

Resolution on Women Workers in the Informal Economy

Adopted at the Asian workshop on: 'Issues Facing Women Workers in Informal Work' held in Bangkok on November 6 – 8, 2001, organized by Committee for Asian Women and HomeNet (Thailand)

We are representatives from 11 Asian countries representing women and men workers involved in different types of work situations -- homebased work, street vending, domestic work, agricultural work, handicraft work, scrap and rag-picking, small-scale factory work, part-time work, casual and contract work, construction work, among others. We are from 12 trade unions, 2 membership-based organizations, 8 NGOs and 3 networks.

A large proportion of the workforce is involved in the informal economy. Informal work contributes socially useful services and a significant proportion of global income. Official statistics indicate that the share of informal (non-agricultural) work is 45-85% in Latin America and 45-85% in different parts of Asia. The contribution of the income that comes from informal work to national income amounts to between 30-60% in different countries. Most new jobs are being created in the informal economy. This growth in the informal economy is directly related to the acceleration of the process of globalization. These processes of globalization have affected both the workers in the formal and the informal economy. Workers in the formal economy have been increasingly reduced to the status of workers in the informal economy. This crowding into the informal economy has rendered workers in the informal economy even more vulnerable and with even less resources.

The conditions of workers in the informal economy are characterized by not just abysmal working conditions, but very often also by their appalling living conditions. This is even more true of women. The conditions of work of the workers in the informal economy include: non-recognition of the work and of the workers in informal employment, very low incomes, very long hours of work, insecure work, unsafe and dangerous work, no benefits, no leave or holidays, no accident or any other benefits, sexual and other harassment and no child care.

Apart from invisibility, poor working and living conditions, and the absence of social protection, workers in the informal economy also suffer from a severe lack of access to productive assets and other resources, land, credit, marketing and technological assistance, education and training.

We, the assembled representatives, resolve to:

- **Organize and support each other in our organizing efforts;**
- **Act in solidarity on common issues;**
- **Build public awareness and visibility of the workers we represent;**
- **Lobby public authorities and other institutions in society for our common interests;**
- **Strengthen the capacity of our organizations through appropriate education programs;**
- **Collate and disseminate best practices of strategies of organizations.**

We urge the following organizations and institutions to address the concerns of women workers in informal employment as follows:

LOCAL, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS:

- **take the initiative to organize directly and to assist in the self-organization of these workers.**
- **build friendly relations of mutuality and solidarity with the already existing organizations of these workers.**
- **work out methods of significant representation of women workers in informal employment in the ILO and other international institutions as well as within the international trade union federations themselves.**

NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: by adopting the following measures and policies:

- **Officially recognize the existence of workers, especially women workers, in informal employment and acknowledge their social and economic contribution;**
- **Extend and strengthen existing social security schemes, including maternity benefits and provide such schemes where they do not as yet exist;**
- **Provide child care services that would enable women and men involved in the informal economy to engage in productive work;**
- **Legislate and implement laws on fair wages and incomes;**
- **Protect workers from harassment by authorities, employers and contractors;**
- **Enact and enforce legislation against sexual harassment, domestic violence and other forms of violence against women and children;**
- **Provide mechanisms by which workers in the informal economy can be provided access to and control over productive assets and resources, such as land, credit, capital, marketing and technological assistance;**
- **Enact and enforce laws and policies which would promote the organization of workers, especially women workers, in the informal economy;**
- **Enact and enforce legislation against child labour and ensure primary education;**
- **Recognize the importance and create opportunities for training, development and capacity building of women in informal work;**
- **Promote, enact and enforce legislation for upgrading the education and training programs in the informal economy to be responsive to globalization;**
- **Create institutional structures to represent issues of the informal economy at local and central government levels;**
- **Ratify and implement through national legislation ILO Conventions relevant to the informal economy;**
- **Support instruments, statements and policies at the International Labour Conference designed to protect the rights of workers in the informal economy.**

THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION is invited to:

- **Recognize organizations of workers especially women workers in informal employment as legitimate workers' organizations;**
- **Adopt and implement conventions and recommendations protecting the basic rights of workers in informal employment, particularly freedom of association and collective bargaining rights;**
- **Undertake education programs for workers in the informal economy;**
- **Uphold the rights of women workers in informal work to adequate social security, including maternity benefits, health insurance and old age pensions;**
- **Uphold the right of women in informal work to adequate income and secure work;**
- **Use its influence on governments to secure the ratification of all instruments relevant to the informal economy and child labour.**
- **Ensure representation of organizations of workers in informal employment in ILO decision-making.**