

Situating the Home, Habitat and Infrastructure: Towards a better quality of life for the Home-Based worker



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**Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi
2018**

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Towards a better quality of life for the Home-Based worker**

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Study supported by The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), India

Report prepared by: Institute of Social Studies Trust, New Delhi,

31 December 2018

Cover Photo: Ayesha Datta

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study would not have been possible without the kind support of a few organizations and individuals. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to all of them.

ISST is grateful to the Friedrich-Ebert Stiftung (FES), India office, for supporting this study. We are particularly grateful to Ms. Damyanty Sridharan and Ms. Jyoti Rawal for their inputs and overall roles in coordinating the project.

We are thankful to Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) for their technical inputs and suggestions in making this study possible. WIEGO has not only helped in finalizing the objectives of the study but also in identifying the study location and identifying the practising organization in the selected location. We are particularly thankful to Ms. Shalini Sinha and Ms. Avi Majithia for their roles and feedback in shaping the study.

It is our pleasure to extend sincere gratitude to Ms. Firoza Mehrotra of Home Net South Asia and Ratna M. Sudarshan of Institute of Social Studies Trust for their suggestions and feedback.

We would like to thank our partner organization-SEWA Bharat and particularly Ms. Subhadra Pandey, Ms. Suman and Ms. Rami for sharing their valuable experiences and providing inputs and Ms. Ankita and Ms. Rehanna for their invaluable support during the field work.

Finally, we would like to thank all our participants who took part in this study, their honesty and contribution is greatly appreciated.

The research for this study was conducted by Ayesha Datta and Gurpreet Kaur at ISST. We also take this opportunity to thank our ISST colleagues Kamalika, Akila, and Nitin who extended their support at different stages of the study.



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1. INTRODUCTION

Home-based work is recognized as the most invisible section of work within the larger ambit of the informal and unorganized sector. Estimates show that there are over 100 million home-based workers in the world and more than half of this number resides in South Asia – 80% of whom are women. In India, they constitute a major segment of labour deployment in the informal sector of the economy. Within the Indian labour force, home-based women workers live in almost every low-income urban locality in the country, as well as in remote rural areas, and are amongst the most exploited group of workers. These workers live and work in ‘on-the margin’ survival conditions and do a variety of jobs for industry and trade: from sewing garments, assembling electronic components to simple jobs of sorting, packaging and labelling goods (Sinha, 2006). Their work, primarily fixing, assembling, or cleaning raw materials to making a final product, in a way attaches no value to the work of the worker, keeping them at the edge of exploitation.

Chen & Sinha (2016) corroborate that the statistics on home-based workers have improved in recent years, but there remain the challenges to counting and classifying them as ‘workers’. They further contend that in many countries, labour force surveys do not even include questions on “place of work”, a key indicator for identifying home-based workers. Enumerators are often not trained to recognize and count home-based workers as part of the survey, and home-based workers themselves often do not perceive or report themselves as such, with the result that they are often listed as doing unpaid domestic work (ibid.). The policy debates thus revolve around the social protection and identification of the women home-based workers, who remain uncounted and unable to avail of any of the benefits which protect them against the risks that affect their everyday lives.

This study attempts to map out the everyday negotiations and struggles in the lives of a woman home-based worker. Previous studies have detailed the nature of what home-based work is, and how invisible and vulnerable it continues to be¹. However, the life of the home-based worker with a focus on the ‘home’ in relation to her work is the focus of this study. The Independent

¹ “...the presence of a large and non-transient informal economy is not normally explicitly factored into macro economic analysis; with the focus on production and growth, employment becomes an input or a necessary counterpart. Visible employment includes the farmer in the field or the factory worker. Exclusive focus on visible forms of employment, however, leads to an incomplete understanding of the labour market. Within the informal economy, one of the less visible forms of work is *home-based work*” (Sudarshan & Sinha, 2011; italics mine).

Group on Home-Based Workers in India constituted by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation in 2007 defined “home” as a) a dwelling unit and/or b) a structure attached to a dwelling unit and/or c) an open area adjacent to the dwelling unit (Sudarshan & Sinha, 2011). In other words how do we understand the larger ecosystem, the habitat, infrastructural provisions, the socio-cultural constraints that constitute the life of a woman home-based worker. To unravel the complex nuances of what affects the home as a workspace and as a household is to understand and bring to light the life of a home-based worker.

The study has thus focused on understanding the context and surroundings where home-based work most commonly births. How does the status of a slum, colony etc. have an impact on the everyday functioning of the worker? How does she negotiate with state-provisioned healthcare, sanitation, ration, education etc. to keep the household running? And how do larger institutional issues of urban poverty and informal labour economy affect the availability of income? Finally the question that one continues to ask: why does home-based work remain a category of gendered marginalization? What is it that, despite the changing nature of the work, continues to make the worker an invisible category within the informal economy system?

The study has been located in Delhi, which stands witness to a huge inflow of migrant workers, with urban slums being the location of informal and unorganized sector workers. Delhi tends to be most populated by North Indian migrants, a majority of whom are from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar² (CPR, 2015). At the same time, Delhi is India’s richest city, and as the capital of the nation has long enjoyed favourable treatment from the Central Government. As home to the country’s national institutions, it also benefits from a large base of secure, well-paid, government jobs. Over the last decade, the city has grown at an average rate of 10 percent. The growth rate from 2004 to 2013 in state gross domestic product was 9.97%. It has also benefitted from a dramatic increase in large-scale infrastructure development. Yet, despite these advantages, Delhi is a deeply divided city marked by layers of social exclusion (ibid.). And this decides the fate of the home-based worker based here.

²According to the Census 2001, these two states account for 58% of migrants who arrived more than ten years ago and continue to account for 55.7% of recent (less than one year) arrivals. However, over this time, the share of Bihar has risen from 12.1% to 21.4% and the share of Uttar Pradesh has declined (See CPR, 2015).

1.1 The Urban Habitat

With urban poverty only marginally less than rural poverty estimates, there is increasing research that attempts to understand how the urban poor can continue to reside in cities and how city planning aids infrastructural provisioning so that their quality of life improves. In comparison to 1983, when rural poverty was 5 to 6 percent higher than urban poverty ratios, by 2004 the rural poverty percentage ratio was only marginally higher than urban poverty by 0.9 per cent. Thus even though rural poverty has declined by 19.4 percent, urban poverty declined by only 15.5 percent. Increasing urbanization has been accompanied by the urbanization of poverty in India (Mishra & Dasgupta, 2014). Further, in 2010, the vast majority (79 percent) of the urban workforce in India was informally employed; half was self-employed and half wage employed. The estimated numbers of domestic workers, home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers represented 33 per cent of total urban employment. It should be noted that ‘home-based work’ was the largest single sector, representing 18 per cent of the total urban employment (ibid.). In that sense, how did home-based work, which originated from traditional craft-based paradigms where whole families would engage in one craft, transition into a major employer of informal women workers? Of course, the liberalization of the economy and the shifts in the market economy have created cheaper and easier avenues for the outsourcing of home-based work, and this is reflected in the various ways in which bigger companies have used subcontracting to distribute basic, low quality work that requires manual labour (Sudarshan & Sinha, 2011).

Considering the urban habitat further, the 2001 census puts the slum population at 42.6 million, which forms 15 per cent of the country’s total urban population and 23.1 per cent of population of cities and towns reporting slums (Mishra & Dasgupta, 2014). Mishra and Dasgupta (2014) give a detailed historical trajectory of how the state has responded to the increasing demands of urban settlers and created policies and programmes that cater to the urban poor. From the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal mission (JNNURM) (2005-2011) and Nehru Rozgar Yojana, to the National Slum Development Programme (2001), and National Urban Housing and Habitat Policy (2007), each have created different programmes with different politics of implementation, and yet the question of how to make lives livable for the urban poor still remains.

1.2 The Urban Resident in Delhi

It is important for us to reflect on how habitats and spaces are structured and divided in urban areas in ways that further hierarchize the provisions and services provided to the residents of these spaces. Bhan et al (2014) help unravel the critical and deeper question of who is the urban resident, and what and who allows and excludes the resident from the city. In building the Master Plan of cities, exclusions are created based on who can participate and contribute to the ‘growth’ of cities and spaces. The informality and illegality of poor urban spaces place them outside the hierarchy, making their residents vulnerable at the hands of state.

Writing on cities in the global South is replete with the term ‘informality’, which is often erroneously used interchangeably with ‘illegality’. There are two distinct themes within these debates: economic informality that describes conditions of work, enterprise, or worker status (where ‘illegality’ is rarely used), or informality/illegality in the habitation and production of space, particularly within housing. The premise of these debates lies in the reality of how residents inhabit cities. A significant proportion of residents—in many cases, the majority—do not do so within the ‘formal’ and ‘legal’ system, but through a range of practices, from squatting and occupation to violations of building and planning norms within individual buildings, or to the conversion of rural land into urban residential developments. It is these residents and their urban practices that the terms ‘informality’ and the idea of the ‘informal/illegal settlement’ seek to capture (ibid.). Bhan et al (2014) suggest that research across cities of the South shows that informal/illegal practices of habitation are not limited to the poor but, in fact, common to poor and elite residents alike, in constantly shifting terrains of how urban space is settled and produced. What separates these ‘degrees of illegality’ (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003) practiced by the elite and the poor are the degrees of informality/illegality and the consequences that result from such practices.

The Delhi government defines eight types of settlements in the city, including “Planned Colonies”. The others are: slum designated areas, jhuggi-jhopri clusters, unauthorised colonies, regularised unauthorised colonies, resettlement colonies, urban villages, and rural villages (CPR, 2015). There are jhuggi-jhopri, or JJ Clusters (14.8%), Slum Designated areas (19.1%), Unauthorized Colonies (5.3%), JJ Resettlement Colonies (12.7%), Rural Villages (5.3%),

Regularized- Unauthorized Colonies (12.7%), Urban Villages (6.4%) and Planned Colonies (23.7%) (Bhan et al, 2014).

Planned colonies are those that are built on plots marked in the development area of the Master Plan, in accordance with the use allocated to that plot in the Master Plan or the Zonal Plan (if it exists), and that are presumably laid out according to norms and standards defined in the Master Plan for design, infrastructure, and amenities (ibid.).

The JJ Clusters, Unauthorized Colonies and Resettlement Colonies come under the category of ‘*unplanned settlement*’ (CPR, 2015; italics mine). The Centre for Policy Research report on Cities of Delhi in 2015 refers to these as “excluded settlements”, as all three are to varying degrees excluded by law and/or practice from the city’s infrastructure and service delivery functions.

‘Unauthorized Colonies’ and ‘JJ Clusters’ in Delhi fall short of their definition but do so in different ways. ‘Unauthorized Colonies’ are settlements built typically on rural land or on land not notified for urban residential use. Yet home-buyers in these colonies typically have formal, documented agreements—ranging from ‘Power of Attorney’ (recently held by the Supreme Court to be no longer valid) to ‘Agreements to Sell’—as proof of legally defensible purchase agreements. The owners of the land (usually farmers) indeed have the right to sell what is undisputedly their property; the ‘unauthorized’ aspect of this transaction is that they are not allowed to sell the land for urban, residential use to non-farmers (as in the case of Khajuri- the field site of the study). In the Master Plan, therefore, these areas are either marked ‘rural’ or ‘urbanizable’. These colonies thus remain absent from the Master Plan even after the land is built up, cut into plots, sold, and occupied. This has serious consequences for residents; primary among them is that the property ‘titles’ are not recognized by the state because, according to the Master Plan, these settlements cannot exist. This lack of recognition has historically led to the inability to raise mortgage or to be eligible for municipal services. In other words, the titles of these homes are *formal but they are not legal* (Bhan et al, 2014).

JJ Clusters, on the other hand, also may involve payment for a plot but rarely involves the written, formal ‘agreements to sell’ on notarized stamp paper that residents of ‘unauthorized colonies’ brandish to show the legitimacy of their residence. The key difference is that JJ

Clusters exist on either public or private land with a clear owner who has not sold the land to the residents of the cluster. In other words, the sale has not been made by legal owner and, therefore, is void and fraudulent, *regardless* of the end use of the land. These residents have either occupied this land or paid someone who has done so before them. There can be no claim to ownership via property title in a JJ Cluster. For residents of JJ Clusters, their ‘titles’ are *neither formal nor legal*. Such a classification thus separates the formality of the transaction from the legality of the resulting ‘title’ (ibid.).

This classification and description finds importance in the present study as we reflect on the ‘home’ as the workplace of the home-based worker. These workers are more directly affected by government policies and practices regarding housing (slum upgrading and/or slum eviction–relocation schemes), basic infrastructure services (particularly the availability and cost of electricity but also water and sanitation), and zoning regulations (especially whether commercial activities are allowed in residential areas). Like other groups of workers, although not always on a daily basis, home-based workers are also affected by the accessibility and cost of public transport, especially if they are forced to relocate at great distances from their customers, markets or contractors (Chen & Sinha, 2016).

2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Home is the place of work for the home-based workers. Therefore the major work related concerns of the home-based workers are always centred around their home and habitat, including access to basic services, public infrastructure and most importantly the provisions of child-care facility at the community level. The present study attempts to unravel this complex relationship between of home, habitat and work of home-based workers live in Khajuri, a poorer settlement in the eastern part of Delhi.

2.1 Research Objectives

1. To explore how the 'household' as a home and place of work, both in terms of income and work symbolizes the 'gendered' life of the home-based worker
2. To explore how the habitat of the home-based worker, i.e. the surroundings and the community have a relationship with the worker and further, how these affect the working lives and conditions of the home-based worker
3. To explore the infrastructural provisions that limit or enhance their living and working conditions, which can then be contributed to the practice of city planning and the Delhi Master Plan
4. Finally, to understand the specific nature of the gendered marginalization of the home-based worker that makes her a vulnerable category

2.2 Methodology

A mixed method approach of survey questionnaires, time use case studies and focussed group discussions were chosen as the research method for this study. This method was chosen to understand the complex nuances of the everyday realities of the home-based worker, understanding the home as a site of their work. It has been observed that using a single method of data collection does not allow for a holistic understanding of the reality and conditions of the worker.

The sampling used was a mix of convenience and snowball sampling. Broadly, the survey questionnaire covered the household income, infrastructural provisions, nature of the home-based work, and the entitlements availed of by the home-based workers and their family.

The focussed group discussion on the other hand, mapped infrastructural provisions to understand the connections between work and locality. It helped in understanding the negotiations that home-based workers make within the family and community, and with the contractor to balance their household and care responsibilities with their demanding production schedules, and the challenges that they face in doing so when 'home' becomes the space for their paid work.

In addition, the focussed groups captured the work satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the women workers and the restrictions on their mobility while working outside the house. The time use studies gave an in-depth understanding of the everyday responsibilities of the home-based worker and how she negotiates arrangements of paid work and household and care responsibilities.

The advantage of this combined methodology thus enables us to better map out the vulnerabilities of the home-based worker within the informal economy. What and how the worker's vulnerabilities are lie in relation to home, habitat and infrastructure of the home-based worker's life.

3. HOME, INFRASTRUCTURE AND HABITAT: HOME-BASED WORKERS IN KHAJURI

Khajuri, in Delhi was chosen as the site for this study due to its large population of home-based workers and the presence of SEWA, which allowed for easier access to the community. Keeping in mind the focus of the study – home, habitat and infrastructure – the Khajuri community offered a fresh perspective on the marginalization of home-based workers due to its politics in being Muslim-dominated and an illegal colony.

The area chosen for this study was located along the banks of river Yamuna which is colloquially referred to as “Pushta”. *Pushta*, which means riverbank in Hindi and Urdu, is in fact a string of informal settlements on the banks of the river Yamuna that house both an agricultural and non-agricultural population of workers. The majority of the non-agricultural population comprises of daily wage labourers engaged as construction workers, domestic workers, street vendors, rickshaw pullers, rag-pickers or recyclers (Bhan, 2009) with very intermittent sources of income. Khajuri is one of the settlements within this area, officially named the Sri Ram Colony: a notified slum in the north-east part of Delhi. The pool of garbage that surrounds Khajuri and a series of sealing have led to the untimely loss of livelihood for many households within the area.

What was a low-lying area meant for agricultural purposes is now inhabited by 1.47 lakh people with a significant proportion of men involved in the stitching of bras and jeans in factories within and outside Khajuri, many of which are facing major upheavals due to the sealing drive in Delhi. Locating the importance of women’s livelihood/income from home-based work within this context becomes crucial to understand the specificities of their marginalization. The first step in this is defining home-based work.

3.1 Understanding Home-Based Work

“Home-based workers are defined as a) own-account workers and contributing family workers helping the own-account workers, involved in the production of goods and services, in their homes, for the market and b) workers carrying out work in their homes for remuneration, resulting in a product or service as specified by the employer(s), irrespective of who provides the

equipment, materials or other inputs used, and those contributing family workers helping such workers”.³

Thus despite the differences in the definition of the home-based work depending on the employment status, type of contract/work arrangement and mode of payment, what unites all the categories is the place of residence i.e. one’s own home. Thus, ‘home’ for all the home-based workers is also a site of her paid work. Furthermore, for those workers paid on a piece rate, as for the women home-based workers in Khajuri, the home also becomes a site of negotiation related to wages, payment schedules, work hours and availability of work.

3.2 Home-Based Worker in the Urban Habitat

As the home-based workers in the area mainly survive on intermittent sources of household income from wage labour – mostly tailoring but also construction, carpentry and property dealing – they work hard to create additional income from home-based work in the absence of a stable household income. A significant proportion of women workers from the A and C/D/E Blocks in the area were making decorative items with artificial flowers and leaves (seasonally available) and fixing the zip locks with the zips (available throughout the year). Pockets of Khajuri were also employed in pom-pom making and embroidery.

As the study examined connections between work and locality, it investigated how the household as an entity – both as a home and as a place of work– and the habitat of the home-based worker, along with the existing infrastructural provisions helped the home-based worker generate income and a better quality of life for themselves and their family. In the context of Khajuri, it became all the more crucial due to the area’s politics in being Muslim-dominated. It was this, along with the unauthorised status of the settlement that encouraged us to study the infrastructural provisions that work or don’t, in the area.

3.3 Habitat and Infrastructural Challenges to the Lives of Home-Based Workers

When we talk about claims to the urban space in contemporary cities, the poor living in informal settlements certainly have the least, and those living in JJ clusters and unauthorized settlements

³(Source: <http://www.wiego.org/informal-economy/definition-home-based-workers>)

perhaps even less, owing to the uncertain ownership of the space that they occupy. What is however important to note is that this informality has subdivisions and what is encouraged and what will disappear is at the sole discretion of the government (Roy, 2005). Roy states that “the metropolitan fringes have become a key location for the informal housing practices of the elite which usually enjoy premium infrastructure and guaranteed security of tenure” and thus it is the “state power that is reproduced through the capacity to construct and reconstruct categories of legitimacy and illegitimacy” (Roy, 2005:149).

3.3.1 Waste Management

Though Khajuri has some protection from eviction unlike a JJ cluster, it shares the same “physical fragility and poverty” (Bhan, 2009:131), as does any urban slum although differing in the degree of exclusion. One of the major challenges is solid waste management, for which several PILs have been filed and a series of evictions from informal settlements and JJ clusters in Pushta (where Khajuri is located) have followed as a direct consequence of the court decision (Bhan,2009).

The area being surrounded by pools of garbage presents a different set of challenges to the home-based worker in Khajuri and puts an emphasis on ‘household’ as a gendered space. Frequently caught in the conflicts that arise from the concerns around disposal of garbage in the area, women’s responsibility to ensure a clean environment for their families is reinforced in Khajuri, as the municipal corporation department (MCD) of the area fails to provide the residents with a hygienic place to live in.

The infrequent visits by the MCD staff and the refusal to dispose of the sewer garbage, which is set aside by women in bins outside their houses, justified by referring to it as “home garbage”, were some of the concerns emphasized by home-based workers in the area. Quoting one of them, as she said “*Hum jaise is kude ko bhar ke rakh denge aur wo kal aaye ya parso aaye aur humne kaha ki humne kuda bhar ke rakh diya hai tum le jao, toh kehte hai nahin le jaaunga isey. Wo ye sochte hai ki ghar ka kuda rakh diya hai*” (If we clean the sewer and keep the waste in litter bins outside the house, they refuse to dispose of it. They think that the bins are replete with household waste.)

As the state retreats from its responsibility of ensuring a clean environment, the women home-based workers in the area, both as workers and as care providers, get disproportionately affected as the loading and unloading of litter from homes and sewers to the dumping ground becomes a part of their everyday routine. It also shines light on the challenges that women face when 'home' becomes a space of their paid work, as it entails incessant rearrangement of their paid work and unpaid care work responsibilities through continuous negotiations within family and community.

Garbage dumping site at Khajuri



Source: ISST, 2018

Due to the disproportionate burden of housework on the women, they also have to bear additional expenses for the 'home' as a way to balance their household responsibilities with paid work demands. For instance, as the demanding production schedules for the home-based workers in decorative items (one of the two home-based trades under the study) and the locational disadvantage they faced left them with no time to dispose of the house waste at the distantly-located disposal area, especially during the peak season of the home-based work, some of them

were also found to pay Rs.50 to Rs.70 per month from their meagre earnings for the collection and disposal of garbage.

As the seasonal nature of decorative items and the social restrictions around mobility for some of these women in the C/D/E Blocks of Khajuri force them to manage their household work of waste management with earnings from their home-based work, this could also throw light upon the complex nature of home-based work and life of the home-based worker as she incurred additional expenditure on 'home' to give more time to home-based work to keep the household running in the absence of any regular source of household income.

3.3.2 State Provisioning of Drinking Water and Access to Tap Water

'Home' when used as a place of paid work for women workers also includes an additional cost of drinking water, as they had to purchase water for Rs.20 a day per family, due to the lack of drinking water connections in the area. The lower purchasing power of some of these households along with the restrictions on getting water from further away, also push some of them to drink the tap water in the absence of alternative choices available.

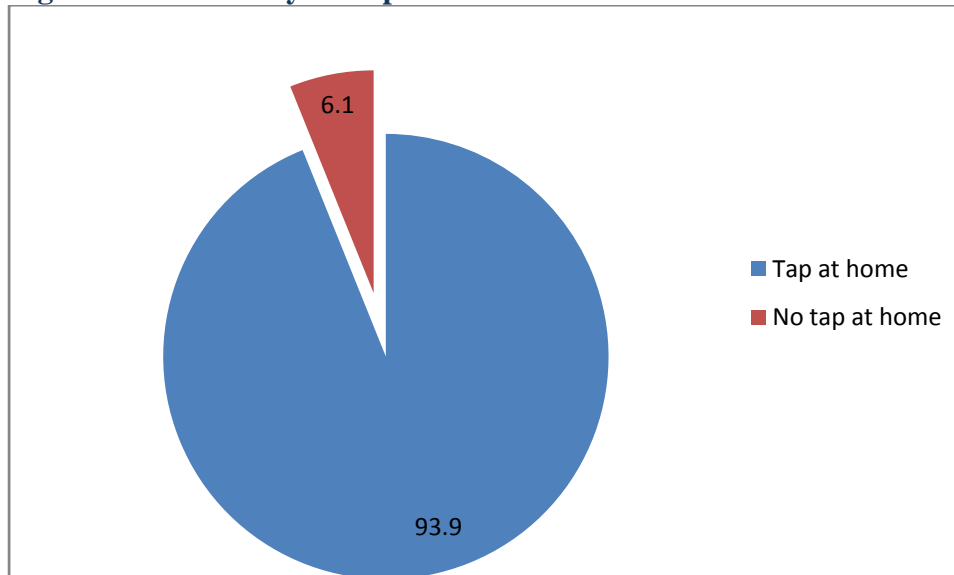
The links that these women draw between the lack of drinking water facilities close by and the additional costs incurred for health-related challenges from drinking tap water (available through summer sewer), also put emphasis on the challenges that women face when the house is used both as a home and as a place of work. The unequal distribution of public services in the area, with most of the supply (drinking) water connections located in the A- Block, also demonstrate the different negotiations that residents in C/D/E blocks make due to low purchasing power, demanding home-based work schedules, and socio-cultural constraints.

Those who could not afford to drink tap water due to the presence of small children and old people at home still had to get the water from A-Block despite their demanding work schedules and the household/care responsibilities. As these people negotiated the work timings and perhaps also the income from home-based work, the inadequate state provisioning of the basic amenities like water and hygiene was found to especially disadvantage those with lower purchasing power and greater household responsibilities.

Similarly, for the women living close to the water connections in A-Block, their children played a significant role in sourcing water from the community taps in the area, which required long periods of time due to inadequate water connections in the area and fixed timings of water availability. As the availability of water through push water taps instead of regular taps further increased the time taken to collect drinking water in the area, the women living in A-Block were forced to share the responsibility of water collection with children as a way to balance their household responsibilities and the production demands.

Though 93.9 per cent of the surveyed households were found to have tap water connections at home (see Figure 1 below), most of these connections are shared with family and neighbours due to the exorbitant charges of the summer sewer installation.

Figure 1: Availability of Tap Water Connections at Home



Source: ISST Study, 2018

3.3.3 Access to Fair Price Shops

Khajuri did not have any ration shops nearby until June 2018, before which residents had to go to Pakki Khajuri (known as Khajuri Khas) to avail of their share of subsidized rations. This in turn often led to conflict with the shopkeeper at Pakki Khajuri, who would refuse them as they did not belong to the area. As a result of these conflicts, the women leaders or “aagyavans” of SEWA carried out a signature campaign wherein they had collected the signatures of as many residents

as possible to petition for ration shops within the area. As a result of continuous follow-up with the food subsidy department for almost a year, the area finally saw two ration shops open in D-Block by the end of June 2018.

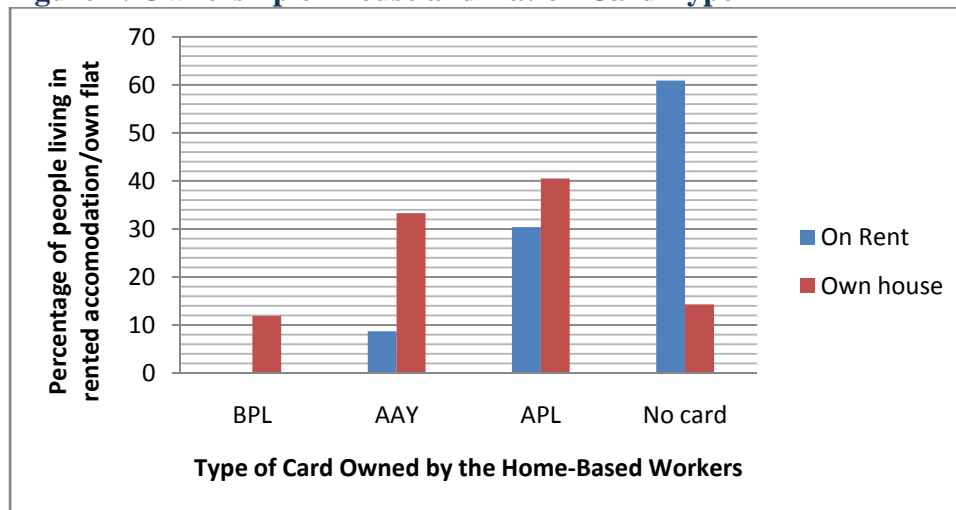
However based on Table 1, we find that 30.8 per cent of the total surveyed households still did not have any access to subsidized rations, as most of them were living in rented accommodation and failed to provide the attested copies of electricity bills and the Aadhaar Card of the landlord as residence proof, which were mandatory for obtaining ration cards. 60.9 per cent of the total households living in rented accommodation were thus found without any access to subsidized rations, as opposed to just 14.3 per cent of the house owners.

Table 1: Ownership of House and Ration Card Type

Ownership status	Type of Card				Total
	BPL	AAV	APL	No card	
On Rent	0.0	8.7	30.4	60.9	100.0
Own house	11.9	33.3	40.5	14.3	100.0
Total	7.7	24.6	36.9	30.8	100.0

Source: ISST Study, 2018

Figure 2: Ownership of House and Ration Card Type



Source: ISST Study, 2018

Those who had access to rations on the other hand, were getting them from distant locations like Bhajanpura and Sherpur Chowk, due to the lack of adequate ration shops within the area. The home-based workers in decorative items for example, did not have access to the two new shops in D-Block- as due to the large size of the population of the area, only the residents living in A/B

Blocks could be accommodated. The residents living in A-Block on the other hand found it difficult to access the shops in D-Block due to the long distance of the shops from their home. The exclusion of the people living in the area in the planning of public services thus also resulted in under-utilization of some of these services.

In addition, the availability of rations for only a few (three to four) days in a month deprived the people from rations in some months, when the queues were long or if they were not near home when the ration was distributed. As a home-based worker, engaged in decorative items and living in C- Block explained: “*Dur itna hai na ki waha jaa kar pata bhi nahin kar paate. Itna dur hai fir pata chale dukaan khuli hi nahin hai. Ration aaj nahin milega, kal milega*” (The shop is so far that we cannot go there every day to find out if they have started distributing the ration. Often we would reach there and come to know that it has not started).

3.3.4 Access to Health

Other concerns of the people living in the area included lack of government dispensaries and poor treatment at the existing ones. While the location of the only government dispensary in D-Block of the area discouraged the people living in more distant blocks to access the service, the lack of qualified practitioners and the inadequate supply of medicines served as deterrents for most of the other residents living in the area.

With regard to this, a home-based worker living in A-Block of the area said “*Bahut dur padhta hai D-block aur dekha jaaye toh dhang ki dawai bhi nahin dete. 3 din ki dawai dete hai itni si. Choti si hai, line laga lo aur ghar aajao. Doctor toh aate hi nahin waha pe. Kam se kam badi toh honi chahiye, suvidha toh honi chahiye. Pareshaani hoti hai*”(D-Block is very far and then the service is also very poor. They do not give adequate medicines- for 3 days, they would give medicines that would run out in one day. Further, it lacks doctors and isn't spacious enough. Despite all of this, it usually has long queues and we would often return home disappointed after waiting for hours).

The residents would also be denied service at Pakki Khajuri as they did not belong to the area. Further, the nearby government hospitals were also located at a minimum, half an hour away by bus or auto, which affected both their domestic responsibilities and their paid work schedules. As the faraway location of these hospitals: Zero Pushta, GTB, Urban, Police Line and Kasturba

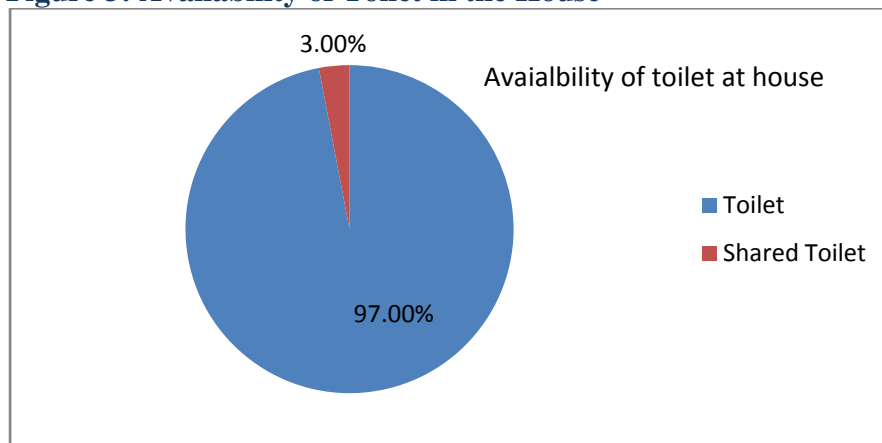
Gandhi Hospital, and the poor service at the dispensaries located within the area affected their work schedules and also their income, the home-based workers in the area were found paying both in terms of their time and returns from home-based work to overcome the poor provisioning of health service in the area.

3.3.5 The Status of Housing and Land Recognition

The issues discussed above also emerged from the illegal nature of inhabitation and the lack of validity of these settlements within the Master Plan. As these plots were meant for agriculture and are no longer in concordance with the use allotted to them, the plot residents are limited in terms of what services could be made available to them and what could not be.

The condition of housing was however, found to be adequate, and with all the houses made of high-quality materials like bricks and cement. As the neighbourhood was affected by floods due to its proximity to the Yamuna, the government was mandated to rebuild their houses with materials resistant to floods. However, only those who could display their proof of residence received a compensation amount of Rs.5,000 while those who could not had to do the reconstruction at their own expense. The potential obstacles of unclean community toilets and travelling long distances in search of open fields were also non-issues, as 97 per cent of the people surveyed under the study had a separate toilet to themselves. The remaining 3 per cent shared the toilet with extended family members or tenants residing on the same floor. (See Figure: 3 below)

Figure 3: Availability of Toilet in the House



Source: ISST Study, 2018

3.4 Major Expenses vs. Household Income

The study found that the average household income is Rs.10,018 per month, which is only an indicative figure. The men of the sample households are generally engaged as casual wage labourer without any guaranteed regular income. Many of them work intermittently, as they reported that there are not enough jobs available throughout the year. The households who live in rented accommodations must pay house rent and electricity bills every month, which is a major fixed expenditure. The income from the home-based work, even if it is a meagre amount, has immense importance to the household income.

Table 2: Average Monthly Household Income of the Home-based Workers in Khajuri (in INR)

Variable	Observation	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.
Household	53	10017.92	6286.119	300	32000

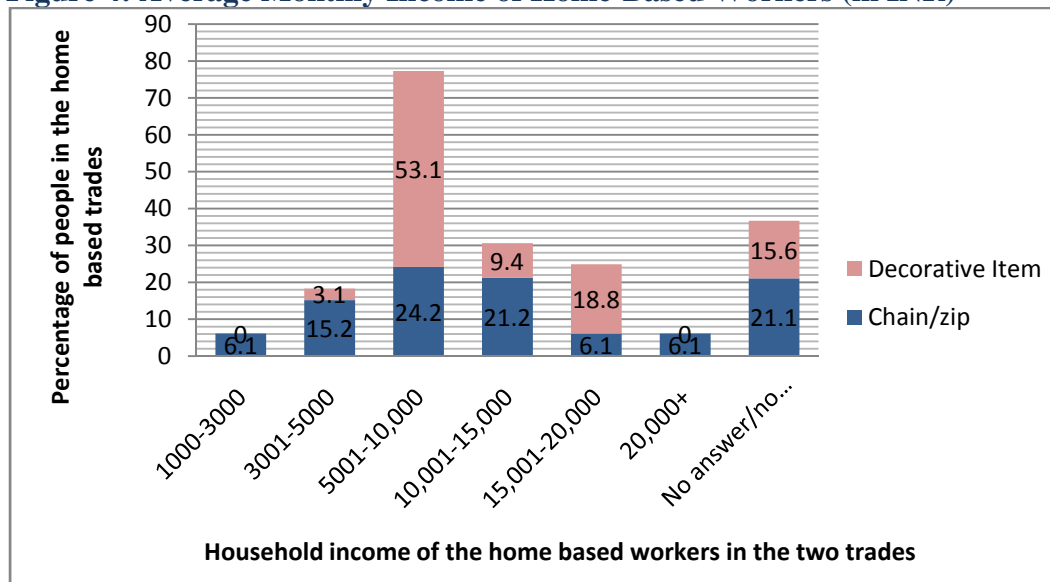
Source: ISST Study, 2018

Nonetheless, there were certain trade-specific peculiarities that made the home-based workers, who are engaged in making decorative items more vulnerable than those engaged in making chain/zip locks. Those trade-specific differences have been discussed in the following sections. A small variation in the monthly household income makes a big difference in household expenditure patterns of food, health, and education. Table 3 provides an indication on the average household income of the sample households in the present study.

Table 3: Average Monthly Household Income of the Sample Households (in INR)

Income	Trades		
	Chain/zip	Decorative Item	All trades
1000-3000	6.1	0.0	3.1
3001-5000	15.2	3.1	9.2
5001-10,000	24.2	53.1	38.5
10,001-15,000	21.2	9.4	15.4
15,001-20,000	6.1	18.8	12.3
20,000+	6.1	0.0	3.1
No answer	21.1	15.6	18.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ISST Study, 2018

Figure 4: Average Monthly Income of Home-Based Workers (in INR)

Source: ISST Study, 2018

Table 4 shows that the 75 per cent of the home-based workers in the trade of making decorative items earn up-to Rs. 1000 in a month from home-based work. The home-based workers in the trade of chain/zip making are slightly better off as far as the earnings from the home-based work are concerned. Within the broader ambit of urban labour market inequality and the lack of regular work for people engaged in informal labour economy, even the meagre earnings of up to Rs. 1,000 per month from decorative items and up to Rs.2,500/- from chain/zip locks did ensure the families of the home-based workers in Khajuri some protection from further marginalization. The discussions with the workers in the field revealed that some home-based workers are able to access more work than others in the same trade and earn more. They also have more helping hands, mostly children, who can assist in completing the job.

Table 4: Average Monthly Income from Home-Based Work in Peak Season

Trade	No Answer	Up to Rs. 1000	Rs. 1001-2500	Rs. 2501-5000	Rs. 7500-10000	Total
Zip	6.1	36.4	36.4	18.2	3.0	100.0
Decorative	0.0	75.0	15.6	9.4	0.0	100.0
Total	3.1	55.4	26.2	13.9	1.5	100.0

Note: No case found in the income group of Rs. 5,001-7,500

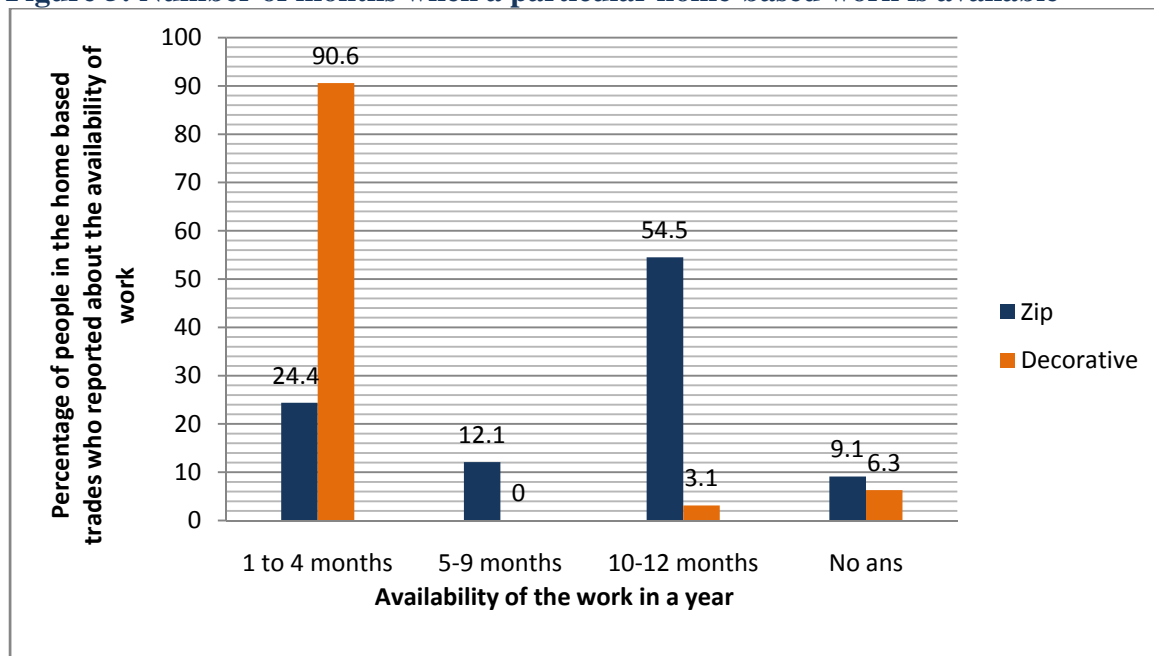
Source: ISST Study, 2018

3.5 Coping with Challenges: Availability of Work and Regularity of Payments

While the home-based workers in both the trades paid an average rent of Rs.1,000/- to Rs.3,000/- per month and an electricity bill of Rs. 251/- to Rs. 750/- , workers in the two trades showed differences in how they responded to the challenges of work availability and its affect on their income. Around 57.5 per cent of the workers in decorative items for example were engaged in a second home-based trade as compared to just 31.25 per cent in chain/zip locks. This was mostly due to the seasonal nature of decorative items, extremely irregular payments in the trade, and an overall lower household income.

As the availability of work in decorative items lasts for only four months in a year and the payments were made just once during the Diwali/Dhanteras season, the income from other home-based work helped the women in decorative items manage their everyday expenses in the absence of a regular household income. However, the lack of home-based work in C/D/E Blocks and the declining work supply and piece rates in other occupations, like pompom and sequin making, did not leave home-based workers with any space for negotiation with the sub-contractors in decorative items. These subcontractors distribute basic, low-quality work, requiring a significant amount of women's time and labour (See Figure 5).

Figure 5: Number of months when a particular home-based work is available



Source: ISST Study, 2018

Those working on chain/zips on the other hand, had shifted from the previous trades of pompom making, decorative items and sequins to chain/zips due to greater availability of work in the trade, regular payments and delivery of work at home. However, while the burden of domestic responsibilities and the restrictions on women's mobility, relevant for a Muslim dominated community like Khajuri encouraged these women workers to shift to the home-based trade of chain/zips, the reduced supply of chain/zip jobs in and around C/D/E Blocks decreased its accessibility to the home-based workers in decorative items.

A home-based worker is fixing the zippers at her home



Source: ISST, 2018

3.6 Participation of Children

The option of children's participation in the home-based trade of chain/zips on the other hand, though it was mentioned as an incentive to shift to chain and zip work, was in fact found to be higher in decorative items, with 28.1 per cent of the home-based workers saying that their children helped them with their tasks as opposed to only 18.2 per cent of the home-based workers in chain/zip locks.

Perhaps it was the greater participation of the daughters in the home-based trade of chain/zip locks that encouraged the workers in the trade to shift from pompom, decorative items and embroidery, as 57.6 per cent of all the home-based workers in trade said that their daughters helped them as opposed to 43.8 per cent of the home-based workers in decorative items.

Table 6: Participation of Children in Home-Based Work

Trade	Participation of children	
	Daughter	Both daughter and son or only son
Chain/Zip (33 workers)	19 (57.6%)	6 (18.2%)
Deco item (32 workers)	14 (43.8%)	9 (28.1%)
All (65 workers)	33 (50.8%)	15 (23.1%)

Source: ISST Study, 2018

3.7 Work Satisfaction of the Home-Based Workers

The home-based workers often complain about the lack of work satisfaction. Low piece-rates and meagre income compounded with lack of space for negotiation with the middlemen and irregular payments are the major reasons behind this low level job satisfaction. However in the absence of alternative work options in the area, the women are forced to continue with the home-based work, which even fails to bring them a status of a worker.

3.7.1 Low Piece Rate

Low piece rates were found to be the other major challenge in both the trades, at Re.1 per piece in decorative items and Rs.0.023per piece in chain/zip locks. The long working hours of 9-10 hours during the peak season of decorative items and 6-7 hours in chain/zips for a meagre income of Rs.50-100 per day furthered the challenges.

Table 7: Percentage of Home-Based Workers Reporting Low Piece Rate as a Challenge

Trade	Challenges
	Low piece rate
Chain/Zip	75.8
Deco item	96.9

Source: ISST Study, 2018

Table 8: Piece Rates in the Home-Based Trades

Trade	Piece rate
Chain/Zip lock	Rs.22.5/- for 1000 pieces
Decorative items	Re.1/- per piece

Source: ISST Study, 2018

3.7.2 Negotiations with Contractors and Sub-contractors

The lack of negotiation space for these workers with respect to low piece rates, irregular payments and low quality of work due to the increasing demand for home-based work in the area makes it easier for companies to sub-contract low quality work at cheaper rates, lowering worker's satisfaction. The lack of a formal/legal transaction made it easier for the middlemen to hold back payments, forcing the workers to work for a particular contractor for an unspecified period of time. The following table (Table 9) shows that almost 44 per cent of home-based workers in the trade of making decorative items complained about irregular payment after delivering their products.

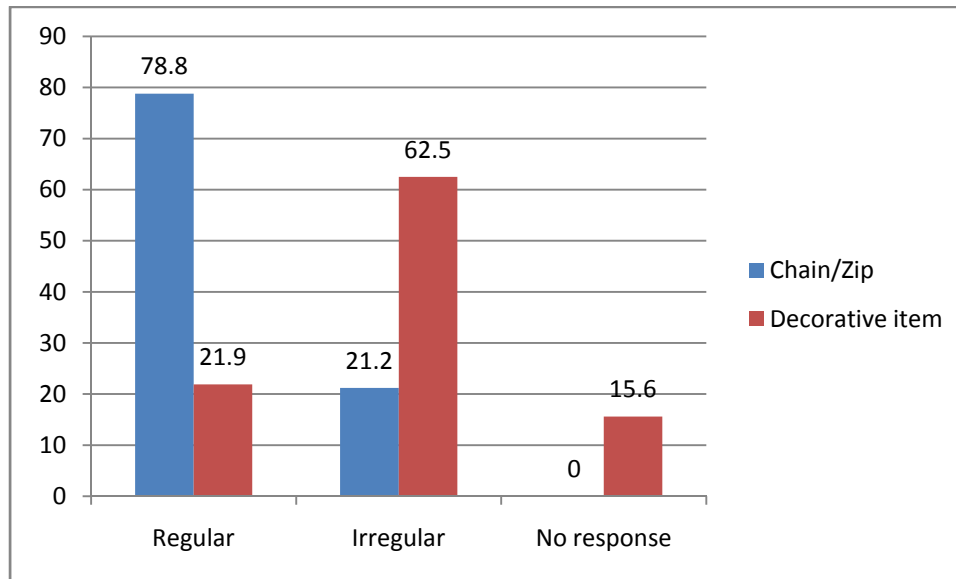
Home-based workers in chain/zips had a greater power to negotiate their agency in the labor market, specifically with respect to timely payments in the work due to the greater availability of work from different contractors within the area. As a worker in zip/chain says "*Jo paisa nahin deta uska kaam nahin karte. Dekh lete hai ek baar, sahi dete hai toh karte hai, nahin toh dobara nahin jaate hai*" (We do not work for those who do not make payments. We do it once and see if the payments are made in time and if that doesn't happen, we do not go back to them).

Table 9: Percentage of Home-Based Workers Reporting Irregular Payment Challenges

Trade	Challenges
	Irregular payment
Chain/Zip	9.1
Deco item	43.8

Source: ISST Study, 2018

Figure Six below shows that more than 62 per cent of the home-based workers making decorative items reported irregular payment.

Figure 6: Irregular Payment in Different Trades

Source: ISST Study, 2018

As these home-based workers in chain/zips lived closer to the contractor outlets supplying the work, they also had better negotiation abilities, as it was easier for the contractors to deliver work to the home-based workers living within A-Block than to those staying far from the factory. Illustrating this, a home-based worker living in A-Block of the area says that the contractor would even wait for them to return home when they would be away to fetch water in the morning.

In cases where the woman had been working for the same contractor for a longer period of time and a relationship of trust had been established between the two parties, the contractor would even leave the raw materials with a neighbor/relative living close to her. The kind of negotiations that the home-based workers engaged in thus depended on the relationship they had with their employer.

3.7.3 Meager Income

The economic informality and the lack of stipulated working hours coerced the women in chain/zips into working for long hours during the peak seasons, which was not fixed for the trade. As a worker in the home-based trade explained, when production demands were high, they would leave all their household work to accomplish their work targets.

The unrecognized bondage that the home-based workers get roped into when working for indefinite hours for paltry amounts characterized the workers participating in the survey. Further, since the piecemeal remuneration failed to provide these workers a stable income, 44.6 per cent of all of the home-based workers were found to depend on a second source of home-based work for their income. In spite of the income from home-based work being low and unstable, in 21.2 per cent of the surveyed households in chains and 12.5 per cent in decorative items, it was found to be a major source of household income. (See Table 10)

Table 10: Households With Home-Based Work as a Main Source of Income

Trade	Frequency	Percentage
Chain/Zip	7	21.2
Deco item	4	12.5
All	11	16.9

Source: ISST Study, 2018

3.7.4 The Lower Status of the Woman Worker

The rigid patriarchal structures and the complex household dynamics within which the women home-based workers in the area worked and the multiple entries and exits that they made from the urban labor market owing to their household and care responsibilities also contributed to their lower status within the informal labor market. While this holds true for most women workers from urban lower income households, it is especially true for the home-based worker as her the home becomes the workplace.

For the home-based workers in Khajuri, the meager and irregular incomes from their work further discouraged the workers, leading to limited support from family especially from husbands and older sons. As a home-based worker living in D-block says “*Jaise hum apne marzi se le aaye ya bacche le aaye maal aur kar rahe hai, aur time se nahin hua aur khaana nahin bana toh aadmi gussa ho jaate hai ki khaana kyu nahin bana, isme kyu lagi hui hai, isme kya mil raha hai aamdani jo isko karna bhi sahi hai..paise nahin hai toh kyu kar rahi ho! Bolte hai itni mehnat karke haath ghisa rahi ho aur time se khaana bhi nahin bana rahi aur baccho ki dekhbhaal bhi nahin kar rahi aur tumko mehnat ka bhi kuch nahin mil raha, time se paise bhi nahin mil rahe...toh kyu kar rahi ho.*” (If we bring the work on our own wish or if the children get it and we are unable to prepare the food in time due to the heavy workload, the men get very angry. They ask why we do this work, if it is not fetching us any money. They say that we are

unable to even cook in time or take care of the children due to the work load and then it is not even giving us any return – neither in terms of money nor in terms of timely payment).

Thus, even within the household, an interrupted flow of money from home-based work and the long hours of work for meager income strengthened the power hierarchies between men and women, and the roles of women as mothers and wives rather than as workers contributing to the supply chains and to their own households. The lower status of the home-based worker in the area could also be attributed to the restrictions around mobility, particularly regarding working outside the house and obtaining raw materials from factories - which in turn limit the scope of work for the home-based workers, further reinforcing their roles as subordinates within the household.

3.7.5 Other Challenges

Apart from the above challenges, the home-based workers also reported a number of challenges that influence their work conditions, livelihood, health and care responsibilities.

i) Declining Piece Rates and the Tussle between Better Piece Rates and Timely Payments

As most home-based workers in the community had little negotiating power with respect to work, they had to rely on more than one kind of work for their income, due to the lack of regular work supply within the home-based trades. A lot of them were thus found engaged in stitching or embroidery as their second home-based work due to the declining piece rates and untimely payments in addition to irregular supply of work.

For example, the home-based trade of pom-pom making has declined in piece rate from Rs.20-25 per piece to Rs.12-15 per piece in a span of just few years. Similarly, a scattered supply of work in embroidery along with an influx of migrants into the community limited the negotiation abilities of home-based workers already engaged in the trade. Moreover, the lack of options for home-based work especially in C/D/E Blocks of the area and the declining piece rates in the available home-based trades had resulted in a lower negotiation power for workers in decorative items- the piece rates of which have remained stagnant since several years.

The greater availability of work in chain/zips on the other hand, provided home-based workers with better negotiation power for their wages: they were able to increase their wages from Rs.25 to Rs.30 per 1000 pieces, although could hardly benefit from it, as the irregular payments by the contractors affected their purchasing power of essential household items like groceries for the household and contributions to savings.

While the home-based workers in the trade could negotiate their wages, they would still continue the work for Rs.25 per 1000 pieces from contractors who made the payments in time. As a home-based worker in the trade says “*Uska karte hai kyuki wo paise dene mein sahi laga. Jab bhi zarurat padhti hai jaise khaane ki, kharche ki, committee ban rahi hai, jaise jaise zarurat hoti hai usse le lete hai*” (We do it for him because he is good with payments. Whenever we need money – be it for grocery, for savings or for other household expenses – we can take it from him).

The tussle between regular payments and higher piece rates in the home-based trade thus landed the home-based workers in a conundrum with very little choice. The lack of choice for the home-based workers had also resulted from the lack of options for home-based work within the area, irregular payments in the existing home-based trades and the stagnant/declining piece rates in the home-based trades of decorative items, pom-pom and embroidery.

ii) The Laborious Nature of Home-Based Work

The low quality of manual labour required in the home-based trades of decorative items and chain/zips, both of which require long hours of work for paltry amounts, provide these workers with lowered job satisfaction. In decorative items, for example, the intricate designs of garlands needed both patience and time. The flowers had to be first put into the correct shapes and then threaded into garlands. The order in which the differently coloured flowers and leaves were strung had to be kept in mind till the last piece was put on the thread and if by chance the order was incorrect, the entire strand would have to be re-strung. Although deductions in income due to mistakes were uncommon, contractors would occasionally send back pieces to be re-worked once they had been checked after delivery.

The lack of skills required for such work, despite the long hours of work that it requires, and the minimal income discouraged the home-based workers in the community from persuading their children to pursue the same work in the future.

A home-based worker is balancing her paid and unpaid care work



Source: ISST, 2018

iii) Balancing Unpaid Responsibilities with Paid Work

The most significant issue that emerged from the all observations and interviews with the home-based workers in the community was the difficult task of balancing production demands with care work and household responsibilities. In such a circumstance, it is the negotiations of the home-based worker within the family and the community, and her negotiations with the contractor/sub-contractor that help her successfully make her way through the difficult arrangements of home-based work, unpaid care work and the other household responsibilities.

Case Study

A time use study of a home-based worker, living in A-Block of the area and engaged in chain/zip work helps to understand the implicit ways in which women divided their time and work to fulfil their household/care responsibilities and production demands – especially during the peak seasons of the trade. As Heena (name changed), living in a rented flat in A-Block of the area detailed her daily routine, it was clear that her daughters shared both the household work of cooking, cleaning and water collection, and the home-based work of chains/zip locks.

Heena says that although she wakes up at 5 in the morning, she is unable to collect water which also becomes available at that time. As she feeds her 8 year-old son, who has been in coma for last several years, her two daughters (aged 11 and 14) help her with the water collection. Although the taps are located within A-Block, the timings of water availability: 3 hours in the morning, and 3 to 4 hours in the evening, makes it difficult for her to manage both water collection and care or other household responsibilities at the same time. As the family does not have a summer sewer connection, the water collected from the public taps is used for both household chores and drinking purposes.

She explains that when the zip/chain workload is heavy, she has to complete all the household chores by 1pm, including bathing and feeding her two younger children (aged 1 and 5) and then will work until 10 at night. She has her lunch between chores, while for breakfast she only has time for a cup of tea.

Heena has to work for long unpredictable hours to earn at least Rs.2500 to 3000 in a month, which will then go towards rent which is Rs.2500 per month, an electricity bill of Rs.500-1000, and other household expenses of ration, medicines etc., as her husband's income from painting is both meagre and irregular. Additionally, she has to spend Rs.1,000 to Rs. 2,000 every month on her son, who is in the coma.

Due to her location, Heena is at an advantage, and manages to engage more work than others in the community. However, she still cannot manage to earn more than Rs.3000 due to childcare and household responsibilities. With a household income of less than Rs.5, 000 she must be selective about the contractors and subcontractors she works with, as she can only work for those who pay on time. It is important for her to collect the payments weekly to manage her household expenses.

Her three daughters also help her with work once they come back from school, especially when the work load is heavier. The tacit understanding between Heena and her daughters regarding the distribution of work was clear during the interview: when she was doing the home-based work, the daughters would take care of the younger siblings and when she was busy feeding the children, they would do the household chores. She even says that at night she can sleep only once her son falls asleep.

iv) Trade-Related Health Challenges

The other issue that was pertinent to the home-based workers was trade-related health challenges. The home-based workers in decorative items, for example, had to put a lock around each flower to put the petals in place and press it down with their finger tips which caused chronic pain. Similarly, while working on chain/zips, finishing the locks required pressure from the fingers that created painful blisters on the tips. Moreover, the long hours of work in the same sitting position caused pain and acidity amongst many women.

Table 11: Reported Percentage of Health Challenges

Trade	Health Related Challenges in Home-Based Work (Percentage)
	Health
Chain/Zip	78.8
Deco item	68.8

Source: ISST survey, 2008



Source: ISST, 2018

4. CONCLUSION

Home-based workers in the present study were mostly sub-contracted workers who work for either a single or multiple employers for a fixed piece rate for an indefinite duration/time. As the study attempted to understand the connections between work availability and locality, it found that the home-based work options declined as one moved from A-Block to the subsequent blocks. This endowed the home-based workers in better locations with greater negotiation power vis-à-vis their counterparts with respect to work timings, regular payments and the flexibility to get the work delivered at home. Those home-based workers living further away on the other hand, suffered from lack of work, irregular payments, and demanding work schedules due to the seasonal nature of decorative item making that affected both their household responsibilities and family care duties.

In addition to this, the unequal distribution of public services within the area affected all the home-based workers in the area in different ways, depending upon their location. For example, as most drinking (supply) water connections were located in A-Block, those living further away had to bear additional expenses at home in order to balance their demanding production schedules with household responsibilities. Those living close to A-Block on the other hand, involved their children in both household and paid work to enhance their income. The potential to involve children in the chain/zip lock trade was found to be one of the important factors in the shift of the home-based workers living in A-Block from decorative items to a more recent trade of chain/zips. Most women home-based workers in Khajuri had to pay both in terms of their time and a lowered income from home-based work in order to compensate for inadequate public ration supply and low-quality health services.

As the Khajuri land was not in concordance with the use allotted to it in the Master Plan, it excluded the residents from the city's infrastructure and public services, rendering them vulnerable at the hands of the state. The lack of a formal contract with their employers created a form of economic bondage, where contractors/sub-contractors would hold back payments to force home-based workers to work for an unspecified period of time at far below the minimum wage.

The study also found lowered levels of work satisfaction amongst the women home-based workers doing basic, low quality work that required a significant part of women's time and

labour. While the home-based workers used different approaches to negotiate within the household in order to work for these employers at extremely low wages, the low quality of the work along with meagre pay served as deterrents to workers persuading their children to enter the same trade in the future.

5. KEY FINDINGS

- There is a severe lack of home-based work within the area that provides decent wages and regular payment. Even when work in the chain and zip-lock trade was available, the wages were extremely low. For decorative items, the barriers were even higher, due to the seasonal nature of the work and irregular payment. Further, the frequency of home-based work varied and declined as one moved from Block A to Blocks, D&E.
- The home-based workers in the two trades demonstrated different responses to the challenges of work availability and its implicating outcome on their income.
- The sewage management in the area was also extremely poor, and the home-based workers were found paying both in terms of time and money to deal with it.
- The inadequate and unequal distribution of drinking water connections in the area had its effect on the everyday negotiations of the home-based workers, especially in the case of those workers in decorative items.
- The fair price shops within Kacchi and Pakki Khajuri only provided rations for 3 days a month. The difficulty involved in collecting those rations: the long distances as well as the irregular timings added to the challenges for home-based workers in the area, or forced them to look elsewhere for supplies.
- Healthcare providers within the area were either poorly provisioned or in the case of the Pakki Khajuri dispensary, discriminated against workers looking for medicine.
- Due to the mix of household responsibilities and workplace negotiations, as well as the poor quality of infrastructure and public services near their homes, home-based workers had to find innovative ways of balancing their work and enhancing their income.

6. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The contributions and struggles of home-based workers must be made more visible. This can be accomplished by highlighting their contributions to product supply chains and addressing the macro-economic trends and policies that have created avenues for outsourcing of home-based work, and the impact of liberalization which makes this process easier and less expensive.
- As home-based workers are more directly affected than other workers by government policies and practices regarding housing, basic infrastructure services and zoning regulations (notably, whether commercial activities are allowed in residential areas), those settlements with large concentrations of home-based workers need serious policy interventions to ensure that they have adequate provisioning of shelter, water, sanitation, healthcare and rations.
- These policy interventions around land allocation, housing, basic infrastructure, and transport services should be designed keeping in mind that these workers use their homes as a place of work, and that an impact on their quality of life at home is an impact on her productivity at work.
- As home-based workers, unlike other workers in the informal sector, are not unionized, they have decreased negotiation power. It is important that they are organized enough to demand regular work, decent wages and adequate provisioning of public services that will lead to a better quality of life for the home-based worker.

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