

WOMEN AND WORK: FOCUS ON HOMEWORK IN THE PHILIPPINES

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The whole subject of women and work revolves around the concept of the gender division of labor, which operates inside and outside the home, in reproduction and production. Simply put, there is "woman's work," and there is "man's work," both of which are socially and culturally defined depending on the requirements and possibilities of the economic framework within which they exist.

Much of reproductive work is considered woman's work. She is in charge of maintaining the home and family; she gives birth to and takes care of children; she does most of the cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, sewing, and marketing. Male/female time allocation studies bear out this almost universal phenomenon. One such study conducted in the Philippines concluded that "husbands devote only one-third of their wives' time in housework."¹

Domestic or reproductive labor in a market economy does not earn money. It is not considered as producing exchange value, and is not reflected in the Gross National Product. Housewives, who have always comprised a substantial chunk of the female population, are not counted as part of the labor force. There is a tacit assumption that housewives do not "work", that they are dependent on the incomes that their husbands earn, and that if they do "work", this must be as secondary and supplemental earners complementary to their primary reproductive roles. The assumption applies even to unmarried women or female heads of households who do not rely on male earnings to maintain themselves or their families.² Women are still expected to form the bulk of the reserve army of labor, to be pulled in when needed and discarded when not.

¹ See Virginia A. Miralao, *Women and Men in Development. Findings from a Pilot Study* (Institute of Philippine Culture, Ateneo de Manila University, 1980).

² Noeleen Hyzer, "Towards a Framework of Analysis," *Women and the Informal Sector* (IDS Bulletin, 1981), pp. 3-7.

When they do engage in social or productive labor, they are relegated to low-skilled, low-paid, repetitive and monotonous jobs akin to or compatible with their reproductive roles. They are expected to cope with the demands of both worlds: work to earn money, and work to maintain the family, with minimum social and male support. Thus, the classic double day, with women's workload and working time stretching to the limits of physical endurance, since as they say, "women's work is never done."

The other unfortunate result is the vulnerability of women's productive labor, which is frequently insecure, unstable, and subjected to the vagaries of supply and demand in both national and global markets. Given worldwide trends towards the informalization and casualization of female labor, as more and more women eke out a living at home or on the streets rather than in factories and offices, women workers are becoming more invisible, unprotected, and unorganized.

Such a situation is favorable to both foreign and local corporate interests, which have taken advantage of cheap, docile and manipulable womanpower wherever this is found: in the Third World countries of Asia and Latin America, in the "Third World ghettos" of North America and Western Europe consisting mainly of migrant, non-white workers, in both city and countryside. The framework within which this exploitation occurs is the New International Division of Labor (NIDL), a global trend which is based mainly on wage differences between First World and Third World workers, and between male and female workers. Thus, the NIDL is built on many givens, including the gender division of labor.

In the system of internationalization of production dominated by the transnational corporations based in the United States, Japan and Western Europe, the role of the developing economies is to be "(1) the geographical site of labor-intensive manufacturing for worldwide markets, (2) the supplier of low-priced consumer products, and (3) the source of cheap labor."³ Three main factors have made this possible: 1) "the virtually inexhaustible worldwide reservoir of potential labor" found mostly in Asia, Africa and Latin America, where workers earn wages roughly 5-20 percent only of those of their counterparts in the advanced industrial states; 2) the development of modern transport and communication technology which makes possible the relocation and control of operations over wide geographical distances; and 3) "job fragmentation" or the breaking down of

³Merlin M. Magallona, "The Impact of Multinational Corporations on Developing Economies," University of the Philippines Law Center, n.d. (typescript).

complex operations into simple units so that even unskilled workers can perform them.⁴

Subcontracting, in general, is defined as "an industrial or commercial practice whereby the party placing the contract (parent firm, principal enterprise or company) requests another enterprise or establishment (subcontractor) to manufacture or process parts of the whole of a product or products that it sells as its own."⁵ International subcontracting has a more specific definition: "all export sales of articles which are ordered in advance, and where the giver of the order arranges the marketing."⁶

Through international subcontracting, foreign principals abroad merely order from Filipino exporters and realize enormous profits. The higher the placement in the subcontracting ladder, the bigger the take. The foreign principals, the exporters/suppliers and the big subcontractors extract the most advantages from the system. They can reduce production costs to a minimum, principally through cheaper labor supply and lesser capital requirements. They have maximum flexibility, because they can increase or decrease production depending on fluctuations in demand. When the demand is high, workers can be made to produce more and when low, they can be made to produce less or not at all.

The female homeworkers at the very bottom of the subcontracting ladder understandably suffer the most because they often "represent a buffer workforce, essential in times of heavy demand but the first to suffer in case of recession."⁷ They get a mere pittance yet they are hardly conscious of the fact that their labour redounds to the immense profits being raked in by the foreign principals abroad and the large Manila-based manufacturers-exporters. For example, a baby dress which sells for 15 dollars in an American department store is made by a village girl who gets less than 10 US cents. To reiterate, the agents, the subcontractors, the Filipino exporters and the American importers which position them-

⁴ Folker Frobel, Jurgen Heinrichs and Otto Kreye, "The World Market for Labor and the World Market for Industrial Sites," *Journal of Economic Issues*, XII, 4 (December, 1979) p. 31.

⁵ *Contract Labour in the Clothing Industry* (Geneva: International Labour Office, 1980) p. 5

⁶ Michael Sharpston, "International Subcontracting," *Oxford Economic Papers*, (March, 1975) pp. 94-95.

⁷ Enrico Paglaban, "Philippines -- Workers in the Export Industry," *Pacific Research*, IX, 37 4 (March-June 1978) pp. 6-24.

selves in between the actual producer and the end consumer, receive a whole lot more.

Truly, the homeworkers, mostly married women, are the worst off in this scheme. Their wages are far below the minimum prescribed by law, their employment is irregular, their working conditions leave much to be desired and result in occupation-related illnesses. They have no benefits and social security protection, and because they are scattered and isolated from each other, it is difficult to unionize them. Most of them are not aware of their rights as workers and are not organized into groups which can defend and advance their interests.

Homeworkers are disadvantaged also because they are women and therefore considered to be earning supplementary income and fit to be consigned to monotonous and repetitious tasks requiring manual dexterity. They have no other employment options partly because they have to stay home and attend to their children and their domestic chores. Their husbands hardly share the household's burden, and child care facilities are virtually not available. The gender dimension of the homeworkers' problem is therefore very real.

Homework Revisited

Homework is defined as "work carried out at home with the purpose of exchange under some kind of contractual agreement with an employer or contractor." It can be considered synonymous to what is referred to in other studies as 'domestic outwork' as both share the same elements: work is done mainly inside the home (therefore outside the factory) by "workers," usually married and their children, contracted by an enterprise, usually through an agent, to process or assemble a particular product or a portion thereof. A homeworker, as may be gleaned from Section 1, Rule XIII of the Philippine Labor Code, is one "who performs in or about his home any processing of goods or materials, in whole or in part, which have been furnished directly or indirectly, by an employer and thereafter to be returned to the latter."

Homework is a widespread phenomenon in the Philippines, occurring in both urban and rural settings. It is concentrated in labor-intensive and export-oriented industries, notably garments, footwear, and handicraft, where employment increased by leaps and bounds together with the quick rise in non-traditional export earnings.

In the garments industry, for example, the value of exports jumped from \$35.73 million in 1971 to \$249.7 million in 1977. This further increased to \$405.4 million in 1979 and peaked to \$580

million in 1981. After a two-year period of decline (to \$507 million in 1982 and \$510 million in 1983 due to the global recession), export sales picked up, reaching \$562 million in 1984, \$563 million in 1985 and \$702 million in 1986. In 1987, garment exports passed the one billion dollar mark, registering a record FOB value of \$1,042.8 million and indicating an impressive 48.4 percent increase from the previous years' figure. The upward trend continued in 1988, which saw a 20.8 percent rise in exports to an FOB value of \$1,260 million.⁹ As of July 14, 1989, exports were valued at \$864.90 million, a 21.06 increase from the figure registered in the same period in 1988, giving rise to optimism that the \$1.5 billion export target for the year 1989 would be surpassed.⁹

The garments industry is expectedly one of the biggest employers. In 1984, it had around 148,000 workers in 20,255 registered firms, 97.8 percent of which had an employment size of one to nine workers (and 88.7 percent, one to four).¹⁰ In 1981, a more comprehensive estimate by an official source placed direct and indirect employment at "about 450,000 to 500,000 homesewers on contractual basis and 214,000 factory and homeworkers."¹¹ Today, the upbeat mood is reflected in the forecast made by Trade and Industry Undersecretary Gloria Arroyo (who is also at the helm of the Garments and Textiles Export Board) that 500,000 new jobs will be generated by the garments and textiles sector in the next three years.¹²

Since homework is frequently invisible, irregular and unreported, it is difficult to get reliable, macro-level statistics on its nature and extent. This can only be done through nothing less than a census, where exact information on the incidence of homework can be obtained through questions meant to unearth this.

⁸"Garments, From Rags to Riches," *Philippine Development* (July 31, 1976), p. 21; Bimba Fajardo, "We're out to clothe the world," *Times Journal* (November 4, 1980); *ITC Newsletter*, I, 1 (August 1985), Table 3(Export Earnings of Leading Non-Traditional Manufactures: 1980-1984, citing the *NEDA 1984 Philippine Statistical Yearbook* as source; "800m garments exports expected," *Manila Chronicle* (December 10, 1986); Alice H. Reyes, "RP garments industry dresses up for a killing in the export market," *Philippine Daily Globe* (July 31, 1989).

⁹ Garment Supplement of *Philippine Daily Globe* (July 31, 1989) and the *GTEB Update*, Issues Nos. 41-42 (31 July and 15 August 1989).

¹⁰ *ITIC Newsletter*, *op. cit.*

¹¹"The Embroidery and Apparel Industry: An Overview," *Philippine Development*, IX, 1 (May 30, 1981) p. 11.

¹² *Philippine Daily Globe op. cit.*

Most of the researches done on homework, which began in the early 1980s, were small ones on the level of case studies.¹³ The biggest so far is a survey covering 315 rural women homeworkers done by Noel Vasquez, S.J. for the International Labor Organization in 1988-89. According to this survey, majority of the women belong to the 26-40 age group (the highest concentration in the 31-35 range), and are married (87 percent). Most had only four to nine years of schooling (63 percent), and have been engaged in homework for the last one to ten years.

Although there are differences among survey sites (Sorsogon, Cebu and Davao), in general, incomes and expenditures of homeworkers' households are below regional averages (except for Davao). "Homework is considered a secondary or supplementary source of income," but in some cases (29 percent in Sorsogon, 17 percent in Cebu and 22 percent in Davao), "the income of the respondents are even greater than that of the spouse or another income-earning member of the household." Moreover, "especially in the case of a farm-based household income, for several months a year the woman's homework can be the primary source of income."¹⁴ Homeworkers cite the desire to augment family income as the main reason for homeworking; at the same time, they are dissatisfied that the actual income from homework that they get is far from what is needed to cover family expenditures. Most express preference to work at home because it allows them to attend to family obligations and household chores.

As revealed in the survey, "the most dominant production relation (covering 53 percent of respondents) is labor subcontract-

¹³ See, for example, the following sources: Helen Juliet F. Cabalu and Beulah V. Javier, *An Evaluation of the Sub-contracting Arrangement in a Garment Enterprise: A Case Study*, thesis represented to the University of the Philippines School of Economics, October 7, 1982; Rosalinda Pineda-Ofreneo, "Philippine Domestic Outwork: Subcontracting for Export-Oriented Industries," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 12-3-1982; Ma. Virginia Sinay Aguilar et al, Domestic Outwork Arrangement in the Footwear and the Garments Industries in *Selected Philippine Communities: Case Studies*, Research and Publications Program, University of the Philippines Institute of Industrial Relations, March 1983; Amelita M. King, "The Informal Sector: The Forgotten Workers," *Philippine Labor Review* 8, 1 (January-June 1984); Virginia A. Miralao, *Labor Conditions in Philippine Craft Industries*, IDRC, 1985; Bureau of Women and Minors, Ministry of Labor and Employment, *Participatory Action Research to Promote Organization Among Homebased Women Piece Rate Workers (A Summary)* 1986; and Rosario del Rosario, "The World of Filipino Child Workers in Garments Production," *Philippine Journal of Industrial Relations* VIII, 1, 1986.

¹⁴ Noel D. Vasquez, S.J., *Philippine Country Study on Rural Homeworkers*, presented during the Technical Meeting on the Rural Homeworkers Project, June 5-6, 1989, Bangkok, Thailand, pp. 12-13.

ing, where the "employer" or more appropriately, the subcontractor, provides the raw or semi-processed materials and then collects the finished product as the homemaker is paid for the labor input."

Next in line, covering 30 percent of respondents, is "that of consignment which is basically a marketing contractual arrangement wherein the homemaker produces articles specified by a buyer under agreement that these will be bought by that buyer. The contract part is that the homemaker is not going to engage in the work unless her products are to be bought with pre-arranged prices. The homemaker provides herself with the material required for production."

A significant minority (about 17 percent) are what may be categorized as self-employed, "those relatively independent from a single source of raw materials and from a single buyer. They provide themselves with raw materials and sell directly to the traders. It is possible that they do business with the subcontractors of the other homemakers. The crucial factor is that they purchase and then sell, without any oral or written contract."¹⁵

As explained by Fr. Vasquez, the types of intervention needed by each category of homemaker differ from the rest, depending on what production arrangement she belongs to. The first category may need help more in terms of unionization and other forms of self-organization, leading to better wage rates and working conditions. The last two categories may need assistance more in the form of credit, marketing, management training, technological improvement and quality control.

Homework in the Garments Industry

At this point, it may be useful to look more closely at homework in the garments industry, which has been the subject of many studies, and which, by far, is the biggest employer of homemakers.

In discussing homework in the garments industry, what strikes one as the most characteristic feature is the involvement of women from ages four to 74. These women come from households with below poverty-line incomes, situated in depressed and sometimes squatter communities either in the rural or urban areas. They belong to extended families, have below-college educational attainment, and are mostly elementary school graduates, although a number have already dropped out of the primary grades.

Husbands of these homemakers are usually employed as part-time industrial workers in the urban areas or as seasonal farm-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

ers and agricultural workers in the rural areas. Their insufficient income is one reason which pushes their wives to do homework. In the case of the single ones, their own parents' inadequate income is also one reason why they accept homework. Whether married or single, adult homeworkers are burdened with household chores and child care in addition to their homework.

Thus, if womenfolk who are already busy at home, are to engage in activities for income generation, such activities are usually part-time, like laundry and vending or seasonal, like planting and garments production at home. Since the garments industry lends itself more easily to the home and can engage the help of other members of the family, many women, especially in traditional garments-producing areas (Bulacan, Rizal, Laguna and some parts of Metro Manila) are found engaged in garments homework.

Tradition plays a major role in female domestic outwork, both in terms of the industry and in terms of the culture. The garments industry dates back to its introduction in Spanish colonial times and has since been geared specifically for women. This has remained the case up to the present and has been given a boost by the export policies of the 1970s which required abundant, cheap, skilled and temporary labor for garments export, best answered by women. But socialization as well helps to mold women into their roles as obedient, diligent, passive, cooperative and responsible girls performing their duties at home, while trying hard to help in income generation and to do these as early as possible. By sheer exposure to their mothers and other female kin of the extended family engaged in needlework at home and in the neighborhood, girls get their first training in the industry. In elementary school girls are taught such subjects as Home Economics, and are given less encouragement than boys to pursue higher learning, particularly if the family income is limited. Thus, the tendency for girls is to start practising their roles as women through garments production at home. Of course, girls who want to break tradition, may also start earning through garments production at home as a means of maintaining themselves through school but this hardly works.

Homework garments production definitely provides opportunities for income generation to home-bound women, who would otherwise find it very difficult to get employment outside the home, given the lack of child care services made available by government. Homework is definitely an income-generating opportunity for women who, even if they could work outside the home, cannot find work because of government's inability or reluctance to generate more stable employment.

Homework garments production can also be viewed as tailor-made to answer women's needs as it requires hardly any skills training, and is very flexible in terms of hours, days and place of work. All of the above have been cited by garments homeworkers themselves as the positive aspects of their occupation.

But, they cite negative aspects as well, like dirt-cheap wages, instability of orders, and exploitative and abusive contractors and subcontractors. Their common problems include: low income (personal and family) usually connected with low and stagnant piece rates; production expenses which they shoulder themselves (such as thread) or which are subtracted from earnings (such as rent for sewing machines); seasonality and irregularity of employment; informality of production arrangements, as concretized by lack of written contracts which can establish employer-employee relations and thereby help guarantee labor protection and benefits provided by law; lack of alternative employment and means to start income-generating projects or to improve productivity (e.g. through acquisition of motor-driven or high-speed machines). While they tend to ignore the hazardous effects of their work, they however tend to attribute their physical weaknesses/defects to their occupation, although these are considered part of the trade.

Together with these production-related problems, invariably mentioned are the double burden, lack of social services (particularly child care), lack of access to credit, education, training, and markets, and lack of consciousness as to the rights and potentials of women homeworkers.

Garments homeworkers usually aspire either to be subcontractors or to get regular factory work in order to get away from the negative aspects of work instability, dependence on subcontractors and dirt-cheap wages. Only those who have attained some knowledge of labor laws and of the similarities of conditions of other homeworkers, have expressed the desire to organize themselves to tackle the negative aspects of homework directly.

Under usual circumstances, homeworkers are isolated not only from outside information, but also from each other. Their occupation guarantees the continuation of traditional socialization of young female garments workers, thus aggravating gender divisions which put a heavier burden on them, as males are also progressively becoming unemployed, bring in less income or none at all but are not socialized to help lighten women's burden. At best, males are also being drawn into garments homework or are forced to cook or take care of children on an optional basis, still within the prevailing patriarchal system.

In the face of such a limited horizon and growing economic insecurity and competition, many a garments homemaker turn to religion commonly provided in the depressed communities, as in the case of Rizal, by Mormons, Pentecostals, Iglesia ni Cristo, etc. But if an active women's organization exists, as in Bulacan, a more empowering approach may be adopted collectively.

Poverty born of inadequate industrialization, giving rise to unemployment and underemployment, thus to inadequate income, has limited the level of knowledge of garments homeworkers, as they drop out of school either before finishing the elementary level or usually after graduating from it, because a costly high school education and beyond is unattainable. Furthermore, early gender-tied work at home and garments homework cuts off women of depressed communities from the fruits of a more egalitarian outlook which could liberate them from being home-bound and isolated. Newspapers are virtually non-existent to them, and radio and TV programs are not geared to information for empowerment. Under the usual circumstances, these women would hardly get a chance of getting out of their dead end.

Unless helpful information and change is brought right into their communities. *Unless* they have a chance of linking up with organizations/agencies which could help them. *Unless* they are given a chance to get organized. *Unless* child care services are made available to them. *Unless* education is made completely free and altered towards real gender equality. *Unless* they get regular and adequate employment outside the home, or at least are able to collectively build independent, cooperative and remunerative production arrangements as homeworkers in their own communities.

Government Policies and Programs

The general and basic policy of our government is to encourage industrial homework through subcontracting, which is inherent in an export-oriented, labor-intensive strategy of economic development. There are attempts at regulation, as exemplified by a chapter on employment of homeworkers in the Labor Code, which concentrates on payment for work and the consequent relations among employers, subcontractors and employees.

But records show that past government experiences in monitoring and regulating industrial homework are disheartening, according to Mr. Mariano Jungco, head of the Wages and Hours Division of the Bureau of Working Conditions, Department of Labor and Employment.

There was a time, he said, when employers and subcontractors were required to get permits from the Bureau of Labor Stan-

dards (now the Bureau of Working Conditions) of the Department of Labor and Employment before they could employ industrial homeworkers and distribute homework. They were then using the Department of Labor Manual containing the relevant rules, later superseded by the Labor Code implemented in the mid-1970s. The mood at that time was strict limitation and regulation. In fact, the Manual stated in no uncertain terms in provision no. 4315.03, "As a general rule, industrial homework shall be permissible only in industries where such is already the practice of the industry obtaining," and these industries included "apparel embroidery, other needle trades not by hand, shoes, weaving, basketry and other handicrafts."

The old rules seem to be more protective of homeworkers than the present legislation. For example, the Department of Labor Manual, in provision no. 4315.08 (Rate of Páy for Homeworkers) expressly states that "Employer must pay homeworkers not less than factory rates for similar work but under no circumstances must the pay be less than the applicable statutory wage." This rule is strengthened by the information required in the application for contractor/subcontractor's permit to distribute homework, which includes a question about similar work done in the employer's factory, and how much hourly, daily or piece rate is paid to the factory worker in comparison to the homeworker. Monitoring would also have been facilitated by a paragraph in the permit which states that "Names and addresses of subcontractor and homeworkers must be submitted monthly to the Bureau of Labor Standards and failure to do so will constitute a sufficient cause for revocation of this permit." The health and safety aspects were also considered in a certification which the contractor/subcontractor signed "That the premises in which the homework is performed shall be maintained in a safe and healthful condition and that no person living in the home of the homeworker is afflicted with an infectious, contagious, or communicable disease."

No such provisions are found in present legislation, and on the matter of wages, the current Labor Code makes no reference to factory workers' and homeworkers' rates having to be equal. And besides, an overwhelming majority of homeworkers are unorganized and are not even conscious of their rights; thus, they do not even report to the proper agencies if these rights are violated. They do not know that they have to be paid immediately or at least within the week after the contractor or subcontractor has collected the goods or articles. They do not know that no deductions above 20 percent of their weekly earnings can be made at one time, and that such deductions are permissible only if they are clearly responsible for the loss or damage of materials. They do not know that they can

go to the Regional Office of the Department of Labor and Employment if they disagree with their employer or subcontractor on the matter of deductions or conditions for payment of work. They do not know that in case they are not paid by the subcontractor, the "employer" as defined by the Labor Code shall be just as liable to them.

In brief, homeworkers have not really and truly benefited from government attention and protection, largely due to their "invisibility" even in official statistics. All the past and present legislation meant to protect them could not be implemented because of lack of manpower, resources, and will. Government agencies that should look after them tend to ignore them, and they do not at all appear as a clearly identified target clientele in official livelihood programs.

Non-governmental initiatives seem to be more fruitful because they are directed at the self-organization and empowerment of homeworkers. External support through private institutional assistance will help boost these initiatives. Of course, the best thing is to have a strong network of NGOs (particularly women's organizations), government and private institutions, national and international bodies concerned with the plight of homeworkers in order to coordinate efforts and pool resources.

At this stage of the country's development, it is not feasible to abolish homework as envisioned in traditional international labor policy now undergoing rethinking and in accordance with the clear demand of the local trade union movement which sees homework as a form of unfair labor practice and as a means by which management can weaken the bargaining position of organized workers in the formal sector by threatening to and/or actually taking the jobs out of the factories. It is thus best to adopt measures which would lead to the self-organization and empowerment of homeworkers. Initial efforts could be community-based and could lead to cooperativism as an alternative to subcontracting. A pilot cooperative of garments homeworkers organized by the Katipunan ng Bagong Pilipina (KaBaPa) in Bulacan, Bulacan with funding from the ILO may be worth mentioning here. The necessary support services in terms of training, marketing, credit, technology and child care should be established and strengthened.

Another approach proven effective in India is direct unionization of homeworkers. There, the Self-Employed Women's Associa-

¹⁶ See Andrea Singh, "Protection and Organisation of Homeworkers: The South Asia Experience," paper presented at the Asian Sub-Regional Tripartite Seminar on the Protection of Homeworkers, 5-9 December, 1988, Manila; Renana Jhabvala, "Country Paper-India," paper presented at the same seminar.

tion (SEWA), with ILO support, has done outstanding work in the areas of training and consciousness-raising, monitoring and filing legislation concerning homeworkers, and improving their work conditions through health surveys, ergonomic studies, and inexpensive changes in their equipment and working environment.¹⁶

If homeworkers are organized from the bottom up, they will have a voice with which to demand policy directions that can restructure and reorient the economy towards self-reliance and stable employment generation that can "reconstruct" gender relations at home, in school and at the workplace, that can protect the rights of homeworkers until homework is eventually abolished because women's options outside the home have immensely multiplied.

In particular, they can push for the following:

1. Strict registration, monitoring, and regulation of homework which is only possible if the homeworkers themselves are aware of their rights, will report on their own conditions, and complain to the proper authorities if they have cause to do so;
2. Promotion of cooperative instead of self-employment, which is an individualistic and therefore necessarily limited approach to structural problems which need collective solutions;
3. Promotion of gender equality through non-sexist education in school and at home, and in the equal sharing of the domestic burden by husband and wife, male and female children;
4. Expansion of social services -- education, health care and child care -- which should be accessible to all; and
5. Revision of industrial policies away from overdependence on external forces and markets towards the building of a truly independent, self-reliant, industrialized economy which can provide decent jobs to all in need.

The last point deserves emphasis because the security and regularity of employment on the part of many homeworkers hinge on the stability of the export market. Global market conditions must be continually monitored to predict general trends so that proper adjustments can be made on time. If there is a coming recession, or if the Philippines finds it more and more difficult to compete with cheaper sources of higher-quality garments, then homeworkers dependent on the export market can shift to other sources of income while they can still adjust. It may be a matter of sound policy not to be too dependent on the export market and to develop the internal market more.

The National Policy Workshop on Rural Women Homeworkers held in Quezon City October 2-6, 1989, under the auspices of ILO and the Department of Labor and Employment produced a document outlining various strategies to meet the objectives of visibility and empowerment. Basic to all these is organizing which a homeworkers' group initiated by the KaBaPa has pledged to do within the next two years with ILO support.

Needless to say, organizing must proceed cautiously and systematically, beginning with participatory research, consciousness-raising, education and training efforts focusing on: conditions, rights, and aspirations of women homeworkers; legal literacy; skills and cooperatives development; and micro-enterprise management. Income-generating projects such as cooperatives run collectively by homeworkers must be carefully prepared and set up, having in mind the importance of an effective marketing mechanism which takes proper timing and pricing into consideration, marketable designs, quality control, thorough monitoring, continuous training and upgrading of style of work. Homeworkers, centers for marketing, training and other services (e.g. paralegal, health and child care) may be set up independently or through joint efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations.

A good beginning has been made. What is crucial is to sustain the process of empowerment to serve as a beacon to millions of disempowered women homeworkers still imprisoned by the intersecting binds of nation, gender and class.