



Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers

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Image of a home-based worker taken during a field visit to Sunder Nagari in Delhi, India
Photo: K. Hughes, 2015

INTRODUCTION

Home-based workers – those who carry out remunerative work in their own homes or in the surrounding grounds - are part of the world's most vulnerable workforce (Spooner & Mather, 2012). The vast majority of home-based workers (HBWs), in most regions of the world, are women (ILO and WIEGO, 2013). They work in sectors of the economy as varied as manufacturing and assembly (i.e. of electronics, garments, jewelry and other consumer goods), artisan production, personal services, clerical work, and professional work (ILO & WIEGO, 2002). Although large in number,¹ both own account or subcontracted home-based workers face many problems including low earnings, lack of access to social protection and social security benefits, irregular or insecure work, and difficult living conditions (many live in slums and lack access to basic infrastructure and services). Importantly, because they work from home, HBWs are invisible, isolated and may not even recognize themselves as workers (Spooner & Mather, 2012). This isolation means they are often unaware of their rights, find it difficult to access support and their needs and voices remain unheard in the laws and policies which affect their lives.

¹ Statistics from as recent as 2011-12 indicate there are almost 1 million home-based workers in Nepal (Raveendran & Vanek, 2013), 37.4 million in India (Raveendran, Sudarshan, & Vanek, 2013), over 1.4 million in Pakistan (Akhtar & Vanek, 2013) and 2 million in Bangladesh (Mahmud, 2014)

WHAT ARE HOME-BASED WORKERS?

The term “home-based worker” is used to refer to workers who carry out remunerated work within their own homes or in the surrounding grounds (Sinha, 2015). As the ILO & WIEGO (2002) explain, there are two broad categories of home-based workers: self-employed and sub-contracted home-based workers. “The more specific term, “homeworkers”, refers to the subcontracted home-based workers who carry out paid work for firms/businesses or their intermediaries, typically on a piece-rate basis” (ILO & WIEGO, 2002). Home-based workers are involved in the production and provision of goods and services in a wide variety of industries, including artisan production, personal services, trade, repair services, clerical work, and manufacturing and assembly (among others) (Sinha, 2015).

Fortunately, HBWs have established regional (such as HomeNet South Asia and HomeNet South-East Asia) and national (such as HomeNet Thailand or the Self-Employed Women’s Association in India) organizations and are working to improve their livelihoods. Though home-based work is most common and represents a significant share of total employment in many Asian countries, HBWs are also present in Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and other parts of the world. In recent years, there has been growing demand and interest to extend efforts to organize and support HBWs in these regions.

In 2012, Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) successfully applied for a grant from the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs under its “Funding Leadership and Opportunities for Women” fund for a project titled, “Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers”. One of the elements of the 4-year project was “Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers”, launched in 2012 and which aimed to strengthen or build movements of HBWs in four regions: Africa, Eastern Europe, Latin America and South Asia.

This case study provides an overview of the progress towards building a global movement of HBWs during the period 2012-2015. The case study begins by providing a short summary of the model of intervention and theory of change and continues with a summary, by region of project activities (Africa, Latin America, Eastern Europe, South Asia, and International). Following each regional summary, a discussion of the regional outcomes and impacts is provided. The case study concludes with a discussion on the sustainability of the changes and lessons learned.

MODEL OF INTERVENTION/THEORY OF CHANGE

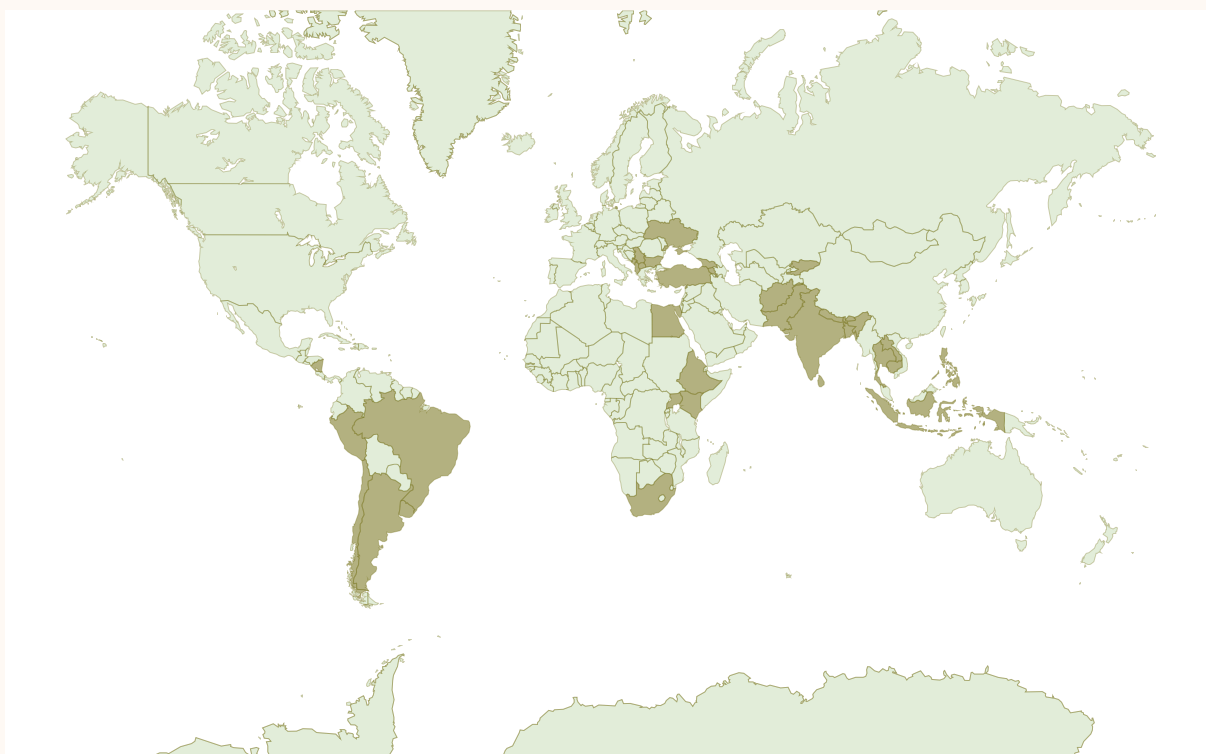
The long-term objective of the project was, *“to assist working poor women employed in the informal economy to gain economic self-reliance and increase their participation in politics, governance and management”*. Per WIEGO’s Theory of Change, systemic change of this type is not possible without ensuring HBWs gain:

- Voice in relevant rule-setting, policy-making, and collective bargaining processes: this requires strong local membership-based organizations of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy;
- Visibility among policy-makers: this requires comprehensive statistics and credible research; and
- Validity as legitimate workers and economic agents: this requires changing the mindsets of dominant players, including the private sector/owners of capital, and the public at large.

For the Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers outcome, WIEGO worked with three main partners: HomeNet South Asia (HNSA), Association of Home-Based Workers Bulgaria (AHBW Bulgaria) and World Fair Trade Organization – Africa and Middle East (WFTO Africa & Middle East) to achieve the following project outcomes:

- Supporting the creation, strengthening and expansion of Membership-based organizations (MBOs) of home-based workers, leading to more national-level organizations and to foster the establishment of regional networks and eventually a global alliance of home-based workers;
- Facilitating capacity building efforts that focus on democratic governance of MBOs; and
- Providing policy-advocacy training to help the HBWs influence policy changes that will improve their lives.

In the South Asia region, the project action focused on work with a more experienced partner organization (namely HNSA) with capacity building and leadership empowerment. Activities on this front included training workshops and in-country support for women leaders and their organizations in Pakistan, Nepal, India and Sri Lanka. In the regions where networks of HBWs were in process of being consolidated (Eastern Europe) or where new work was to take place (Africa and Latin America), the project focused on identifying organizations of HBWs, understanding their working conditions and building their organizing and advocacy capacity. Main activities included mapping HBWs and organizations in Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America, analyzing laws and policies affecting HBWs, providing training to strengthen or develop national HBW organizations and conducting regional or international workshops and exchange visits to build solidarity and leadership capacity of women HBWs and their organizations in the four regions. Further, a series of international exchange and learning visits were hosted between South Asian HBWs and HBWs from Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America.



Reaching out to home-based workers around the world

REGION OF ACTIVITY: AFRICA

BACKGROUND & MAIN PROJECT ACTIVITIES IN AFRICA

In Sub-Saharan Africa informal employment represents 66% of non-agricultural employment (Vanek, Chen, Carré, Heintz, & Hussmanns, 2014). While little current country-level data on home-based work exists in Africa, data drawn from 8 African cities suggests it represents an important source of employment: in those cities, home-based work represents an 11-25% share of urban informal employment (ILO and WIEGO, 2013).

Under Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers, WIEGO began working with HBWs in Africa for the first time. As a result of a partnership established with the African Fair Trade movement, WIEGO began to realize that the producers in fair trade value chains were in many cases, home-based workers. Working with local partner, World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) Africa & Middle East - a regional network of the WFTO which represents 90 producer organizations - WIEGO coordinated a mapping process to understand the situation of HBWs in five African countries. The hope was that the mapping process would identify organizations of HBWs which WIEGO could connect to each other, assist with policy analysis and advocacy, and conduct capacity building workshops to support national networking and/or policy advocacy.

However, initial scoping found that in almost all the African project countries, HBW organizing, if it existed at all was at a very early stage. The Regional Director of WFTO Africa & Middle East, Bernard Outah summarized the situation succinctly: *"HBWs in Africa exist but the exact number is not known. There are [...] no associations of HBWs, and workers who are clearly HBWs do not see themselves as such [...]"*. Efforts therefore turned to understanding the situation of HBWs (through surveys, case studies or interviews), identifying support organizations (through desk-based research) and, in cases where it allowed, training on the concept of home-based work to raise awareness (Kenya and Uganda), or to strengthen existing organizations of HBWs (South Africa). The following sections summarize the work completed in the five African countries and the outcomes and achievements of the activities.

QUICK FACTS

- **5 countries of activity:** Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda
- **10** organizational mapping or policy analysis reports completed
- **Over 500 HBWs** interviewed during mapping process in 5 countries
- **2 regional meetings** bringing together over 55 home-based workers and supporters
- **At least 9 training workshops** held with African organizations on HBW issues, organizing and leadership

COUNTRIES OF ACTIVITY: EGYPT & ETHIOPIA

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT IN EGYPT

“Egypt is home to the largest cotton and textile industry in Africa” (Outah, 2014). Given HBWs are often present in garment and textile value chains, Egypt was selected as a country of activity. In 2013, a mapping exercise was undertaken to identify HBW and support organizations in the country. Through preliminary desk-based research, what quickly became apparent was that there were no organizations of HBWs, no known efforts to organize them, and the concept of home-based work itself was relatively unknown to policy-makers, unions or the workers themselves. Focus therefore shifted to identifying organizations which provide support to HBWs and to understanding their work conditions. WIEGO worked with WFTO Africa & Middle East and Partner Africa – a not-for-profit social enterprise working in ethical and socially responsible business practice – to identify HBWs through links with local organizations. A total of 50 HBWs (engaged in weaving, tailoring and embroidery) were surveyed, and representatives from three organizations² that provide training, financial and information support to individuals including HBWs were interviewed.

The study helped shed light on the conditions of home-based work in Egypt: most HBWs surveyed were sub-contracted workers, home-based work is their main income generating activity, they are mostly unorganized, and lack knowledge of their labour rights or the importance of organizing. Study findings were shared by the researcher at Partner Africa during an international sharing and learning workshop held in Nairobi as part of the project in August 2014. As an outcome to the Nairobi meeting, Partner Africa was selected as the focal organization to take the project work forward. However, due to the political instability in Egypt, it became difficult to conduct organizing and research activities so WIEGO decided to focus more in-depth work in other African countries.

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT IN ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia was identified as a focal country later on in the HBW Project. Following mapping done in Egypt, Kenya and South Africa, additional mapping was carried out in Ethiopia in 2015 due to the presence of a strong and growing textile industry (where HBWs could likely be found). WFTO Africa & Middle East partnered with Women in Self-Employment (WISE) – a charity which works with poor self-employed women and girls to achieve self-reliance through economic and social empowerment to do the mapping. WISE works directly with women engaged in home-based production and micro-enterprises therefore; it was readily prepared to do the work.

2 Identified organizations include: Social Fund for Development, Small and Medium Enterprise Portal and Egyptian Association for Comprehensive Development.

WISE and WFTO Africa & Middle East developed a quantitative survey tool to collect information on the work conditions of 200 HBWs engaged in thread-making, spinning, weaving, embroidery, tailoring and other finishing work in the textile industry in the sub cities, or boroughs, of Addis Ababa. The partners also conducted six focus groups/workshops with a total of 54 individuals from associations, cooperatives or organizations which support home-based workers in the textile industry as part of a scoping exercise. The mapping revealed that there was a mix of own account and subcontracted HBWs in Addis Ababa's textile industry. The majority of these HBWs work without written contracts (despite the fact that the home-based work is their primary source of income), they face rising costs of raw materials, unfair payments for their work, and challenges balancing household chores and caring for their children with their work. The study also provided additional information on the type and nature of support provided to HBWs through support organizations and helped identify that WISE was a well-known support organization to HBWs across sub cities.

KEY OUTCOMES IN EGYPT & ETHIOPIA

The project activities in Egypt and Ethiopia were relatively short in duration. However, some initial impacts can be highlighted:

The mapping contributed to increasing the visibility and knowledge of the situation of HBWs in each country, their working conditions and the organizations that support them (if any). This new knowledge was highlighted as a main outcome by partners during a regional workshop in Kampala, Uganda in November 2015:

"Status of women HBWs and their organizations in Ethiopia is known including demographic characteristics, home situation, work processes, employment relationships, payment and payment arrangements, chain of production linking HBWs within the sector, subcontractors, intermediaries, buyers and brand owners."

Bernard Outah.

The mapping of HBWs also shed light on the low levels of organization in each country.³ Given the mapping found a complete lack of awareness of HBW issues and relative absence of HBW organizations, work turned from the planned focus of policy advocacy and movement building, to further awareness raising regarding the conditions of home-based work in each country, identification of organizations which serve or support HBWs, and researching the legal framework regulating HBWs (in the case of Ethiopia only) – the first steps to organizing a movement of HBWs. In Ethiopia, this new knowledge has sparked the commitment to continue efforts to build a movement of HBWs: *"The mapping exercise in Ethiopia has helped me realise that our challenges are not isolated. WISE wants to work with sister-organizations and expand on this area."* (Agar Mulat, Country Coordinator at Kampala workshop in November 2015.)

By contrast, in Egypt, organizing work stopped due to challenges with political stability. While both Egypt and Ethiopia undertook similar work, project reports do not indicate the same level of commitment in Egypt to taking the work forward.

3 Though some organizations in Ethiopia have organized members who are home-based workers into cooperatives, the organizations themselves do not identify or call themselves HBW organizations.

COUNTRY OF ACTIVITY: KENYA

In Kenya, the project activities were coordinated by WFTO Africa & Middle East and carried out by the Kenya Federation for Alternative Trade (KEFAT). KEFAT is a country network of Fair Trade producers and member of WFTO. Its mission is to improve the livelihoods and well being of marginalized Kenyan producers through innovative approaches to market access on Fair Trade terms and speaking out for greater justice in world trade.

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

As with other African countries in Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers, work in Kenya began with a mapping exercise in 2013 to identify organizations and individuals who could assist in organizing HBWs. Preliminary desk research revealed that there were no known movements or networks of HBWs or efforts to organize them as HBWs in Kenya. The focus therefore shifted to identifying any individuals or organizations supporting HBWs and understanding the local working conditions. Through this process, a total of 16 individuals/organizations with links to HBWs were identified (both inside and outside the Fair Trade movement) and interviews with 60 home-based workers engaged in handicraft production or textile/garments were conducted. The mapping study revealed a mix of subcontracted and own account HBWs in the sample, many of whom reported very casual arrangements with contractors. Less than half of the subcontracted HBWs surveyed felt they were paid fairly and the study revealed Kenyan HBWs lack social protection and knowledge of their rights. Perhaps most surprisingly, the subcontracted home-based workers in the Fair Trade sector were earning much less⁴ than HBWs working on their own account. Though many had asked for an increased rate with their subcontractor, these efforts were largely unsuccessful, likely because they bargained for an increased rate on their own.

In August 2014, a sharing and learning workshop between Asia and Africa was organized in Nairobi by the Organization and Representation Programme of WIEGO in collaboration with WIEGO's "Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade" project and WFTO Africa & Middle East. The workshop gathered a total of 29 participants from South Asia and Africa⁵ to share experiences, discuss findings of the mapping in each African country, and presented an opportunity for African participants to learn from the South Asia participants, many of whom were HBW leaders with years of organizing experience. On the final day, participants visited three Kenyan groups with HBW members where they were able to reflect on and learn from the organizing experiences in Kenya. Organizations were able to establish regional and international linkages, prepare ideas for working together and decide on a way forward for the work in Africa. Focal organizations from Egypt (Partner Africa), Kenya (KEFAT), South Africa (South African Self-Employed Women's Association), and Uganda (Uganda Federation for Alternative Trade - UGAFAT) were appointed to take the work forward and each organization agreed on an action plan.

4 As the (Outah, 2014) summarizes, "[...] sub-contracted women HBWs within the Fair Trade sector earn much less, an average of Ksh. 2000, compared to own account women HBWs, who earn an average of Ksh. 4,000 per month. The same trend is observable among men, albeit with higher earnings, an average of Ksh. 7000 and Ksh. 20,000 per month for sub-contracted and own account HBWs respectively. The majority of the sub-contracted HBWs have asked for upward review of the prices to boost their income with little success. However, these are merely individual efforts since there is no forum in either of the countries through which their voices can be heard."

5 The 29 participants included participation from: Kenya (10), Uganda (5), South Africa (2), Egypt (1), India (2), Pakistan (2), Nepal (2), Sri Lanka (2) plus 1 interpreter and 2 WIEGO facilitators (UK, South Africa).

As a result of the 2014 workshop, KEFAT and UGAFAT (both of whom were also participating in the WIEGO's Informal Women Workers in Fair Trade project), agreed to update baseline studies done in 2013. In 2015, this was done in Kenya and Uganda with a view to develop a comprehensive database on the status of HBWs and their organizations. Using the geographical areas touched by the WIEGO Fair Trade Project, KEFAT surveyed an additional 36 individuals/organizations and conducted a policy analysis to understand the laws affecting HBWs. The findings of the mapping and policy analysis were later shared with approximately 76 HBWs in four sensitization and training forums. Although this activity took place towards the end of the project, it represented an effort to begin to build the organizing, leadership and advocacy skills and capacity of women HBWs in Kenya.



Visit in 2014 to Malembwa Womens Group, Kenya
Photo: E. Bett

KEY OUTCOMES

Several impacts of the project work in Kenya can be noted. The first relates to the strengthening of KEFAT as an organization. The project work enabled KEFAT to improve its knowledge and understanding of its members. As the KEFAT country coordinator Edwin Bett noted, "... [we] never knew they [the fair trade producers] were home-based workers in the first place. So it was a realization for us that we are working with people who could be characterized as home-based workers." In interviews and at the Kampala workshop in November 2015, Mr. Bett noted how the mapping has improved their knowledge of the supply chain relationships within KEFAT and the work conditions and characteristics of home-based workers. The combined work under the WIEGO's Global Trade Programme and Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers project, he says, has provided an opportunity to build KEFAT as an organization as well as the constituents around it.

Another result of the joint work between WIEGO's project elements in Kenya was the strengthening of organizational and women home-based worker leaders within KEFAT:

- Lucy Nyambura, a leader of the Bega Kwa Bega Self-Help Group in Kenya reflected on the experience at the regional meeting in Uganda in 2015: *"Now I can see. I get a lot of energy from these meetings. As a leader I am feeling very grateful because now I can stand and express myself. Now I am strong because of WIEGO and KEFAT. [...] I wish to be strong. I even talk to my ladies in the slum areas and now we talk to the NCO [government office] for the area and see the way forward for us. People respect and consult me, even in the family"*.
- The project also helped build leadership capacity on the administrative and operational side of KEFAT: *"[The HBW Project] helped build leadership in the organization and those that we are working with. [It] built KEFAT and our constituency. Personally, [it has] given me the opportunity to interact with others and attend several international meetings/conferences. Working with WIEGO continuously has given me this exposure and qualified me for KEFAT board membership"*. Country Coordinator Edwin Bett.

A third impact of the project in Kenya is the feeling of solidarity and improved linkages between organizations working on home-based worker issues in Africa (where none previously existed): *"[...] We feel that there is some solidarity within the movement and that as much as circumstances are different, other people are facing similar challenges[...]"*, said Edwin Bett. A commitment to taking the work forward has also emerged, evidenced in the formation of an African Working Group on home-based workers.

ABOUT THE AFRICAN WORKING GROUP

The Working Group formed following the Uganda meeting in November 2015 represents a positive step for the regional networking process for the movement. The Group is composed of the project coordinators in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa and Uganda. At the time of writing this case study (March 2016), the Working Group had met by teleconference in December 2015 and January 2016 to coordinate activities towards building a movement of HBWs in Africa following the end of the project and explored means of maintaining group communication. WISE (the Ethiopian partner) reported in the January 2016 teleconference that it is continuing to maintain contact with HBWs and has been identifying new groups in the process. Given that the Kenyan and Ugandan partners were also part of WIEGO's Global Trade Programme, a discussion took place on ways to use the training materials produced as part of that program going forward. WISE expressed interest in taking the training approach forward to sensitize HBW facilitators to roll out further training with HBWs in Ethiopia. This is something still being explored but demonstrates WISE's commitment to taking the work forward, organizing, training HBWs and increasing their leadership capacity. To continue follow-up efforts, the group has agreed to meet every month to keep each other abreast of activities regarding movement building in Africa.

6 A report from one of the project coordinators of the HBW Project in Africa indicated, *"[...] that virtually all the partners involved in the project previously never engaged directly on home-based work, per se."*

COUNTRY OF ACTIVITY: SOUTH AFRICA

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

In South Africa, home-based work accounts for 6 per cent of urban employment with the majority of HBWs being women (ILO and WIEGO, 2013). Despite representing an important source of employment, little was known about their conditions of work, how or whether they were organized and the policy environment regulating HBW. In 2013, WIEGO engaged a researcher to conduct a national mapping of the sector. The mapping process had three main goals: to identify existing organizations which were working with, supporting or organizing home-based workers; to understand the laws and policies which affect the sector; and to provide a preliminary analysis of HBW work conditions in South Africa.

Through desk-based research, 27 organizations with connections to home-based workers were identified, and, unlike other African countries which were part of the project, three organizations that were actively organizing home-based workers were identified.⁷ A preliminary analysis of the work conditions of HBWs was accomplished through a review of case studies revealing that home-based work is widespread across several sectors. The analysis and review of literature also revealed the challenges that HBWs face in South Africa: low and irregular earnings and wages, no access to social security benefits, and lack of access to health and safety equipment which can in turn lead to health hazards including aches and pains and fatigue (Castel-Branco, 2013). Lastly, the mapping explored the regulatory framework for home-based work, revealing that while protections and standards implicit regulate homeworkers, no labour standard exists for self-employed HBWs (Castel-Branco, 2013).



Machinist working out of a garage, Athlone Cape Town
Photo: V. Pillay

⁷ These organizations included the South African Self Employed Women's Association (SASEWA) and South African Informal Workers Association (SAIWA), and the MBO Inina Craft Agency.

In August 2014, two leaders from South Africa attended the Nairobi learning and sharing workshop where country-level findings on the situation of home-based work were presented. As an outcome of the workshop, it was agreed that one of the organizations identified through the mapping – the South African Self Employed Women's Association (SASEWA) – would be the focal organization to take work forward in the country.

ABOUT SASEWA

SASEWA is a regional association of informal workers founded in 2009 in KwaZulu Natal (KZN) province formed by the remaining KZN members of the Self Employed Women's Union (SEWU) - a national union of self-employed women formed in 1994.⁸ The organization aims to build unity among self-employed women (predominantly street vendors and HBWs) whose livelihoods are not recognized, through developing negotiating and leadership skills to engage with authorities for policy change, organize women to solve problems and educate and help women access other organizations and essential services (i.e. training, credit and loan facilities, and health advice).

In May 2014, organizational challenges and financial difficulties forced SASEWA to close its offices. This was a major set-back for the organization and though some members continued activities under the banner of SASEWA, this was not well communicated to all of the membership and leadership, leading to divisions and tensions (Pillay, 2015). Though this proved a major challenge to the efforts to organize HBWs in South Africa, the WIEGO project was able to support efforts to strengthen SASEWA and help its leaders begin to address these internal challenges.

Following the Nairobi workshop, from October to April 2015, more in-depth mapping of the conditions of home-based workers was conducted, building upon the contextual analysis of organizations, policies and work conditions done in 2013. In the first instance, home-based workers and support organizations operating in the clothing, textiles and craft sectors which were identified through the 2013 mapping were contacted with the aim of exploring HBW working conditions and organizing strategies. Through snowballing, a total of 65 respondents from 16 organizations were identified and their experiences and stories were captured in a report by Pillay (2015). The field visits done as part of the in-depth mapping report were strategic in that they took place in KZN province and therefore supported efforts to re-establish organizing efforts by SASEWA in areas where SEWU previously had members. An organizing plan and budget were developed in tandem with the mapping process covering January to April 2015 which was later extended to the end of 2015. The plans included support to SASEWA with the development of a home-based worker membership database to improve its administration procedures and membership systems (Pillay, 2015)⁸.

WIEGO also began to provide training support and accompaniment to strengthen SASEWA as an organization in 2015. A first workshop in April 2015 covered membership planning. WIEGO worked with SASEWA leadership to develop detailed organizing plans to address key challenges in its four sub-regions of operation, with the aim of eventually growing the organization's HBW membership. In May 2015, WIEGO supported 10 SASEWA members to participate in a national workshop convened by the

⁸ While SEWU thrived when there was funding and support for developing post-apartheid organizations, it eventually closed its doors in 2003 due to financial difficulties, among others challenges (Castel-Branco, 2013).

Department of Small Business Development and the International Labour Organization (ILO) related to supporting the informal economy. SASEWA was invited to provide input as a key stakeholder. While HBW issues were not included as a specific sector of intervention, SASEWA representatives were able to ensure that their concerns were heard regarding HBW – an important first step in creating increased visibility of women HBW issues in the region. In August 2015, a few months after the detailed organizing plans were created, a workshop was convened to evaluate progress towards those goals and build leadership skills for organization building. With the organizing efforts beginning to show signs of success – a total of 143 new home-based members joined SASEWA in 2015 – WIEGO held a final workshop in 2015 with SASEWA's Executive Committee to begin to address the internal organizational challenges. The workshop, attended by 19 women leaders from all branches of SASEWA, focused on managing finances, addressing challenges with collecting membership dues, and discussions of organizational sustainability and the resolution of internal leadership issues.

The above activities helped strengthen SASEWA by promoting their organization as a voice for women HBWs (through the Government-ILO workshop), increasing membership, and the removal of barriers to a thriving organization caused by internal conflicts.

KEY OUTCOMES

A key outcome of the project has been that SASEWA as an organization has been strengthened in several ways:

- Through planning efforts and accompaniment, SASEWA recruited 143 new home-based worker members, almost doubling their membership from the sector in a one-year period.⁹
- The April 2015 workshop with new and existing women HBW members also helped increase member capacity by improving their knowledge about SASEWA's role and the role of organizing. As the workshop facilitator, WIEGO's Organization and Representation Officer noted, "A key outcome of the workshop [April 2015] was that members had a clearer understanding of membership roles and responsibilities in a democratic membership-based organization."
- The August 2015 capacity building workshop with SASEWA leaders has helped the organization improve its administration and begin to resolve internal issues identified mid-way through the project. The session brought together HBW leaders who had not met for some time due to internal tensions. Leaders were able to jointly reflect on strategies to move the organization forward and key challenges to achieving this. They agreed a new Constitution is needed and explored the idea of having elections where new recruits would have a chance at the leadership positions. These ideas are being pursued in 2016. As a result of the workshop, "Participants felt that some long overdue organizational problems were solved [...]" (Pillay, 2015).
- Organizational leadership and new women HBW members have been inspired to continue pushing forward on their issues. One of the leaders shared that participating in the exchanges with HBWs from other regions increased her enthusiasm for SASEWA's continued work, despite the internal issues. According to WIEGO organiser Vanessa Pillay participating in training workshops has helped new SASEWA members to self-identity as workers, and to devise new ways of taking SASEWA forward. She reports that these women "are beginning to demonstrate leadership potential, which represents a very positive point in taking the organization forward".¹⁰

⁹ Numbers based on information from an interview with Vanessa Pillay – WIEGO's Organization and Representation Officer.

¹⁰ Reflections based on conversations with Vanessa Pillay who facilitated the workshops and worked with SASEWA during the project.

The project has also contributed to improving the visibility of home-based work as an issue within the policy sphere and in home-based workers' own communities:

- From a markets perspective, the April 2015 planning workshop and other project activities have helped HBW members of SASEWA to begin thinking about how to raise the profile of their work. Members who were previously trying to sell in the streets or among themselves have begun to explore the idea of increasing the visibility of their work by sharing their work in other spaces such as churches, schools or other spaces where they gather collectively.
- The May 2015 multi-stakeholder meeting with the South African government and the ILO also presented an opportunity for SASEWA leadership to re-engage in policy issues at the national level, thereby increasing the visibility of their organization and issues of their members.

Lastly, the mapping process has also helped identify and establish contacts with new organizations (i.e. clothing cooperatives in Cape Town) which, through further linkages and networking, could form the basis for building a national network in South Africa.

COUNTRY OF ACTIVITY: UGANDA

The Uganda Federation for Alternative Trade (UGAFAT) was established in 2008 to bring together producers to promote Ugandan fair trade products from Uganda worldwide. It is a membership-based organization comprised of 26 member organizations representing over 2,500 producers, and brings together different producers, consumers and trader groups with a view to improving livelihoods through implementing Fair Trade principles as defined by the WFTO. UGAFAT was WIEGO's country level implementing partner for the HBW Outcome.

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

Uganda began participating in the HBW Outcome in 2014 when five members of UGAFAT attended the Nairobi learning and sharing workshop which brought together organizations working on HBW issues in Africa and South Asia. The workshop allowed UGAFAT leaders to gain exposure to HBW issues, begin to gain a clearer understanding of the concept of home-based work and hear from other African countries about the work being undertaken as part of the WIEGO project. As a result of the workshop, it was agreed that Uganda (along with South Africa and Kenya¹¹) would be a focal country and that UGAFAT would be tasked with taking the work forward. As a first order of business, UGAFAT (which was also participating in WIEGO's Developing Women's Leadership and Business Skills in Fair Trade project), agreed to update a baseline study of its membership done in 2013 to include specific information on work conditions of HBW.

¹¹ Partner Africa was also appointed to take the work forward in Egypt but the political situation did not allow for work to progress. Ethiopia was added later on in the project as a focal country in Africa with Women in Self Employment (WISE) acting as the focal organization.

In February 2015, two UGAFAT leaders attended the Global Conference on HBWs in New Delhi, India. This represented the first time that African organizations had been part of a global WIEGO event on home-based work. Attending the conference was particularly valuable for UGAFAT as it contributed to an improved understanding of the concept of home-based work. As Ugandan participant Anna Kuteesa noted at the Uganda workshop in November 2015, “[...] *the global conference in India enlightened UGAFAT about HBWs. We brought back a new idea to Uganda and informed our people about home-based work.*”

Later in 2015, UGAFAT undertook two studies to improve their understanding of home-based work in the Ugandan context: a survey of the home-based workers in its network; and policy analysis of laws affecting home-based workers in Uganda. A total of 130 home-based workers (the majority women) from 38 community-based organizations participated in the survey by UGAFAT. The survey collected basic demographic information on the workers and revealed their working conditions. Principal findings included the type of home-based work they were engaged in (mostly handicraft production and farming or animal husbandry), that most home-based workers surveyed are unaware of labour laws or policies which affect their work (only 27 out of 130 HBWs surveyed indicated awareness about laws affecting them) and most lack social protection (only two HBWs were registered with the National Social Security Fund) (UGAFAT and WFTO Africa & Middle East, 2015).

A mapping of policy and laws was conducted in order to determine whether existing legal and policy frameworks could be supportive of HBWs and improved UGAFAT's understanding of the local context. As a general finding, labour laws in Uganda are written so as to be focused on formal workplaces and formal employment relationships. Labour laws – such as The Employment Act or The Occupational Health and Safety Act - which broadly could relate to HBW make no mention of the home as workplace (Major Communication Consultants, 2015). Therefore, by and large, the legal framework is not supportive of HBWs and does not recognize their existence.

In November 2015, UGAFAT hosted a regional meeting convened jointly by WIEGO's Global Trade and Organization and Representation Programmes. Thirty HBWs and supporters from 10 countries in Latin America, East Europe, South and South-East Asia¹² participated in the workshop and learning visits to two UGAFAT members: Ngalo group and Nurturing Uganda. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss progress made by partners against project plans, deepen partner knowledge on HBWs in Africa (through the workshop and the planned field visits to UGAFAT partners), strengthen connections and solidarity between HBWs in Africa and other regions, begin to understand the laws and policies impacting HBWs and plan for future work on the home-based worker movement. Participants were able to share experiences, build solidarity among different regions and discuss both national and joint actions to be taken in the future. A report of the workshop noted the commitment felt by partners across countries to taking the work forward and to organizing as a means to make policy gains and improve home-based worker livelihoods (HBW Report Kampala).¹³

12 The workshop had participation from Kenya(5), Uganda (5), Ethiopia (1), South Africa (2), Zimbabwe/WIEGO Law Programme(1); Asia: Pakistan(1) Thailand (2); Europe/Latin America(1); Eastern Europe: Bulgaria(1 + interpreter) and Latin America: Argentina(1), Chile(1); World –Fair Trade Organization and Regional Coordinator(1) and Kenya Federation for Alternative Trade (KEFAT)(1).

13 The impact of the meetings will be discussed in a specific section on the learning exchanges.

In addition to the above, towards the end of 2015, WFTO Africa & Middle East reported at the Kampala workshop that UGAFAT had already begun sharing the findings of the mapping and policy analysis in the sensitization and training forums being conducted as part of WIEGO's Global Trade Programme. They have begun to introduce the concept of home-based work through these trainings and there are plans to continue taking this work forward.



Participants from Chile, Argentina, Thailand, Pakistan, Ethiopia and Kenya participated in regional workshop in Kampala, Uganda and visited home-based worker groups in rural and urban areas. Photo of field visit to Nurturing Uganda, WIEGO.

KEY OUTCOMES

At the outset of work in Uganda, little was known about the concept of home-based work, working conditions or policies governing the sector. The work in Uganda was successful in increasing the understanding of the concept of home-based work in the leadership and membership of UGAFAT. This recognition of their identity as workers with common problems has inspired UGAFAT to continue to spread the information more widely, both within and outside of UGAFAT, and demonstrates a commitment to continue taking the work forward to organize and sensitize HBWs. It can therefore be argued that the (albeit nascent) movement of home-based workers in Uganda has been strengthened through the project activities. Anne Kuteesa, a UGAFAT leader summarized how the project impacted their organization at the regional meeting in Uganda:

"We also had to do sensitisation about home-based workers mainly to groups we are dealing with. We had a chance to use the mapping to help with the sensitisation. Because of the FLOW project they [fair trade producers] now know themselves as home-based workers. They know what their challenges are so it is just a matter of telling other people and organizations outside UGAFAT. We need to spread this information more widely."

(WIEGO, 2015)

An additional impact (as summarized in the other African country summaries above) is the establishment of a regional Working Group on HBWs which includes Uganda. This Working Group represents a first step towards forming a regional network of HBWs – the first of its kind in Africa. The four-country group has already met twice since project completion (in December 2015 and January 2016) and plans are being discussed for ways each country can continue working on HBW issues.

Ugandan HBW networks (along with Kenya) have decided to continue supporting community-based facilitators (who were trained as part of this project) in carrying out trainings to small groups about the concept of home-based work, findings from the mapping and policy analysis and other topics.

PROJECT REGION: LATIN AMERICA

BACKGROUND & MAIN PROJECT ACTIVITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

In Latin America, as in Africa, WIEGO aimed to extend networking among home-based workers beyond South and South-East Asia. Though WIEGO was aware that HBWs were operating in Latin America, little was known about their organizations or working conditions. A scoping exercise was undertaken to understand the situation of HBWs in four Latin America countries (Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Nicaragua), with an aim of identifying organizations of HBWs which could benefit from policy analysis and advocacy, and from capacity building workshops aimed at supporting national networking and/or policy advocacy.

During 2012 over 160 potential contacts were identified in four cities: Buenos Aires, Argentina; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Lima, Peru; and Managua, Nicaragua. Later in the year, the researcher conducted field visits to four cities to meet with organizations, individuals and home-based workers to gain a more in-depth understanding of the situation of HBWs in the countries, what work was being undertaken to take up their issues and main challenges to organizing the sector. The field visits found the concept of “home-based work” was not well understood by workers themselves or support organizations. While several organizations in the field visits were supporting HBWs (i.e. because they were supporting textile workers, micro-entrepreneurs, migrant workers, or women workers), they were not explicitly supporting “home-based workers”. Organizing HBWs in Latin America was therefore at a much earlier stage than anticipated by WIEGO.

QUICK FACTS

- **6 countries of activity:** Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Nicaragua and later Chile and Uruguay
- **11** organizational mapping or policy analysis reports completed
- **1 regional meeting** bringing together 23 home-based workers and supporters
- **6 capacity building workshops** in 4 countries

In September 2013, a regional meeting was held in Lima, Peru with a total of 23 home-based worker organizers and their supporters.¹⁴ The meeting brought together organizations and supporters identified through the mapping process, providing an opportunity to establish linkages in the region and identify additional organizations supporting home-based work not reflected in the mapping. Given the relatively low level of existing knowledge on the concept by participants, capacity building was provided by WIEGO on home-based work, what it is, and information on the networking and organizing process being undertaken by other HBWs around the world. Participants also worked together to identify what was required to build HBW leaders and organizations and explored key areas for activities based on country-level needs. This identified the need for a more in-depth understanding of the sector (through additional research) and the need for awareness raising activities in the region (through workshops).

WIEGO further focused efforts on deepening its understanding of the sector in three countries: Argentina, Brazil and Peru,¹⁵ where more in-depth mapping and policy analysis of the laws affecting home-based work was undertaken in 2014 and 2015. In Brazil and Argentina, the local partners then shared the results of the mapping in workshops with HBWs, support organizations, trade unions and academics with a view to raising awareness of the sector, discussing key issues and making plans for organizing HBWs.

Unexpectedly, one of the workshops in Argentina helped identify additional organizations of HBWs in Chile and Uruguay (countries which were not initially contemplated for inclusion in the project). These contacts were followed up through a field visit by a WIEGO Organizer in July 2015, where the first trade unions of HBWs in the region were identified.

The following sections summarize the work completed in six Latin American countries and the outcomes and achievements of the activities.

COUNTRY OF ACTIVITY: ARGENTINA

Argentina is one of only ten countries (and the only one in Latin America) to have ratified the ILO Home Work Convention C177. In Buenos Aires alone, home-based work accounts for 3 per cent of urban employment (ILO and WIEGO, 2013). In 2012, WIEGO began work to investigate how and whether home-based workers were being organized in the country with an aim to attempting to extend the movement of home-based workers to Argentina.

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

In November 2012, following a mapping process to identify organizations supporting or organizing HBWs in Buenos Aires, Argentina, a WIEGO organizer visited the Argentinian capital. The field visit allowed WIEGO to gain a better understanding of the situation of home-based work in the country

¹⁴ Participants were from Peru (6 from 5 organizations), Argentina (2 participants from 2 organizations), Brazil (3 participants from 2 organizations), Nicaragua (2 participants from 1 organization), plus 1 researcher, 6 WIEGO and 2 from Bulgaria.

¹⁵ Further efforts to follow-up work in Nicaragua proved unsuccessful.

and meet with representatives from two organizations. One of the two organizations was the Asociación Lola Mora –which supports social activists, women leaders, grassroots organizations and unions through research and capacity building. Given Lola Mora's mandate and close work with social movements, it was identified as a local partner for supporting additional research and movement building. Lola Mora and WIEGO then linked with a worker's organization which could support organizing efforts – the Confederación de Trabajadores en la Economía Popular (CTEP) – an independent organization which represents workers in the popular economy and their families. Though not specifically organizing home-based workers at the time, CTEP was organizing street vendors, workers in cooperatives, waste pickers and other informal workers.

Building on the contacts identified by WIEGO, Lola Mora undertook a more in-depth mapping process in Buenos Aires in 2014 in order to identify additional organizations, and make recommendations regarding a plan of action in Argentina. Lola Mora interviewed 14 key informants from government, trade unions, NGOs, and academics and held meetings with 20 organizations which supported or had HBWs in their ranks.¹⁶ As Lola Mora researcher Norma Sanchís commented, *"It was very difficult to begin [...] because there were no people who identified as home-based workers. We could find people that could be identified as home-based workers but they had other names such as own account workers, independent workers [...]"*. Despite this, the mapping revealed a "rich informal network" of different types of organizations and groups in the city of Buenos Aires and its surrounding areas, many of which were supporting home-based workers in some way. While these organizations had HBWs among their members, their goals did not mention home-based work specifically, often referring to it as "self-employment" or "individual enterprises" (Sanchís, 2014).

In February 2015, two Argentinian representatives – Gabriela Olgún from Cooperativa El Adoquin (an affiliate of CTEP) and Norma Sanchís from Lola Mora – attended the Global Conference on Home-Based Workers in Delhi, India organized by WIEGO. The conference (and field visits to SEWA Delhi) provided the Argentinian participants with an opportunity to learn of the organizing experiences of more well-established movements of HBWs from South and South-East Asia, learn more about regional efforts to organize HBWs and to provide input to the Delhi Declaration – the first ever international Declaration on HBWs (see more on the Global Conference in the "international" section below). Attending the conference also helped cement their commitment to taking HBW issues forward in Argentina:¹⁷ during a feedback process on the Delhi Conference between Gabriela Olgún and the president of CTEP, he agreed that CTEP needed to start looking at home-based work as a cross-cutting issue which affected various sectors of their membership.

In March 2015, WIEGO, CTEP and Lola Mora organized a workshop in Buenos Aires to create a networking space for grassroots organizations, NGOs, and academics who were doing work related to HBWs, increase knowledge of the concept of home-based work and the specific challenges and problems of the sector, conduct an analysis of existing legislation in Argentina aimed at the sector and set priorities and agree on actions to promote the sector. The workshop brought together 41 participants and represented the first of its kind in the country. Three key outcomes of the workshops were: an agreement to establish a Working Group to take forward actions agreed

16 In addition to the interviews and surveys, additional information was gathered during the Latin American Workshop of Informal/Popular Workers' Organizations in March 2014 which was organized by CTEP and WIEGO. The workshop was part of a process to gather feedback on a platform on formalizing the informal economy for a separate line of work but WIEGO took advantage of the opportunity to gather additional information for the HBW project in Argentina.

17 Based on feedback from an interview with Latin American Home-Based Worker Coordinator, Laura Morillo.

upon during the workshop, agreement to expand the exploratory mapping of the sector done in 2014 and a dialogue which was held between leaders of CTEP with representatives from the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Development during the workshop.¹⁸

Later in the year, a series of three Working Group meetings were held (in June, July and September). The meetings, convened by CTEP and Lola Mora, brought together a total of 13 different organizers and supporters of home-based workers representing 7 organizations to discuss main issues and challenges to organizing HBWs and how to begin implementing the action plan decided at the March 2015 meeting.

In tandem with the Working Group activities, a secondary phase of mapping was undertaken by Lola Mora to deepen the understanding of the relationship between HBWs and formal unions who organize in sectors where home-based work is known to be prevalent (i.e. the brickmakers' union), market/trade organizations, and support organizations.

Given some of the difficulties in bringing together organizations during the Working Group meetings, WIEGO, CTEP and Lola Mora decided to deepen efforts to organize HBWs with a smaller number of leaders of organizations with HBW members. A meeting in December 2015 was organized by the partners with 25 participants from workers' organizations, NGOs, universities and the International Labour Organization in Buenos Aires. Most of the representatives attending the workshop had already been included in previous project work related to HBWs in Argentina and represented a critical mass of organizations with diverse experiences and organizational structures. There was general agreement of the need to draw up strategies for the rights of HBWs, develop more communications materials



Aracely Tabarez, a member of Cooperativa El Adoquín, CTEP, Argentina. Photo: El Adoquín, CTEP

¹⁸ Per conversations with Laura Morillo and Chris Bonner, it is believed that this dialogue helped contribute to CTEP being granted legal recognition later in 2015.

to raise awareness about the issues of the sector and sensitize and create a collective home-based worker identity. A working agenda was approved for 2016 and it was agreed that a memorandum of Agreement would be drafted and signed by the different trade unions, allied unions, co-operatives, NGOs and individuals committed to the topic of home-based work – a promising indicator that there is commitment to continue organizing and raising awareness of home-based worker issues.

KEY OUTCOMES

In Argentina, the starting point for the HBW project was a situation where there was “low – almost nil – awareness” of home-based worker issues, working conditions or rights among organizations involved in the mapping (Sanchís, 2014). There were no organizations of home-based workers and seemingly no organizations specifically taking forward their issues. The term “home-based workers” was commonly confused with “domestic workers”, demonstrating a basic lack of awareness regarding home-based work (Ibid). In the ensuing years of the project period, however, notable progress was made, which points to increased visibility and awareness of the sector and progress towards building a movement of HBWs in the country.

Through the research and mapping, support organizations and organizations with HBW members have been identified. Through workshops, results of the mapping process were shared and invited organizations were able to improve their knowledge of the concept of home-based workers and their issues. The mapping helped identify a strong presence of HBWs in several sectors (i.e. the leather sector, brick makers, textile workers) and identified informal links between different organizations. Several organizations recognized they had HBW members and declared they would be making concerted efforts to address their issues:

- SEDECA (Secretariado de Enlace de Comunidades Autogestionarias)¹⁹ representatives are using the term “home-based worker” rather than “entrepreneurs” as they recognize that the term better describes the worker’s situation and work conditions.
- CTEP has improved its awareness and knowledge²⁰ of HBWs and has committed to establishing and promoting a specific branch for HBWs in its organization, convinced of the need to integrate this group of workers into its membership and make them visible (Asociacion Lola Mora, 2015).
- Industry-based unions such as the Brickmakers’ Union, the Land Workers’ Union and the Leather Manufacturing Union – included in project activities given the size of home-based work in their sectors – have each, to varying degrees, expressed willingness to include home-based workers in their unions (Asociacion Lola Mora, 2015). The Leather Manufacturing Union, for example, is promoting a change in its Constitution to include HBWs (Ibid).
- The project also helped establish linkages between informal worker organizations (such as CTEP) with formal trade union centres such as the Confederacion General de Trabajadores (CGT) and the Central de Trabajadores de Argentina (CTA), both of whom had representatives at the workshop in December 2015. The CTA stated it plans to integrate HBWs into the union.

19 SEDECA develops activities in informal housing settlements in the city of Buenos Aires and Greater Buenos Aires. It works with entrepreneurs, migrants, especially women, with a gender perspective. Some of the people it helps are HBWs but there does not appear to be specific info on this sector. Per their website, they say that since 1995, they have helped 2000 microentrepreneurs with financing, technical assistance and training. And, over 1000 households have been supported by microcredits to improve their houses since 1995.

20 An interview with Norma Sanchís said that she believed one of the biggest achievements of the project was that CTEP went from not doing anything related to HBW to beginning to organize and integrate HBWs as members.

The above in a sense represents “policy change” within the formal trade unions, many of whom often are reluctant to include informal workers such as HBWs in their ranks. This change – towards recognition of home-based work as a sector, and one with its own specific challenges – is one of the first steps to organizing the sector. In terms of improving visibility and understanding, this achievement should not be under-emphasized.

In addition to improved knowledge and understanding of the sector, the project work has strengthened the partner organization CTEP. As Gabriela Olgúin of Cooperativa El Adoquin/CTEP explains, the project helped establish more formal lines of dialogue with trade unions like the CTA and other worker organizations such as Colectivo Simbiosis. *“We [CTEP and Cooperativa El Adoquin] couldn’t work together [with other trade unions and worker organizations] and sit at the same table [in dialogue]. The project helped to do that.”* Building relationships between informal worker organizations and formal trade unions is not easy given existing conflicts and/or rivalries between organizations and this collective work strengthens the legitimacy of CTEP. The workshops and Working Group meetings helped bring organizations together, where they were able to put aside their differences and engage in joint planning on the sector. In addition, at the end of 2015, the CTEP obtained legal recognition after a lengthy struggle. This new status will provide it with additional legitimacy in negotiating and engaging with trade union centers and government departments. CTEP is already being included in a dialogue about policies on workers in the social economy and home-based workers with the newly elected government at the end of 2015 (Asociación Lola Mora, 2015). The dialogue between CTEP and the Ministry of Labour at the March 2015 workshop contributed to this achievement.

As a result of the project, more concerted organizing efforts are taking shape through the formation of a nascent network of HBWs in the wider Buenos Aires District. This represents a significant development given that no organizations were knowingly organizing HBWs or taking their issues up in 2012. Project outreach and workshop activities facilitated networking between 15 organizations with HBW members (mostly women), resulting in the decision to form a working group of leaders from these organizations. The working group met three times in 2015 to discuss strategies and to plan activities on organizing HBWs. Plans are in place to take work forward in the spring of 2016.²¹

Most importantly, the networking process and project activities have strengthened the capacity of new women home-based worker leaders such as Gabriela Olgúin. Gabriela is a member of the Cooperativa El Adoquin, CTEP and the newly formed Working Group in Buenos Aires. The project has improved her understanding of the concept of home-based work. At the beginning of the project, Gabriela explains *“...we were all home-based workers but we did not realize.”* Travelling to exchanges as part of the project (India and Uganda in 2015) allowed her to learn about organizing experiences of HBWs in different regions of the world and learn more about HBW issues. This in turn, led to the realization that workers in her cooperative (who vend in public spaces) were also HBWs and that in CTEP, HBWs were present across several branches of activities. Armed with this knowledge, she reported back to the President of CTEP about her learnings. As a result, CTEP agreed to begin organizing HBWs as a branch in the organization and frequently asks Gabriela for her advice on different issues.²² *“Attending the conference in New Delhi was important for legitimising me as a leader because in my home country I was now respected and*

21 Presidential elections leading up to November/December 2015 put some of the working group activities and meetings on hold. The new centre-right government elected in November 2015 marks a significant shift from the left-wing government operating in the country over the last 10 years.

22 Per comments made by Gabriela at the Uganda meeting in November 2015.

people were willing to listen to me," she says.²³ As one of the most active members of the Working Group, Gabriela has facilitated linkages between the nascent HBW network, formal trade unions such as the CTA and – with the support of Norma Sanchís of Lola Mora - has actively sought to bring other allied organizations into the organizing process.



Gabriela Olguín during the Global Conference on Home-Based Workers in Delhi, 2015.
Photo: S. Trevino

COUNTRY OF ACTIVITY: BRAZIL

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

Sao Paulo, Brazil was selected as one of the four Latin American cities in the desk-based mapping of HBW organizations. Field visits in October 2012 by a WIEGO researcher helped identify support organizations which would later act as local partners: ONG Agência de Desenvolvimento Solidário ADS (an NGO created by the Trade Union Centre (CUT) to organize self-employed workers in Cooperatives and Associations and help them disseminate, market and sell their products), *Instituto Observatório Social* (an institute that supports CUT members by analyzing and identifying companies' compliance with basic labour laws and decent work principles), and ONG Centro Gaspar García (an NGO that works for social inclusion through popular education, defense of rights and public policy interventions).

²³ Gabriela Olguín at Uganda Meeting in November 2015.

Following a regional meeting of HBWs and support organizations in September 2013, WIEGO decided to focus additional research efforts in Brazil (plus Argentina and Peru) to assess the possibilities and challenges for deepening work to organize HBWs. From August to December 2014, local partners IOS-CUT, ADS-CUT and a researcher at *Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros/ Universidade de São Paulo* (IEB/USP) did additional mapping of key policies related to home-based work, organizations supporting them and undertook interviews with four cooperatives/associations with HBW members. Several types of policies related to decent work, urban policies, the solidarity economy and individual micro-entrepreneurs (among others) were identified, with provisions which address the vulnerabilities of home-based work including informality and precarious work. Using these policies as a guide, researchers then identified several national, state or city level “networks”²⁴ with participatory spaces for policy debate and formulation on issues related to home-based work (such as urban policies, decent work, the solidarity economy, among others). These spaces involve government, worker organizations, civil society or women/business. Four types of networks dealing with HBW issues in some way were identified through this process.²⁵ Scoping interviews were then conducted with 10 organizations – including worker cooperatives or associations involved in the textile or food industry – to understand work conditions and types of organizations. Based on the research and interviews, the Solidarity Economy Network was identified as having the most direct and effective participation of home-based workers. WIEGO therefore decided to proceed with awareness raising and sensitization activities with the two most active regional solidarity economy networks: in Joao Pessoa and Sao Paulo.

In July and August 2015, a researcher conducted two workshops – one in Joao Pessoa with 8 women handicraft producers from 5 cooperatives and another workshop in Sao Paulo with 7 women home-based textile, food and handicraft producers from 3 cooperatives. During the workshops, the facilitator provided sensitization and training on the concept of home-based work, provided insight on the networks and organizations of HBWs around the world and in Brazil (such as SEWA and HNSA) and examples of international HBW organizing experiences and achievements. Though the workshops were conducted late in the project with a limited number of participants, this was an important initial step in sensitizing HBWs and raising their awareness of the sector globally. Participants expressed interest in knowing more about the experience of Ruaab SEWA,²⁶ participating in an international movement of home-based workers and sharing and learning from experiences of women workers in other countries – an important initial commitment to linking home-based workers to an international movement of HBWs.

24 The term “network” is used loosely – these spaces include councils or committees, conferences, hearings, dialogue tables, and public consultations with multiple actors.

25 Networks identified include: 1) solidarity economy networks (such as the National Solidarity economy network (CNES) and the Brazilian Forum of Solidarity Economy (FBES); 2) Decent work networks (such as the Permanent National Forum to defend workers threatened by outsourcing); 3) Fight against slave labour networks (such as National Committee to Eliminate Slave Labour (CONATRAE), State Council for Elimination of Slave Labour (COETRAE) – São Paulo, City Committee for Elimination of Slave Labour (COMTRAE), *Inpacto: National Pact to Eradication of Slave Labour Institute* (“Pacto”); and 4) Women’s Economic Autonomy Social Dialogue Networks (such as the National Council of Women’s Rights (CNDM)).

26 As part of the field visits undertaken during the Global Conference on Home-Based Work – participants visited Ruaab SEWA – a producer cooperative. See the “International” section for a brief explanation.



Home-based workers representatives visit to Ruaab SEWA in Delhi, India 2015.
Photo: K. Hughes

KEY OUTCOMES

The starting point of the project work in Brazil was one where little – if any – information existed among project partners about the legal/policy framework affecting home-based work or organizations supporting or organizing HBWs. As a result of the project WIEGO and local partners have improved knowledge on home-based work in Brazil. Mapping identified a relatively supportive policy framework for workers and several types of networks who were supporting HBWs in some way. As local researcher and facilitator Luciana Itikawa summarizes, “...the biggest challenge [to organizing home-based workers] is a kind of gap between progressive regulation and very interesting networks. And, on the other hand [in some of these networks], we do not have a very solid participatory process with workers as protagonists of their rights.”

In addition, the local facilitator notes that workshop participants and interviewees tend to self-identify as cooperative workers or members of the horizontal/democratic solidarity economy network, rather than as HBWs. The workshops held with 15 women HBWs improved their understanding – where none previously existed - of home-based work as a national and global work sector, of the main sectoral issues and challenges, and of existing efforts to organize HBWs around the world.

As a result of the workshops, women HBWs expressed interest in joining and participating in an international movement of HBWs where they can share and learn from the experiences of other HBW organizations. They were particularly inspired by SEWA's experience in advocating for social and economic rights and their work to promote fair working conditions through the Ruaab SEWA Artisans Producer Company and intend to invite SEWA to share its experiences on linking to export markets.²⁷ This can be interpreted as initial progress towards raising interest and awareness about building a movement of home-based workers in Brazil – a small but important achievement. This is well summarized by local researcher and facilitator Luciana Itikawa, *“The biggest achievement is to know there is a strong and real desire and willingness of home-based workers to participate in the international scale, to participate in this international network and also to share their experiences internationally at international forums [...] and also to have a political role in this as international women workers.”*

COUNTRIES OF ACTIVITY: CHILE & URUGUAY

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

Neither Chile nor Uruguay were originally conceived of as countries of activity for work under Strengthening the Movement for Home-Based Workers. However, in March 2015, WIEGO obtained information from participants at a workshop in Buenos Aires that several groups were organizing HBWs in Chile and Uruguay. Given the opportunity to link with Latin American unions organizing HBWs, WIEGO organized field visits to Montevideo and Santiago in July 2015. A WIEGO organizer met with 7 organizations (including 4 organizations with HBW members), conducted a workshop in Chile with 10 participants (2 organizers and 8 members of HBW organizations, all women) and held five interviews with women HBWs in Uruguay and Chile.

The field visit in Chile identified two trade unions of home-based textile workers - Sindicato de Trabajadoras y Trabajadores Textiles de sus Domicilios, Santiago de Chile (SINTRATEDO) and Sindicato de Mujeres Textiles en sus Domicilios de Coquimbo, Cuarta Región de Chile (SIMUTED), plus a women's group called Trabajadoras Construyendo Futuro y Dignidad Laboral en Viña del Mar (TRACONFULAB).²⁸ Though these organizations are small (with 25, 36, and 10 members respectively), they were the first unions or organizations identified during the project which are explicitly “home-based worker” organizations who have an understanding of the concept of “home-based work”. SINTRATEDO, SIMUTED and TRACONFULAB currently are united in a coordinating body – Coordinadora Nacional de Trabajadoras Textiles de su Domicilio (CONATRADO) – and hope to eventually create a Federation in order to join CONTEXTIL and have improved voting rights. During the Santiago workshop, participants from CONTEXTIL, CONATRADO and WIEGO discussed their organizations, heard about WIEGO's work raising awareness and organizing HBWs in the region, and discussed the state agencies responsible for implementing and enforcing norms and regulations related to home-based work.

²⁷ Per interviews with Luciana Itikawa.

²⁸ These groups were organized by CONTEXTIL - Confederación Nacional de Federaciones y Sindicatos de Trabajadores y Trabajadoras Textiles Manufacturas, Servicios, Subcontrato y Domicilio de Chile – a confederation of textile workers which began organizing home-based textile workers in 2012.



Daniela Oliva, Secretary of SINTRATEDO, a union of home-based workers in Chile.
Photo: L. Morillo

In Uruguay, WIEGO visited Sindicato Unico de la Aguja (SUA), a trade union which organizes approximately 3,000 garment workers, 50 of whom are HBWs (most of whom are women). Through meetings with SUA's executive committee and with HBWs, WIEGO gained an improved understanding of the context of home-based work in Uruguay and the work of SUA. The union demonstrated an awareness of the concept of home-based work and has already been engaging in advocacy efforts for the sector (they advocated to have home-based work and the contents of C177 included in Law N° 18.846 – the Law of the Garment Industry published in 2011).

Given the field visits in Chile and Uruguay came towards the end of the project, more in-depth activities could not be pursued with the organizations. However, a representative from Chile was able to participate in the Africa regional/international workshop in Uganda at the end of 2015 – a first step to linking the Chilean HBW movement to the international movement.

KEY OUTCOMES

Though the two countries were included in the mapping and networking process in Latin America late in the project, a few positive outcomes of their participation can already be highlighted.

The workshop with WIEGO led the Chilean participants to understand that home-based work is not exclusive to the textile industry. As the WIEGO Coordinator for HBWs in Latin America reported following the field visit, "...after talking to them [home-based workers, organizers and supporters in Chile], union representatives realized the need to [raise awareness] that there are home-based workers in other sectors and industries, and also start to think about joining forces with them [home-based workers in sectors and industries outside the textile industry]." This idea of organizing across sectors was solidified when Patricia Coñomán, a Chilean HBW organizer, attended the Uganda workshop at the end of 2015. There, she heard from a HBW leader from Argentina who discussed the idea of the popular economy and how they have begun organizing HBWs across sectors/industries. As Patricia Coñomán said, "With that [concept of] popular economy, we decided to reach out to artisans. We saw them as two different groups [but the Uganda workshop] served

as an experience [...] to help us in organizing". By April 2016, Patricia and colleagues had helped organize home-based workers across sectors in a district-level union in Santiago. The new union called Sindicato de Trabajadores y trabajadoras en Domicilio Comuna de Lo Espejo, organizes 25 HBWs (14 of which are women) across sectors including accountants, artisans, wood workers, bread makers, those who package cosmetics and welders (among others). According to the accounts of workers (as per above), the WIEGO outreach work as part of the HBW outcome played a role in this new understanding of the concept of home-based work in Chile.

The links established between Chilean HBW leaders and the wider movement of HBWs – although done in the final year of the project – has also already started to show evidence of how women's leadership has been strengthened. Patricia Coñomán, an organizer from CONTEXTIL and the Labour and Social Human Rights Department of Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Chile (CUT-Chile) participated in the meetings and workshops with WIEGO and HBW representatives in July 2015 and November 2015. She is an active supporter and organizer of HBWs in Chile, having helped organize two unions of women textile HBWs, one women's group and most recently a multi-sector district level union of HBWs. Reflecting on the experience of attending the meeting in Uganda, she said that though she had been to many union conferences and meetings, it was her first time attending a meeting with organizations of HBWs from different continents (Africa, South Asia, South East Asia, East Europe). In that meeting, she gained more knowledge of the situation of women HBWs around the world and their organizing efforts. As indicated above, the discussions at the workshop in Chile and learnings from organizations at the Uganda workshop, helped improve her understanding of the concept of home-based work as a cross-industry issue and to expand organizing efforts of HBWs across sectors in Chile. Following the workshops/meetings, Patricia has become inspired to organize a meeting with HBWs organizations of Chile and SUA in Montevideo to raise awareness and establish a common agenda and plan of action for HBWs in both countries.²⁹ Reflecting on her experience organizing home-based workers in Chile, Patricia says, "To have rights, you need to organize."



Patricia Coñomán Carrillo during the Africa Regional Home-Based Worker Workshop, looking at products made by participants. Kampala, Uganda, November 2015.

Photo: C. Wills

²⁹ Based on a report from HBW Latin America Coordinator, Laura Morillo.

COUNTRIES OF ACTIVITY: PERU & NICARAGUA

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT IN PERU & NICARAGUA

In early 2012, initial scoping via desk-based research was carried out to find HBWs and their support organizations in Managua, Nicaragua and Lima, Peru. One organization in each city was identified and field visits were scheduled in late 2012 with NGO Asociación de Desarrollo Comunal (ADC) in Lima and the Confederación de Trabajadores por Cuenta Propia (CTCP) in Managua. Through the field visits to the two organizations, an additional eight organizations were identified (six registered associations and one non-registered association with HBW members in Lima and one union with HBW members in Nicaragua). An additional membership-based organization in Lima – the Red Nacional de Mujeres Autoempleadas – was also identified through this process.

Based on findings from the initial field visits and given WIEGO's strong presence in Lima, it was agreed that a local researcher would undertake additional policy mapping and organizational mapping in early 2013. In September 2013, a regional Latin American workshop was held in Lima bringing together 23 HBW leaders and supporters from Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Nicaragua and Bulgaria. The workshop provided capacity building on home-based work and building organizations and networks. Participants were also able to share information and exchange experiences on the legal/policy issues in their countries, discuss the situation of HBWs in their countries and learn from the networking process of HBWs in Eastern Europe (from the Bulgarian participants). As a result of the meeting, plans for action were prioritized in each country.

Though additional work was planned in Nicaragua and Peru as part of the project, other priorities meant that organizing and sensitizing HBWs in both countries was put on hold. In Lima, changes in the municipal government threatened to change a regulation favourable to street vendors, therefore advocacy efforts by WIEGO shifted focus. Despite this, WIEGO was able to gain additional knowledge of HBW working conditions through two focus groups held at the end of 2015 with 13 HBW participants. The focus groups provided a preliminary analysis of the work environment and HBWs' perceptions of their working conditions which can be used as a starting point for future organizing work in the sector. In Nicaragua, further efforts to engage local partner CTCP proved unsuccessful.

KEY OUTCOMES

As indicated above, only initial scoping of organizations was done in Peru and Nicaragua. However, from a starting point in each country where WIEGO had little knowledge of the sector and existing organizations, the mapping conducted in Peru and Nicaragua contributed to increasing the visibility and knowledge of the situation of home-based workers in each country, the organizations which support them and initial information on their working conditions (in the case of Lima). This represents a good starting point for future movement building in each country.

PROJECT REGION: EASTERN EUROPE

PROJECT PARTNER: ASSOCIATION OF HOME-BASED WORKERS BULGARIA

The Association of Home-Based Workers Bulgaria (AHBW Bulgaria) is a national association of mostly women home-based workers with over 35,000 members (Spooner, 2013). AHBW Bulgaria is one of the strongest and largest organizations of HBWs in the Balkan region and has been the driving force behind regional organizing and networking efforts between organizations supporting home-based workers. Given its experience in networking and organizing HBWs in the region, WIEGO partnered with AHBW Bulgaria in implementing activities towards strengthening the movement of HBWs in Eastern Europe.

BACKGROUND & MAIN PROJECT ACTIVITIES IN EASTERN EUROPE

In Eastern Europe, the WIEGO HBW Outcome aimed to support the creation or strengthening of home-based worker networks/organizations, improve their ability to advocate for policy change and strengthen the ability of their leadership to lead their organizations. Planned activities included mapping individual HBWs in several East European countries to understand their work conditions and places of work. Many of the organizations other than AHBW Bulgaria were very small (often with fewer than 200 members); therefore a program of capacity building was intended to strengthen their organizing efforts and understanding of the concept of home-based work. Networking between the East European countries was also encouraged through workshops to strengthen linkages between their organizations in hopes that a regional network could be established.

In February 2012, WIEGO and AHBW held a regional conference in Bulgaria. The Conference brought together representatives from associations, NGOs and unions that were currently – or intended to soon be – working with and/or organizing HBWs in Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey. Given that HBW organizing in the region was at a very early stage in most of the Balkan countries (with the exception of Bulgaria), the conference was used as an opportunity to share developments in each country, discuss ideas and information on

QUICK FACTS

- **11 countries participated in networking and training activities:**
Albania, Armenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria Croatia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine
- **Over 1000 HBWs** interviewed during mapping process in 7 countries
- **At least 10 country level or regional workshops** held with HBW organizations on organizing, policy analysis, organizational sustainability and advocacy
- **1 regional network** formally constituted with statutes and democratic processes

organizing and to decide on a way forward with respect to forming a regional network of home-based workers. A main outcome of the conference was a Declaration signed by organizations from 7 countries³⁰ agreeing on the need to form a regional network of organizations supporting and representing HBWs in Eastern Europe. Preliminary goals identified for the proposed regional network included advocating for labour and social rights of home workers and other workers in the informal economy, supporting the democratic development of member-based organizations of HBWs and increasing the visibility and validity of home workers (among others).

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

With this commitment to building a network, HomeNet Eastern Europe (HNEE) was officially registered in Bulgaria and work in the region shifted to creating and strengthening the national structures (HBW organizations and support organizations) and to supporting their organizing efforts. In March 2013, a second regional workshop was held³¹ in Bulgaria in 2013 with 22 HBW participants (the majority of whom were women) from 7 Eastern European countries. Through this meeting, organizations from additional countries (Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Armenia) were brought into the networking process. Participants discussed their activities, local challenges of HBWs, and discussed policies and laws regulating home-based work in each country. They also discussed the mapping activities which would be carried out later in 2013 and 2014. On the final day, participants discussed and agreed upon the long and short term objectives of the network and elected the Office Bearers of HNEE, marking an important initial step in regional efforts to organize HBWs and work as a region on HBW issues.

In 2013 and 2014, AHBW provided training and support to HBW leaders in 7 countries to conduct a mapping exercise which would help partner organizations of HNEE identify the nature of home-based work in the local context, the problems faced by workers, and provide an information base to organizations which could later be used for advocacy purposes. This was an important step in strengthening and building the local organizations given that in many cases, efforts to organize HBWs were at very early stages in Eastern European countries apart from Bulgaria. The following activities were undertaken in order to support local organizations in the mapping:

- In mid-2013 (May through July), local seminars were held in Albania, Macedonia and Turkey with a total of 63 participants. The workshops provided training to leaders on HBW issues, legal regulations affecting the sector and the mapping activities to be undertaken in the 3 countries;
- In October 2013, a regional workshop was held with 18 participants from 7 countries. Organizations from Albania, Macedonia and Turkey could share their experiences and learnings from the mapping process with countries which would be undertaking mapping in 2014 (Montenegro, Serbia, Ukraine and Georgia);
- Two workshops were held in April 2014; one in Montenegro (with participants from Serbia and Montenegro) and one in Georgia (with participants from Georgia and Ukraine). A total of 30 leaders were trained on the mapping process, and on organizing and networking, problem analysis of HBWs in the local context, a review of existing laws and policies, and a discussion on initial advocacy and engagement with local authorities.

30 Countries included Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Turkey.

31 The conference had a small contribution from FLOW but funding was obtained from other sources.

As a result of the trainings, HNEE partners in Macedonia, Albania and Turkey conducted a total of 500 interviews with individual HBWs in 2013. Policy analysis was conducted in Macedonia to deepen understanding of the legal and regulatory framework for future advocacy efforts.³² In 2014, a total of 500 home-based workers were interviewed in Ukraine, Montenegro, Serbia and Georgia. The mapping process provided the new national organizations with detailed information which could be used for future advocacy and in-depth information on home-based workers in their context. In general, they found that the majority of HBWs surveyed in the 7 countries were women, most were engaged in own-account work, earned very little (below minimum wage) and worked long hours without access to social security. Results of the mapping exercise in several of the focus countries started to bear fruit as organizations began to expand in membership and scale. This is because HBW organizations used the mapping process as an organizing activity. Work in 2014 and 2015 therefore shifted to focus on further developing membership-based organizations at local and national levels, strengthening HNEE, and securing the incomes and livelihoods of HBWs through exchanging good practices and training.

In July 2014, HNEE was further consolidated as an organization when it held its First Congress in Sofia, Bulgaria. Twelve leaders from 8 countries met to discuss future activities of the network, identified policy challenges in their country context and identified specific targets for advocacy. Further trainings were conducted in 2014 and 2015 which helped strengthen and focus the work of the regional network and encouraged joint learning between national level HBW organizations:

- October 2014: A regional meeting was held with Georgia, Serbia, Montenegro and Ukraine to discuss learnings from the mapping, and plans for taking up common issues on self-employed HBWs.
- April 2015: A training workshop was held on strategic planning, financial training and product design and marketing for 25 HBW leaders from Georgia, Albania, Kyrgyzstan and Bulgaria. The strategic planning session brought leaders through an exercise to develop concrete country plans for the period following this project, and a preliminary planning discussion for HNEE.
- September 2015: with the project end date nearing, a regional planning meeting was held in Kyrgyzstan with HBW leaders from Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia to further discuss planning for HNEE.

In addition to the activities above, organizations in HNEE began to organize "fairs" in different countries as a joint networking activity and to facilitate market access for many of the own-account HBWs. At this writing, HNEE organizations have participated in fairs in Bulgaria, Serbia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan. Training and regional meetings were often timed to coincide with these fairs to allow for greater cross-country networking and participation.



Vaska Karafli from Albania.
Photo: HomeNet Eastern Europe

³² This was done only in Macedonia given existing knowledge of East Europe country laws and policies.

KEY OUTCOMES

An important result of project activities is that several home-based worker organizations/networks (supporting mostly women HBWs) were either created or strengthened through regional networking and capacity building. The regional network, HomeNet Eastern Europe – composed of organizations from Albania, Bulgaria, Armenia, Turkey, Georgia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine – was formally registered in Bulgaria, has organizational statutes in place and is now under the leadership of democratically elected workers' representatives. By the end of the project, HNEE had grown to include 2,600 HBW members/associates (not including the 35,000 Bulgarian members/associates).

The establishment of the network is an important step forward in strengthening the movement of HBWs in Eastern Europe, many of whom are women. Prior to 2012, organizations in Eastern Europe had been in contact with each other but the project strengthened linkages between the organizations through more joint activities such as regional workshops. The workshops have also led to greater clarity around goals and the regional plans for organizing and activities in the future. As Karin Pape (WIEGO Deputy Director, Organization and Representation Programme) explains, *“By the end of the 3-year project period the representatives of the HNEE members have a clearer picture of how they want to move forward and how the regional umbrella organization can be used as a vehicle to serve its members. The focus of the work has moved from just being an exchange platform to developing demands and strategic plans.”* One such plan has been to further expand networking efforts into Central Asia. To this end, towards the end of 2015, HNEE had begun to contact HBW organizations and their supporters to extend the network to Central Asian countries such as Kyrgyzstan.

In addition to the establishment of the regional network, democratic practices of organizations of HBWs and/or organizations which support HBWs in 6 Eastern European countries have been strengthened. *“The project helped a great deal in building the movement,”* says Violeta Zlateva, the Chair of HNEE. *“Because when [we] registered HNEE, a big part of the organizations didn't exist at that point in time. With the help of the project, [we] organized the HBW and helped them register.”* As a result of support and accompaniment by WIEGO and AHBW Bulgaria, organizations in Albania, Armenia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey have registered with democratic structures in place. These organizations represent almost 2,000 HBWs, the majority of whom are women.



Violeta Zlateva during HomeNet Eastern Europe Congress in Bulgaria, 2014.

Photo: K. Pape

Organizations have also been strengthened as a result of increases in membership. The mapping exercises and regional workshops allowed HBW leaders from HNEE affiliates and partners to reach out to a large number of HBWs. Workshops following the mapping exercises allowed leaders to exchange experiences and good practices, leading to an intensification of organizing activities among HNEE affiliates. As a result, several organizations have grown in both size (membership) and scale (geographic coverage):

- In Albania, the Intellectual Women of Pogradec Albania grew from 50 members in 2012 to 500 in 2015 and expanded from a local base to form a national organization.
- In Macedonia, Dora Dom grew its membership from 50 members in 1 city to 500 members in 5 cities in 2015, expanding from local to a national level organization.
- In Turkey, organizations expanded their membership from 45 to 550 members.
- In Georgia and Ukraine, the Transport Workers Union (Georgia) and the Free Trade Union of Entrepreneurs of the Ukraine (FTUEU) reached out to 300 HBWs each (600 total) as part of the mapping process, which constituted WIEGO's first contact with HBWs in those two countries. The FTUEU has since shown interest in integrating HBWs into its organization.
- In Montenegro, the Association Sharenica Plievlia expanded its activities to two new localities in the 3-year period.

Another positive impact of the project is that organizations of women HBWs in several Eastern European countries are beginning to advocate with government officials – one of the long-term goals of the project. For example, the Macedonian affiliate of HNEE, Dora Dom, has begun to engage in policy advocacy with governments to represent the interests of its members, the majority of whom are women. As part of the project, the organization held a meeting with representatives from the local and national government (including representatives from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Chair of the Parliamentary Group for Agriculture among others) with the support of WIEGO and AHBW Bulgaria to discuss a draft law on home work. The government committed to present the Bill in Parliament as a result. In Albania, following the mapping in 2013, the HNEE affiliate “Association Intellectual Women Pogradec” substantially increased its membership, giving it authority and power to fight for women home-based workers’ rights. The leadership engaged the local authorities and successfully negotiated for a public space for members to sell their products free of charge near a main tourist area. Inspired by this success, Intellectual Women of Pogradec Albania Intellectual Women has started to negotiate with government for a regulation on HBWs. Other HNEE affiliates including organizations in Montenegro and Kyrgyzstan have also begun policy advocacy efforts for the right to produce and sell their products, for access to social security and for regulations which protect home-based workers.

The regional exchanges between HBW organizations in Eastern Europe has allowed for increased information sharing and exchange of best practices, increasing a feeling of solidarity amongst workers. Network members have helped each other access higher quality raw materials by buying products in bulk together or helping each other source materials. The fairs which have been organized in tandem with capacity building has also allowed members to gain improved access to regional markets as a collective, allowing women HBWs to gain an increased degree of self-reliance.



Second International Festival of Home-based Workers in Sofia, Bulgaria, 2013.
 Photo: HomeNet Eastern Europe

PROJECT REGION: SOUTH ASIA

BACKGROUND & MAIN PROJECT ACTIVITIES IN SOUTH ASIA

In South Asia, home-based work is an important source of employment for many workers. The most recent available statistics indicate that in India, there are over 37 million HBWs (Raveendran, Sudarshan, & Vanek, 2013), in Pakistan there are just under 1.5 million (Akhtar & Vanek, 2013), and in Nepal there are just under 1 million HBWs (Raveendran & Vanek, 2013). In most Asian countries, home-based work is a more important source of employment for women than for men (WIEGO, undated).

In South Asia, where organizing is at a more advanced stage, the HBW Outcome of the Securing Economic Rights for Informal Women Workers Project sought to strengthen four existing HBW organizations/networks by training women leaders in democratic governance and organizational management. To undertake the work, WIEGO partnered with HomeNet South Asia (HNSA), a regional network of organizations of women home-based workers. Founded in 2000, it has 53 member organizations from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives,

QUICK FACTS

- **4 countries of activity:** India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal
- **164 women leaders** directly trained on democratic governance and organizational management
- **8 workshops** held to increase leadership capacity of women leaders across 4 countries
- **1 pilot project** developed and implemented in 2 cities to improve women HBW leadership capacity to negotiate for improved civic infrastructure

Nepal, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka. HNSA members include member-based organizations of HBWs, NGOs working for/with HBWs, networks of HBWs or those that work to support HBWs. The organization aims to make HBWs and their issues more visible, ensure HBWs have secure livelihoods, and strengthen their voice and organizing efforts in South Asia.

ROLLING OUT THE PROJECT

Through organizing, women HBWs can gain collective strength which allows them to effectively articulate their needs and advocate for policy change or to make improvements to their livelihoods. To do this requires effective leaders on the one hand and strong organizations. The program of activities undertaken by HNSA was based on this wider assumption and experience of WIEGO. As part of a previous project, HNSA had begun working with member organizations to organize women HBWs in several South Asian countries into small self-help groups. However, though the women had begun coming together in groups to discuss livelihood issues, wages, and urban issues, they were not organized under a common objective (HomeNet South Asia, 2014). Taking this context into account, HNSA conducted a needs assessment and developed a training program to develop the leadership skills of women HBWs and help them build their organizations.

An initial capacity building program was developed around "Organizing and Leadership" for groups from India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Training was delivered by HNSA in collaboration with the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Academy – the branch of SEWA responsible for basic membership education, capacity building, leadership training, communication and research. SEWA Academy is an affiliate of HNSA and has extensive experience in organizing and training women informal workers (including HBWs) and was therefore well-equipped to assist in delivering the training.

Starting in 2013, HNSA and SEWA Academy began leadership training with the identified HBW groups (which have mostly women members). In December 2013, 11 Indian HBW leaders from 3 cities (Udaipur, Solapur, Nasik) attended a workshop on organizing and leadership. Topics included benefits of organizing, gender equality, effective leadership, techniques for running meetings and communicating with government officials. Following the training, the women leaders held follow-up meetings with groups of women HBWs in their cities to pass learnings along. In February 2014, a second workshop was held in India, this time with participants from Bhubaneswar. Twenty-eight HBWs participated in a workshop on Organization and Leadership and were able to gain exposure and learn from the organizing challenges and strategies of SEWA – a well-established union of informal women workers (including HBWs). In September 2014, a follow-up workshop was held again in Bhubaneswar, India with 21 HBW leaders and organizers on the importance of effective leadership, building trust among group members, effective communication, and forms of organization. This workshop sought to deepen the understanding of women HBW leaders on organizing and leadership so they would take HBW issues forward in their communities (such as advocating for basic infrastructure, improved housing and other amenities).

In February and June 2014, the training program was further tailored to HBW groups at a more advanced stage of organization in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. A total of 47 women HBWs attended an advanced leadership workshop in their home country on improved leadership and organizational management. The leaders had taken part in basic training on organizing and leadership as part of a separate project; therefore workshop topics included promoting organizational sustainability, increasing membership, and communicating and engaging with government departments on livelihood issues to respond to leaders' issues in the field. Using these learnings, participants were better prepared to begin taking issues forward with government departments (see outcome section for a discussion of the impacts of the training).

Mid-way through the project, towards the end of 2014, HNSA found that while the “one-off” workshops improved the skills and leadership capacity of HBWs, they did not always lead to effective implementation of the skills in a sustained way. Though HBW leaders had been exposed to good practices and received training on engaging with government officials, there was a disconnect between the learnings and taking action on HBW issues in their communities. This led to a decision to engage in a new type of training through the “Training Plus” pilot program. To implement the new training program, HNSA partnered with the Mahila SEWA Housing Trust (MHT), an organization which works to improve the housing and infrastructure conditions of poor women (many of whom are informal workers living in informal settlements). Given that several studies have confirmed that infrastructure and housing are key issues for home-based worker livelihoods, earnings and wellbeing, the training program involved a combination of in situ needs assessments with the partner and MHT, learning exchanges and training, and ongoing support by HNSA and MHT in developing and implementing a plan of action for issues identified by local partners. Two cities were selected for the program – Kathmandu, Nepal (given it was originally selected as a focus country) and Bhubaneshwar, India (given project work with this partner was already at an advanced stage).

MHT began the pilot program by conducting needs assessment visits to Kathmandu and Bhubaneshwar in November and December 2014 respectively. In Bhubaneshwar, MHT worked with local organization ROAD to conduct focus groups in eight slum areas to identify the urban civic issues faced by HBWs. In Nepal, focus groups were held to understand the needs of HBWs in five slums with the help of local partner Saathi. Following the visits, MHT met with leaders in each organization to discuss the findings of the focus groups and assign follow-up actions. Each organization then conducted a follow-up household survey in the identified slum areas to obtain more detailed information on basic amenities and infrastructure issues. Through this process, they were able to identify major issues in terms of availability of basic amenities. The initial assessment visits also allowed MHT to develop a training program based on organizational needs and weaknesses, namely a lack of understanding of local government structures, lack of awareness of procedures and documents required in upgrading procedures and lack of understanding about technical aspects of infrastructure and amenities issues.

In April 2015, 8 leaders from Bhubaneshwar and Kathmandu attended an exposure visit to MHT in Ahmedabad to learn about MHT’s experience in participatory slum upgrading, local government functions and functionaries, techniques for mapping infrastructure by communities in slums, forming CBOs, and building relationships with local and city government. During the visit, local leaders from the two cities developed short and long-term action plans for engaging with local government departments around basic infrastructure and housing upgrades, both essential to HBW livelihoods. Following the April 2015 visit, several meetings were held between women HBW leaders and various Bhubaneshwar city authorities (including the Mayor and representatives from the water and sanitation and electrical departments). These meetings marked important steps towards building advocacy and leadership capacity of the women leaders. Two further workshops were held in November 2015 and January 2016 in India and Nepal respectively. In India, 4 leaders from Bhubaneshwar visited SEWA to learn about the importance of cooperatives, how they can be set up and run, and how to implement the concept at the local level in order to improve leaders’ understanding of different forms of organization. In Nepal, deeper work with the partner was put on hold due to the April 2015 earthquake. However, a workshop was able to be carried out with 17 HBW leaders and organizers on running effective organizations and improving leadership ability. The aim of the final two workshops was to further cement leadership and organizing training done as part of the Training Plus Programme.

KEY OUTCOMES

Through a program of capacity building, exchanges and accompaniment (through the Training Plus Programme), HNSA has helped strengthen its member organizations and women home-based worker leaders in four countries (India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka). The training has educated women HBWs on the benefits of organizing in their communities. Reflecting on the training on Organizing and Leadership, a leader from Moratuwa, Sri Lanka said, “We have realized that we can do anything if we get together and work as one group.” Similarly, a woman HBW leader from India workshops summarized her learnings as follows, “We learnt leadership building, the importance of forming groups, how to register our groups, resolving conflicts amongst ourselves, among others and these skills are very important for us.” Below is a practical example, compiled by HNSA on how a Pakistani home-based worker leader has improved her leadership capacity as a result of the training:

A HOME-BASED WORKER IN PAKISTAN IS INSPIRED TO ORGANIZE HBWS IN HER COMMUNITY

“Sanam Gul is an emerging leader from Quetta, Baluchistan, a highly conflict-prone area of Pakistan where sectarian violence makes working dangerous. It is difficult for young girls and women to be out. The sectarian violence has made the region full of threats. It is dangerous to work in this region. In spite of such odds, Sanam Gul dared to stand out as a leader and to work for the home-based workers. After training with HNSA and HomeNet Pakistan (HNSA member), she has organized 8 groups in Quetta with 300 home-based worker members. She has identified a market that can provide HBWs with raw materials. As a leader, she updates her group with information on government programs and schemes and also engages them in larger advocacy campaigns. In Pakistan, groups have become vocal in representing their issues at provincial level and advocating for a national policy on home-based workers.”

The above is an excerpt prepared by HomeNet South Asia

The training also helped women leaders increase membership in their organizations, form new groups, rejuvenate old groups and improve the democratic governance of their organizations. This was particularly important as some of the HBW groups (especially in Sri Lanka) had started to dissolve, and unity and trust among group members was lacking. Following trainings, in 2013-2014, 53,287 HBWs were organized into 825 groups, in 2015 another 25 groups consisting of 700 HBWs were newly formed in India and Nepal, and 100 groups with a total of 2684 members were added in Pakistan.³³ The majority of the members in the organizations are women. In Sri Lanka, where groups formed prior to the project had begun to dissolve, the training on organizing and leadership helped motivate women leaders to continue organizing (HomeNet South Asia, 2014). Importantly, trainings on organizational management have helped further formalize

³³ Note that this increase cannot all be attributed to the project itself, but activities contributed to the mobilization of HBWs and understanding by leadership on how to organize, how to run a membership-based organization.

democratic practices within their groups. As the Project Coordinator for HNSA writes, “Leaders have understood the importance of governance which is evident, as the groups have started decision-making by electing a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and a three member working committee, chosen unanimously.” The coordinator also observed that at least 28 HBW leaders from Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka had further formalized their group proceedings, “[...] by conducting regular meetings, maintaining meeting minutes and books of accounts, etc., which clearly indicates change in governance of the groups.”



Shakuntala Rameshman, a home-based worker who has been hand crafting brooms for seven years in Ahmedabad, India.
Photo: Paula Bronstein/Getty Images Reportage

An additional, unexpected positive impact of the project was the knock-on effect that strengthening the grassroots organizations had on HNSA as a membership-based network. A first General Body Meeting was held in February 2015 to launch a new, more inclusive governance structure with a new more representative Advisory Board elected with 20 members from 8 countries. WIEGO and partners helped provide advice and guidance on the new “rules” to guide the governance of HNSA. Because the General Body meeting took place following the Global Conference on Home-Based Workers in Delhi, HBW representatives from HNSA affiliates and HBW leaders from other parts of the world were also able to participate and learn about the governance of a regional network.

Lastly, and most importantly, as a result of workshops and the Training Plus Programme, women HBW leaders and their organizations have begun to engage with local authorities around livelihood issues. The text boxes below demonstrate how both the Organizing and Leadership Training and the Training Plus Programme have helped equip women with strategies and tools for communicating with authorities:

IMPACT OF THE ORGANIZING AND LEADERSHIP WORKSHOPS

The leadership and organizing workshops undertaken in Pakistan, India and Sri Lanka involved educating women participants on the importance of organizing, taking issues forward as a group, and communicating with authorities. Women leaders were also able to gain inspiration on how women workers can come together to access essential services and basic infrastructure through presentations by SEWA Academy. Leaders and their groups now understand the importance and potential to make successful interventions around labour, infrastructure and social security issues and have begun to do so. The following are excerpts gathered by HNSA on the impact of the organizing and leadership training:

A Sri Lankan home-based worker leader advocates for repairs in her community

In Chilaune, the water supply tap required repair. Calls to the local authorities went unheard. Sita Shrestha, a member of the Ganeshthan HBW Group, took the initiative to see that the tap was repaired. She with another member of her group, campaigned to collect Rs 100 from each household. Most of the households cooperated and provided the money. This money was presented to the community representative who purchased the required cement, sand and other construction materials. Local masons volunteered to do the repair.

“At present, the tap repair is in the final stage. I am happy that the community supported me to repair it”, Sita said. “Following the training I participated in on Organising and Leadership organized by SAATHI, this insight came into my mind. I am taking the lead to transform my insight into reality”, she added.

Pakistani HBW leaders achieve improved waste management & access to electricity

In Pakistan, thanks in part to the capacity building leaders have advocated for improved infrastructure services with city authorities. For home-based workers, access to basic services and improved slum conditions are essential to their livelihoods given their home is their workplace.

Following trainings with HNSA and HomeNet Pakistan, a woman HBW leader in Lahore engaged in regular meetings with the Water and Sanitation Agency to address the inappropriate solid waste collection. Now, the garbage is collected from her community every two days (HomeNet South Asia, 2014). Similarly, another HBW leader in Faisalabad prepared an application to local authorities to have electrical repairs done in her community. Because of her arguments as to why the repairs were necessary, the issue was resolved within a week (Ibid)

Through exposure visits, workshops and ongoing support, the pilot Training Plus Programme improved the leadership capacity of women HBWs. Leaders improved their knowledge of urban service needs in their communities and now understand application procedures and effective strategies for approaching local authorities to resolve their issues. With the help of local organization ROAD, several women HBW leaders have engaged with local authorities including the mayor of Bhubaneswar on issues including sanitation, water stand posts, electricity and proof of residence (needed to access an electrical connection in the slum). Women leaders have begun to see improvements in their communities and in cases where they have come up against road blocks, the training visits have validated their strategies for engaging with government which has in turn strengthened their resolve to continue. Below is an example compiled by HNSA which demonstrates how women's leadership has been strengthened and HBWs are advocating for change in their communities:

"Snidga Mohanty is a leader of a HBW group in Bhubaneswar. After taking training and participating in the exposure visit to MHT, Ahmedabad, she realized the strength of HBWs coming together. In her locality there was a problem of drainage affecting HBWs' working conditions, as well as living conditions of families in the neighbourhood. She held regular meetings with her HBW group and with the support of ROAD (NGO member of HNSA), she was able to raise the issue with the local authority. She is also actively organising a savings group, through a scheme initiated by local government. Her strength and ability to present issues was recognised and she has become a representative in a slum committee formed by local government. The committee has to supervise the work of the engineer attending to the pipelines for drainage. She has also been able to mobilize more home-based workers into her group and taken the initiative to form a cooperative."

PROJECT REGION: INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE VISITS AND CONFERENCES

ROLLING OUT THE ACTIVITY

A key component of building a global movement of HBWs involves a process of networking within and between regions. This networking allows HBW leaders to build a common identity and consensus around key issues, learn from each other through the exchange of experiences and good practices and build solidarity. With this in mind, a series of international exchange visits and regional workshops were undertaken³⁴. These activities

³⁴ Regional workshops have been summarized in each regional section above.

QUICK FACTS

- **52 women** from 21 organizations participated in South-South exchanges and learnings visits
- **2 South-South exchanges** and 3 learning visits held strengthen global linkages and understanding of the realities of home-based work around the world
- **137** home-based worker representatives and supporters have participated in 8 regional meetings
- **1 Global Declaration** on Home-Based Work drafted with input from over 100 HBW leaders and supporters across 5 regions

aimed to begin establishing linkages between individuals and organizations focused on the sector in new regions (Africa and Latin America), facilitate cross learning between organizations and leaders of HBWs in more established regions, encourage networking within and between regions and in doing so strengthen women's leadership in the global movement.

The initial plan for the exchange visits was to have African and Eastern European countries visit India on exposure visits to learn from SEWA – a well-established trade union of women informal workers (including home-based workers). However, the program of activities was broadened to allow for HBWs from South Asian countries to learn from the situation of HBWs in Africa and East Europe. In May 2013, the exchanges began with a visit by three home-based worker organizers from India to Eastern Europe. There, South Asian participants conducted a needs assessment based on discussions with 21 representatives of HBW organizations from Macedonia, Turkey and Albania (with Bulgaria, Croatia and Bosnia acting as observers). The visit provided an opportunity for South Asian participants to learn about the Eastern European organizations, main issues faced by HBWs in the region, the legal framework governing home-based work, and to experience the realities of HBWs in the region through visits to the workplaces of HBWs. The topics of the meeting also served to inform the programme (through a needs assessment) for a future exposure visit by Eastern European participants to India.



Organizers from Asia visit Bulgaria and meet with home-based workers from Eastern Europe in 2013.

Photo: V. Zlateva

Eight HBW representatives from Albania, Macedonia, Turkey and Bulgaria (7 of whom were women) then visited Ahmedabad, India to participate in training workshops and field visits organized by SEWA and HNSA in November 2013. Participants learned about the structure and services provided by SEWA (i.e. trade facilitation centre, health workers and the cooperative bank of SEWA) and made visits to HBWs in different trades and SEWA cooperatives. For the relatively new organizations in Eastern Europe, the field visits provided a valuable opportunity to learn from SEWA's organizing strategies, its bottom up approach, services provided to members and how information is shared in a democratic organization.

The following year in August, local partner WFTO Africa & Middle East hosted a learning and exchange workshop in Nairobi, Kenya with HBW leaders and supporters from India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Egypt, Kenya and Uganda. At the meeting, participants from Africa (who were just beginning to work on HBW issues) had the opportunity to learn from participants from South Asia (who have been organizing HBWs for many years). The meeting also represented the first opportunity for networking between the 4 countries in Africa participating in the project (Egypt, South Africa, Kenya and Uganda).³⁵ Participants shared their organizing experiences and the activities undertaken as part of the project to date. A field visit was conducted to gain a more in-depth understanding of the situation of HBWs in Africa. And, at the end of the meeting, the South Asian participants provided input and feedback on strategies for taking the work forward in Africa and a plan of action was agreed upon.

Global networking was further encouraged in February 2015 when participants from five regions (Africa, Latin America, South Asia, South-East Asia and Eastern Europe) came together in New Delhi to participate in the first ever Global Conference on Home-Based Workers. Over 100 HBW leaders and their supporters (the majority women) met to discuss the situation of HBWs in five regions of the world, their challenges, achievements and plans for the future. They also participated in field visits to SEWA Bharat and Ruaab Artisans Collective³⁶ to learn about good practices in organizing and livelihood development. A key component of the Conference saw participants work together to draft a Global Declaration on Home-Based Work. The approved Declaration – the Delhi Declaration – sets out the main challenges and demands of HBWs around the world and calls on HBW organizations, trade unions, governments, and development agencies to take action in promotion of home-based worker livelihoods and rights. The Declaration was debated line by line and eventually unanimously adopted at the conference after it was put to a vote. HBW leaders then prepared a 5-year action plan with activities outlined at the local, national and international level (WIEGO, 2015). The Conference helped build solidarity between regions and served as inspiration for some of the newer movements to continue or begin their work organizing HBWs in their home countries.



Participants at the global Conference on home-based workers, 2015.

Photo: WIEGO

35 Ethiopia was later added as a country of activity and activities in Egypt were later put on hold.

36 Ruaab SEWA Artisans Producer Company is a producer company which is owned, managed and operated by women home-based workers in Delhi, India. It directly links women home-based workers to the mainstream garment industry and promotes fair wages and other benefits (see: <http://sewadelhi.org/ruaab-sewa/>).

In November 2015, project partners had an opportunity to network and share experiences at an Africa Regional workshop co-hosted by Uganda Federation for Alternative Trade (UGAFAT) and WIEGO in Kampala, Uganda. Thirty HBW leaders and supporters from Africa, Latin America, East Europe and South and South-East Asia met in a follow-up meeting to the Nairobi workshop. The meeting aimed to strengthen connections between African organizations supporting HBWs and linkages within the global movement of HBWs. Participants from all regions discussed their country level progress and achievements in movement building to date (in Africa and globally) including mapping organizations, understanding the legal framework, policy advocacy and organizing. More experienced organizations from South-East Asia and South Asia were able to share information on their successful experiences with organizing and policy advocacy in favour of HBWs. All participants were able to gain a practical perspective of the challenges faced by HBWs in Uganda through a field visit to two HBW groups. On the final day, participants worked together by region to identify their priorities for movement building, and provided feedback and suggestions to African participants on how to take the work forward in the region. Plans of action were agreed in the different regions and there was a common agreement that to achieve policy gains and improved rights, HBWs had to work together as a global movement: *“The overarching sentiment in the workshop was that to win any significant policy gains as HBWs we must engage in global collective struggles”* (WIEGO, 2015).



Home-based worker representatives meet in Uganda, 2015.
Photo: C. Wills

KEY OUTCOMES

The international exchanges served to build solidarity among HBW leaders within regions and globally, build leadership and organizational capacity through sharing best practices around organizing and advocacy, and inspired nascent movements to take work forward in their own countries.

For WIEGO, Latin America and Africa represented “new” regions for HBW organizing (as previous organizing efforts of HBWs were focused in South Asia, South-East Asia and Eastern Europe); therefore the international exchanges helped establish new connections amongst HBWs and support organizations in the African and Latin American regions. The Global Conference in Delhi allowed HBWs and supporters from 5 continents to come together to meet, build solidarity and share experiences and achievements for the first time. Importantly, the vision towards a global network of HBWs was consolidated and agreed upon unanimously by HBW leaders and organizers during the Conference and further validated during the 2015 Uganda workshop. As the text of the Delhi Declaration states, HBW organizations are committed to “*supporting, building and strengthening our organizations and gaining recognition, rights and representative voice. In order to improve our lives, we are committed to extending our networking and to building global solidarity*” while the Action Plan states that the vision of organizations of HBWs around the world is to build a global network of home-based workers. Both documents were unanimously adopted, demonstrating buy-in from all regions on this joint vision.

The Conference itself had several positive ripple effects. Participants from Nepal, Pakistan and Bulgaria (the coordinating partner in Eastern Europe) took the opportunity to raise visibility of HBW issues in their countries by holding press conferences to highlight the Delhi Declaration and their commitment to the Action Plan. In addition, several women HBW leaders who took part in the Global Conference and other international exchange meetings in the project highlighted how the experiences increased their knowledge and capacity as leaders, reinforced their commitment to organizing HBWs or inspired them to use learnings in their own organization:

- Gabriela Olguín, a home-based worker leader from Argentina said, “*Attending the conference in New Delhi was important for legitimising me as a leader because in my home country I was now respected and people were willing to listen to me [...]*”. Following her attendance at the Global Conference, she and support organization Asociacion Lola Mora began to deepen their efforts to organize HBWs in Buenos Aires through forming a Working Group on HBW issues. This is an example of a budding network resulting from project activities. (For a more detailed summary of Gabriela’s reflections and learnings, see the section on Argentina).
- Patricia Coñomán, a HBW organizer from Chile attended the final international exchange in Uganda. Though she is an experienced organizer who has attended various international meetings, this was her first time attending a meeting with other HBW organizations from around the world. She commented in an interview how learning about the popular economy and how Argentinian groups were organizing HBWs across sectors contributed to her decision to begin similar work in Chile. This eventually led to the constitution of a district level union of HBWs in April 2016. (For a more detailed summary, see the section on Chile).
- At an exchange visit to SEWA, four leaders from Bhubaneshwar learned about how to set up and run a cooperative. Following the visit, the leaders have helped set up 11 coops (or pre-coops) in their localities with *papad* workers,³⁷ stitchers and incense stick rollers.

37 *Papad or papadums are a type of Indian flatbread.*

- Following the international exchange between SEWA and HomeNet Eastern Europe, several participants mentioned that they were interested in promoting HBW cooperatives in their home countries. As the Coordinator in Eastern Europe reflected, *“It was useful for HBWs to see how Indian HBWs were formed in cooperatives and [based on the training and learning...] they built cooperatives here.”* At least 20 cooperatives in 4 countries (Macedonia, Albania, Montenegro and Serbia) have been formed based on this concept. Members producing vegetables, fruits, traditional souvenirs, clothes or knitting work buy products collectively, work together using municipal areas to sell their goods and market their goods collectively. *“They are working well and they are growing,”* Violeta Zlateva, the Coordinator for Eastern Europe says, *“They [...] saw in India, it’s better to form and work in cooperatives than working alone and selling alone.”*

For the “newer” movements of HBWs, the international exchanges provide inspiration for what is achievable in the long-term and can serve as motivation to continue their struggle. As Violeta Zlateva (Project Coordinator in Eastern Europe) said, *“The informal economy is a huge ocean of problems, but SEWA taught us how to swim, so as not to drown.”*

SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT GAINS

Overall, WIEGO’s project “Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers” has made several advances in building a global movement of HBWs. In areas where organizing was more advanced such as South Asia, women’s leadership was strengthened through trainings which have led to advocacy efforts around livelihood issues (i.e. access to infrastructure and basic services in the home which is also HBWs’ workplace), organizations grew their membership and improved democratic practices. In areas where WIEGO was reaching out to build new movements (as in Africa and Latin America), new research was produced on working conditions, support organizations and policies related to home-based work, initial awareness raising activities were undertaken, and in some cases, work was taken forward by newly established informal networks of HBW leaders and supporters. Where work was being consolidated (Eastern Europe), a regional network was established, national organizations grew in strength (through increased membership) and geographical coverage and initial advocacy activities were undertaken. All of the above reflects positive progress towards a stronger and more wide-reaching movement of HBWs which is working towards securing voice and participation in processes that affect HBW work conditions and livelihoods.

Several examples point to evidence that these gains will be sustained. The Working Groups and networks established are helping to carry work forward in the different regions beyond the life of the project. In Africa, the newly established African Working Group already had (as of March 2016) two teleconferences to coordinate activities after official project activities ended. In Argentina, conversations with two members of the District-level Working Group indicated that they hoped to resume work in the Working Group in April.³⁸ In Kenya, KEFAT’s improved membership information will allow it to do more targeted work and ensure that the programs it is developing are rooted in the context and challenges its members are facing. In Eastern Europe, plans are underway to continue regional networking through the fairs and to jointly mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the ILO Home Work Convention C177.

³⁸ A centre-right government was elected at the end of 2015. The previous government promoted supportive policies for workers in the popular economy and aimed to extend minimal levels of protection to many workers in the informal economy (Asociacion Lola Mora, 2015). The new government seems to be promoting more neoliberal policies. This may mean that rather than pushing for additional rights of new sectors, worker organizations may be fighting to maintain what they had. Despite this, conversations in early 2016 with representatives from Lola Mora and El Adoquin/CTEP indicate that there are plans to continue taking forward efforts to organize HBWs and convene additional meetings of the Working Group.

Inspired to continue organizing HBW

Most importantly, there is a general commitment to continue organizing HBWs at the national level and as a movement globally. In Chile, women leaders have already been inspired to organize HBWs across branches of activity, an important step in expanding the national movement of HBWs in Chile. In Kenya and Uganda, UGAFAT and KEFAT have plans to continue awareness raising and sensitization activities on HBW issues, organizing and policy issues with women HBWs in the fair trade movement. In South Africa, plans are underway to facilitate organizing efforts by connecting groups of HBWs identified during the mapping process to foster national linkages and raise their awareness on the benefits of organizing. In Brazil, HBWs intend to invite Ruaab SEWA to Brazil to share information on their producer company, which facilitated market access. And, globally, leaders of various organizations around the world expressed the sentiment – at the Global Conference and again at the Uganda workshop – of their desire to continue networking and building a global movement of HBWs. Plans are already underway to continue joint work and to launch a global policy advocacy campaign around ratification of C177, using the 20th anniversary of its adoption in 2016 as a focus.³⁹

LESSONS LEARNED

Several lessons can be drawn from the project:

- 1. Movement building and organizing is a long-term process.** In Africa and Latin America – the “new” regions – there were few – if any – existing organizations of HBWs. Given this situation on the ground, WIEGO found that rather than “networking”, the priority was awareness raising, organizing and mobilizing HBWs from scratch. This means that particular anticipated outcomes (i.e. the creation of national and regional networks in new areas) will take much longer to build.
- 2. The concept of home-based work is still not widely understood.** Outside of South Asia and Eastern Europe, the concept of home-based work is not readily understood and workers do not identify themselves as “home-based workers”. This underlines the importance of ongoing awareness raising of the sector, and the need to continue to increase the visibility of HBWs and their issues through official statistics, research and high profile collective action.
- 3. Groups often need in-depth and ongoing support to achieve positive change.** This learning was highlighted by HNSA when they shifted from the one-time trainings at the beginning of the project to the more in-depth ongoing support to HBW groups with organizing and engagement with city authorities. This requires substantial resources and skills.
- 4. Supportive legal frameworks do not immediately create better working conditions and rights.** Several of the project locations including Argentina, Bulgaria, Albania and Macedonia have ratified C177 but working conditions vary substantially between countries. There is significant variation among policies and laws that have been implemented since ratification of the Convention. Some countries have laws which recognize and protect homeworkers but with patchy implementation, while others have not yet drafted laws. This highlights the importance of ongoing advocacy and organizing of HBWs to ensure legal frameworks are adopted and appropriately implemented.

³⁹ This campaign was kicked off in Ahmedabad, India in March 2016 where HNSA and WIEGO held an international event to mark the 20th anniversary of C177 and highlighting the lives, experiences, contributions and needs of HBWs. Connections between HBW leaders and organizers who participated in Strengthening the Movement of Home-Based Workers will be further enhanced during the International Labour Conference General Discussion on Decent Work in Global Supply Chains in June 2016. WIEGO is organizing and coordinating a delegation of homeworkers, organizers and supporters for this event.

- 5. Own account HBWs by and large are unprotected by any form of policy/legislation in most parts of the world.** While the policy analysis in some cases identified policies for subcontracted home-based workers, in most cases, own account workers remained unprotected by any form of policy or law. This highlights the need for ongoing work to raise awareness and organize this particularly vulnerable sector of workers.
- 6. Changes in political parties or leadership in countries can significantly threaten progress.** This was an observation which was relevant both during and after project implementation. Changes in the political situation in Egypt meant it was no longer feasible to conduct project activities. In Argentina, a new right-wing government is threatening progress made by worker organizations in the last 10 years as there is debate on whether it will reverse/abolish supportive policies for workers. This highlights the need for ongoing movement building and worker organizing, to continually respond to changes in context which affect progress.

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About WIEGO: Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing is a global research-policy-action network that seeks to improve the status of the working poor, especially women, in the informal economy. WIEGO builds alliances with, and draws its membership from, three constituencies: membership-based organizations of informal workers, researchers and statisticians working on the informal economy, and professionals from development agencies interested in the informal economy. WIEGO pursues its objectives by helping to build and strengthen networks of informal worker organizations; undertaking policy analysis, statistical research and data analysis on the informal economy; providing policy advice and convening policy dialogues on the informal economy; and documenting and disseminating good practice in support of the informal workforce. For more information visit: www.wiego.org.



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