Homeworkers Worldwide
Summary Annual Report 2024-25



Many hands, many roles. Homeworkers in the garment sector in Tamil Nadu India
Photo: Cividep, India

September 2025

Homeworkers Worldwide

Company No. 3796677, Charity Number: 1195399.

c/o Bohorun's Business Solutions,
Howley Park Business Village,
Howley Park Road, Morley
Leeds LS27 0BZ.

Introduction

Many women work from home, especially in developing countries with large informal sectors, making garments, homeware, basketry, handcrafts and myriad other products[1], mainly for local markets but also for export. In South Asia alone, millions of homeworkers are engaged in export product chains, but are ignored by international retailers whose social audit programmes do not extend beyond the factory. Out of sight of inspectors and auditors and with few legal protections, they are the women workers with the lowest pay and most precarious employment in the supply chain of the brands whose products they make.

Homeworkers Worldwide [HWW] is the leading UK NGO campaigning for the rights of homeworkers to be respected. Working with local organisations and wider networks we aim to strengthen the voice of homeworkers and build alliances to secure equal rights and decent conditions for homeworkers in the UK and in global supply chains.

This is a summary of our activities during 2024-25.

Networking

As a small voluntary organisation, HWW seeks to optimise impact from its limited resources by collaborating with others. We maintain close links with civil society partners in key sourcing countries, notably Cividep India, a labour rights organisation active across Southern India and with Transform Trade India, based in North India. These organisations have substantial experience in homeworking, and together with HWW, were part of the four-year collaborative EU-funded Hidden Homeworkers Project, which developed a simple and effective Toolkit for businesses to carry out supply due diligence to identify and improve the conditions of homeworkers making their products.

HWW has links with civil society organisations in other key sourcing countries, notably Pakistan, where in 2023 we held training webinars on using the Toolkit to improve transparency and homeworkers' conditions, in conjunction with HomeNet Pakistan, through the Hidden Homeworkers project. We lacked resources to develop this further but contact was made with a recently-formed homeworkers' union, the Home Based Women Workers Federation, which would be an excellent future partner.

Advocacy and influencing

During 2024-25 HWW focused on sharing learning from the Hidden Homeworkers project with companies and multi-stakeholder initiatives [MSIs], encouraging companies to carry out due diligence towards homeworkers in their product chains, and promoting the adoption of homeworker policies, which are an essential first step in getting transparency and traction over homeworkers in global supply chains, by companies and MSIs.

We engage with companies principally through our membership of the UK Ethical Trading Initiative [ETI]. ETI is a leading alliance of trade unions, NGOs and businesses, working together with other stakeholders to promote practical solutions to end the abuse of human rights at work. HWW was an active participant in ETI Apparel & Textile Working group activities, and uses ETI channels to disseminate information to ETI member companies, to whom we offer free support and advice around homeworker policies. During the year we started to work with one ETI-member company, which reached out through ETI proactively for advice on addressing homeworking in their chains.

We also (as far as resources permit) sought to engage influence other MSIs in the sector. We maintained links, forged last year, with ETI Denmark and ETI Norway, seeking alignment of policies on homeworking across members of the ETI family, and for the first time reached out to the German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles through a collaboration with the Dutch NGO, *Arisa*[2].

HWW has collaborated with *Arisa* over many years. Arisa's activities on labour rights in the Indian garment sector regularly brings it into contact with homeworkers, and turns to HWW for detailed policy and strategy guidance. In 2024-25 HWW presented at three events jointly organised with Arisa:

- A webinar on Due Diligence with Homeworkers to German/European fashion retailer members of the *German Partnership for Sustainable Textiles*. Monsoon also presented at this webinar, alongside Indian NGOs and homeworker representatives (July 2024).
- A presentation on the Hidden Homeworkers Toolkit at a webinar, co-organised with *Transform Trade India*, which focused on issues (including homeworking) in the garment chains in NCR, North India. Many brands sourcing from this sector attended. A local supplier and Transform Trade India also presented (September 2024).

Finally, HWW presented on due diligence with homeworkers at a side session on Forced labour/Child labour/ exploitation at the *OECD Forum on Due Diligence in the Garment & Footwear Sector* with over 100 participants, jointly organised with *Arisa* and ETI member-NGO International Dalit Solidarity Network. (February 2025).

At all these events, HWW offered to support and advice to companies who wished to develop an effective homeworker policy and carry out due diligence aimed at homeworkers.

These activities helped raise awareness of MSIs and their member companies of the need to carry out due diligence aimed at homeworkers /informal workers in the lower tiers of their supply chains, and practical approaches which they can take to do so (as documented in our toolkit https://www.homeworkersww.org.uk/s/Hidden-Homeworkers-Toolkit.pdf). This increased awareness probably contributed to the uptake of advice and eventual adoption and implementation of homeworker policies by several companies detailed below.

Collaboration with companies

Uptake by companies to our offer to support company policy and due diligence targeting homeworkers has been patchy. Many leading progressive fashion brands that are members of ETI have effective Homeworker Policies, but many do not, and outside ETI few fashion brands have effective Homeworker Policies.

HWW therefore supported an on-going Homeworker Campaign by the ETI-member NGO, Transform Trade, which aims to persuade larger UK fashion retail chains to adopt and publish an inclusive homeworker policy and publish evidence of their supply chain implementation. Company targets included *inter alia,* Asda, John Lewis, M&S, New Look, Primark, Sainsburys, TFG, Tesco and The Very Group. Non-ETI member companies (Boohoo, Clarks, Sports Direct etc) were also targeted. *Transform Trade* supporters had written to CEOs of the targeted companies asking questions about their policies on homework in during 2023.

During 2024-25 HWW contributed advice and analysis and joined meetings between *Transform Trade* campaigners and companies, to offer technical inputs around homeworker

policies. The campaign benchmarked the adoption and implementation of effective homeworker policies by fashion brands, and in March 2024 published this analysis, see:

How the biggest fashion brands in the UK & Ireland score in their approach to homeworkers

The campaign succeeded in securing the attention of companies on homeworking, and created opportunities for dialogue with companies. HWW sought to harness the raised level of awareness to encourage companies to strengthen their policies on homeworking, publish and implement them. During 2024 HWW gave advice and often detailed feedback on due diligence around homeworking and effective company homeworker policies to 9 ETI member companies, and one member of ETI Denmark4. While it is hard to attribute policy changes to specific actions, it is likely that this contributed to the following outcomes:

- Seasalt adopted and published a Homeworker Policy (January 2024).
- Tesco produced a draft Homeworker Policy, shared with HWW for feedback.
- New Look agreed to review their Homeworker policies
- Selfridges is developing a Homeworker Policy to be shared with HWW for feedback.
- John Lewis published a website statement on homeworking[3].

The TT campaign website page will remain live, enabling on-going influencing through incentives on brands to improve performance, and future rounds of benchmarking.

Advice was given on use of the **Hidden Homeworkers toolkit** to two ETI member companies:

- One company reported that, on publishing their *exemplary* Homeworker Policy in January 2024, other suppliers disclosed homeworkers in the UK and Thailand. The company is now implementing the Hidden Homeworkers toolkit in those chains. Further advice was given on how to navigate around tricky implementation issues.
- Advice on the use of the Hidden Homeworkers toolkit was given to a retailer and one of its suppliers, who are working together on due diligence aimed at homeworkers in a supply chain in China.

HWW worked with another company, a member of ETI Denmark[4], which had identified homeworkers in the chains of a supplier in China. HWW does not currently have local partners in China, and so reached out to fellow ETI-member NGO, *The Centre for Child Rights & Business* to jointly develop a proposal for CCRB to map homeworking.

HWW contributed to a *Gender Briefing* that ActionAid UK is developing, to supplement the UK's Corporate Justice Coalition's Parliamentary Briefing on the proposed Business, Human Rights and the Environment legislation.

HWW Archives

HWW maintains an extensive and unique archive, covering the work of HWW and the UK National Group on Homeworking and our partner/other organisations across the world. The contextualising information about the situation of homeworkers at the end of so many global supply chains, and the conditions under which they work, is key to an understanding of the international labour market and contemporary capitalism, sadly still unknown to far too many economists, researchers and international development practitioners. The archive, when catalogued, will shine a light on this. It also includes a valuable collection of embroidered textiles and other products created by women homeworkers and a large collection of stunning photographs, along with academic dissertations and theses.

This year the HWW archive was rehoused in the University of Leeds Cultural Collections & Galleries, part of its main Library, to become part of its Feminist Archive. HWW Trustees

invested considerable time sorting and preserving the material and adding details to the rough catalogue created by DPhil student Rose Dryzek (see below). Staff at Cultural Collections are keen to find funds to catalogue the collection and incorporate it into their searchable database. The material will then become much more widely available.

During 2024-25, Cambridge University DPhil student Rose Dryzek continued her research into homework, and created a basic catalogue for the archive. HWW thanks Rose for her helpful work on what was a very mixed and unwieldy collection and wishes her all the best for the future.

Fundraising governance & people

The fund-raising environment has become very challenging, especially for labour rights organisations. Funding was received during 2024 from the Ethical Trading Initiative, but other funding applications were unsuccessful. HWW has cut its costs to match the reduced level of funding. Some functions continue to be carried out by part-time staff, but others are carried out on a *pro bono* basis by HWW Trustees and volunteers.

Recent developments in human rights due diligence law at EU-level and potentially in the UK could help ensure that companies take account of homeworkers in their social responsibility programmes and commercial practices. If homeworkers' voices are to be heard, and their interests represented, in the decision-making by companies, MSIs and governments, there is a need for a UK civil society organisation, like Homeworkers Worldwide, able to advocate on behalf of homeworkers.

Homeworkers Worldwide was registered at Companies House in 1999 as a not-for-profit company (#3796677). In 2021 we created a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (registered with the Charity Commission, #1195399) to take over our work. The lead partner in the Hidden Homeworkers project was reluctant to allow us to transfer our work on this EC-funded project across to the new charity structure; we therefore maintained two parallel organisational structures (the Company and the Charity) throughout the year. The Company will be wound up in 2025.

The HWW Team

Admin & Comms: Gudrun Lauret
Trustees: Julie Jarman (Chair)**,** Catriona Purdy (Treasurer)**,** Al Garthwaite, Lucy Brill, Peter Williams, Shanta Bhavnani.
Volunteers: Peter Williams (Policy Lead), Lucy Brill, Shanta Bhavnani

Further information from https://www.homeworkersww.org.uk/

Contact: admin@homeworkersww.org.uk

[1] Homeworkers also carry out checking and finishing garments, packing gift packs, assembly of toys etc.

[2] Arisa was previously known as The India Committee of the Netherlands

[3] This represents progress, but falls short of expectations of good practice established under the ETI Homeworker Project

[4] Etisk Handel Danmark https://etiskhandel.dk/om-os/about-the-organisation/

Homeworkers Worldwide **Charity No. 1195399**

Receipts and Payments Account for the year ended 31 December 2025

Receipts

Income	**£**
Transfer from HWW The Company (now closed)	3,292.91
Donations	40.00
Total Receipts	**3,332.91**

Payments

Expenditure	**£**
Staff costs	1,312.22
Administration, IT and communications	650.68
Total Payments	**1,962.90**

Net Surplus

	£
Total Receipts	3,332.91
Less Total Payments	(1,962.90)
Net Surplus for the Year	**1,370.01**

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

As at 31 December 2025

Assets

Asset	**£**
Bank balance	4,212.92
Total Assets	**4,212.92**

Liabilities

Liability	**£**
Outstanding liabilities	0.00
Total Liabilities	**0.00**

Net Assets

	£
Total Assets	4,212.92
Less Liabilities	0.00
Net Assets	**4,212.92**