



Observational Study of Home Based Glass Bangle Women Workers of Firozabad City

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ABSTRACT *Firozabad is famous for its bangle industry not only in India but also in abroad. Future of thousands of families in Firozabad depends on the bangle-making industry for their livelihood. This informal sector is totally unorganized and is represented by contract labourers and daily wage earners. The large number of workforce is engaged in home based work. According to the Pak Social Welfare Society survey, there are more than thirty-nine different processes of bangle making at different stages. Women are involved in different stages such as: Sadai, jurai, chaklai, katai, chatai, colour chapai process. Here is less income generation opportunities to women in the Glass Bangles subsector. Home based women worker are working at the processing and adornment stages of bangle production. These women play in supporting role to their families. Women themselves have little understanding of their rights with respect to approach and control over resources. They work in the sophisticated environment without any safety gadgets. These women are playing with the bare glass, which is unsafe for their body. They face many health problems- tiredness, dizziness, eye burn, burn marks on fingers. Therefore, they do not enjoy the facilities. There is simply no security either of job or in the life of a bangle worker. The state of home based women worker is blur and harsh. This paper aims to discuss the conditions and problems of women in home based glass bangle work.*

Introduction

Firozabad is a district head quarter in western Uttar Pradesh. The city is well-known as Suhag Nagri for the rest of the country. The city is famous for the largest producer of bangles and other glass items.

Observation of bangle making process

Each bangle passes through at least 70-80 hands before it reaches the customer's hand. Bangle-making is a household business with traditional technique being passed on through generations. Half of the bangle making work is done in factories but the other half is done in houses by each family member. The bangle making business has reached common households in the district enchanting each family member living in the town and restraining villages. Generally, factory owners outsource the work to home-based workers where the entire family gets involved in the job. Alike their homes seem like mini production units of bangles. The women get engrossed in the colouring, shaping, soldering the joints, straightening and bending of bangles. Women, principally married, sense of incomplete without bangles as these are considered a symbol of suhaag. It is also for the sake of health, luck and prosperity. The colorful and beautiful bangles appeal to every woman but nobody knows about the exertion, throes and pain suffered by their manufacturers and that too against a little money.

Condition of Home Based Worker

'Home-based worker' point out to the general category of workers, within the informal or unorganized sector. They carry out lucrative work within their homes or in the surrounding grounds. However, the term 'home-based work' envelops a wide diversity. Home-based workers do piece-work for an employer, who can be a subcontractor, agent or a middleman, or they can be self-employed on their own or in family enterprises. They can work in the new economy (assembling micro-electronics) or the old (weaving carpets). Though home based work refers to informal arrangements of work and is mostly used to describe a

type of work that is small, unregistered, uncertain and unprotected. The number of home-based women workers is rapidly increasing due to many factors including recession, scarcity and sky rocketing prices of the essential commodities of life. These women belong to disadvantageous section of the society. The home-based workers are scattered, unorganized and work independently. Very often they have linkages with each other. They have no platform to unite and think about their issues and benefits. Moreover these home based workers, being working in the informal sector, are deprived of the struggles of the trade unions for the rights of the workers. Workers in the informal economy are not registered or recorded under the legislation, regulations and statistics of national or local governments and are, therefore, largely 'invisible' and 'unprotected'.

They often do not enjoy fundamental workers' rights – with poor working conditions, irregular and often very long working hours, exposure to various forms of insecurity and occupational safety and health hazards. Typically, their productivity is low and earnings are poor. Women turn to home based work for a number of reasons such as: lack of necessary qualifications and formal training, absence of child care support, social & cultural constraints.

Bangle Making Factories

Although the main work is done in factories, the decoration, soldering of the joints, straightening and bending are done in homes. Since bangle industry has no formal industrial set up and a large number of men, women and children are involved in this industry, working in their homes. Out of seven-lakh population of the town, aside from the factory owners, everyone else belongs to the working class. Each family is responsible for only one stage of bangle making, completes the bangles in bundles and they are paid after returning the completed bundles to the contractors. Each bundle contains 315 bangles, normally; an average size family completes 40 bundles in one day. The fact that such a large number of workers work in homes indicates the cost advantages to the employers in terms

of hiring an establishment and employing regular labour. There are positive aspects to home-based work also. It gives women the opportunity to combine work with domestic chores flexibly and sometimes better working conditions.

Production process and health hazards in Glass Bangle Production

Home based women workers mainly suffer from the diseases during production process of bangle are given below:

- Judai (joining of bangles with fire flame): watering and pain in the eyes, asthma disease, digestive problem, joints pain
- Jhalai (straightening of bangles with the help of fire flame): bronchial Asthma, watering and pain in the eyes, joints pain,
- Mudai (designing of bangles with the help of clipper and fire flame): respiratory disease/ asthma, watering and pain in the eyes.
- Hill making: skin disease/ irritation
- Chaklai (sorting of bangles): hard work cause leg pain and backache
- Katai (designing of bangles on grinder): injure the fingers
- Colouring with paints: skin irritation

The provision of safe drinking water, sufficient light, protective tools is also not seen in their houses. They are in fact leading a miserable life. They are in dire need of intervention for improvement.

Suggestions

On the basis of above discussion the researcher suggests for:

- Labour laws should be strictly implemented and monitored by the administration.
- A strong labour union should be formed which will take care of the labourer's pathetic situation and improve their condition.
- Government should come forward to open quality educational schools and recreational centers.
- There should be an effort to focus on the situation of the miseries of the bangle-workers.

Thus, we have fair reason to agree with National commission for enterprises in the unorganized sector (NCEUS) (2007) that these workers are a special category and they need specific policies to readdress their situation.

Implication

On the basis of observational findings the researcher feels that there is a need to promote the affirmative policies to improve the working and living conditions of home-based workers in Firozabad. These policies will be helpful for those people to achieve safe and secure life which provides respectable social status.

Conclusion

From the close study, it estimates that the home based glass bangle women workers working in Firozabad are living a life far below from satisfaction. The low earning of these women cannot meet with their daily needs. They live under the unhygienic environment, which results dangerous disease.

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