand.

often unprotected by law.⁶

- Workers have unregistered jobs, no legal protection, and are not paid the minimum wage, and work in factories that have supposedly been shut down.⁷

5. Who are informal economy garment workers?

Informal economy garment workers are:

- often women (including women from different stages in their life cycle)
- often migrants (internal or from other countries, possibly not registered) or from minority populations
- sometimes former or current (formally-employed) factory workers
- often unaware of how their work fits into (global) supply networks
- often unaware of legal rights or labor rights in their countries

There is no one “model” of an informal economy garment worker; this must be recognized when trying to develop strategies for organizing in defense of their rights or campaigning in support of such organizing efforts.

The fact that most informal economy workers are women and that many are migrants is discussed further below. These two characteristics have important implications for organizing and campaigning efforts.

6. Gendered processes push women into the informal economy

In the informal economy in general women are over-represented: two-thirds of the active female population in developing countries work in the informal economy; in

⁶ Although official dispatch work is not very common in the garment industry, being employed by a contractor who is not the factory owner, and being “dispatched” to the workplace in question is common in the garment industry. For example, the CCC has received reports of factories in Thailand and India where workers at different lines are in fact employed by different people. In addressing the issue of rights and responsibilities in relation to dispatched workers, it is important to consider that while dispatch workers might be paid by their agency or the individual who places them in a workplace, they are directly under the control of the company or individual that makes use of their labor, however there is no direct employment relationship between the worker and the “host” company.

⁷ Based on information on textile operations in Morocco (ICFTU, 2004b).

sub-Saharan Africa the proportion is as high as 84% (ICFTU, 2004:1).⁸

The garment industry is highly feminized⁹ and the same can be said of the garment industry's informal economy: Approximately 75% of the 11.2 million formally employed in the global garment industry are women. While it is difficult to estimate the size of the garment sector operating in the informal economy, "conservative estimates would suggest that the total number of women employed in the garment industry is nearer to 35 million" when those active in the informal economy are factored in (Shaw, 2002: 12).

Understanding the gender dynamics involved in pushing women into informal work is important;¹⁰ understanding their reality means looking at their situation through a "gender" lens. Developing strategies to support them in their struggle to improve their working conditions can only be done by addressing the gendered processes that help construct the framework (legal, social, economic) in which they live and work.

Generally speaking, the gendered ideas relating to flexibility are those that suggest that women are merely supplementary earners, not "real" workers, who will therefore accept lower wages, and less formal working arrangements. As only

⁸ Again, WIEGO believes that official statistics, which underestimate the extent of activity in the informal economy, also underestimate the participation of women in the informal economy (WIEGO, 2004b)

⁹ "Natural" qualities are generally attributed to women that are supposed to predispose them to factory work, these include "...naturally nimble fingers, ... naturally more docile and willing to accept tough work discipline, and naturally more suited to tedious, repetitious, monotonous work" (Elson and Pearson, 1981: 149). "In this model of work organisation, the global companies use women's labour because, to quote an industrial expert, 'women in the subcontracting units make the most flexible robots of all'" (Mitter, 1992: 3). Women workers are seen as more agreeable, and less likely to be knowledgeable or speak out in relation to their legal workplace rights, which in any case might be fewer than their male counterparts.

¹⁰ Government policies have sometimes specifically encouraged women to work in the informal economy. For example, in Taiwan beginning in the 1970s, the government actively promoted a "Home As Factory" policy, that encouraged women to do processing work in their homes (CAW 2001b:43).

part-time or temporary workers, whose “real” work is seen as being reproductive (i.e. the tasks assigned to mothers, wives, and daughters, of caregiver and home-maker) it is often seen as culturally acceptable to propel women in and out of the productive workforce.¹¹

Gendered biases about whether or not married or pregnant women, or women with children should still be employed (because they have too many other responsibilities and cannot give 100% to their paid jobs, or will be entitled to increased benefits) have been manipulated to push these women out of the formal workforce when they are seen to be “less flexible” workers.¹² For example, pregnancy testing has been used in the Philippines to prevent soon-to-be mothers from employment.¹³ In China pregnant footwear factory workers haven been fired to avoid payment of benefits.¹⁴ Thus it is not unusual for women in the informal economy to be older women and mothers. In Indonesia, the ICFTU reports that “one major reason for employers employing women as casual labourers is because they are not liable to pay benefits such as maternity pay” (2003: 6). Homeworkers in the garment industry in Dongguan, China were reportedly middle-aged, married, local women, some with factory experience. They became homeworkers due to reproductive responsibilities: they had children or had to be at home to take care of family members (Wong, in WWW, 2003: 15). These gendered biases also result in age discrimination. Because women of a certain age are seen to be more likely to have more reproductive duties, they are seen as less flexible. For example, women over 25 years will usually not be employed in labor-intensive industries in Indonesia and the Philippines, according to Pun (1995: 30). The same policy has been reported at footwear factories in China (Kernaghan, 2000: 48, 54). (It should be noted that while these examples are of how gender plays a role in pushing older women out of formal and into informal employment, in some contexts young, single women also constitute a large segment of the informal economy workforce).

¹¹ See for example Saffioti, 1975; Beechey, 1978; Vaughan, 1977 on this point, cited in Ruiz, V. and S. Tiano, eds, (1987) *Women on the U.S.-Mexico Border*, Allen & Unwin, Boston.

¹² This phenomenon has been referred to as “natural wastage” (Elson and Pearson, 1981: 149).

¹³ This trend, once documented only in the EPZs is now reportedly on the increase beyond the bounds of the zones, see Philippine Resource Center paper published as part of *Women Working Worldwide* research reports on subcontracting chains, September 2003.

¹⁴ For example, at Lizhan Footwear Factory, Guangdong (Kernaghan, 2000: 54).

Since the early days of female employment in export-oriented industries, women have been shown to contribute significantly to their family income. The importance of women's earnings is also true of women working in the informal economy. For example, in a study of women embroidery homeworkers in the Philippines the women said their productive work was crucial for the survival of their families (either as a "big help" or as the main source of income) (Ofreneo, et al, 2002: 101). In some areas of Bulgaria and the Republic of Macedonia women working in the garment industry's informal economy are often the sole breadwinners for their families (on average 60%, though in some areas estimates are as high as 90%) (Musiolek, 2004a).

But while women might be significant earners for their families, gender bias in some cases prevents them from being socially or legally recognized as such and less able to access benefits male earners would be entitled to. For example, in South Korea women who are the main earners for their families are not recognized as such if their husbands live with them and are denied the benefits a breadwinner would be entitled to. Gender bias coupled with informalization can be a powerful combination used to prevent women from accessing rights and benefits workers might be entitled to under national labor laws.

Gender-based discrimination as a tool for flexibility is real. Gendered processes and gender bias place obstacles in the path of women workers having opportunities (ex. lack of time due to the other reproductive responsibilities) to access or shape agendas of traditional workers' organizations (ex. trade unions). Gendered ideas also play a role in keeping women workers from receiving more training or opportunities for advancement.¹⁵

Because of gendered harassment, women are less mobile (ex. threats to their safety mean it is difficult to travel to and from work, especially at night) and this can be manipulated to make women more available for work (ex. they live in or nearby factory premises or work in their homes). Gendered notions of acceptable behavior in some cases make it acceptable for managers or supervisors to intimidate or behave abusively toward female workers (for example in Cam-

¹⁵ For example, a report on two Indonesian factories producing for Reebok found that though women were the majority of the workforce (84% and 81%), only male workers were trained in how to use fire extinguishers (IHS, 1999: 14). In these same factories, women were significantly underrepresented as line leaders and supervisors. (Following the report, a program to familiarize women workers with the fire extinguishers was initiated.) In Cambodia, where women are the overwhelming majority of the workforce, men are overwhelmingly the managers (Hall, 1999: 33).

bodia, as cited by Hall, 1999: 33).

7. Informal economy workers are often migrant workers

Migrant workers have played an important role in the garment industry for decades. This includes migrants from other countries (ex. Burmese workers coming to Thailand to work in the Thai garment and sports shoe industries) and migrants from other parts of the same country (for example women from northern or western provinces of China traveling to the south east to work in the nation's booming garment and sports shoe industries). Migrant workers are often denied coverage by national labor laws due to their residency status. For example:

- In Singapore, "many migrant workers are excluded from the provisions of the Employment Act" (CAW, 2001b: 59).
- In China, migrants from other parts of China who worked in Guangdong's garment industry were not legally entitled to social security provision in Guangdong (Wong in WWW, 2003: 17).
- In South Korea, most labor protection legislation does not apply to foreign workers (Lim et al in AMRC, 2003: 322).
- In Brunei, most labor laws apply only to Brunei citizens. This means over 33% of workers in the Sultanate are excluded from protection under the labor law. In May 2001 several Filipino garment workers went on strike because their employer allegedly did not pay overtime. Intimidation and threats followed, and in the end 269 workers found the situation so threatening that they asked to have their contracts terminated early and be repatriated (AMRC, 2003: 70).
- In Poland (where undocumented workers from Belarus and Ukraine work in the informal garment industry) undocumented foreign workers are not covered by national labor law (Musiolek 2004b).
- While people of foreign nationality can join a union in Turkey, workers have to be Turkish to be a member of a union's executive body and have to have at least ten years work experience (ICFTU cited in SOMO, 2003: 5).
- Some countries (ex. Taiwan and Hong Kong) have separate wage categories for migrant workers. Malaysia has no national minimum wage, but in some cases the Malaysian government has agreements with migrant-sending countries that

cite a basic wage for immigrant workers from these countries. (FLA, 2003: 100). A specific problem for migrant workers is that they have to pay high recruitment fees to be placed in a factory. In Taiwan, migrant laborers reportedly pay between US\$ 364 and US\$ 5,454. Workers often have to borrow at high interest rates to pay this off (FLA, 2003: 100).

- In the United States many garment workers are undocumented immigrants and do not legally qualify for most welfare benefits (Foo & Bas, 2003). While most employment and labor law protections do apply to workers in the U.S. regardless of their immigration status, a U.S. Supreme Court decision in March 2002 found in a particular case that workers unauthorized to work in the U.S. were not entitled to back pay under the National Labor Relations Act after being illegally fired from their jobs in retaliation for union activities. Though undocumented workers are covered by the NLRA, according to the National Employment Law Project (NELP) this 2002 decision has encouraged employers throughout the country to argue that certain immigrant workers have no workplace rights and to use workers' immigration status as a tool for retaliating against their organizing efforts or attempts to push for enforcement of their rights (NELP, 2004).

Given their very weak position vis-a-vis the law, the stakes are high for migrant workers who press to improve conditions. For example, in the Mae Sot area of Thailand, near the border with Burma, garment factories routinely employ Burmese migrants who are unprotected by law and are deported if they dare to complain about their conditions. For example, in June 2003 Burmese migrant garment workers in Thailand, earning less than 50% of the legal minimum wage, were dismissed and deported after they made a formal complaint regarding wages, forced overtime, and other issues to the Tak Labor Protection and Welfare Office (CCC case file). According to the Thai Labour Campaign, support for both legal and illegal migrant workers would be best provided by extending the Labour Protection Act to include them.¹⁶

The issues of migrants and gender are connected: There has been a trend toward increasing feminization in migration. Migration of women in Asia (both internal and between countries) for example has increased "exponentially" during the past 20 years (Hugo, in Sen, 1999: 2).¹⁷ Migrant women workers, because of their combination of flexibility due to gendered reasons and vulnerability associated with their migrant status are positioned as even more flexible workers.

¹⁶ www.thailabour.org/docs/BurmeseMigrants.html

¹⁷ Sen observes that female migration was traditionally often related to marriage or was associational, however recent decades "have seen women migrating in larger number for work and by themselves, both domestically and internationally" (1999: 3).

8. Specific challenges facing workers in the informal economy

The following have repeatedly been cited in research into conditions in the informal economy as important issues to be taken up by labor rights advocates concerned with the informal economy.

a. No recognition or protection under legal and regulatory frameworks

Informal economy workers are not recognized under the law as workers and therefore receive little or no legal or social protection. They are either without contracts or are not in a position to push for the enforcement of contracts. Some workers, working in their own account unit or in a family enterprise, might be categorized as self-employed, and therefore not entitled to the rights or benefits stipulated for workers in an employee-employer relationship under national labor laws.

Thresholds for coverage will vary from country to country, and depending on what their specific work arrangement are within these frameworks workers identify different priorities or strategies for extending legal coverage. Homeworkers in the Philippines for example wanted: “a clear contract between themselves and their subcontractors and facilitation of their membership in the Social Security System (SSS) to be able to claim sickness, maternity, disability, retirement, and death benefits. They also want to receive the piece-rates due them, to be paid on time, and to have fair compensation for rejects that they have redone” (Ofreneo et al, 2002: 104).

In their conclusions to a study on home-based workers in Indonesia (including garment workers in the Jakarta area), researchers from the Humanika Working Group found that there were several ways in which the workers surveyed lacked social and legal protection due to the weaknesses of their contracts: the “work-contract” consisted mainly of establishing the obligations on and sanctions against home-based workers; there was no mention of their rights, except to state their wages; the “work-contract” was one-sided in favor of the employer; the “work-contract” was merely oral; and the workers were unable to access their rights (Ayuni and Rudiono, 2002: 27).

The lack of legal provisions to ensure the rights of people working in the informal economy can be linked to the legal status of the workers, but also due to the legal status of their workplaces. According to the ILO (2002: 52) a critical reason why informal workers may not enjoy the rights accorded in labor legislation or are not covered by labor administration is because the enterprises they work in are not

regulated. The Director-General's 1991 Report also noted that "the non-observance of labour legislation is therefore linked with the precarious existence of most informal sector enterprises, and the problem will not be entirely overcome until such enterprises are able to operate profitably in a more stable environment."

Illegal/unregistered workplaces, obviously uninspected and often not in compliance with health and safety standards, can be unsafe and even death traps for workers. In China for example, a 2001 fire in a building housing two illegal garment factories killed three workers and seriously injured nine others (Pentland, 2002: 29). Since informal economy workers and their families are usually excluded from legal provisions for compensation in the event of accidents, fires, poisoning, etc. they will be particularly hard hit but such tragedies.

Informal economy workers are sometimes not permitted to legally organize in unions, because they are either not recognized as workers or their workplaces are illegal or considered too small to be legally organized (for more on organizing, see below, point two).

Examples of the gaps in coverage for informal economy workers:

- In Hong Kong "At present, employment laws only provide protection for workers who work continuously for the same employer for four weeks and for not less than 18 hours per week. Under the current trend of casualisation, many women are employed on a part-time or temporary contract basis and are not protected by employment laws" (CAW: 23).
 - In Turkey the Job Security Act does not cover workplaces with ten or fewer employees, though in 2000 for example such workplaces made up 25% of total employment. Much of the Turkish garment sector is thought to operate in unregistered workplaces¹⁸ (ICFTU and FWF cited in SOMO, 2003: 7).
 - In South Korea before October 1998 workers in small businesses were not covered by unemployment insurance. Because women workers (62%) were usually employed in businesses with four or fewer employees, they received no benefits when they lost their jobs (that includes women laid off at the height of the financial crisis in 1997-1998) (KWWAU, 2000: 40).
- Cambodian labor law, though reportedly progressive, only covers workers in the

¹⁸ Official Turkish Ministry of Labor and Social Security figures on the number of workers employed in the garment and textile sectors were set at approximately 518,000 in July 2002, however employee and employer associations estimate employment in the sectors are more than five times as much, perhaps as high as three million (FWF in SOMO, 2003: 7).

formal sector who account for approximately 25% of the total labor force (Falkus and Frost, 2003: 9).

- In Hungary labor law only recognizes rights at the enterprise level. Only workers in enterprises and with employment contracts can be represented by unions. Many workers are now employed under civil contracts rather than employment contracts, and in this way are not covered by labor law (Tuch in Mather, 2003: 9-11).

Although the ILO optimistically writes about governments who have “not yet been able to extend effective protection afforded by national law to all workers” (ILO, 2002: 48) there is a disturbing trend that, where countries are changing their labor laws, this is in the direction of more flexibilization and not in the direction of extending coverage to the more informal workers. For example:

As a result of the new Indonesian Manpower Act there has been a massive upsurge in “outsourcing” of workers. “Employers of all sorts, from factories to service companies, are laying off their workers, and then rehiring them through ‘labor agents.’ The workers essentially become daily hires, since the company using their labor can tell the agent not to bring back a particular employee. The agents follow few of the labor laws, like paying severance or length-of-service pay. And often, the employees get a pay cut in the changeover because the primary employer has to pay for the services of the agent. [There have been] reports that some garment manufacturers have already switched to ‘outsourcing’ and a number of others are threatening to do so. Even though the new law says ‘outsourcing’ is not permitted for the primary functions of the business, employers are ignoring that part of the law.”¹⁹

There have been some examples of legislation that has been passed that has the potential of improving the conditions of workers in the informal economy. For example the French law regarding temporary and short-term workers and the Canadian law regarding homeworkers which calls for a premium of 10% of the general minimum wage to be paid to homeworkers to compensate for incidental costs arising from working at home (WIEGO, 2004a).

b. Difficulties in organizing

Workers in the informal economy may not be covered by freedom of association legislation. In some cases workers are not legally entitled to organize because they are not recognized as workers or because their workplaces are not recognized as workplaces. For example in Thailand the 1975 Labour Relations Act does

¹⁹ E-mail to CCC from Rudy Porter, Solidarity Center Indonesia, July 7, 2003, describing the situation 3.5 months after the new law was put in effect.

not provide coverage to workers in enterprises employing less than 10 persons.²⁰

The ILO has called upon countries where this is the case to guarantee that this right is guaranteed to workers in the informal economy. The ILO notes that “in some cases, a country’s legislation does not recognize persons active in the informal economy as workers and employers, or rules require authorization prior to the establishment of an organization, which delays or prevents such establishment. Regulations requiring an onerously high number of workers in order to form a union may also prevent the establishment of such an organization in the informal economy. More directly, self-employed workers may be excluded from the application of legislation or prohibited from organizing for professional purposes by law” (ILO, 2002: 45). And as mentioned above, in many cases labor laws in host countries do not cover foreign workers.

Trade unions have limited experience in organizing in the informal economy. A September 2003 study of 27 trade union confederations in 22 countries found that 59% had no experience in organizing workers in the informal economy. The main reason was that these workers were not seen as a priority for the trade union, the union lacked the funds or staff to do this organizing or did not see a financial benefit of taking it up (ICFTU, 2004: 10). Low wages also mean it is difficult for informal economy workers to pay union dues.

Some unions are trying to address the issue of organizing in the informal economy. See for example the Global Unions “Unions for Women, Women for Unions” campaign organized in 2004 (ICFTU, 2004: 3), which supported informal economy organizing efforts, such as those by the Moroccan Workers’ Union (UMT) to reach out to workers in the textile industry. Informal economy workers’ rights activists have challenged unions in recent years to change their “mind set” when it comes to organizing informal economy workers, calling upon them to drop their assumptions about organizing and develop new creative approaches to reach out to informal economy workers with education and organizing initiatives (see for example, Horn in Mather, 2003: 15-17).

Workers in the informal economy however might also be skeptical of unions that did not prevent informalization of their jobs in the first place (Bennett, 2003: 26). Fear is also a big factor that prevents workers from discussing the conditions of their work with others, including organizers.

An additional obstacle is locating workers – informal workers and workplaces can be isolated and also highly mobile.

²⁰ In Thailand workers were campaigning in 2001 for inclusion of the right of informal workers to unionize in the new labor relations bill (CAW, 2001a: 34).

Workers in the informal economy will often have limited access to phone and faxes, so communicating requires (time intensive) in-person visits. In the experience of SACTWU, the South African union that tried to recruit more workers in the informal economy, newly organized informal workers needed more constant attention and quick interventions. Organizing them was more resource-intensive than organizing workers in the formal economy (Bennett, 2003: 26-27).

c. Low visibility

The concerns of garment workers in the informal economy are not heard (for various reasons, including non-organization), and therefore it is difficult to draw attention to the legal/regulatory gaps that they are subject to.

d. Unstable work situation

e. Little access to or completely excluded from public infrastructure, benefits, and other resources

f. Have to rely on informal, often exploitative institutional arrangements, for information, markets, credit, training, or social security

*g. Poverty*²¹

9. Is flexible and informal always bad?

Flexibilization through informalization has alternatively been seen as good for women workers, for the very reason that it is flexible and therefore better accom-

²¹ See also the Report of the Regional Workshop on Women Workers in Informal Work, 6-8 November 2001, organized by CAW and HomeNet Thailand. During this meeting participants categorized the needs of women in the informal economy as follows: self-confidence and identity as workers; credit, economic, political, autonomy, multi-faced organizing, redefinition of existing structures, solidarity, advocacy, challenging legal frameworks, organizing for resistance and changes in policy, and research and information and other support needs of women workers (2001: 50-52). For an overview of problems faced by Indonesian home-based workers, including Jakarta-area garment industry homeworkers, please see Ayuni and Rudiono, 2002: 18. Several earlier studies have shown that in the view of women casual workers, their primary needs are greater regularity of work (and payment) and higher level of income (Baud, 1994, with reference to Beneria & Roldan 1989).

modates their reproductive work,²² and bad for women workers because of the very negative characteristics of informal economy work, such as lower wages, isolation, fewer opportunities to organize, less leverage with employers, lack of legal coverage, etc.

Unions that are addressing the issue of informalization often speak of turning the informal into the formal as a goal. But is it a given, for example, that eliminating homework is a campaigning goal? How can women workers maintain the aspects of “flexible” and “informal” that they want to maintain? This links back into the importance of putting effort into understanding and addressing the gender issues involved in each particular context of the informal economy.

Some women homeworkers do report positive aspects of working at home. For example, in the Philippines, homeworkers saw the benefits as: “earning income while near their children and inside their homes, using the skills traditionally taught to women such as sewing and embroidery, and gaining self-respect and self confidence because of their earnings.” They also said that having their own income “...has provided them a sense of entitlement to make purchases for their own needs (as opposed to collective family needs) and improved their bargaining position vis-a-vis their husbands/partners” (Ofreneo et al, 2002: 100-101). Garment industry homeworkers, in Dongguan, China reported that they found “working at home freer than working in the factories.” They could decide when to work and when not to and felt that there was less pressure. If they were working at the factory and worked fast, the unit price would be lowered (WWW, 2003:15-16). One woman interviewed about her work in a small atelier that she set up with three other former factory workers in Bulgaria reported that they preferred to work on their own because they did not have to deal with intimidating employers (CCC, 2001: 30).

²² The argument is that formal work is something structured around the idea of a male worker, and is inconsistent with the needs of women workers, and therefore choosing informal work could be perceived as an example of women exercising their agency. For more on this, see for example, CAW 2001: “Women Workers in the informal economy and organizational challenges – a perspective”, published as part of materials for the Regional Workshop on Women Workers in Informal Work, 6-8 November 2001, Bangkok.

But meanwhile, other homeworkers have reported that working in the home in proximity to their children is one of the more difficult aspects of their work arrangement;²³ indeed the fact that work takes place in the home with children nearby and possibly involved in work assignments raises the issue of child labor, another important issue to consider in the context of the informal economy.²⁴

Sen observes that in the Asian context “homework does allow somewhat greater flexibility in combining domestic responsibilities and work with contracted labour, but the cost in terms of reduced earnings and risk of job loss is great.” However, she concludes that “the desperation, vulnerability, and fragmentation of home-based workers is usually greater even than of the young women in the factories and ensures docility and compliance” (1999: 9).

The issue of choice in working in the informal economy seems to be at the heart of this debate. Pros and cons aside, in general people often enter the informal economy because of a need to survive, not out of choice (see Ahmedabad resolution, 2003). While some women might report “choosing” to work in the informal economy because it is a preferred out of the options available to them, when pressed for more information it is sometimes revealed that women who present such decisions as choices, actually had little choice but to take up such work because of financial pressures.

²³ See for example the story of Winnie, who migrated from China to Australia, where she works as a homemaker in the garment industry. A mother of two, Winnie reports that sometimes she receives rush orders and is not able to watch her children properly. She reports that the material creates a lot of dust in her house often causing her and her children to get sick. These things make her very upset and she would like to give up her job but says that she does not have any other choice but to keep going, as her family needs the income (FairWear, 2004a).

²⁴ See for example the story of the Nguyen family, immigrants from Vietnam to Australia, where their four children aged three to 18 have all been involved in the production of garments in their home. While the parents work 12 to 14 hours a day, seven days a week as homeworkers for a number of major brand name garment companies, their children also put in an average of three hours of work per night and up to 10 hours a day on the weekend (FairWear, 2004b).

10. Action being taken to stop rights violations in the informal economy

Women workers organizing

While informal economy workers face great challenges, there are examples of women garment workers that have organized to improve their working conditions, either joining existing trade unions (ex. the informal recruitment program launched by Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers' Union, SACTWU) or forming their own organizations (ex. the Self-Employed Women's Union, SEWU, also in South Africa) (Bennett, 2003). Probably the most well-documented example of women organizing in the informal economy is that of the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India, which was founded in 1972. SEWA now has 700,000 members and is affiliated to international trade union federations in three sectors, including the ITGLWF (for more on SEWA see their homepage, <http://www.sewa.org>; ICFTU, 2004: 14).

Organizing is seen as the key step in bringing about positive change for women workers in the garment industry's informal economy. It is important to note that many women coming from the formal economy into the informal economy (as discussed above) sometimes do have organizing experience and have an awareness of their rights – this can potentially be tapped into. However, workers will be fearful if they have had negative experiences with organizing (ex. if they lost formal jobs due to involvement in organizing efforts) or simply due to their weakened bargaining position.

Research, networking, and campaigning

Since the 1990s several international networks have taken up the issues of women workers in the informal economy (ex. CAW, WIEGO, StreetNet, SEWA, HomeNet), lobbying for passage of the ILO's 1996 Convention on Homework, and supporting research and organizing in the informal economy. Such organizations have articulated recommendations for further work in the informal economy in such documents as the Ahmedabad Resolution (drawn up during a gathering of 47 organization from 23 countries in December 2003)²⁵ and the Eastern European Women's declaration on the informal economy, adopted by the ICFTU-CEE & NIS Women's Network in October 2003 (see ICFTU, 2004: 12). International networking and awareness raising on the issue of informal economy workers has been done by IRENE (for reports on various seminars and workshops on this topic organized by IRENE, please see their website <http://www.irene-network.nl>) and solidarity campaigns have also been launched that specifically take up the issues of garment workers in the informal economy (ex. CCC/

²⁵ To read the resolution, see for example <http://www.streetnet.org.za/English/ahmedresen.htm>

Oxfam/Global Unions Play Fair at the Olympics Campaign). Some of these activities are included in the appendix.

Codes of conduct as a tool?

There has been some discussion about whether or not codes of conduct (lists of labor standards that companies voluntarily pledge to adhere to in the workplaces where their goods are produced) can be a tool to push for improvements in working conditions for informal economy workers.

Labor rights campaigners in the context of the garment industry generally conclude that good codes have a potential to be useful tools in pushing for improved working conditions and worker empowerment, *but* only if used along with other tools and as part of a broader strategy. The better codes of conduct have always included provisions for security of employment (ex. the CCC model code),²⁶ which for example would mean that workers have the right to an “appointment letter” or other type of contract. One strategy for future campaigns could be to push for better understanding and enforcement of security of employment standards. How codes could be a tool of value to *all* workers in the many different work arrangements that characterize the informal economy needs to be more thoroughly explored.

Brill notes that in relation to home-based workers, the majority of codes make no specific mention of such workers and little is known about the impact of codes on home-based workers (2002:122). Some codes have been explicitly developed to protect home-based workers. For example in Australia the broad-based Fair Wear campaign pressured retailers to sign up to a code of conduct that was based on the Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (TCFUA) research on home-based work. The union used the code as one tool in conjunction with research and information campaigns, traditional worker organizing, and legal action, all aimed at improving conditions for home-based garment workers. The campaign was deemed a success, having raised the profile of home-based workers and earning them a degree of legal protection (Brill, 2002:118-119).

11. Moving forward in support of informal economy garment workers' rights

More research on informal economy garment production needed - In some countries and regions there is data on the informal economy in general (though there is a continued need for better statistical development, as discussed above, and these efforts should be supported), however enough is not always known about the character or scope of informal economy activity per country/region in the production of (different types of) garments. Which forms of informal economy work/workplaces

²⁶ The CCC model code is available at the CCC website <http://www.cleanclothes.org/codes/ccccode.htm>

are most common in the garment industry in different countries and regions? Which issues are priorities for garment workers involved in these different forms of work? More information to better understand the informal economy's role in garment production will support worker organizing efforts and campaigning in support of such organizing.

More support for informal economy worker organizing - See issues mentioned above in relation to difficulties in organizing; these will all need to be taken into consideration. More sharing of successful organizing strategies (including worker education in the context of the informal economy) should take place. How can international solidarity campaigns help create space for organizing efforts to succeed by pressuring companies and governments?

Attention to gender in both organizing and campaigning in support of organizing - Organizing women workers is by definition in every culture different from organizing male workers because of their gendered position in society, and this has to be recognized and dealt with. Gender aware organizing will mean recognizing why those differences (inequalities) exist in the first place in a specific context, and how to strategize to change that. It will also mean rethinking the type of worker organization or trade union that addresses the needs of these workers. Addressing their needs means first developing a process -- a meeting place, or a decision making process in a meeting, for example -- that is right for these workers and facilitates them articulating and acting upon their demands.

Organizations that do take a look at the gendered processes when organizing women workers need to be supported, both directly and by campaigning work. Worker organizations in the garment industry that are not fundamentally connected to the real empowerment of women are not sustainable, because while they might improve conditions that are of interest to women workers, they are not always in touch with all the practical and strategic needs of women workers.

More campaigning in support of informal economy garment workers' rights - Prioritizing will need to be done at the different campaigning levels (local, national, and international) in relation to the challenges faced by informal garment workers, previously listed (i.e. legal/social protection, organizing, etc.), developing campaign goals (both short term and long term), appropriate campaign targets (ex. public authorities, employers, brand name companies, and retailers), and campaigning tools (ex. for awareness raising, lobbying, etc.).

More attention from campaigners for migrant worker issues - Efforts to organize migrant/undocumented workers must be supported and expanded, since

migrants are often either employed in informal workplaces or have informal work arrangements even in more regulated workplaces. This is also linked to legal issues in cases where unions are prevented from legally organizing foreign workers and/or migrant workers working in the informal economy. Again this is also linked to the need to address gender issues (mentioned above), as migrant workers in the garment industry are increasingly women. Space needs to be created for organizations that work directly with migrant workers to share their experiences and participate in the strategizing that needs to take place at the national and regional level. The issue of competition between local and migrant workers needs to be addressed.²⁷

The situation will be different for migrant workers in different national contexts, therefore national level campaigners (who in turn are developing strategies in cooperation with community-based and workplace-based rights activists) will need to provide guidance to international level campaigners on how best to support these organizing and campaigning efforts (for example in relation to the need for specific legislation in specific countries or the need to pressure governments in specific countries to adopt international conventions of relevance to migrant workers).

When considering the different levels at which campaigning takes place, distinctions should be made between the needs of internal migrants and migrants from other countries. Also, when developing demands and lobbying governments campaigners should address the responsibilities of both countries sending migrants and those that receive migrants.

Campaigning efforts in relation to pushing for migrant workers' rights will need to have a multi-national dimension. Cases involving foreign workers will benefit from the input of labor rights advocates in the country where production is located (for example by providing information on workers' rights in that specific legal context, legal assistance with contracts, information on where to go to report abuse by agents, employers, etc.), where the goods are sold, where the migrants originate, and where any of the MNCs involved are based. Roles and responsibilities in relation to such casework will need to be well-thought out. While all workers take a risk when they go public with the reality of their workplaces and the demands for improvement, undocumented workers risk getting deported in addition to losing their jobs. The specific risks for undocumented workers need to be taken into account at all times.

More coordination and cooperation among labor rights, women and migrant worker organizations at the national and international level to develop strategies and set

²⁷ Though this might be more of an issue for those organizing workers than for those working on campaigns.

demands for different targets - The informal economy in the garment industry is highly feminized and often involves many migrant workers (internal or from other countries). Informed strategizing on informal economy workers' rights will mean working together with organizations that explicitly look at the gendered processes underpinning the dynamics in the informal economy and the gendered needs of workers. Organizations that focus on migrant workers rights also have an important role to play in strategizing around organizing and campaigning for informal economy workers' rights.

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Appendix

Examples of research, organizing, and campaigning initiatives on the garment industry's informal economy

Research

Homeworkers Worldwide: Mapping Programme

Action-research program aiming to build independent, democratic organizations of homebased workers in selected areas of Asia, Latin America, and Eastern Europe.

Homeworkers Worldwide
30 38 Dock Street,
Leeds LS10 1JF
United Kingdom
E-mail: mapping@homeworkersww.org.uk
Website: www.homeworkersww.org.uk

Below an overview of the mapped countries/regions, with relevant issues for this seminar (if no contact information is provided, HWW can be contacted):

Brazil

Coordinated by the Social Work Department of the Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio). Working within the state of Rio de Janeiro, three associations of homebased workers have now been established. Members of the team visit each area regularly, training has been organized on skills development as well as women's rights. Garment production in Nova Friburgo – underwear.

Bolivia

Women's Centre (CEMUJ-B) & Rural Artisans - many of the urban women are involved with street vending as well as homeworking. There is a lot of homeworking in garment and leather, as well as other sectors. In the rural areas, there is a lot of handicraft production, wool from alpaca and llama. It is not mainly for export except for the handicraft and alpaca industry.

Chile

AnaClara (now CECAM), women's training organization. Homebased workers trained to carry out surveys and do follow-up work with homeworkers. As a result of this, informal groups were established, and some were later formally registered as trade unions. Focus on urban homebased workers, some workers

do piecework for leather and garment industry.

CECAM

Miriam Ortega (regional coordinator)

Calle Garcia Reyes 537

Santiago, Chile

Tel. +56 2 673-5208

E-mail: cecamchile@vtr.net

Mexico

Women's organization Factor X. Set up team of organizers and (former) *maquila* workers. Many women and some men were sewing garments. After initial contact advice and services were offered, while the production chain was traced. An informal group of homebased workers was established.

India/Bihar and Jharkhand

Adithi, empowering women's organization. Rural focus, surveys. Adithi has lobbied state governments for a social security fund, and a federation of home-based workers has been set up.

Adithi

Viji Srinivasan

2/30 State bank Colony – II

Bailey Rd

Patna 800014

Bihar, India

Tel. +91 612 259 3018

E-mail: adithiwomen@rediffmail.com

India/Tamil Nadu

Rural Education and Development Foundation (READ). Focus on homebased garment workers. Intensive three month campaign and meetings resulted in the set up of 46 Self Help Groups, attended by 900 garment workers and supported by formal trade union CITU. Read Foundation are continuing their work with garment homeworkers, and those in other sectors. They also have links with the CCC Task Force in Tamil Nadu.

Nepal

Home Based Worker Concern Society – Nepal (HBWSCN). Focus on dependent homeworkers, working for agent or contractor. Following interviews and discussions, organizations were set up with elected leaderships of homeworkers.

China

Early stage, initial work on identifying different types of homebased work in both rural and urban areas.

Bulgaria

BEPA and others. Main research activities are on own-account workers - dependent homeworkers in garments and footwear. Subcontracting from Greece, including footwear and garments. Focus on informal work in former formal workplaces – factory workers.

BEPA

c/o Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation

12, Luben Karavelov Street

1142 Sofia

Bulgaria

Tel. + 359 2 950 38 65

E-mail: bepa@fastbg.net

Newly formed organization of dependent homebased workers in garment, footwear industry in South West Bulgaria. Great deal of information about subcontracting chains – contact through Felicitas (see below).

Lithuania

Some initial research in Lithuania done by local labor exchange on home-based work, producing for export. Contact person: Alvyda Porauskyte

Local Labour Exchange

Pavasario 11-15

Lt 89144 Mazeikiai

Lithuania

Tel: +37061545001

Fax: 8 433 65093

E-mail: alvydap@mazeikiai.ldb.lt

Serbia

Felicitas, representing homebased workers, was established out of different organizations involved in mapping program. Focus on training. Regional coordination of Homeworkers Worldwide Mapping Programme. Majda Sikosek, regional coordinator, Eastern and Southeast- Eastern Europe

Citizens' Association FELICITAS
Resavska 25
11000 Belgrade
Serbia& Montenegro
Tel: + 381 11 32 45 067
E-mail: flcts@eunet.yu

REGIONAL – CEE

ECG-Homeworking Project

(Czech Rep., Lithuania, Estonia, Slovakia) parts on garments (also connected with Mapping Programme) - especially in Vilnius /Lithuania.

The European Contact Group (ECG)
Ivana Sindlerová
c/o Diakonie CCE
Belgicka 22
CZ120 00 Praha 2
Czech Republic
Tel +420 2 225 17173
E-mail: ivana.ecg@ecn.cz
Website: www.ecg.ecn.cz

REGIONAL – ASIA

Committee for Asian Women (CAW)

386/60, Ratchadaphisek Soi 42,
Ratchadaphisek Road Ladyao, Chatujak
Bangkok Thailand
Tel. + 66-2-9305634-35
<http://caw.jinbo.net/index5.php>

UK

Women Working Worldwide: The rights of women in garment industry subcontracting chains

A research, education, and action project with worker's organizations in Asia and Eastern Europe, June 2003.

Women Working Worldwide
MMU Manton Building,
Rosamond Street West,
Manchester M15 6LL, UK
E-mail: info@women-ww.org
Website: <http://www.poptel.org.uk/women-ww/index.html>

National Group on Homeworking (UK)

The National Group on Homeworking is an NGO that campaigns for improved employment rights and condition for homeworkers in the UK, also carries out research.

National Group on Homeworking
Office 26
30-38 Dock Street
Leeds LS10 1JF
UK

Advice line: 0800 174 095
Tel: +44 - 0113 245 4273
Fax: +44 - 0113 246 5616
E-mail: admin@homeworking.gn.apc.org
Website: <http://www.homeworking.gn.apc.org/>

AEKTA Project

Works with clothing workers in Midlands, UK

AEKTA Project
16 Holyhead Road
Birmingham
West Midlands B21 0LT
UK
Tel: +44 - 01215548747

MADEIRA

The Union of Embroiderers on Madeira

According to HWW this union in an autonomous region of Portugal, is still the best example of a trade union organizing homeworkers in Europe. The women are doing hand embroidery and some of it is on garments and household linen. Used to work with garment workers in the Madeira Free Trade Zone but appar-

ently all the garment factories, opened when there were subsidies, have been closed.

Sindicato dos Trabalhadores da Indde Bordados
Rua dos Ferreiros 151 - 2nd floor
9000 Funchal, Madeira
Portugal

REGIONAL – WESTERN EUROPE

The European Homeworking Group

Not so active recently but HWW has contacts in Italy, Greece, and Spain. Also in Portugal, Anne Marie Delettrez is active on the mainland - igrec@clix.pt. She is working with the Equal Project which is among other things developing a code of practice, including for garment and footwear workers.

Organizing / Campaigning

AUSTRALIA

Fair Wear Campaign

The Fair Wear Campaign addresses the gross exploitation of workers who make clothing at home in Australia.

Several offices around the country, see: <http://www.awatw.org.au/fairwear/>

BELGIUM

Wereldsolidariteit: “Wereldwijd werken aan zekerheid” (Working on security worldwide”) – campaign; 2004 (ongoing). Campaign against informalization of work and pro equal rights and social protection.

Wereldsolidariteit
Haachtsesteenweg 579
1030 Schaarbeek – Brussel
Tel. +3202/ 246 36 85
E-mail: wereldsolidariteit@wsm.be
Website: www.wereldsolidariteit.be, www.wereldburger.net (Dutch)

International Young Christian Workers (IYCW / IKAJ)

“Just work for all” – campaign on workers in the informal sector

<http://www.jociycw.net/doc/aspacsignaturecampaign.htm>

Living on the edge – Young workers in the informal sectors (case studies, including garment workers)

Avenue Georges Rodenbach, 4

B - 1030 BRUSSELS

Phone: 32 2 242 18 11

Fax: 32 2 242 48 00

E-mail: international.secretariat@jociycw.net

Website: www.jociycw.net

INDIA

SEWA – Homebased workers campaign

One of SEWA's oldest campaigns has been for the rights of millions of home-based workers for both piece rate and own account workers. Today SEWA along with Homenet is spearheading both a national and an international campaign for the ratification of the ILO Convention and its translation into concrete implementation so that home-based workers can truly enjoy the rights enshrined in the Convention.

Self Employed Women's Association

Reception Centre,

Opp. Victoria Garden, Bhadra

Ahmedabad - 380 001 India

Tel.+ 91-79-5506444

mail@sewa.org

<http://www.sewa.org/campaigns/index.htm>

TURKEY

Turkey Working Group on Women Homebased Workers

Finding alternatives, research, partly organizing through workshops.

Dilek Hattatoglu: hdilek@mu.edu.tr

Olcay Bingöl-Ozturk: olcaybingol@yahoo.co.uk

Avcilar home-based workers cooperative, Istanbul

Contact through:

Simel Esim

ILO Regional Office for Arab States

Beirut, Lebanon
Tel: 961-1-752-400 ext.110
E-mail: esim@ilo.org

SOUTH AFRICA

Southern African Clothing and Textile Workers Union (SACTWU)

Industrial trade union affiliated to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), founded in 1989, that has recently begun organizing workers in the informal economy.

SACTWU
Industria House
350 Victoria Road
Salt River
Cape Town
Tel: + 27 + 21 + 447-45 70
Fax: + 27 + 21 + 447-45 70
E-mail: lynnt@sactwu.org.za

Self-Employed Women's Union (SEWU)

A trade union for self-employed women in South-Africa, formally launched in 1994.

SEWU National office
Suite 815-816 Sangro House, 8th Floor
417 Smith Street , Durban 4000
Tel: 031 - 304 6504
E-mail: Sewu@sn.apc.org
Website: <http://www.sewu.pit.co.za/>

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