

**Empowering Women Homeworkers from Invisibility to Leaders:
Experiences, good practices and lessons from Indonesia in
promoting decent work for homeworkers**

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1. Introduction

This report presents experiences, good practices and lessons from Indonesia in empowering and organizing homeworkers to access decent work in North Sumatra, Central Java, Yogyakarta, and East Java, Indonesia with a view to inspiring discussions and actions to strengthen the homeworkers' movement in Indonesia. Homeworkers are subcontracted dependent workers who work at home to produce goods or services according to the specifications of the employer or intermediary and they are often paid by piece-rate. Sometimes they are workers who used to work at factories but now work at home carrying out the same task because of various reasons such as the family responsibilities or the fact that the factory has been closed by the owner to reduce the costs associated with production (e.g. maintaining the factory premises and paying for utilities, etc). Therefore, sometimes these homeworkers are also referred as the workers in the "putting-out" system, stemming from the notion that the production has been put out of the traditional factory setting.

Homeworkers fall into a vulnerable category of workers. Employers or intermediaries mostly engage homeworkers informally without formal contractual arrangements and since homeworkers are working at home, they fall outside the scope of the labour inspection and home work is characterized by low pay and long working hours. Many homeworkers are women who combine household and income-generating responsibilities and since work takes place at home, work is often not recognized as work. Home work is not explicitly mentioned in the labour laws and statistics in Indonesia and homeworkers have limited access to legal and social protection. Since homeworkers work at home in isolation from others, they also have limited bargaining power to negotiate with their employers or intermediaries for improving their working conditions.

Box 1: What is home work and who is a homemaker?

Home work is a type of work that is carried out by a person, homemaker, who works at home or at a premise other than that of the employer. They work to produce goods or service which results in products as specified by their employer, and they receive remuneration, often wage based on a piece-rate.

Homeworkers are not domestic workers who work in or for households carrying out household tasks. They also differ from home-based self-employed worker who work at home with autonomy.

While there is limited data and recognition on home work in Indonesia, studies indicate that home work existed for a long time and according to a research by Joan Hardjono (1990) titled "Developments in the Majalaya Textile Industry", the system of home work has existed in Indonesia since 1928 in the textile industry. With globalization and flexibilization of labour and the growth of the manufacturing sector, the system of home work is thought to be growing in Indonesia. Existing studies on homeworkers also suggest that homeworkers have limited education and are often from poor households and they work in substandard conditions with limited scope to improve their living and working conditions. Indonesia has been experiencing an impressive economic growth in the past decade and it is working towards inclusive, equitable and sustainable development. In this effort, it is important to shed light on often invisible homeworkers, and support them in accessing decent work and improving their livelihoods.

This documentation therefore presents key steps, good practices and lessons in locating and identifying homeworkers and empowering them to take initiatives to improve their living and working conditions based on experiences of the ILO/MAMPU project's four implementing partner organizations in Indonesia.

2. Who can use this?

This documentation is designed to provide inspiration and practical guidance to civil society organizations, trade unions, and homeworkers' organizations working on the promotion of decent work for homeworkers. Those organizations working on the empowerment of women at the community level may also find this documentation useful as they may find that the women that they have been working with are in fact homeworkers, though they did not recognize them as such in the past. The documentation can also be used as a reference for other stakeholders

such as the Manpower Ministry/departments and other development partners planning initiatives to enhance women's access to decent work in Indonesia.

3. Why need this?

Homeworkers generally have limited education and are from poor households. This means that they have limited knowledge as well as time to improve their livelihoods and working conditions. Without the recognition as workers, homeworkers are not able to benefit from various support programmes by the government or development agencies. Therefore, organizations such as trade unions (TUs) and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) working at the community level often play an important role in locating homeworkers, initiating actions and supporting them so that they become empowered to take actions to improve their living and working conditions.

However, the process of supporting homeworkers comes with specific challenges. Since they work at home, it may not be easy for TUs and CSOs to locate and identify homeworkers. They juggle household responsibilities while managing income-generating home work with a tight timeline to finish products as required by their employers, it may be difficult for them to make time to join activities designed to support them. They are usually paid by piece-rate and if they take time away from work, this means less time for production and it directly results in the loss or reduction of their income. Therefore, they may not be able to afford to join activities even if they are interested.

Therefore, this documentation has been prepared to provide practical steps, good practices and lessons to CSOs, trade unions, and homeworkers' organizations in locating homeworkers and empowering them so that they can start to take initiatives to improve their living and working conditions.

4. How did this come about?

From February 2014 to June 2015, the ILO worked with Yayasan Bina Ketrampilan Pedesaan Indonesia (BITRA) in North Sumatra, Trade Union Rights Center (TURC) in Central Java, Yayasan Annisa Swasti (Yasanti) in Yogyakarta, Mitra Wanita Pekerja Rumahan Indonesia (MWPRI) in East Java, and Trade Unions at national level to implement community-based action programmes to promote decent work for homeworkers as part of the Programme on Empowering Indonesian Women for Poverty Reduction in Indonesia (Maju Perempuan Indonesia untuk Penanggulangan Kemiskinan – MAMPU). The Programme was funded by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Government of Australia and implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of National Development Planning, the Government of Indonesia. Apart from MWPRI which has a history of working on home-based women workers since 1996 and Yasanti which has worked with home-based workers since 2005, BITRA, TURC and Trade Unions were new to the issues of homeworkers at the start of the ILO/MAMPU Project.

Although the timeframe of the community-based action programmes carried out within the ILO/MAMPU project was short, with technical guidance on the issues of home work and the promotion of decent work for homeworkers by the ILO combined with the long-term experiences of CSOs in working with people at the community-level, there was a significant progress in:

- Improving the visibility of homeworkers among the key stakeholders especially the Manpower department, employers' and trade union organizations.
- Improving the awareness of homeworkers on gender equality and workers' rights.
- Organizing homeworkers to work collectively to address various barriers to decent work including gender barriers: More than 400 women homeworkers, 2,000 homeworkers, 277 homeworkers, 68 homeworkers have been organized in North Sumatra, East Java, Central Java, and Yogyakarta respectively.

Therefore, the ILO/MAMPU project decided to document the experiences and capture good practices and lessons in organizing and empowering homeworkers to contribute to the on-going efforts to promote decent work for homeworkers in Indonesia.

The documentation was developed based on qualitative information collected during August – September 2015 via interviews and focus group discussions held with the direct and ultimate beneficiaries of the ILO/MAMPU project, namely the officials and staff of the relevant stakeholders and homeworker beneficiaries of the ILO/MAMPU project in North Sumatra, Central Java, Yogyakarta and East Java. In total, over 50 people representing the departments of manpower, ILO/MAMPU partner CSOs, trade unions, legislative body, and the departments of women's empowerment and child protection were interviewed and over 100 women homeworkers participated in a total of 13 focus group discussions. For interviews and focus group discussions, a list of key guiding questions were used to understand the process, factors contributing to success, challenges faced, and strategies used to overcome challenges. The collected information was organized according to the steps taken to empower homeworkers. Data collection and documentation was carried out by Novita Hendrina for North Sumatra, Agnes Gurning for Central Java and Yogyakarta and Lilis Suriyani for East Java. The consolidation of the reports from the four areas was done by Novita Hendrina and Aya Matsuura.

While the documentation provides information on the process and what worked in the project areas, the good practices are not the blueprint as what worked in the project areas may not work elsewhere. Therefore, readers may give sufficient consideration to their individual contexts and make necessary adaptation when preparing interventions in their local areas.

Box 2: Story from North Sumatra

Prior to early 2014, homeworkers in North Sumatra had worked for a long time without questioning the situation that they were in despite the difficult working conditions. They received very low pay and had no health insurance though they had long work hours. Many of them had been working for over 10 years and they had accepted that it was their fate. Nobody had paid attention to them and they had continued to work to support their family. But the situation started changing for better in early 2014 when the Australian funded ILO/MAMPU Project started providing support to these women to access decent work in cooperation with the partner organizations. They received awareness raising and capacity building support, understood their status and rights as workers, and started taking actions to improve their living and working conditions.

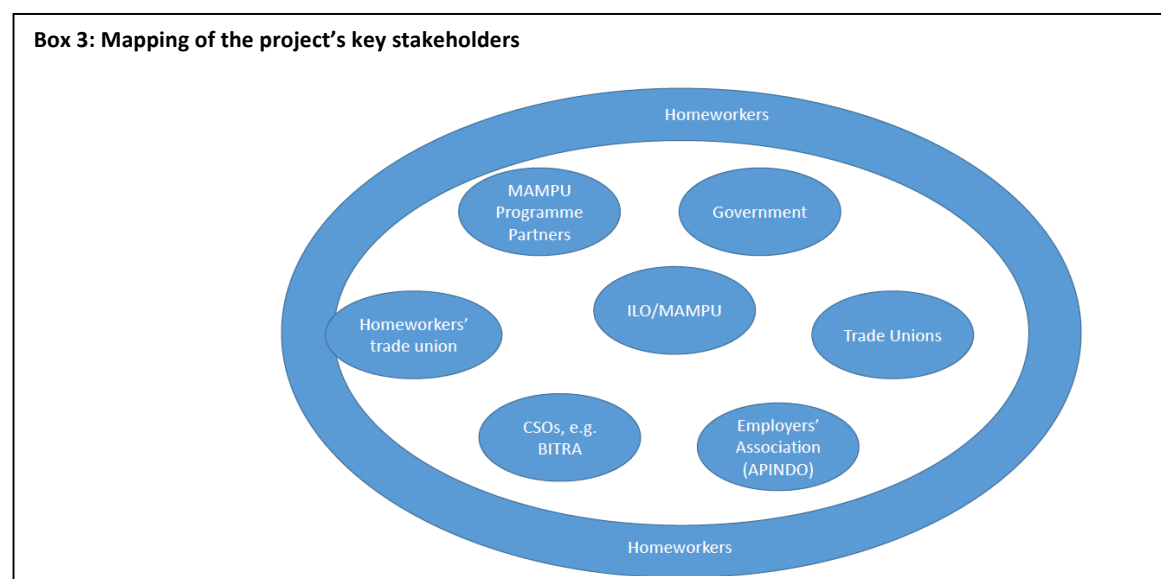
On 14 January 2015, the homeworkers with support from the Project's partner organization BITRA marked an important milestone in promoting decent work for homeworkers in North Sumatra with the establishment of Serikat Pekerja Rumahan Sejahtera (SRPS, Prosperous Homeworkers' Trade Union), the first trade union of homeworkers in North Sumatra, Indonesia. As of August 2015, it had 433 member homeworkers (including 1 man) coming from 10 groups categorized according to types of work. With the new knowledge and skills gained from the project, the member homeworkers work together to improve their living and working conditions, and they have successfully negotiated with their employers to improve their working conditions (e.g. increase in piece-rate, and coverage of production cost, etc). They have also been advocating for a regulation to provide appropriate legal and social protection to homeworkers, and reaching more women homeworkers to join to strengthen their collective efforts.

With advocacy work, the North Sumatra Manpower Office is planning to include homeworkers' issues in the upcoming local labour regulation to be adopted in 2018.

5. Steps, good practices and lessons in empowering women homeworkers

In order to build the capacity of the relevant stakeholders and partner organizations in promoting decent work for homeworkers, the ILO/MAMPU project first raised awareness on the issues of home work among the relevant stakeholders (Government, employers' and trade union organizations) and project partners (BITRA, MWPRI, TURC and Yasanti). The project then provided technical support to the key stakeholders including the CSOs, trade unions and employers' organization and the government so that they can be equipped with knowledge to promote decent work for homeworkers. The project also facilitated knowledge sharing and learning from each other and from other countries with many achievements in advancing the rights of homeworkers through workshops, study trips and participation in the international forums such as the general assembly meeting of the Women in Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), an international network working to improve the livelihoods of informal economy workers with focus on women.

With the new knowledge on the issues of home work and decent work promotion, the partner CSOs worked in their respective areas to carry out community-based activities to provide direct support to homeworkers to improve their access to decent work. During the implementation of the community-based action programmes, the project ensured the engagement of the government and employers so that they have better understanding on the homeworkers' issues and they are encouraged to take actions to promote decent work for homeworkers (See Box 3 on the mapping of the project's key stakeholders).



Key steps towards recognition and decent work for homeworkers

This documentation presents the key steps applied by support organizations and challenges encountered in each step, and strategies used to overcome challenges as good practices. The key steps are as follows:

1. Locating homeworkers
2. Developing relationship and trust and facilitating formation of groups
3. Building capacity of homeworkers to organize into groups and to manage its sustainability
4. Building solidarity and strengthening their negotiation power
5. Advocating for homeworkers' issues and obtaining legal recognition
6. Formalizing groups and building movement

5.1 Locating homeworkers

Challenge: Homeworkers are working at home, therefore, they are hidden from outside and it is not easy to locate them.

Response: Door-to-door visit and ‘live in’ to locate homeworkers in communities where homeworkers have been observed. Track homeworker through marketing chains of product.

Good practice: Identify homeworkers through word of mouth and personal connection, networks and neighbourhood familiarity.

Unlike factory workers who can be found at factories, it is not easy to locate and find homeworkers who work at home, hidden from public eyes. The first challenge in organizing homeworker is to find out where homeworkers are. To prepare for locating homeworkers, all partner organizations recruited field facilitators to locate homeworkers and support them in the process of improving the living and working conditions. Their work was arranged around mainly three areas of 1) identifying homeworkers, 2) facilitating group formation, and 3) coaching homeworkers’ leaders (See Box 4 for the roles and responsibilities of the field facilitators).

In general, the field facilitators recruited by the partner organizations had a long experience working at the community level. Some of them were social activists and volunteers, and homeworkers. However, the majority of the field facilitators had not worked with homeworkers, so they were trained by the ILO/MAMPU project to improve their understanding on the issues of home work and to become trainers on various topics such as legal literacy, advocacy, gender equality, workers’ rights, leadership, and occupational safety and health (OSH).

Box 4: Roles and responsibilities of field staff (field facilitators):

- Conduct a mapping and needs assessment on homeworkers.
- Establish contacts, conduct discussions and organize and assist homeworkers.
- Maintain regular contacts with homeworkers.
- Facilitate discussion, education, and training, and organize seminars and workshops.
- When necessary, assist in litigation and non-litigation process required by group.
- Assist groups in action planning and work delegation.
- Assist homeworkers in lobbying, carrying out courtesy meetings, and negotiating with relevant institutions.
- Develop relationships and network with other organizations relevant for the advocacy work.
- In coordination with programme officer, prepare terms of reference for activity related to promoting decent work for homeworkers.
- Conduct regular coordination meeting for planning and implementing activities.

There were mainly two ways to locate homeworkers. The first way was to carry out door-to-door visits, and the second way was to track the supply chain of products. Since the supply chain is sometimes complex and not easy to track, the first method of door-to-door was proven to be more effective. For identifying the location to carry out door-to-door visits, the facilitators relied on their knowledge or information from their friends and colleagues. Some of the facilitators have seen or encountered women working at home or in front of their houses in the past. Others have heard from their friends or colleagues about homeworkers who lived near them. The field facilitators noted the locations mentioned by others, went to the suggested locations, and started checking houses until they found homeworkers. When the field facilitators went to locations with limited public transportations, they sometimes stayed in one location for a few days until they could locate homeworkers.

In case of Yasanti, it was a matter of reconnecting with the women that they had assisted in the past.

"As we learned about homeworkers from the ILO/MAMPU project, we came to realize that the community we had assisted in Bantul (Yogyakarta) in the past are homeworkers too! Why not continue working with them, as we are already familiar with each other? And it turned out they were also happy to work with us again." - Ima, Yasanti

While looking for homeworkers, the facilitators found that homeworkers were often confused with domestic workers and home industry workers that operate their own micro and small enterprises. The easiest way to distinguish homeworkers was to use the term 'piece rate worker' or 'pekerja borongan' in the local language or to describe the characteristics of a homeworker.

"It's not really difficult to explain who the homeworkers are as long as we describe the characters. I usually explain as those who receive orders from intermediaries and do the work at home. After they finish, they give products back to the intermediaries and receive payment based on the completed number of pieces. Then people understand and provide information on whether there are homeworkers in the area or not." – Yonas, TURC

In the first three months, BITRA facilitators were able to identify 226 homeworkers (225 women and 1 man), well beyond the target of 100 homeworkers initially planned because there were more homeworkers present than expected. By the end of the project period BITRA worked with 368 homeworkers (367 women, 1 man), MWPRI with 1,128 homeworkers (1,056 women and 72 men), TURC with 277 homeworkers (233 women and 44 men), and Yasanti with 68 women homeworkers.

The identified homeworkers were in many different types of jobs. For the purpose of providing maximum support to homeworkers, partner organizations decided to select types of jobs with a higher number of homeworkers, with a view to support the formation of groups according to the types of jobs. Examples of types of jobs done by homeworkers were patchwork/sewing cloth for cleaning machine, cutting roots/cleaning onion, cutting and gluing footwear materials, peeling shrimps, cutting chili, sewing baby seats, weaving fish grill, packing prayer paper, sewing wallet, sewing plastic floor mattress, cutting threads, assembling wigs, weaving badminton racket, packing envelope, and wrapping cable.

Grouping homeworkers according to the job, rather than grouping them according to the broad category of "homeworkers" worked well for building solidarity as it was easier for the homeworkers to share work-related issues with other homeworkers doing the same job rather than sharing issues with homeworkers doing different jobs.

Box 5: Experience of Trade union (FSB KAMIPARHO) in locating homeworkers in North Sumatra

FSB KAMIPARHO, a trade union (TU) present in North Sumatra, also started extending support to homeworkers in Deli Serdang and Pematang Siantar, North Sumatra in November 2014. FSB KAMIPARHO, like BITRA, also started locating homeworkers by word of mouth by members of the trade union. The trade union members have heard of cases where homeworkers lost jobs or seen homeworkers working in front of their house. FSB KAMIPARHO started approaching homeworkers, and started providing support to homeworkers that showed interests in working with the trade union. Those homeworkers were categorized according to 7 types of jobs as follows: 1. Separating waste of plastic floor mattress by colour (Deli Serdang), 2. Cutting roots/cleaning onion, 3. Cracking candle nut shell, 4. Weaving traditional scarf "ulos", 5. Making tassel of "ulos", 6. Twisting/wringing threads of "ulos", and 7. Embroidery (Pematang Siantar).

5.2 Developing relationship and trust and facilitating group formation

Challenge: Suspicion, hesitation and refusal from homeworkers and their families.

Response: Develop personal relationships, find common interests and concerns, build rapport, and identify existing government programmes and facilitate homeworkers' access to the programmes for improving their living and working conditions.

Good practice: Develop relationships through intensive communications and interactions, gain trust and address the concerns of homeworkers using a combination of support responses.

Once the homeworkers were located, it was the time for the field facilitators to approach them to establish relationships so that they could start the process of group formation. In the beginning, the women homeworkers were suspicious and hesitant to talk to the field facilitators and join activity because:

- (1) In the government's poverty reduction programme, poor families including women homeworkers had been considered as the target beneficiaries and they had been approached to share information about their livelihoods. They had expected to receive the government assistance but they had not received any benefits. Since then, they were doubtful about being involved in what they considered as a development programme.
- (2) In general they feel suspicious and uncomfortable when a stranger visit their house and ask a lot of questions. They wondered about the genuine aim, benefits, and motives behind all the questions and invitation to join the project.
- (3) They fear that they would lose their job if their employer found their association with CSOs or trade unions.
- (4) Their husbands or other family members (parents or in-laws) do not allow them to join what they consider as unnecessary activity outside house.
- (5) They are busy with home work and household chores, especially those with young children. If they choose to leave their work for several hours, it directly results in income loss.
- (6) They expect concrete intervention such as access to capital and other economic support to improve their lives.
- (7) They are indifferent or sceptical about the benefits of joining the project.
- (8) Community have negative impressions about aid organizations based on the experience during the post 2006 post earthquake period as they came and left abruptly (Yogyakarta).

Understanding the reasons for hesitation and suspicion, the field facilitators decided to focus on developing relationships with the homeworkers and build good rapport through casual conversations. They established personal connections with homeworkers, their neighbours and the village head to gain trust. The facilitators often approached the homeworkers while working, and initiated a conversation. The facilitators showed respect by addressing the women accordingly. Occasionally the facilitators joined the community activities such as 'kerja bakti' (cleaning up the village by the inhabitants) and helped the women homeworkers with their work while having conversations to develop relationships and gain trust. The facilitators also often initiated a conversation around the kinship-based connections, which is known as 'bertutur' in North Sumatra, when they found that homeworkers had the same last name, implying the same clan. The homeworkers were interested in knowing the family origin of a facilitator to search for family connections.

"I often put my self as their child and call them as if they were my parents. I pay visits to their home one by one and have a chit chat about their day – how are you doing, are you just fine, where are the kids, etc. It can only be a short visit, perhaps ten to fifteen minutes where I only ask about them and don't talk about the so-called 'homeworkers' issues. Over time I know almost all of their family members, their names, what they are doing, their kids' schools and the grade they're in. I can feel that they accept my

Once a good relationship with trust has been established, the facilitators introduced about their CSO and the project’s plan to improve women’s lives. When the women showed positive response and interests, the facilitators introduced the plan to organize women into groups and carry out learning activities such as training and discussions to improve their lives. In Yogyakarta, Yasanti also introduced the plan to establish ‘homeworkers’ school’ programme. Some partner CSOs organized a series of meetings to give opportunities for the homeworkers to clarify their understanding. Local government officials from the Village Office or Manpower Office were also engaged in these meetings.

However, some women homeworkers remained hesitant to join the project because they felt that being a homeworker is better than not having a job at all. They were concerned about losing their jobs, managing household responsibilities and economic activity, creating potential conflicts with family members if they joined the project, and problems with transportation. Some women homeworkers were also concerned about attending meetings or workshops at hotels as the hotels had a negative image as a sinful place in the community. In addition, external factors related to the rise of religious radical movements in Central Java and Yogyakarta made community suspicious about group meetings. There were also homeworkers who lacked spirits for self-reliance and only expected receiving social assistance from partner CSOs.

To overcome their concerns, the facilitators continuously provided honest and open explanations. They encouraged the homeworkers by explaining that the activities were meant to improve their living and working conditions, and the project started providing training on lobbying and negotiation skills to the interested women homeworkers to enable them to negotiate better working conditions with their employers. In order to maximize the benefits from the project for the homeworkers and to motivate the homeworkers to join the project activities at the initial stage, the partner CSOs also invited speakers on various topics of interest such as accessing government’s programmes in the meetings with homeworkers. In East Java, MWPRI provided vocational training and facilitated the homeworkers’ access to capital and market in order to support the economic empowerment of homeworkers.

Transportation fees, enough to cover transportation cost and replace a portion of their lost income, were also given to homeworkers to join the project’s capacity building activities so that they can join activities without losing the income needed to support their family. The training was conducted at various venues such as a government’s hall, hotel, public library, a restaurant meeting room, CSOs’ office, or private school meeting room where the homeworkers were allowed to bring their young children. Group meetings were also held at homeworkers’ house but they also received transportation fees to replace a portion of their lost income. Homeworkers who had a means of transport were encouraged to give a ride to others. While the project needs to build the capacity of homeworkers to become self-reliant overtime, the initial funding support to cover the cost of transport and lost income played an important role in mobilizing the homeworkers and raising awareness among them on the need to take initiatives to improve their living and working conditions.

The facilitator started working with the interested homeworkers and did not make extra efforts in the first month to engage women who were not allowed by family members to join or those who were not motivated enough to join the project because of the limited project time frame, though they were continuously invited to join. Gradually the women learned more about the group meetings and training and they were also encouraged to join the group by other homeworkers who had been joining already. After seeing the positive behavioural changes happening in other homeworkers, they explained about the benefits of joining the project to their husband or family members and convinced their husband/family members to allow them to join the activities which were to improve knowledge and lives.

Box 6: Experience of FSB KAMIPARHO in recruiting homeworkers and organizing them into groups.

In Pematang Siantar district, the level of suspicion was very high. Mr. Ramlan Hutabarat, a trade union member who started reaching out to homeworkers, found that the homeworkers had suspicion about trade unions (association with strikes, etc) too, and despite his explanation that fighting individually is less effective than groups, and the trade unions can help to advocate for their issues, the homeworkers were not convinced to join his union. They wanted to see immediate benefit such as cash or training to start a business.

In the beginning of 2015 the District Manpower Office of Pematang Siantar received a programme from the Ministry of Manpower to organize vocational training. The target beneficiaries of this programme were former factory workers who were dismissed. The 21 homeworkers from six types of work identified in Pematang Siantar qualified for this programme. FSB KAMIPARHO used the opportunity to gain homeworkers trust by proposing their names as participants of embroidery training to the District Manpower Office. The training required that the participants to form a group to receive a free embroidery machine as a grant after the two-week course. FSB KAMIPARHO Pematang Siantar then worked with the homeworkers to form a group and to become part of the trade union. In case the homeworkers are not interested in becoming a member of trade union, FSB KAMIPARHO encouraged the homeworkers to at least form groups, so that they can be trained on various topics and they can share their experience and help each other to improve their living and working conditions.

In total, 21 women homeworkers from 6 types of jobs were identified and organized into a group in Pematang Siantar, and 85 homeworkers (including 1 man) with 4 types of work were identified, and 25 of them (including 1 man) with the same job was organized into a group in Deli Serdang.

5.3 Building capacity of homeworkers to organize into groups and manage the groups for sustainability

Challenge: Lack of knowledge and understanding related to gender equality and workers' rights including the rights to organize.

Response: Place homeworkers in the learning environment and transfer knowledge through informal conversations, training, and regular (but short) group meetings using simple words, pictures, and interpreters as appropriate. Encourage sharing and discussions. Establish homeworkers' school.

Good practice: Training and educating homeworkers for social realization and empowerment. Ensure equal opportunities and transparency among homeworkers.

Since the homeworkers started joining the project activities, the next step was to organize the homeworkers into groups. The homeworkers had no prior experience in organizing themselves as a group and they were often illiterate and were using only local languages that were not spoken by the facilitators. Sharing the information on organizing with the homeworkers and for the homeworkers to understand about the concept of organizing was a long process.

The facilitators first identified several key women homeworkers who were willing to participate in the project to initiate the group formation. The level of awareness of these homeworkers on organizing into groups was still limited, but they were willing to invite other homeworkers to join learning activities. They were assigned to help the facilitators in identifying other homeworkers from similar types of work, approaching them and inviting them to join the learning activities. Sometimes when women needed permission from their husbands or family members, the key women homeworkers accompanied the women to talk to the family member and explain the purpose of the project which was to learn new knowledge which can contribute to improve the family's livelihood.

'Highlight the benefits for the family, then the husband agrees for his wife to join training', a homemaker.

The first meeting was organized when the number of women from the same type of work reached 10. The meeting introduced about the concept of home work, discussed a common goal, introduced the idea of forming a group, selected group leaders and shared the project's training plan (See Box 7 for the list of training topics provided to the women homeworkers). Some of the homeworkers preferred to participate in activities intermittently and thus, did not become members of group initially. However, gradually many of these homeworkers became a group member after learning more about their status and rights as workers. In general after about 1 month of working with the homeworkers, the facilitators were able to organize homeworkers into groups. For FSB KAMIPARHO, this process took between one and four months since FSB KAMIPARHO in the beginning did not focus so much on organizing homeworkers' groups but on awareness raising for its members and public. However, the interests and concerns of FSB KAMIPARHO to improve the working conditions of homeworkers were ascertained, and two groups of women homeworkers were formed and became part of FSB KAMIPARHO.

Following the group formation, the homeworkers with support of the facilitators met a few times with their group members to select leaders and members to attend training. The group meetings were held at the house of a group member while training was conducted at a designated venue such as a government's hall, CSO office, private school meeting room, hotel, restaurant or public library.

In the beginning the training participants were only the group leaders but over time it included members. They were also invited to training and workshops organized by the ILO as homeworkers' representatives. These representatives were selected with a condition that they would share the new knowledge from training with the group members upon return. In the first one or two meetings, the facilitators provided support and coached the leaders who joined the training when

Box 7: List of training and workshop provided to homeworkers:

1. Organization
2. Gender equality, women's and human rights
3. Workers' rights
4. Legal literacy
5. Lobbying and negotiation
6. Advocacy, communication and campaign
7. Leadership
8. Facilitation
9. Occupational safety and health
10. Financial education
11. Group organization and management
12. Training on Facilitator
13. Financial Education
14. Socialization on home work
15. Selected vocational training from government program or homeworkers (i.e. embroidery, handicraft, liquid soap production, batik painting)

they shared the new knowledge with the group members. However, the group leaders over time became capable of facilitating meetings and sharing the new knowledge independently. Pictures and drawings related to home work or women's lives were used in several locations when sharing information with illiterate women or women with limited understanding. In addition, an interpreter was occasionally arranged if the women only spoke their local language, but usually a member of group took the responsibility to interpret for the members who only spoke the local language. This requirement for the leaders to share new knowledge with the rest of the members helped develop the sense of accountability, transparency and knowledge sharing in the groups.

In order for the women homeworkers to join training or group activities, they had to find ways to manage between group activities and family responsibilities. Those with small children usually asked their husband, family members or neighbours to look after the children. When they could not find anyone, they brought their children with them. They would also work extra hours or get help from other family members to finish their job so they would not lose income when they join group activities. They also started to discuss about gender equality with their husbands and family members and experienced positive changes. Several women homeworkers reported how they shared their work including domestic tasks such as cleaning, washing and looking after the children with their husbands. Many of them also reported that they no longer needed to ask for permission when joining activities. In East Java, the homeworkers with increased awareness on gender issues joined a campaign of 16 days of activism against gender-based violence and labour day.

"Gender and leadership training was very useful. It was my turning point to become what I am now. I used to be afraid of my husband, I am shy, quiet and often feeling worthless. Those trainings made me realize about my potential and I learned to negotiate with my husband. He is now very supportive and I am now brave to speak my concerns even in front of public"- Nurvianti, homemaker

'We are equal to men. Let's not live as a second citizen. We need a decent life with good wage, protection and social security' - homemaker.

To maintain and manage their group, the women shared that it is important to regularly share information with the members and ensure regular attendance by the members. Outside the group activity, the homeworkers started to visit each other on daily basis and those who live nearby started to do home work together and share workload. In order to make the group more attractive and useful for the members, some groups also created 'arisan', a group saving scheme to help address the financial needs. There were also groups that carried out other activities such as family retreat. Through the participation in the group activities and interactions, the homeworkers started to discuss and envisage common dreams to improve their livelihoods.

The homeworkers consulted the facilitators for advice when faced with challenges from homeworkers outside their group who were often discouraging. For example, some of the groups in North Sumatra received negative comments on losing their job (chili group) after joining the project or a sarcastic remark about how fancy the homeworkers have become now that they have an office (SPR Sejahtera's secretariat, which is at BITRA's office). The women homeworkers usually ignored these discouraging comments but sometimes they took time to explain their struggle to improve their living and working conditions which required a lot of efforts over a long period of time and the attention of the government and parliament to seek legal protection.

Over time solidarity among homeworkers became stronger, and the homeworkers started reaching out to recruit more homeworkers to join their groups by sharing their experience and new knowledge particularly in North Sumatra and East Java where they envisaged bigger organization. In all project locations, the number of group members has fluctuated slightly but the number remained about the same in general.

When the homeworkers faced problems, they discussed to find solutions to maintain and operate their groups.

For example when some homeworkers' groups decided to establish a membership fee, there were mixed opinions concerning accountability, an amount affordable for all, and the members' willingness to pay. In the end they

Box 8: Key messages used by the homeworkers to reach more workers:

- Homeworkers are workers, not cheap workers.
- No one will change the condition unless you change it.
- Fight for homeworkers to achieve common goals.
- Fight for yourself to improve the livelihoods.
- Homeworkers are not domestic workers.

Box 9: Things to avoid when recruiting homeworkers as shared by the homeworkers:

- Be careful with words: do not make promises you can't keep (e.g. the wage will be similar to that of a factory worker if you join the group).
- Losing temper: Have to be patient.
- Think about your own interest only.

decided on a low membership fee to accommodate all. The leaders and facilitators persistently explained that the collected fees would be used to fund their activities to improve their life such as transportation fee to join training, etc. Gradually women homeworkers understood the purpose of membership fees. In North Sumatra, as of August 2015 over 300 women out of 433 homeworkers regularly pay their membership fees. In Central Java, a group which started with only 10 women homeworkers now has over 100 members and they collect membership fee and have been operating despite many challenges. This group in Central Java also decided to alternate the meeting venue to maximize the participation of homeworkers in the regular meetings. This was in response to a finding that one of the reasons that some homeworkers were absent from the regular meetings and activities was the long distance to travel and limited transportation. Therefore, the venue for group meetings changed every time and

group representatives were assigned to arrange transportation for homeworkers to join the meeting.

In all project locations, homeworkers highly appreciated the learning activities which provided them with new knowledge to be aware of their status as workers, organize themselves to increase their representation and make improvements to ensure occupational safety and health. They became aware of gender equality and became confident to speak up and negotiate with people around them to make improvements in their lives. Training on occupational safety and health was mentioned particularly as a useful training which could bring immediate

improvements to their household. The homeworkers mentioned that regular group meetings and continuous coaching by the facilitator was essential to build their capacity and solidarity. The homeworkers also shared that they gained confidence by being exposed to other places, and meeting other workers and authorities such as representatives of the Manpower Office, Governor Office, BPJS and APINDO through the project. During the project, the beneficiary homeworkers received a number of training and their knowledge and capacity to improve their living and working conditions has been strengthened. However, these women homeworkers need a long-term continuous support to strengthen their groups to operate independently and effectively advocate for their issues.

Box 10: List of training topics on the wish-list of the homeworkers

- Income generation skills.
- Group management.
- Cooperative development.
- Managing and solving problems.

5.4 Building solidarity and strengthening their negotiation power

Challenge: Intimidation from employers.

Response: Encourage intensive communication among homeworkers. Initiate discussions on working conditions directly with the employers to negotiate better working conditions and involve the intermediaries/employers in the project activities to raise awareness on homeworkers' issues.

Good practice: Build solidarity among homeworkers and work collectively to initiate a dialogue with the employers.

The extreme poverty, a lack of employment opportunities for women, and gender roles that keep women home-based encourage destructive competition among homeworkers across communities. This condition permits employers to seek cheap labour and move the jobs easily to new areas in search of cheaper labour especially when the jobs do not require specific skills. Therefore intimidation and termination threats are a constant challenge in organizing homeworkers. For example, a group of homeworkers packing straws into plastic bags in North Sumatra withdrew their participation in the project after two months because they received threats from an employer who discovered their involvement in the project. Despite the facilitators' efforts, the group of homeworkers packing straws did not change their mind to stay with the project. The facilitators could not contact the employer to explain the purposes of the project either.

In Central Java and Yogyakarta, TURC encouraged homeworkers to form homeworkers' organizations by using mainly the following reasons:

- To get recognition from the others (especially the government).
- To fulfil administrative requirements to access government programmes.
- To represent and increase bargaining position of homeworkers.

Then the homeworkers' groups declared their organizations namely Mitra Bersama Pekerja Rumahan Solo (Partner of Solo Homeworkers) in Solo and Citra Manunggal Sejahtera on 13 December 2014. These groups are yet to be registered formally, but the declaration of these organizations was an important milestone for the homeworkers. According to the leaders and the members of the these groups, they listed several factors that helped the formation of organizations as follows:

- Homeworkers had opportunities to interact with trade union members during the capacity building activities organized by the project. Through interactions, homeworkers gained knowledge of the roles, functions and benefits of trade union for workers, and how organizing can bring benefits to homeworkers.
- TURC continuously circulated key messages on workers rights.
- A homemaker, who had joined a study trip to the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) India organized by the project, shared what she had learned from the study trip with other homeworkers and took lead in spreading the idea to establish homeworkers' organizations.

"I always bring this brochure from SEWA. I don't understand the language but it has the pictures of these old women together in group showing off their organization. I always show this to other homeworkers to tell them that in other parts of the world, homeworkers are united and they are still very energetic although they are old. If they can do that, why can't we?"-Nuning, homemaker

In East Java, in addition to homeworkers groups, MWPRI also made efforts to establish HomeNet, a network of homeworkers, in five districts. MWPRI utilized social media such as Facebook to initiate discussions and coordination among homeworkers and community facilitators across districts.

In North Sumatra and East Java, after several training and intensive interactions among homeworkers, the groups became solid enough to independently discuss their working conditions with their intermediaries/employers. Several homeworkers started a dialogue with the employers by utilizing the negotiation skills they had learned from training, though they had never negotiated with their employers before joining the project. They explained that they had not received any pay increase despite the increasing utility costs that the homeworkers must cover in their work and the higher living costs. Other homeworkers started asking their intermediaries to negotiate with their employers.

The results from the negotiations were not always positive. A group of homeworkers making barbeque grills in North Sumatra was intimidated by their employers and did not receive any jobs for a month when they negotiated for a pay raise. In total, 27 homeworkers including non-group members making barbeque grills did not receive job orders. However, all of the 27 homeworkers did not give in to the threat of the employer. And after an open discussion between the homeworkers and the employer to

Comment by a homemaker:

'Now the employer respects homeworkers and acknowledges that the employer needs these workers'

understand the mutual benefits of maintaining the working relationship, the employer and the homeworkers agreed with the new arrangements (e.g. work by homeworkers must be neat, the employer is responsible for dropping off the materials and picking up the finished products), and the employer started giving job orders again with a pay increase. In East Java, the group of weaving badminton racket and embroidery held a strike for a several days before receiving a pay increase between Rp.500 and Rp.5,000. Other groups received payment for utilities which was not paid by the employers prior to the negotiation. As one of the strategies, sometimes homeworkers involved the village head in the negotiation with the employers.

In a different location in North Sumatra, the intermediaries responded rudely to a group of homeworkers making baby seats and refused to give a pay increase while continuing to give work to the group. A group leader met the employer personally and presented an argument to justify the requested pay raise, which was that the utility costs have increased several times while their piece-rate stayed the same. After several weeks the group received a pay increase.

There were also groups that lost jobs. For example, the group with the job of cleaning chili in North Sumatra lost their job after negotiating because the employer moved the job to other areas with cheaper labour. The group (28 women) working on sewing plastic mattress lost their job in August 2015 because the employer relocated the production back into factory, though the factory still engaged and paid workers on piece-rate basis. Although they lost their jobs, they are continuing to work together as a group as they realized the benefits of working together. The members can help each other not only with jobs but also with family matters, e.g. death of a family member.

Other groups did not face strong resistance from their intermediaries and employers. They received pay increase and/or other types of improvements such as costs for delivery of products to be covered by the employer which had been paid by the homeworkers. The pay increase was relatively small but the homeworkers considered it a success because they had never negotiated for pay increase as a group before. The most significant success for the homeworkers was that the increased piece-rate (and other improvements) was also given to non-members doing the same type of work.

Box 11: Types of improvements gained by homeworkers in North Sumatra

Medan			Deli Serdang		
Type of work	Improvement	Monthly income before/after	Type of work	Improvement	Monthly income before/after
Sewing cloth/patchwork	Product delivery cost waived (used to be Rp2,000/delivery)	300,000-350,000/400,000-500,000	Sewing baby seats	Pay increased by Rp1,000/dozen from Rp7,000/dozen to Rp8,000/dozen	500,000-700,000/800,000-1,000,000
Cutting onions	Pay increased by Rp50/kg, from Rp100/kg to Rp150/kg	100,000-200,000/230,000-300,000	Weaving fish grills	Pay increased for small sized grill to Rp1,500/package, middle sized and big sized to Rp2,000/package	150,000-200,000/200,000-400,000
Cutting sandals	Pay increased by Rp500/sack, from Rp5,500/sack to Rp6,000/sack	75,000-100,000/150,000-250,000	Packing prayer papers	Pay increased by Rp300/package, from Rp2,000/package to Rp2,300/package	100,000-200,000/200,000-300,000

5.5 Advocating for homeworkers' issues and obtaining legal recognition

Challenge: The absence of legal protection for homeworkers and lack of understanding on homeworkers' issues among the key stakeholders such as the government and employers.

Response: Raise awareness on homeworkers' issues among the key stakeholders through dialogue, and engage stakeholders as resource persons in workshops and trainings

Good practice: Engage the stakeholders in activities by homeworkers and raise awareness on homeworkers' issues.

Since homeworkers are working at home, hidden from public and the eyes of labour inspectors and the government officials, the working conditions of homeworkers had been concerns of nobody. Even when people knew about women working at home to produce products for the employers or factories for remuneration, they had different understandings and misconceptions about work. For some people, it was an activity done by some home-based women to pass time and receive extra income for the family. For others, it was seen as a self-employed income-generating activity. In reality, home work is an important source of income for many women who would not otherwise have other income sources to maintain their livelihoods. Since the issues of home work have not received attention and recognition, there haven't been research and statistics to understand the prevalence and the working conditions of homeworkers. Without data on homeworkers, the government officials and other stakeholders lacked the basis to work on homeworkers' issues. Even when the homeworkers' issues have been acknowledged as an important issue to be addressed by the trade unions or employers' associations, the issue could not gain sufficient attention as the stakeholders always had other priority issues to work on. The lack of specific regulations or laws concerning home work in Indonesia also made it difficult for the government officials and other stakeholders to work on homeworkers' issues.

Therefore, the project needed to apply various strategies to increase the attention of the key stakeholders to homeworkers' issues, including raising awareness on homeworkers' issues, actively engaging them in the project activities as resource persons, participants and observers, collecting evidence-based data, and building the capacity of the stakeholders to work on homeworkers' issues.

The project engaged the relevant stakeholders including the government officials, employers, trade union representatives, parliamentarians, and intermediaries in project activities to promote better understanding on homeworkers' issues. For example, in North Sumatra, BITRA organized training sessions on legal literacy and occupational safety and health in cooperation with the Manpower Office, and on organizing and regulations in cooperation with trade unions and parliamentarians respectively. Those who came as resource persons often did not have deep understanding on the issues of home work, therefore, they could deepen their understanding and make a commitment to work on homeworkers' issues as they delivered sessions on technical topics and interacted with homemaker participants.

The project also organized awareness raising workshops, field visit, and a series of dialogue sessions with homeworkers for the relevant stakeholders to develop consensus on the need to work on homeworkers' issues including improving legal framework and promoting better working conditions for homeworkers. A study visit to India organized by the project in 2014 has inspired trade union leaders and the official of the Labour Inspection Unit of the Provincial Manpower Offices in North Sumatra and East Java to improve the working conditions of homeworkers.

In order to have evidence-based data available on homeworkers, the project collected information through various sources. The project first collected baseline information from the 1,815 identified homeworkers to understand their living and working conditions. The project also carried out a mapping of homeworkers to understand the working and living conditions of homeworkers in six selected provinces namely North Sumatra, West Java, Banten, Yogyakarta, Central Java and East Java. The project also advocated to have the data on homeworkers available from the regular labour force surveys carried out by the Statistics Office of Indonesia.

With the increased awareness on home work by the stakeholders, there have been some positive developments. In North Sumatra, the Manpower Office is working to include homeworkers' issues in the provincial regulation which is planned to be finalized and adopted in 2018. In East Java, the legislators are developing local regulation to protect labours including homeworkers. Understanding the issues faced by homeworkers, the Head of the Village in Yogyakarta invited representatives of homeworkers' groups to attend village assembly to share their concerns to be addressed in the village decision-making process. As a result, the homeworkers were able to access the village fund as stipulated in the Village Law.

Although there have been good progress, the absence of a legal framework for homeworkers will continue to disadvantage homeworkers. Therefore, advocacy work needs to continue until home work is formally recognized and regulated.

5.6 Formalizing groups and building movement

Challenge: Lack of organization and formal representation of homeworkers.

Response: Support the establishment of a homemaker trade union, and networking with other trade unions and forums.

Good practice: Facilitating the formalization of groups to gain official recognition and status.

Homeworkers were not represented in formal organizations and/or forums when the project started. The project

developed a plan to work with trade unions to represent homeworkers. Unfortunately the trade unions were unable to support this plan. They had many other priority issues to address and they had limited capacities (e.g. staff and knowledge) to represent and advocate for homeworkers.

In North Sumatra, during the dialogue sessions with the key stakeholders it was recommended by the manpower office and trade unions that homeworkers form a dedicated trade union for two reasons. First, if homeworkers joined the existing trade unions they would be divided into existing sectors within the current trade unions structure based on types of work. The number of homeworkers per sector would be small and therefore, their representation would be limited. When they are minority, their issues would not be prioritized either. Secondly, it was thought that the homeworkers could better advocate for their issues with stronger ownership if they had a formal trade union registered by themselves for themselves. The homeworkers were not certain about the idea of having their own trade union initially because they had no experience in managing an organization and carrying out advocacy work but they became willing to go ahead with a commitment as they gained knowledge and received encouragement and support from BITRA Indonesia.

BITRA Indonesia in cooperation with Serikat Pekerja Nasional (National Trade Union or SPN) of North Sumatra facilitated the women homemaker members to develop organizational bylaws and select leaders. The preparation to register a trade union took one week and the Serikat Pekerja Rumahan Sejahtera (Prosperous Homeworkers Trade Union or SPRS) was formally launched on 14 January 2015 in a congress of homeworkers at the BITRA Indonesia office. The Provincial Manpower Office and Trade Unions attended the launching ceremony. Now the membership reached 433 and over 300 members regularly pay a membership fee of IDR3,000 per month. The collected membership fee is divided and one third of the total amount each goes to the local, district and provincial levels to support the operation of the union.

The women gained more confidence and commitment and recruited more members to raise their collective voice through their organization. When the employer reallocated chili-cutting work to other area for lower piece-rate and terminated the engagement of the homemaker group in April 2015 the women continued group activities and outreach to more women.

‘In the past, my world is my house, now, my world is wider’, a homemaker.

At every opportunity SPRS members invited and encouraged other homeworkers to join group meetings and learn about the homeworkers’ movement. Since the SPRS is yet to be registered at the provincial level, which requires representations in 5 districts to qualify as a provincial trade union, the SPRS needs to continue to make steady progress to expand the coverage and membership so that they can further increase their representation and voice to advocate for decent work for homeworkers in Indonesia. Similarly in East Java, as of August 2015 MWPRI and HomeNet Indonesia have organized 2,089 homeworkers members.

6. Conclusions and key lessons

There were a lot of challenges and it was not easy to mobilise and organize homeworkers, but the results of the collective efforts by the field facilitators, other staff of partner CSOs, and the ILO/MAMPU Project, which were also supported by the Provincial Manpower Office, local legislature and trade unions were significant. The women homeworkers gained awareness on their status as workers and increased their knowledge on various issues such as workers’ rights, gender equality, occupational safety and health, financial management, leadership, and advocacy.

They initiated actions to improve their living and working conditions, and established a trade union of homeworkers in Indonesia.

A combination of factors contributed to the significant progress:

- The availability of the project funding was imperative especially in the beginning. While it is ideal for the homeworkers' groups to manage their own groups on their own, it is a long way to reach that stage since most of the homeworkers are from low-income families who need the income to support their basic livelihood. Therefore, the project's fund to support homeworkers to join the project activities (by covering the transportation cost and a partial income lost from joining the project activities) supported the process of homeworkers in realizing the benefits of organizing. The training workshops provided by the project also contributed to open eyes of the homeworkers to start taking actions. Without the initial funding support, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to mobilise and organize homeworkers as the benefits of organizing may not be enjoyed by the homeworkers immediately, and without experiencing or realizing the benefits of organizing, the homeworkers would not be motivated to organize.
- Although without prior experience in working on homeworkers' issues, CSOs' extensive experience in working at the community-level to empower people to take part in the local economy and governance was proven to be a strong basis for CSOs in locating, supporting and mobilizing homeworkers. The information, experience, and networks related to the organization of homeworkers and the link to the national level forums on labour issues as well as technical knowledge to promote decent work (e.g. training on workers' rights, OSH, etc) provided by the ILO through various means such as workshops, coaching and study trips were considered essentials for making such progress in promoting decent work for homeworkers.
- The continuous engagement of the key stakeholders (e.g. government officials, employers and trade union representatives) in activities was ensured throughout the project. This was key in having the homeworkers' issues recognized by the government officials, parliamentarians, employers and trade unions as it provided the basis for further discussion to include homeworkers' issues in the upcoming local labour regulation.
- Support in economic empowerment activity (e.g. provision of vocational training, access to market and funds) was essential to many homeworkers to secure their livelihoods while advocating for better working conditions for homeworkers.

The struggle of these women homeworkers will continue for a long time to come, but the progress is an important milestone for the movement of homeworkers in Indonesia where homeworkers have been working without recognition for many decades. While there are many priority issues for the government and the stakeholders to address, the homeworkers' issues should not be forgotten but recognized as an important area to address as Indonesia works towards poverty alleviation and sustainable and inclusive development. Continuous support to the homeworkers should be provided to strengthen their capacity by developing specific programmes targeting homeworkers or linking the available government support programmes to homeworkers. In addition, cooperation among the key stakeholders including groups representing homeworkers, workers' and employers' organizations, the government and other relevant stakeholders should be maintained to promote decent work for homeworkers.