

MY HOME, MY WORKPLACE

Volume 1, Issue 1

June 2003

ALL THAT YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT BHWA

Its activities and programmes

Compiled from BHWA office,
DHAKA

Bangladesh Homeworkers Women Association (BHWA) is an organization working towards improving the social and economic status of women homeworkers in Bangladesh since 1986. Our activities encompass all aspects of developmental work related to women homeworkers. Along with fighting for homemaker rights, we also work towards increased awareness & financial independence for women homeworkers in association with like-minded international agencies. (UNIFEM, HomeNet South Asia). Many trade union organizations including the ITGLWF, TWARO & BNC have been supporting us in our effort towards getting proper recognition for the

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR LEADER

Ms. Dilruba Anguri,
General secretary, BHWA

As of this month, we are beginning a new chapter in our work for recognition to the homemaker. Improved communication is a big part of the changes you will see in BHWA in the coming year. We hope to release regular newsletters, activity reports and have more frequent personal interactions with all our members and colleagues, however geographically distant. To this end, I shall need the cooperation of all my colleagues in helping BHWA become more effective and participative in its approach. We must give more strength to the organization by regularly attending meetings and keeping in touch. Exchange of views and expertise between members is also essential. We must become aware of our rights as a worker like minimum wages, decent working hours, medical insurance etc.

All members must feel free to approach BHWA for any assistance required at any time. BHWA had come a long way in our fight for Homebased women workers. And for any movement to be successful, dogged determination and unity among members is very crucial. It is necessary for each member to feel wholeheartedly involved in all activities of BHWA. We are working towards removing all misconceptions about home based

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homeworker. BHWA has been repeatedly requesting the government to include homebased women workers in its new **LABOUR CODE** and adopt a **NATIONAL POLICY** (based on the ILO Homework Convention 1996) to ensure better justice and representation to their cause. BHWA has tied up with Homenet South Asia to promote the cause of homebased women workers.

In the current economic scenario, globalization has meant that many big business houses and factories have been shut down because they were unable to cope with the various difficulties arising from globalization. BHWA firmly believes that our motto, "**MY HOME, MY WORKPLACE**" is an idea that will help combat the future labour and economic problems faced by the country. If the government can equip and fund every home as a workplace, then unemployment caused by closure of factories can be dealt with effectively. And, as a result, the country's economic downslide can be prevented. □

work in the minds of the general public. On an individual basis, each of our members can contribute to this in their own small way by spreading the message of awareness down the line to each and every woman in the villages across the country.

Marketing of products made by homebased women workers is a big part of our activities. Ensuring fair trade practices in this sphere is our long-term goal. It is important to maintain a consistently good quality in all the products being offered for sale by homeworkers as this would help improve the public opinion on output and efficiency of homeworkers. And remember that there are no shortcuts to success, we will need to work honestly, patiently and unitedly. We need to maintain this tempo of motivation over the coming year so that we can move ahead by leaps and bounds. □

BHWA Craft Centre

BHWA Craft Centre is the sales and marketing unit of Bangladesh Homeworker Women's Association. Our showroom-cum-office at Dhaka showcases various types of handiwork created exclusively by homebased women workers and assimilated from all over the country. The products on display are proof of the creativity inherent in these women who have had little access to any formal training or education. All of them, right from the laboriously detailed NOKSHI KANTHA, the brightly embroidered cushion covers and tablecloths, the trendy looking dress materials & saris and the meticulously made dry flower arrangements have been created over months of hard work by a group of women working singly or jointly. The prices reflect the tremendous amount of time and effort that has gone into these creations.

A large percentage of homebased workers are engaged in embroidery work and making handicrafts from locally available raw materials. In most cases, the basic skills necessary for embroidery work are traditionally acquired i.e. handed down by mother to daughter and honed through years of practice. Designs depicted are also motifs taken from the surroundings mainly village life and local flora and fauna. □

NATIONAL POLICY WORKSHOP AT BARISAL

In April, BHWA had taken an initiative to start organizing workshops all over the country in association with local homebased worker associations. The primary motive behind holding these workshops was to generate local support and favourable public opinion for the cause of the homebased women workers. This would help put pressure on the government to speed up decision making and implementation of a NATIONAL POLICY for homebased workers. The workshops would also help co-ordinate the efforts of the local organizations & create awareness on this issue among local government officials. The first workshop was jointly conducted by BHWA and Mahila Unnayan Samiti, Borobashail at Aagailjhora, Barisal.

DATE: 15th May 2003

PLACE: B.R.D.B. Training center

CHAIRPERSON - Mrs. Hosne Ara Rafiq, President, Mahila Unnayan Sangstha.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES WHO ATTENDED THE WORKSHOP

Mahboob Islam-Social Welfare Dept., Aagailjhora.

Nazmul Huda - Fisheries Dept., Aagailjhora.

Humayun Kabir- Youth Development Dept., Aagailjhora.

Farida Khatun - Women Affairs Dept.

Gazi Mizanur Rehman - Youth Development dept.

Rekha Rani Haldar-Rajihar Development org.

The participants were representatives from 16 local homebased women worker organizations.

SUGGESTIONS PUT FORTH BY THE PARTICIPANTS DURING THE WORKSHOP

- (a) Arrange for monetary assistance from government and donor organizations
- (b) Run projects on a contract basis in association with donors.
- (c) Encourage village women to work from home so that they can achieve a certain level of financial independence, help change their mindsets.
- (d) Make an effort to remove social superstitions.
- (e) Conduct vocational training and literacy courses for women.
- (f) Pressurize the government to adopt a NATIONAL POLICY for homebased workers
- (g) Each organization should guide and direct the women workers on a local level.
- (h) Improve communication and networking between organizations.
- (i) Try and procure latest machinery/ technology.

The workshop ended with all participants agreeing to send in more information on their respective organizations to BHWA so that future interaction could be more meaningful. □

EXHIBITION HELD IN MAY

On the occasion of Labour Day (1st May), BHWA and HOMENET, Bangladesh had arranged for an exhibition-cum-sale showcasing various types of handiwork created exclusively by home based women workers and assimilated from all over the country.

VENUE : DRIK Gallery, Dhanmondi, Dhaka

DATE : 2nd - 5th May 2003.

The motives behind having the exhibition were manifold:

1. Offering a platform for a dignified display of the products made by the women workers.
2. Assessing buyer interest in a specific type of product.
3. Assessing market demand, market acceptability & possible pricing for the entire product range on display.
4. Procuring orders based on work on display for the forthcoming domestic festive season.
5. Exploring new marketing channels and retail outlets for the products.
6. Interpreting the feedback from this exhibition and passing it on to the women workers so that they can create products with better market value.
7. Highlighting problems faced by women homeworkers & inviting decision-makers to interact with them directly.
8. To direct the attention of the country's decision makers towards the need for giving proper representation to women homeworkers in the new LABOUR CODE.

EXHIBITION HELD IN MAY (contd....)

Media coverage at the exhibition-cum-sale was widespread with visits from representatives of many English and Bengali newspapers, magazines and TV channels. The articles published will help generate mass discussions and favourable publicity on the plight of homebased women workers and stress on the urgent need for a national policy on the same. Hopefully, this exposure will ease the path for adoption of legislations in favour of homebased women workers.

PRODUCT RANGE ON DISPLAY

Nokshi Kantha

Bedlinen (embroidered, block printed & applique)

Sarees (embroidered & block printed)

Salwar Kameezes (embroidered & block printed)

Dry flower arrangements

Embroidered sofa set covers & cushion covers

Show pieces

Sandals made from leather, jute & fabric(embellished with hand embroidery)

Dolls□

Hand embroidered Wall curtains

Table linen sets (embroidered)

Embroidered kurtas for men

Wall hangings (hand embroidered)

Bamboo and cane handicrafts

Bags & purses(with hand embroidery)

Wooden watches

Please write in to

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